June 2nd, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 10th June 2026** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid, Church Street, Newtownards via zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

Attachment: EC 10.06.26 Agenda.pdf ***Page 1***

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. From Waste to Worth - Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme Consultation - Draft Response

(Attached)

Attachment: 3 From Waste to Worth - NI Waste Prevention Programme Consultation Draft Response.pdf ***Page 4***

Attachment: 3 App 1- Draft Consultation Response.pdf ***Page 7***

Attachment: 3 App 2 - From Waste to Worth - Waste Prevention Programme.pdf ***Page 16***

Attachment: 3 App 3 - From Waste to Worth - Consultation Questions.pdf ***Page 67***

4. Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036

(Attached)

Attachment: 4 Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036.pdf ***Page 90***

Attachment: 4 Appendix 1 Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036.pdf ***Page 94***

5. Off Street Parking Activity

(Attached)

Attachment: 5 Off Street Parking Activity.pdf ***Page 130***

6. Rollo Gillespie Monument, Comber - Phase 2 Works Update

(Attached)

Attachment: 6 Rollo Gillespie Monument, Comber - Phase 2 Works Update.pdf ***Page 136***

Attachment: 6 Appendix 1 Gillespie Monument Condition Report.pdf ***Page 138***

7. Notice of Motion 629 Clandeboye Park and Pitch Update

(Attached)

Attachment: 7 Notice of Motion 629 Clandeboye Park and Pitch Update.pdf ***Page 182***

Reports for Noting

8. Local Biodiversity Action Plan Update 2026

(Attached)

Attachment: 8 Local Biodiversity Action Plan Update 2026.pdf ***Page 186***

Attachment: 8 Appendix 1 Action Plan Update.pdf ***Page 189***

9. North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes

(Attached)

Attachment: 9 North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes.pdf ***Page 212***

Attachment: 9 Appendix 1 Minutes of the NDCP Working Group for 5 January 2026.pdf ***Page 214***

10. Tree and Woodland Update Report 2026

(Attached)

Attachment: 10 Tree and Woodland Update Report 2026.pdf ***Page 224***

11. Rewilding - 2026 Progress Report

(Attached)

Attachment: 11 Rewilding - 2026 Progress Report.pdf ***Page 244***

12. Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2025-2026

(Attached)

Attachment: 12 Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2025-26 Q4.pdf ***Page 249***

Attachment: 12 Appendix 1 - Updated Sustainble Energy Manangment Stragety Action Plan.pdf ***Page 260***

13. Notice of Motion 595 Bangor Christian Heritage Response

(Attached)

Attachment: 13 Notice of Motion 595 Bangor Christian Heritage Response.pdf ***Page 278***

14. Donaghadee Football and Hockey Update

(Attached)

Attachment: 14 Donaghadee Football and Hockey Update.pdf ***Page 281***

15. Cemetery Maintenance Six Monthly Update

(Attached)

Attachment: 15 Cemetery Maintenance Six Monthly Update.pdf ***Page 285***

16. Proactive Cleaning and Maintenance Regimes including Response to Notice of Motion 702

(Attached)

Attachment: 16 Proactive Cleaning and Maintenance Regimes including Response to NOM 702.pdf ***Page 291***

Attachment: 16 Appendix 1 Planned Maintenance Locations.pdf ***Page 301***

Attachment: 16 Appendix 2 Public Realm and Open Spaces Maintenance.pdf ***Page 302***

Attachment: 16 Appendix 3 WCS scheduled and reactive services.pdf ***Page 304***

17. Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics October to December 2025

(Attached)

Attachment: 17 NI Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, Oct to Dec 2025.pdf ***Page 306***

Attachment: 17 Appendix 2 LACMW Q3 2025-26 report.pdf ***Page 326***

18. Isle of Man Visa Requirements for Fishing Vessels

(Attached)

Attachment: 18 Isle Of Man Visa Requirements for Fishing Vessels.pdf ***Page 342***

Attachment: 18 Appendix 1 Letter from the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government.pdf ***Page 344***

19. Notices of Motion

19.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Edmund and Alderman Adair

That this Council task officers to bring forward a costed programme of works to bring slipways and harbours in Council ownership or control up to an appropriate standard in order that they can be utilised by leisure users as part of our wider tourism offering and to investigate appropriate funding streams to deliver this.

AMENDED TO

That this Council tasks officers to bring back a report on a programme of works to bring Slips and Harbours in Council ownership or under or control up to an appropriate standard.

Thus in order that they can be utilised by leisure users as part of a wider tourism offering and investigate appropriate funding streams to deliver this.

19.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor W Irvine and Councillor S Irvine

This Council recognises the service and sacrifice of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), including those from the Borough and surrounding areas who served with dedication during a diffcult periode in Northern Irelan'd history.

Accoringly, tasks officers to birng back a report to this Council on providing a memorial bench within Clandeboye Cemetery, Bangor, dedicated to the memory and service of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The proposed bench should provide a dignified place for remembrance and reflection for families, beterans, and members of the wider community.

20. Any Other Notified Business

IN CONFIDENCE

Items Delegated for Decision/Approval (In Confidence)

21. Tender Reports

21.1 Extension of Haulage Contract

(Attached)

Attachment: 21.1 Extension of Haulage Contract.pdf ***Not included***

21.2 Extension of Tender for the Provision of Legionella Services

(Attached)

Attachment: 21.2 Extension of Tender for Legionella contracts.pdf ***Not included***

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

3 June 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Environment Committee of Ards and North Down Borough Council in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards on **Wednesday, 10 June 2026** 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

Reports for Approval

3. From Waste to Worth - Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme Consultation - Draft Response (Report attached)

4. Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036 (Report attached)

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The proposed bench should provide a dignified place for remembrance and reflection for families, veterans, and members of the wider community.

20. Any Other Notified Business

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MEMBERSHIP OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (16 Members)

Alderman Adair	Councillor Douglas
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Edmund
Councillor Ashe	Councillor Harbinson
Councillor Blaney	Alderman McRandal
Councillor Boyle	Councillor Kendall
Councillor Brady	Alderman McAlpine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor Newman
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor Wray

ITEM 3

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	From Waste to Worth - Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme Consultation - Draft Response
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Draft Consultation Response Appendix 2 - From Waste to Worth - Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme (draft) Appendix 3 - From Waste to Worth - Consultation Questions
File Reference (if applicable)	56060
Legislation	Choose an item. Waste and Contaminate Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental

If multiple:

	2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background
The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has launched a public consultation to seek views on its draft Waste Prevention Programme. The draft Waste Prevention Programme follows on from the 2019 'Stopping Waste in its Tracks' programme.

Waste prevention is defined in the draft Programme as 'stopping waste from being created in the first place'. Regulation 17 of the revised Waste Framework Directive 2011 introduced a legal duty to apply the Waste Hierarchy.



Figure 1: The Waste Hierarchy

Waste prevention is at the top of the Waste Hierarchy because prevention avoids the environmental impacts, costs, and resource use that come with collecting, processing, or disposing of packaging and products.

A public consultation opened on 20 April 2026 and will close on 10 July 2026.

Measures proposed in the draft Programme include incentives to design out waste, measures to reduce consumption, and nudges to change behaviours through education and awareness raising.

Waste Prevention Programme
The draft Programme's 7 objectives are:

1. Reduce Resource Use - Encourage efficient use of materials in manufacturing, packaging, and service delivery.
2. Promote Reuse and Repair - Support systems and networks that extend the life of products (e.g. reuse centres, repair cafés).

3. Influence Consumer Behaviour - Raise awareness and educate the public on sustainable choices and waste reduction.
4. Support Circular Economy Principles - Encourage product design that enables reuse, repair, remanufacturing, recycling, and minimal waste.
5. Engage Businesses and Public Sector - Promote waste audits, sustainable procurement, and prevention strategies in organisations.
6. Monitor and Report Progress - Track waste generation trends and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention measures.
7. Reduce Environmental Impact - Lower greenhouse gas emissions and pollution associated with waste production and disposal.

The draft programme proposes 21 actions. A draft response has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 3. The draft response text is italicised.
Key response points are:

- This Council supports the publication of the draft Waste Prevention Programme and many of the proposed actions.
- Council welcomes the shift of responsibility to producers, and the proposal to develop eco-labelling to support consumers in making more sustainable choices.
- Council welcomes support for increased reuse, repair, and the circular economy through third sector projects and engagement with schools.
- Call for more of the Carrier Bag Levy revenues to be targeted to waste prevention and recycling projects and campaigns.
- Strong support for measures which reduce avoidable food waste and tackle unnecessary plastics.
- Notes that some proposed actions relate to recycling or tackling litter and are unlikely to have an impact on waste production.
- Some actions appear to duplicate the work of existing programmes and campaigns.

Next Steps
An agreed Ards and North Down Borough Council response to this consultation must be submitted through the Department's Citizen Space online consultation website by 10 July 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Approves the draft consultation response, attached at Appendix 1.

Item 3 Appendix 1

From Waste to Worth – Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme

	Actions
1	Action 1 - Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments in the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging. Question 1 - Do you agree with action 1 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree* *Waste prevention means stopping waste from being created in the first place. AND supports Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and acknowledges that it incentivizes producers to produce only necessary packaging. This Council considers that an extended producer responsibility approach might usefully be applied to other difficult items, for example, textiles, e-cigarettes / vapes, and batteries.*
2	Action 2 – Eco-Design and Eco-Labelling DAERA will continue to work collaboratively with the Devolved Governments to support eco-design and develop eco-label frameworks. Question 2 - Do you agree with action 2 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree* *This Council supports more consideration of environmental factors at the design stage and of clear, unambiguous labelling to allow consumers to consider and compare the environmental impact of products or packaging when making a purchase.*
3	Action 3 – Deposit Return Scheme DAERA will implement the Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers. This is due to go live from October 2027 to include PET plastic, steel, and aluminium drinks containers from 150ml to 3l to further drive-up recycling rates and reduce littering. Question 3 - Do you agree with action 3 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Disagree.* *This Council agrees that a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), through applying a value to single use drinks containers, should incentivise better disposal behaviours – increasing recycling and reducing litter. The Council considers,*

Item 3 Appendix 1

	however, that a DRS is unlikely to lead to a reduction in waste being prevented or an increase in reuse. Other measures such as a levy on single-use plastic cups /food containers or a voluntary industry scheme (e.g. Ireland's Conscious Cup campaign) are more likely to deliver waste prevention outcomes.
4	Action 4 – WEEE Reform DAERA will collaborate with Defra and the other Devolved Governments to implement WEEE Reform. Question 4 - Do you agree with action 4 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *No opinion.* *This Council supports interventions to reduce electrical / electronic waste and improve recycling and recovery of the valuable materials contained within. Council acknowledges that there is an urgency to implement effective collection, storage and recovery of Li-ion batteries. To offer support for this action, however, would require more clarity on proposals to reform policy and regulation in this area.*
5	Action 5 – Carrier Bag Levy DAERA will continue to administer the levy and ensure the revenue is allocated to additional environmental projects within Northern Ireland Question 5 - Do you agree with action 5 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree* *This Council acknowledges the positive impact of the Carrier Bag Levy in reducing the number of single-use carrier bags in circulation and littering the environment. Council also supports the use of revenues for environmental projects. Council fully agrees that the problem of plastic articulated in Section 4.2 goes far beyond carrier bags to include plastic bottles and other plastic packaging. For this reason, Council would support a significant increase in levy revenues allocated to waste reduction and recycling interventions being paid back to communities. Council would welcome a larger portion allocated to national and local council waste prevention, reuse and recycling campaigns which will address the wider problems articulated in Section 4.2.*
6	Action 6 – Absorbent Hygiene Products DAERA will support WRAP in conducting an AHP collection study into the separation of AHP waste.

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	Question 6 - Do you agree with action 6 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council fully supports a study into the separate collection, treatment and disposal options for nappies and other Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP). This study would align with DAERA's Rethinking our Resources proposal to restrict household residual waste capacity as a measure to increase recycling.* *As useful as this study may be, this Council considers that this study does not demonstrate any clear waste prevention outcomes. This Council would welcome support to deliver a consistent national reusable nappy scheme. Many citizens are unwilling to invest in modern reusable nappies without first testing that they work for the baby and the family. A national scheme would remove this cost barrier and support a reduction of disposable nappies in the residual waste stream.*
7	Action 7 – Waste Levies DAERA will continue to tackle the problem of littering and work with stakeholders to advance the circular economy including the potential for introducing bans or levies on certain problematic product materials. Question 7 - Do you agree with action 7 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council supports measures to tackle litter, including the application of appropriate levies or bans on difficult to recycle materials and commonly littered items. The draft Waste Prevention Programme again cites the success of the Carrier Bag Levy in reducing plastic bag litter in our environment.* *This Council would welcome more information on which items of packaging or products might be in scope of potential bans, levies or other interventions. This Council notes DAERA's 2022 consultation on reducing consumption of single-use plastic cups and food containers, which included levies as a potential intervention. The results of this consultation have been published but no action has been taken.*
8	Action 8 – Plastic Pollution Plan DAERA will publish a Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland to achieve a reduction in plastic pollution. Question 8 - Do you agree with action 8 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.*

	A draft Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland was consulted on between July and September 2025, and a summary of responses published in March 2026. This Council is supportive of many of the measures proposed in the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland (PPP), for example, the policy levers proposed, support of the UK Plastics Pact (now UK Packaging Pact), and regulations to ban specific single use items. *This Council notes that the draft PPP indicates support for existing and historical initiatives and proposes targets and strategies against which it will report. Council would, however, welcome a review of strategies, policies, and interventions designed to reduce plastic pollution, followed by a long-term commitment to resource their delivery.*
9	Action 9 – European Week for Waste Reduction DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and will seek to build upon the outcomes and successes generated through participation in its associated competitions. Question 9 - Do you agree with action 9 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council notes the international profile of the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) and welcomes an action to continue to support it. The annual campaign themes align with Northern Ireland's ambitions to reduce waste with schools, businesses, and communities, and to increase reuse and repair. For this reason, the Council would welcome a more joined-up and better-resourced approach to EWWR delivery.*
10	Action 10 – Circular Councils DAERA will assist NIRN to establish a Circular Councils network and develop a co-created waste prevention education programme with councils. Question 10 - Do you agree with action 10 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *No opinion.* *This Council supports a shared approach to the development and delivery of waste prevention. The proposed action notes that councils [officers and elected members] can increase their understanding of the circular economy and the waste hierarchy and proposes the Circular Councils awareness raising network.* *Northern Ireland's councils already demonstrate leadership in resource efficiency, with circular economy principles firmly embedded across policy and practice. Through established practices in waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and sustainable procurement, councils continue to drive progress*

	towards a more circular economy. This work is strengthened by well-established networks that enable collaboration and the sharing of best practices such as arc21, the NI Council Waste Forum, TAG NI, NIRN, LARAC, and WRAP's National Campaign Advisory Panel (NCAP). Together, these structures ensure knowledge transfer and continuous improvement. *It is unclear how the advent of a new Circular Councils programme would add value to the sector. This Council would welcome more information on the aims, scope, and proposed delivery of the proposed programme.*
11	Action 11 – Waste Prevention Metrics DAERA will support NIRN to explore the establishment of a framework of metrics to monitor, evaluate, and report on waste prevention efforts across Northern Ireland. Question 11 - Do you agree with action 11 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree* *This Council supports work to develop meaningful waste prevention metrics, including for waste elimination (e.g. food waste reduced through Love Food Hate Waste or single-use bags through the Carrier Bag Levy), reuse (e.g., through Council or third sector initiatives), and repair (e.g. through Repair Cafes). This Council recommends that NIRN engages across all sectors to ensure that any developed metrics are consistent, meaningful and measurable.*
12	Action 12 – Circular Communities DAERA will support NIRN to develop & deliver a Circular Communities Programme to embed reuse & repair into everyday community life. Question 12 - Do you agree with action 12 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council agrees that developing awareness, knowledge, skills, and agency within our communities can lead to increases in reuse and repair. Ards and North Down Borough Council notes the draft Waste Prevention Programme's examples of grassroots initiatives which already take place within our communities. The Council would welcome more detail on the definition of a Circular Communities Programme, what it would deliver, and how it would add value to existing initiatives and partnership working.*

13	Action 13 – Recognised Awareness Days DAERA will support NIRN to co-ordinate a schedule of recognized awareness day campaigns. Question 13 - Do you agree with action 13 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Disagree.* *This Council acknowledges that awareness, information, and knowledge are essential to encourage and enable citizens, communities, and businesses to take action to reduce waste. This Council notes that there are already many waste awareness days, weeks, and campaigns throughout the year and limited time and resources to plan, deliver, and amplify the messages from these existing campaigns in an already crowded campaign calendar. These include Repair Week, Food Waste Action Week, Recycle Week, World Environment Day, EWWR, Compost Awareness Week, Zero Waste Week, World Refill Day, and many more.* *This Council calls for a focused, coordinated and resourced approach to campaign messaging and delivery. We would reiterate our recommendation that revenues from the Carrier Bag Levy be ringfenced for waste prevention and recycling campaigns.*
14	Action 14 – Consumer Food Waste Prevention DAERA will maintain its partnership with WRAP to support the delivery of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, aimed at preventing consumer food waste. DAERA and WRAP will co-develop follow-up initiatives designed to strengthen behavioural change and enhance messaging around food waste prevention. Question 14 - Do you agree with action 14 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council acknowledges that avoidable household food waste presents a challenge for citizens and for local councils and supports the delivery of a national Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) campaign. We support food waste prevention messages which lead to householders saving money and a reduction in the environmental and financial costs of managing wasted food.* *This Council would encourage DAERA and WRAP to engage with local councils and other campaign partners in the development of campaign follow-up initiatives. This Council notes previous LFHW initiatives which developed the skills of community-based partners to cascade these to community and Sure Start groups, and to develop LFHW champions within the hospitality sector. These initiatives can support local businesses and benefit the most vulnerable within our communities and require long-term strategic investment.*

	This Council notes that support for our cafes, restaurants, hotels, and other hospitality sector businesses is absent from the draft Waste Prevention Programme. Council notes both the Guardians of Grub campaign and resources and the work of International Synergies. This Council recommends that the scope of the draft WPP is broadened to include more non-household interventions and to mirror the draft Rethinking our Resources recycling and waste strategies.
15	Action 15 – UK Food and Drink Pact DAERA will continue to support WRAP with the UK Food and Drink Pact to deliver against UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: a 50% per capita reduction in food and drink waste by 2030 vs the UK 2007 baseline Question 15 - Do you agree with action 15 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.*
16	Action 16 – Food Redistribution DAERA will work in partnership with NIRN to collaborate with food redistribution networks to reduce avoidable food waste by enhancing their visibility and facilitating connections with businesses and public sector organisations. DAERA will provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention. Question 16 - Do you agree with action 16 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council supports interventions to ensure that edible surplus food is redistributed to communities and individuals in need. We would welcome more information on how the above collaborative approach will be delivered and its success measured.*
17	Action 17 – Industrial Symbiosis DAERA will continue to collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis Question 17 - Do you agree with action 17 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.*

18	Action 18 – Eco-Schools DAERA will further support the Eco-Schools Programme to embed waste prevention and circular economy principles into the curriculum. Question 18 - Do you agree with action 18 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *Ards and North Down Borough Council are proud to partner with Live Here Love Here in the delivery of the Eco-Schools programme for schools within our borough. Waste prevention behaviours are more complex than recycling behaviours. For example, the former may require citizens to make different purchasing decisions (e.g. choosing unpackaged produce or product repair) or plan ahead (e.g. to bring a reusable cup or bag).* *At present waste reduction is an activity within Eco-Schools' 'Waste' topic. To support changing attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours within the next generation, this Council recommends that waste prevention, reuse, and repair should be a standalone topic or given greater prominence within the Eco-Schools programme.*
19	Action 19 – Circular Schools DAERA will support NIRN to promote reuse and repair in school communities. Question 19 - Do you agree with action 19 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Disagree.* *This Council fully supports the promotion of reuse, repair, and the circular economy within our school communities. This Council acknowledges the significant challenge for our teachers in incorporating such messages within a packed curriculum. All of our borough's primary and secondary schools already deliver the internationally recognised Eco-Schools programme, including its 'Waste' topic. This Council recommends that reuse and repair initiatives be delivered through the Eco-Schools program rather than through a new Circular Schools initiative which may cause duplication and possible confusion. DEARA should build on the clear successes of already delivered programmes and projects such as eco schools, which it already funds along with Councils through Live Here Love Here, across NI.*
20	Action 20 – Support to the Third Sector for Zero Waste/Circular Economy Projects DAERA will continue to provide support to the Third Sector for zero waste/circular economy projects as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.

	Question 20 - Do you agree with action 20 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree.* *This Council acknowledges the value that our third sector delivers towards the prevention of waste, reuse, and repair. As local Councils are leaders in resource management and already provide support to our third sector partners, we recommend that future support, including funding, is coordinated with or through local councils.*
21	Action 21 – Reuse & Repair Week DAERA will support NIRN to establish an annual Reuse & Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland. Question 21 - Do you agree with action 21 above? If your answer is no, please explain why. *Agree* *This Council agrees that Reuse and Repair Week should be a regular feature within the campaign calendar.*
	Additional questions
22	Question 22 - Do you agree that the Waste Prevention Programme should be incorporated into the Waste Management Strategy? *Agree.* *This Council agrees that Northern Ireland's strategic approach waste prevention, reuse, and repair should be incorporated within the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy. There is, however, value in publishing an agreed Waste Prevention Action Plan which sets out in detail how the strategic objectives will be resourced, delivered, and measured.*
23	Question 23 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality Screening Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme? *Yes*
24	Question 24 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme? *Yes*

Waste Prevention Programme 2026

"From Waste to Worth"

Waste Prevention Programme 2026

Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

This document is also available on the DAERA website at: From Waste to Worth: Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of the documents above, such as:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other Languages

To request an alternative format, please contact us:

Resources and Waste Strategy Team
Environmental Resources Policy Division
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
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From Waste to Worth

1. Introduction

1.1 What is Waste Prevention?

Waste prevention means stopping waste from being created in the first place. Waste prevention can be achieved by: reducing the amount of material used; extending the life of products; avoiding unnecessary consumption and waste generation and changing how products are designed and made.

It aligns with the principles of the circular economy, which seeks to design out waste and decouple economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation.

1.2 The Waste Hierarchy

The “Waste Hierarchy” is a legally binding hierarchy, introduced in the European Waste Framework Directive (WFD) [2008/98/EC] which establishes an order of preference for actions in sustainable waste management. If properly implemented, it minimises the amount of waste generated and improves the overall waste management process.:

1. **Prevention** – Stop waste before it starts. This means using fewer materials and making products that last longer.
2. **Reuse** – Use things again. Instead of throwing items away, find ways to use them again—like repairing or donating.
3. **Recycling** – Turn old materials into new products. This helps save resources but still uses energy.
4. **Recovery** – Get energy from waste. Some waste can be burned to produce energy, but this is less ideal.
5. **Disposal** – Throwing waste away. This includes landfill and incineration without energy recovery. It’s the least preferred option.



Figure 1

The goal is to reduce the amount of waste we create and to handle it in the most sustainable way possible.

1.3 Circular Economy

A circular economy is an economic model that aims to eliminate waste and keep resources in use for as long as possible. Unlike the traditional "make-use-dispose" linear model, the circular economy focuses on designing products and systems that use fewer raw materials, generate less waste, encourage reuse, repair & recycling and promote sustainable production and consumption. The benefits include reducing environmental impact, supporting innovation and green jobs, building resilience in supply chains and helping meet climate and sustainability goals.

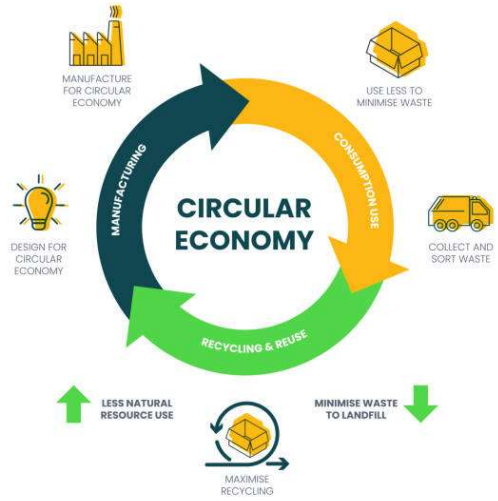


Figure 2

Waste prevention is an essential component of an effective circular economy. It both helps prevent waste from having a negative impact on the environment and health and directs it to more efficient uses. The actions required to move toward a more circular economy are twofold. In the first instance, resource consumption must be reduced in order help eliminate the use of virgin materials and to support our finite biosphere. Secondly, any waste that is generated must be used in a resource efficient manner.

This can be achieved in a number of ways. Encouragement and education to create a culture that values its resources is of high importance, as well as making information about how to reduce waste and resource consumption, how to reuse and how to repair easy to access. There is a responsibility for producers to undertake building waste prevention into design and alternative business models must be implemented to enable the success of circularity. Eco-design is important to help achieve this, as well as the introduction of producer

responsibility schemes. As well as creating new opportunities for growth, a more circular economy can:

- reduce waste;
- help create 'green' jobs;
- drive greater resource productivity;
- deliver a more competitive economy;
- position Northern Ireland to better address emerging resource security and scarcity issues in the future;
- help reduce the environmental impacts of our production and consumption.

2. Review of the 2019 Waste Prevention Programme – 'Stopping Waste in its Tracks'

The legal requirements for waste prevention in Northern Ireland are primarily governed by the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 (SR 2011/127)[1], which transpose the EU Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC) into domestic law. These regulations establish a statutory framework for developing and implementing waste prevention programmes and enforcing the waste hierarchy.

Core requirements include:

Establishment of a Waste Prevention Programme
Northern Ireland is legally required to maintain a Waste Prevention Programme, which must be reviewed at least every six years.

- **Assess Existing Measures**
  Evaluate current national waste prevention actions and their effectiveness.
- **Define National Objectives**
  Set clear measurable goals for waste prevention tailored to national context.
- **Evaluate Strategy Suitability**
  Ensure strategies are appropriate for inclusion in the Programme.
- **Promote Product Reuse**
  Take measures to encourage reuse of products and materials.
- **Support Reuse and Repair Networks**
  Facilitate the development of reuse and repair infrastructure and services.

[1] Northern Ireland Statutory Rules 2011 No. 127 The Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011

- **Public Procurement Criteria**
  Integrate reuse and waste prevention principles into public procurement policies.

- **Set Benchmarks**
  Establish qualitative or quantitative benchmarks to assess waste prevention measures.

- **Adopt Targets and Indicators**
  Use indicators and targets to monitor progress and evaluate success.

- **Apply the Waste Hierarchy**
  Prioritise prevention, followed by reuse, recycling, recovery, and disposal.

- **Ensure Environmental and Health Protection**
  Waste must be managed without harming human health or the environment.

- **Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**
  Producers must take responsibility for the lifecycle of their products, especially at end-of-life.

The first Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland – “The Road to Zero Waste”, was produced in 2013. This was reviewed in 2019 and revised as - “Stopping Waste in its Tracks”. This Programme contained 22 waste prevention actions, of which 21 have either been implemented or are ongoing (Annex A). The primary aim of the Programme was to reduce the generation of waste at its source in order to conserve resources, minimise environmental impact, and support a transition to a circular economy. This has been achieved through actions such as the creation of the Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN) which promotes the reduction of waste and building a more circular economy. Since incorporation, their members totalled carbon savings of over 126,000 tonnes, reused almost 23,000 tonnes of waste and generated a saving of nearly £45M. They now support 1,295 employees, 7,036 volunteers, totalling over 910K hours, and benefitting almost 1M people.

2.1 Legal Background to Waste Prevention

The revised Waste Framework Directive (Directive 2008/98/EC) is the principal legal instrument governing waste management across the European Union. It establishes the overarching framework for defining, handling, and regulating waste to protect human health and the environment.

Regulation 17 of the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 introduced a legal duty to apply the waste hierarchy from 8 October 2011. This applies to all organisations that produce, handle or transfer waste such as councils, businesses, brokers and carriers.

There is a statutory requirement that the waste prevention programme is reviewed every six years. The review of the actions in Annex A of this document, fulfils this obligation.

Of the 22 action points listed, nine have been brought forward and updated for inclusion in this current programme.

2.2 Decoupling of Waste Generation and Economic Growth

Decoupling waste generation from economic growth means reducing the amount of waste produced even as the economy continues to grow. In Northern Ireland, this concept is central to the transition toward a circular economy. We can aim to achieve this by improving recycling systems, reducing food and packaging waste, and encouraging sustainable production and consumption. The goal is to ensure that economic development no longer leads to increased environmental harm.

Previous Waste Prevention Programmes in Northern Ireland have explicitly recognised the need to decouple waste generation from economic growth. The 2013 “Road to Zero Waste” and the 2019 “Stopping Waste in its Tracks” programmes emphasised that waste prevention is both environmentally and economically beneficial. These programmes promoted resource efficiency, reuse and repair networks, and behavioural change initiatives, all aimed at reducing waste without hindering economic activity.

The Carrier Bag Levy revenue has been used to support NIRN and DAERA funded third-sector projects that targeted food, plastics, and textiles. These additional DAERA funded programmes were designed to reduce consumption and waste while supporting local economies. The programmes also aligned with the Waste Hierarchy, placing prevention at the top, and supported the principles of a circular economy, which inherently seeks to decouple resource use from growth.

Figure 3 displays the relationship between economic growth and waste generation for the years 2002 – 2023, taking 2002 as the index year. Overall, Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita rose from £14,142 to £29,234 while there was a fall of waste arisings per capita from 603kg to 521kg.

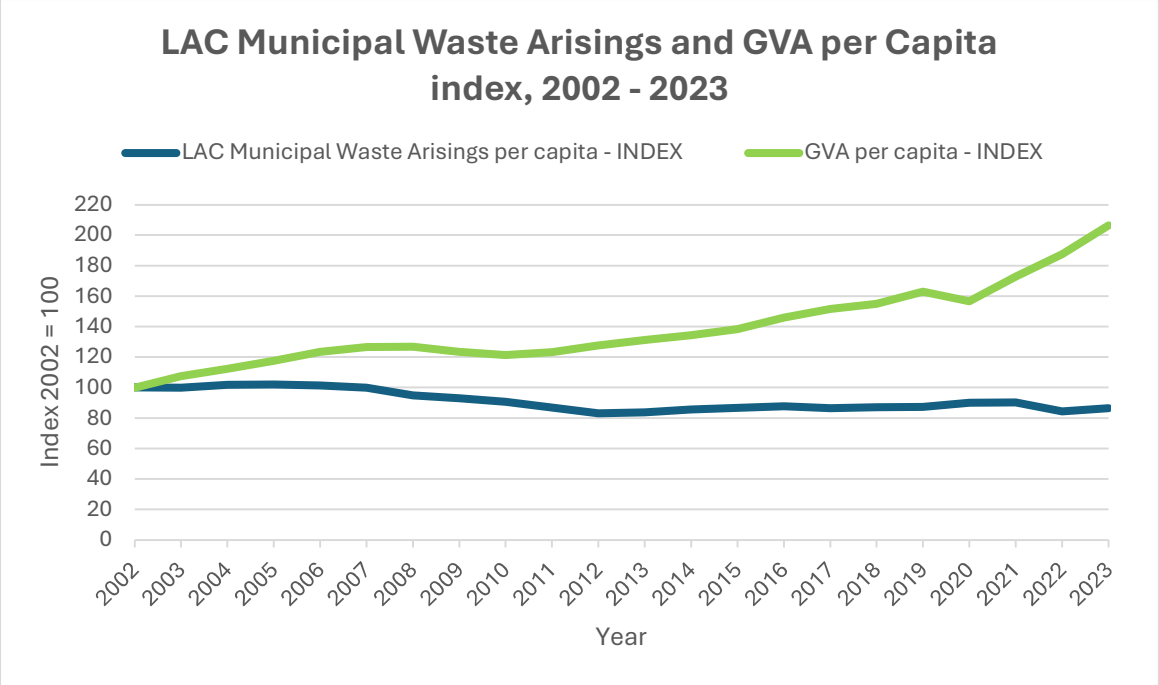


Figure 3

Figure 4 shows an index of the ratio of waste arisings against GVA taking 2002 as the base year with a value of 100. This shows that, for every unit of GVA produced, waste arisings per capita has decreased.

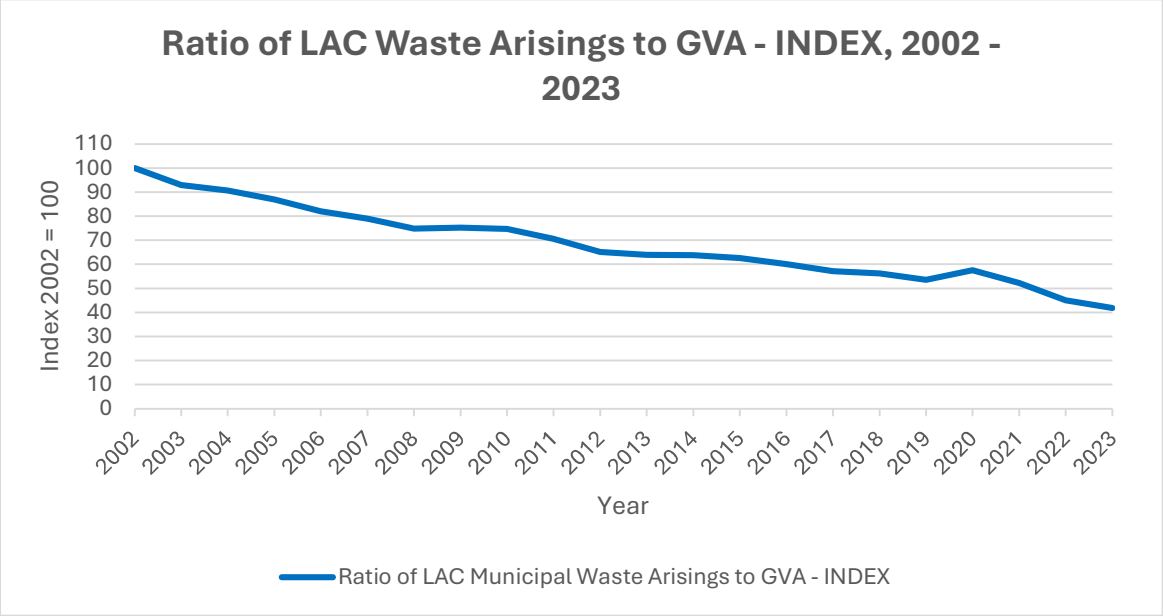


Figure 4

2.3 Food Waste

Although great progress has been made in the UK on food waste from all sectors (manufacture, retail, hospitality and food service, and household), the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) have calculated that households in Northern Ireland have the highest rate of food waste in the UK, with families wasting an average of over £1,000 of food a year. Despite having comprehensive collections for the recycling and composting of food waste, around 30% still ends up in landfill where it emits harmful greenhouse gases for decades.[2]

The DAERA Food Strategy Framework Action Plan 2025–2027 is Northern Ireland's first comprehensive, cross-government initiative to reshape the region's food system. It builds on the Food Strategy Framework published in November 2024 and sets out 39 actions to be delivered over two years. Food waste policy sits under the core mission to "support sustainable, safe and ethical agri-food supply chains" and includes actions designed to eliminate food waste through methods such as diverting surplus food to the community and alleviating food poverty.[3]

Since the introduction of the Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015[4] there have been requirements for both councils and businesses to have separate food waste collection. This organic waste is sent for composting and anaerobic digestion in the drive towards reducing the amount sent to landfill.

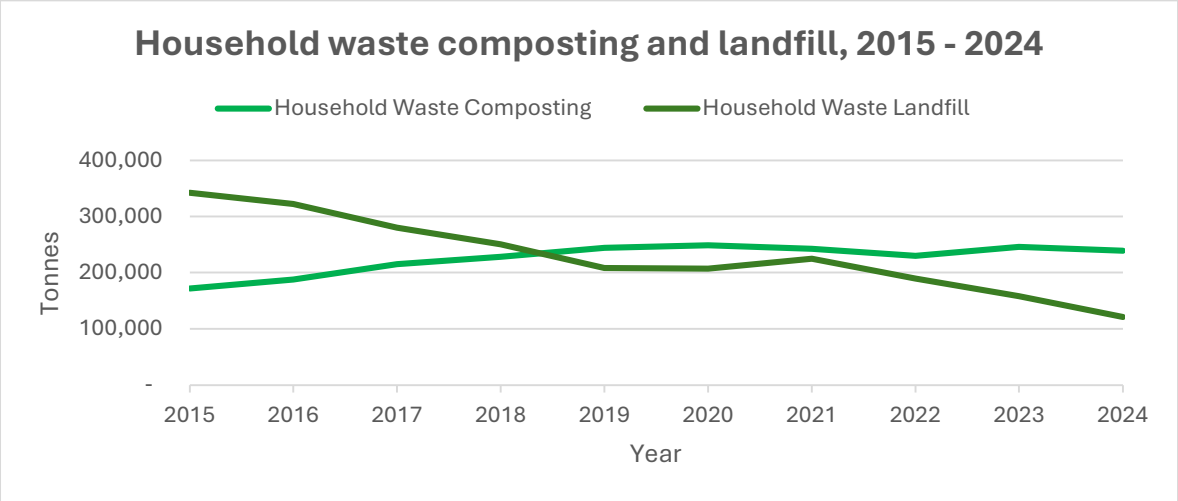


Figure 5

Figure 5 shows the continued trend is the fall of organic waste to landfill, however there was a spike in landfill during Covid-19 when sites were closed and normal collections were severely impacted for some time.

[2] New data show's Northern Ireland households are throwing out food they could eat | WRAP - The Waste and Resources Action Programme
[3] Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework Action Plan 2025-2027 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
[4] The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

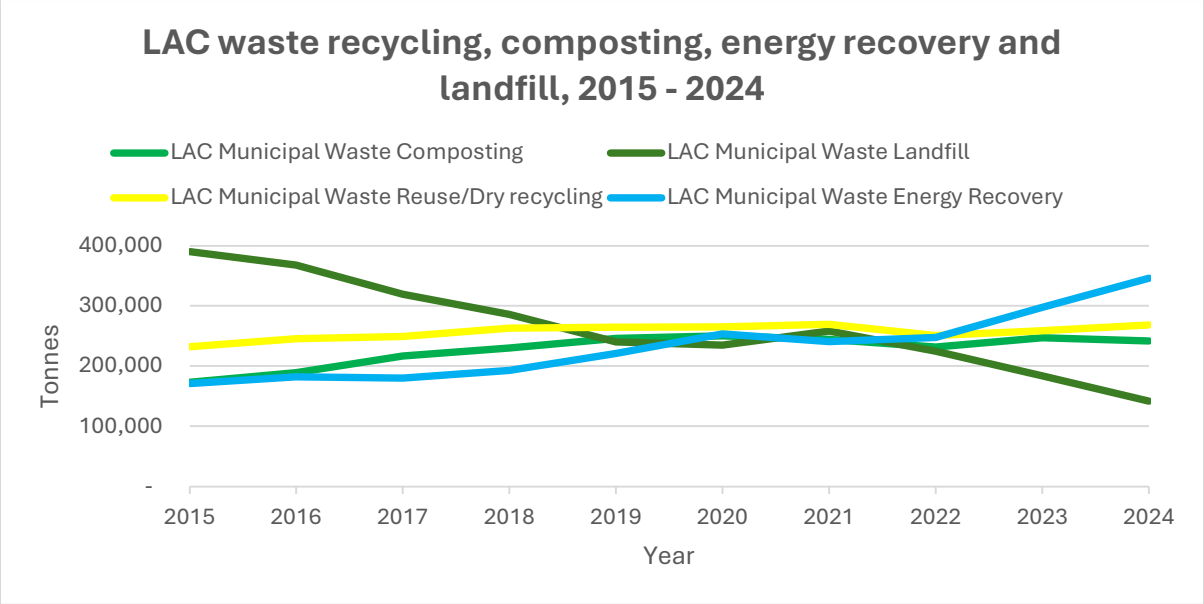


Figure 6

Figure 6 also illustrates a downward in trend in the move away from landfill, with energy recovery driving that reduction. Although there has been no specific monitoring of business compliance with the Food Waste Regulations, recent surveys of business waste and recycling practices in Northern Ireland indicate that compliance is generally low. This may be a combination of a lack of knowledge of the recycling requirement on food businesses, the potential additional cost burden for some organisations and limited support to help optimise services to keep costs low. As demonstrated across the UK, the wide range of businesses in scope of the current Northern Ireland regulations would also warrant dedicated resources to deliver education, compliance checks and any enforcement required.

3. Waste Prevention Programme – 2025 Review

Further to the 2013 programme 'The Road to Zero Waste' and the 2019 Programme 'Stopping Waste in its Tracks' reviewed in 2025, it is proposed to continue building on progress through this revised Programme "From Waste to Worth".

3.1 The Waste Prevention Programme Framework

Waste management in Northern Ireland has undergone significant changes over the past two decades, driven by evolving environmental priorities, EU legislation, and the transition toward a circular economy.

There continues to be a large reduction in waste moving to landfill with both Household and LAC Municipal reporting significant decreases year on year (excluding 2020/21 due to Covid-19 impacts). This programme incorporates ongoing actions from both previous waste prevention programmes and the inclusion of further action areas to help support and maintain the upward trend in waste prevention in line with policies of the Executive.

Programme for Government

The Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG)[5] and the Waste Prevention Programme are aligned through shared goals around sustainability, resource efficiency, and the transition to a circular economy.

The PfG 2024–2027, titled *"Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most"*, places strong emphasis on improving environmental outcomes and tackling climate change through a Wellbeing Framework. This aligns directly with the Waste Prevention Programme's goals to reduce, promote circular economy principles, reduce greenhouse emissions and to minimise resource consumption.

The Waste Prevention Programme includes actions such as supporting reuse & repair networks, promoting sustainable consumption and implementing Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging which all support the PfG priorities relating to economic resilience and sustainable development, encouraging innovation and reducing waste at source.

DAERA leads many waste prevention initiatives in partnership with local councils, social enterprises and schools & businesses. This collaborative approach mirrors the PfG's commitment to joined-up government and partnership working to deliver better outcomes.

[5] Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most

The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020[6] were introduced to transpose the EU Circular Economy Package into Northern Ireland law. It is a comprehensive policy initiative designed to accelerate the transition from a linear economy (take-make-dispose) to a circular economy, where resources are kept in use for as long as possible, waste is minimised, and materials are reused, repaired, remanufactured or recycled. This policy has several important implications for waste prevention in Northern Ireland including:

1. Upstream Focus
Encourages designing products and services to avoid waste generation.
Promotes reuse, repair, and refurbishment over disposal.

2. Public Sector and Business Accountability
Expands municipal waste definition to include non-household sources.
Requires organisations to reduce waste at source and improve recycling practices.

3. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
Shifts responsibility to producers to minimise packaging waste and improve product design.

4. Education and Engagement
Supports public awareness campaigns and school programmes to change consumption habits.

5. Monitoring and Targets
Introduces statutory targets (e.g. 65% recycling by 2035) that require preventive action, not just better waste management.

The Environmental Improvement Plan

Northern Ireland's first Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)[7] was published in September 2024 which is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021, and it sets the overarching environmental direction for Northern Ireland.

The Waste Prevention Programme contributes directly to EIP goals through a range of measures such as; promoting reducing waste at source, behavioural and cultural change campaigns and encouraging eco-design, extended producer responsibility, and resource-efficient practices.

The Waste Management Strategy

The Waste Management Strategy also complements the Waste Prevention Programme by setting long-term statutory targets and infrastructure plans that promote waste prevention initiatives. The strategy provides the structural framework, while the programme delivers behavioural and community-level interventions.

[6] The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
[7] Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland

3.2 Programme Aim & Objectives

Aim

To reduce the generation of waste at its source, thereby conserving resources, minimising environmental impact, and supporting a transition to a circular economy.

Objectives

To achieve this aim and in keeping with the outcomes of the PfG, this programme focuses on the following objectives;

1. **Reduce Resource Use**
   Encourage efficient use of materials in manufacturing, packaging, and service delivery.
2. **Promote Reuse and Repair**
   Support systems and networks that extend the life of products (e.g. reuse centres, repair cafés).
3. **Influence Consumer Behaviour**
   Raise awareness and educate the public on sustainable choices and waste reduction.
4. **Support Circular Economy Principles**
   Encourage product design that enables reuse, repair, remanufacturing, recycling, and minimal waste.
5. **Engage Businesses and Public Sector**
   Promote waste audits, sustainable procurement, and prevention strategies in organisations.
6. **Monitor and Report Progress**
   Track waste generation trends and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention measures.
7. **Reduce Environmental Impact**
   Lower greenhouse gas emissions and pollution associated with waste production and disposal.

The next section sets out the actions which comprise the Programme.

4. Areas for Action

4.1 Producer Responsibility

Producer responsibility is an environmental policy concept that places the onus on producers to manage the environmental impacts of their products throughout their lifecycle. This includes the design, production, use, and especially the end-of-life stage, such as collection, recycling, and disposal. The idea is to shift the financial and operational burden of waste management away from local authorities and taxpayers, and onto the producers who place products on the market.

4.1.1 Extended Producer Responsibility

A key development is the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which is increasingly being adopted across the UK and internationally. Under EPR schemes, producers are required to fund or directly manage the collection and treatment of waste arising from their products. This encourages them to design products that are easier to reuse, recycle, or dispose of safely. For example, packaging producers must now pay for the full net cost of managing household packaging waste, which incentivises them to reduce unnecessary packaging and use more recyclable materials.

In Northern Ireland, producer responsibility is a central pillar of the Waste Management Strategy and supports a circular economy by promoting sustainable product design and reducing avoidable waste.

The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024[8] represent a major reform of the UK's packaging waste management system. These regulations were laid before Westminster in October 2024 and came into force on 1 January 2025, enabling the UK-wide extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging to go live in April 2025.

Action 1 - Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging

DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments in the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging.

4.1.2 Collaboration with Defra and Other DG's in relation to Eco-Design and Eco-labelling

Eco-design and eco-labelling are two complementary approaches aimed at reducing the environmental impact of products throughout their life cycle.

[8] The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024

Eco-design refers to the process of integrating environmental considerations into the design and development of products. The goal is to minimise negative impacts such as resource depletion, energy consumption, emissions, and waste generation. This approach looks at the entire life cycle - from raw material extraction, manufacturing, and distribution to use and end-of-life disposal or recycling. Key principles include improving energy efficiency, using sustainable materials, designing for durability and repairability, and facilitating recycling. For example, in the electronics sector, eco-design might involve creating devices that consume less power, use recycled plastics, and allow easy component replacement to extend product life.

Eco-labelling is a communication tool that helps consumers identify products with lower environmental impacts. These labels are typically awarded based on compliance with specific sustainability criteria, which can include energy efficiency, reduced emissions, or responsible sourcing of materials. Eco-labels empower consumers to make informed choices and encourage manufacturers to adopt greener practices to meet certification standards.

Together, eco-design and eco-labelling create a feedback loop: better-designed products can earn eco-labels, and consumer demand for eco-labelled goods incentivises further innovation in sustainable design.

Action 2 – Eco-Design and Eco-Labelling

DAERA will continue to work collaboratively with the Devolved Governments to support eco-design and develop eco-label frameworks.

4.1.3 Deposit Return Scheme

A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is a circular economy initiative designed to reduce litter and increase recycling rates by incentivising the return of single-use drinks containers. Under the scheme, consumers pay a small deposit when purchasing drinks in containers such as plastic bottles or aluminium/steel cans. This deposit is refunded when the empty container is returned to a designated collection point, such as a shop or a reverse vending machine.

In Northern Ireland, the DRS is being developed by DAERA in collaboration with England and Scotland. The scheme will apply to PET plastic bottles, aluminium and steel cans ranging from 150ml to 3 litres. Containers will be marked with a scheme logo to indicate eligibility. DRS aims to tackle the estimated 120 million plastic bottles and 75 million cans that go unrecycled each year in Northern Ireland, many of which end up as litter or in landfill.[9]

[9] Deposit Return Scheme | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Ireland launched its DRS on 1 February 2024 with over 1 billion containers returned within its first year, driving an increased recycling rate of 73% in that period.

Action 3 – Deposit Return Scheme

DAERA will implement the Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers. This is due to go live from October 2027 to include PET plastic, steel, and aluminium drinks containers from 150ml to 3l to further drive-up recycling rates and reduce littering.

4.1.4 Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

WEEE refers to discarded electrical and electronic devices, such as computers, phones, household appliances, and lighting equipment. These products often contain critical raw materials like copper, lithium and cobalt, as well as hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, and flame retardants. Proper management of WEEE is essential to prevent environmental harm and recover resources.

DAERA, alongside Defra and other devolved governments, consulted on reforms between December 2023 and March 2024 to modernise the producer responsibility framework. The aim is to reduce e-waste, improve recycling rates, and close compliance gaps.

Action 4 – WEEE Reform

DAERA will collaborate with Defra and the other Devolved Governments to implement WEEE Reform.

4.2 Plastic Waste

Plastic waste remains a significant environmental challenge in Northern Ireland. Around 145 million single-use plastic bottles are used annually, many of which end up in landfill or incineration, releasing pollutants into the atmosphere. Despite efforts to improve recycling, only about one-third of household plastic packaging is currently recycled, with most households discarding at least 40 kg of plastic each year[10]. In 2023–24, Northern Ireland recycled approximately 16,664 tonnes of plastic, avoiding over £3.5 million in disposal costs and reducing CO_2 emissions by 31,000 tonnes[11]. However, plastic still dominates marine litter, accounting for 84% of waste found on beaches[12], highlighting persistent leakage into the environment. Policy measures

[10] Plastic – Northern Ireland Resources Network
[11] Recycling data for Plastic | My Recycling NI
[12] 009659.pdf

aim to curb plastic waste and promote a circular economy by reducing production and improving recycling infrastructure remain priorities.

4.2.1 Carrier Bag Levy

The Carrier Bag Levy was introduced in Northern Ireland on 8 April 2013 through the introduction of The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 to address the environmental damage caused by the excessive use of single-use carrier bags. Prior to its introduction, around 300 million bags were used annually across the region, contributing significantly to litter, landfill waste, and resource depletion.

The primary objective of the levy is to protect the environment by reducing the number of carrier bags in circulation. By charging consumers a fee for each new bag, the policy encourages people to reuse bags and only purchase new ones when necessary. This behavioural shift helps conserve natural resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with bag production and disposal, and decrease the volume of waste sent to landfill.

The levy charge was increased from 5p to 25p in April 2022 to further incentivise sustainable behaviour. The levy applies to all new carrier bags with a retail price of £5 or less, as all materials have an environmental footprint.

The scheme has had a measurable impact. In 2024/25, around 59.2 million bags were dispensed, which is a reduction from 84.5 since inception in 2013. This has also resulted in generating £13.8 million in revenue[13]. Revenue generated from the levy has been used to fund additional environmental projects and programmes across Northern Ireland. It has supported additional environmental projects and programmes that contribute towards the Department's Environmental Improvement Plan and Climate Action Plans. The Department also contributes towards community groups, schools, charities, and local initiatives aimed at improving biodiversity, reducing pollution, and enhancing public spaces.

Action 5 – Carrier Bag Levy

DAERA will continue to administer the levy and ensure the revenue is allocated to additional environmental projects within Northern Ireland.

4.2.2 Absorbent Hygiene Products

Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHPs) include disposable nappies, incontinence pads, sanitary products, and other single-use items designed to absorb bodily fluids. Due

[13] NI Carrier Bag Levy Annual Statistics

to their mixed material composition, often combining plastics, cellulose, and superabsorbent polymers, AHPs are challenging to recycle and are typically disposed of in landfill or through energy recovery processes.

Their disposal is regulated as offensive waste, which, while non-hazardous, requires careful handling, particularly in healthcare and public settings. The environmental impact of AHPs is considerable, not only due to their volume but also because of their long degradation times and the resource intensity of their production. Consideration needs to be given to the feasibility of alternative approaches, including their overall environmental impacts.

Action 6 – Absorbent Hygiene Products

DAERA will support WRAP in conducting an AHP Collection study into the separation of AHP waste.

4.2.3 Waste Levies

Levies applied to waste products offer a range of benefits for waste prevention, particularly when designed to influence consumer behaviour, support sustainable alternatives, and fund waste prevention initiatives.

Levies create a direct financial incentive for individuals and businesses to reduce waste. For example, charges on single-use items like plastic carrier bags have led to dramatic reductions in consumption. By making wasteful choices more expensive, levies encourage consumers to opt for reusable or more sustainable alternatives.

Unlike recycling focused policies, levies target waste generation. They help shift attention upstream, toward product design, purchasing decisions, and consumption habits therefore reducing the volume of waste entering the system in the first place.

Through the Carrier Bag Levy Northern Ireland has already acted to reduce the use of all carrier bags with positive results over the last 12 years. To date the levy has seen approximately 2.4 billion carrier bags removed from circulation addressing the problem of plastic litter and raising revenue to support environmental programmes.

Action 7 – Waste Levies

DAERA will continue to tackle the problem of littering and work with stakeholders to advance the circular economy including the potential for introducing bans or levies on certain problematic product materials.

4.2.4 Plastic Pollution Plan

DAERA is developing a Plastic Pollution Plan[14] for Northern Ireland. This will detail a strategic approach to tackling plastic waste and its environmental impacts. The plan aims to reduce plastic pollution, particularly in marine environments, and to support the transition to a circular economy where resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised. It builds on previous initiatives, such as the successful removal of unnecessary single-use plastics (SUP) from the government estate and aligns with broader UK and EU commitments on waste prevention and resource efficiency.

The plan will focus on several key areas: phasing out unnecessary SUP, addressing marine litter and microplastics, and promoting behavioural change among consumers and businesses. It emphasises collaboration with stakeholders and public engagement to drive sustainable practices. DAERA also highlights the urgency of action, noting that global plastic production has surged from 2.3 million tonnes in 1950 to 448 million tonnes in 2015, with only 9% recycled. In Northern Ireland alone, over 250 million plastic bottles are discarded annually, contributing to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Through this plan, DAERA seeks to create a cleaner environment, protect biodiversity, and reduce the climate impact of plastics. It will set a framework for future regulations, awareness campaigns, and partnerships to ensure that plastic use is minimised and managed responsibly.

Action 8 – Plastic Pollution Plan

DAERA will publish a Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland to achieve a reduction in plastic pollution.

4.3 Awareness

Waste prevention awareness is vital because it helps people understand that avoiding waste at the source is the most effective way to protect the environment, conserve resources, and reduce carbon emissions. By promoting responsible consumption and encouraging reuse, repair, and smarter purchasing decisions, awareness campaigns support the transition to a circular economy and help households and businesses save money.

4.3.1 European Week for Waste Reduction

The European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) is a major annual campaign across Europe that promotes awareness and action on sustainable resource and waste management. In Northern Ireland, it is coordinated by WRAP and supported by DAERA.

[14] Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Local councils, businesses, schools, and community groups are encouraged to register and carry out awareness-raising actions. Participants can access toolkits, communication resources, and even enter the EWWR Awards for outstanding initiatives.

During EWWR, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) organises and hosts a variety of events and campaigns aimed at raising awareness about waste prevention and encouraging behavioural change. These include workshops on reuse, repair, and sustainable fashion, such as the Fashion Forever Festival, which showcases creative ways to reduce textile waste through community-led activities. KNIB also supports school-based initiatives like the Wheelie Big Challenge, funded by DAERA, which teaches pupils how small lifestyle changes can contribute to climate action and waste reduction.

In 2024, DAERA also supported the launch of the Zero Waste Champion education programme, developed by NIRN, which engages schools in circular economy workshops during EWWR.

Action 9 – European Week for Waste Reduction

DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and will seek to build upon the outcomes and successes generated through participation in its associated competitions.

4.3.2 Circular Councils

Local councils play a central role in communicating with citizens on waste prevention. The Northern Ireland Audit Office has reported that approximately £170 million is spent annually on household waste management[15] highlighting the potential savings and environmental benefits that could be achieved by reducing waste generation. While councils already deliver public communications on waste, there is an opportunity to increase understanding of the circular economy and the waste hierarchy within councils themselves, supporting cultural change and embedding waste prevention into their own operations.

DAERA delivery partner, NIRN, through its Local Authority Forums, is developing a co-created education programme with councils to raise awareness of the circular economy and waste hierarchy among council staff and elected members. They will showcase and celebrate reuse and repair initiatives currently being delivered by councils and to identify further opportunities for collaboration, innovation and public engagement.

Action 10 – Circular Councils

DAERA will assist NIRN to establish a Circular Councils network and develop a co-created waste prevention education programme with councils.

4.3.3 Waste Prevention Metrics

Waste prevention metrics are essential tools for evaluating the effectiveness of policies, programmes, and interventions aimed at reducing the generation of waste at source. Current waste prevention metrics in Northern Ireland and across the UK face several challenges that limit their effectiveness in guiding policy and evaluating progress. One of the most significant issues is the incomplete coverage of data. In Northern Ireland, detailed monitoring is largely confined to municipal waste collected by councils, which represents only about 10% of total waste.

Another key limitation is the lack of standardised indicators. Waste prevention metrics vary widely in terms of definitions, scope, and methodology, which hinders meaningful comparisons across regions and sectors. Many indicators also focus on downstream activities like recycling rather than upstream actions such as eco-design, reuse, or reduced consumption. This misalignment with the waste hierarchy risks diluting the focus on true prevention.

Action 11 – Waste Prevention Metrics

DAERA will support NIRN to explore the establishment of a framework of metrics to monitor, evaluate, and report on waste prevention efforts across Northern Ireland.

4.3.4 Circular Communities

Circular Communities are grassroots initiatives that place community at the heart of the circular economy. These communities focus on waste reduction, reuse, repair, and sharing, creating local hubs where people can come together to extend the life of products, reduce consumption, and build social connections. Examples include repair cafés, community fridges, tool libraries, and upcycling workshops, all designed to make sustainability accessible and practical for everyone.

The concept goes beyond environmental benefits. Circular communities foster social inclusion, skill-sharing, and economic resilience. For instance, a community fridge not only reduces food waste but also helps tackle food insecurity by redistributing surplus food. Similarly, repair cafés empower people to fix broken items, saving money and learning new skills in the process. These initiatives often involve partnerships between local authorities, charities, social enterprises, and volunteers, creating a vibrant ecosystem of support and collaboration.

NIRN, with DAERA support, plays a pivotal role in supporting these efforts by offering guidance, resources, and networking opportunities. Their events, like the recent “Circular Communities: Connecting People to Create Change” conference, bring together stakeholders from across Northern Ireland and beyond to share best practices and inspire action. The energy and enthusiasm at such gatherings

underscore the transformative potential of circular communities in driving both environmental and social change.

Action 12 – Circular Communities

DAERA will support NIRN to develop and deliver a Circular Communities Programme to embed reuse and repair into everyday community life.

4.3.5 Recognised Awareness Days

Recognised waste awareness days play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and reducing environmental impact. These days serve as focal points for education and advocacy, helping citizens and businesses understand the consequences of waste and the benefits of resource efficiency. By highlighting issues such as plastic pollution, food waste, and electronic waste, they encourage people to rethink consumption habits and adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

NIRN will lead a coordinated programme of multi-channel campaigns tied to key international and national awareness days. These campaigns will harness the visibility of global observances to promote waste prevention and preparation for reuse. Through its extensive network of members, NIRN can co-ordinate local activities, provide event tool kits and create high quality, accessible content.

Action 13 – Recognised Awareness Days

DAERA will support NIRN to co-ordinate a schedule of recognised awareness day campaigns.

4.4 Food Waste

Preventing food waste is essential for environmental, economic, and social reasons. When food is wasted, all the resources used to produce, transport, and store it, such as water, energy, and land are also wasted, contributing to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Reducing food waste helps households save money, supports food security by ensuring more food reaches those who need it, and lessens pressure on landfill sites where decomposing food generates greenhouse gases such as methane. By raising awareness and encouraging better planning, storage, and portion control, we can make a significant impact on sustainability and create a more efficient food system.

4.4.1 Love Food Hate Waste Communications Campaign

The Love Food Hate Waste campaign is a UK-wide initiative launched in 2007[16] by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to tackle the growing issue of food waste, particularly in households. Its core mission is to help people reduce the amount of food they throw away by raising awareness, changing behaviours, and providing practical tools and advice.

Recent data shows that 30% of the average household bin in Northern Ireland is food waste, and 23% of that is edible food that could have been consumed. Love Food Hate Waste works by engaging citizens through educational resources, social media campaigns, and events like Food Waste Action Week. It offers tools such as meal planners, portion calculators, storage tips, and recipes for leftovers. These resources are designed to help people buy only what they need, store food correctly, reduce waste and to help households save money. A family of four could save up to £1,000 a year by using all the food they buy[17].

By encouraging small, everyday changes like checking fridge temperatures, understanding food date labels, and planning meals the campaign empowers individuals to make a big difference. It's a key part of the UK's broader strategy to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, and support climate action.

Action 14 – Consumer Food Waste Prevention

DAERA will maintain its partnership with WRAP to support the delivery of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, aimed at preventing consumer food waste. DAERA and WRAP will co-develop follow-up initiatives designed to strengthen behavioural change and enhance messaging around food waste prevention.

4.4.2 UK Food and Drink Pact

The UK Food and Drink Pact[18], formerly known as the Courtauld Commitment 2030, is a voluntary agreement led by WRAP that brings together nearly 200 organisations across the food and drink supply chain including businesses, trade bodies, local authorities, and charities to tackle key sustainability challenges.

The Pact aims to build a circular food system that supports the planet, people, and business. Its three core targets for 2030 are:

- Reduce food waste by 50% per capita (compared to the UK 2007 baseline),

[16] Love Food Hate Waste / Preventing food waste

[17] New data show's Northern Ireland households are throwing out food they could eat | WRAP - The Waste and Resources Action Programme

[18] UK Food and Drink Pact | WRAP - The Waste and Resources Action Programme

- Halve greenhouse gas emissions from the food and drink system (against a 2015 baseline),
- Ensure that 50% of fresh food is sourced from areas with sustainable water management.

These goals align with global ambitions such as UN Sustainable Development Goals 12.3 and 6, reinforcing the UK's commitment to sustainable production and consumption. The Pact provides members with access to evidence-based tools, practical resources, and collaborative working groups, fostering innovation and collective action.

The rebranding from Courtauld Commitment to the UK Food and Drink Pact reflects WRAP's broader strategy to unify its voluntary agreement and expand its international reach through the Global Food Pact Network.

Action 15 – UK Food and Drink Pact

DAERA will continue to support WRAP with the UK Food and Drink Pact to deliver against UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: a 50% per capita reduction in food and drink waste by 2030 vs the UK 2007 baseline.

4.4.3 Food Redistribution

Large quantities of edible food are wasted every year by producers, retailers, and consumers. This not only represents a loss of valuable resources such as water, energy, and labour but also contributes to environmental degradation through increased greenhouse gas emissions from landfill waste. Many individuals and families across Northern Ireland also face food poverty, struggling to access sufficient, nutritious food on a regular basis.

Addressing this requires a coordinated approach that includes reducing food waste at the source, improving access to affordable food, and supporting community-led models that empower people rather than simply providing charity.

Food redistribution involves collecting surplus food, often from farms, manufacturers, supermarkets, and hospitality businesses and redirecting it to people in need through charities, food banks, and community organisations.

NIRN, supported by DAERA, plays a pivotal role in supporting food redistribution as part of its broader mission to promote sustainable reuse, repair, and circular economy practices across the region. NIRN work with a number of food redistribution networks and identifies opportunities for them to partner with both businesses and public bodies. Their work with the Circular Schools Programme embeds food waste into education and everyday learning.

Action 16 – Food Redistribution

DAERA will work in partnership with NIRN to collaborate with food redistribution networks to reduce avoidable food waste by enhancing their visibility and facilitating connections with businesses and public sector organisations. DAERA will provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention.

4.5 Business and Industry

4.5.1 Industrial Symbiosis

Industrial symbiosis is a collaborative approach where traditionally separate industries work together to exchange materials, energy, water, and by products in ways that create mutual economic and environmental benefits. It is a key strategy in the circular economy, aiming to keep resources in productive use for longer and reduce waste generation.

The concept is based on the idea that the waste output of one company can serve as a resource input for another. This can include anything from excess heat and treated wastewater to surplus materials like plastics, metals, or food by products.

In Northern Ireland, industrial symbiosis has been actively supported through the Industrial Symbiosis Service (ISS) and delivered by Invest NI. Since its launch in 2007, the service has helped divert over 200,000 tonnes of waste from disposal, saved £9 million in costs, and reduced CO_2 emissions by over 260,000 tonnes. It connects businesses through a central database, identifying resource matches and facilitating partnerships that turn waste into value.[19]

Action 17 – Industrial Symbiosis

DAERA will continue to collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis.

4.6 Education

4.6.1 Eco - Schools

Eco-Schools is the world's largest environmental education programme, empowering young people to lead sustainability efforts in their schools and communities. The programme began in 1994 and now spans 101 countries, with over 52,000 registered schools and more than 13.7 million students participating globally.

The programme follows a seven-step Framework that guides schools through forming eco-committees, conducting environmental reviews, creating action plans, linking sustainability to the curriculum, and engaging the wider community. Schools

[19] industrial-symbiosis-guide-for-businesses-in-northern-ireland.pdf

work on up to 14 themes, including biodiversity, climate change, energy, litter, marine, transport, and waste.

Schools can earn awards at three levels, bronze, silver, and the Green Flag, which is internationally recognised as a symbol of environmental excellence.

Eco-Schools Northern Ireland has led impactful campaigns such as Cut Your Carbon, which in 2023/24 saw nearly 2,000 schools and nurseries participate. Pupils delivered over 200,000 carbon-saving actions, resulting in an estimated 600,000 kg of CO_2e reductions. The Litter Less campaign also saw 1,270 bags of litter collected by schools.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful operate the programme here with support from DAERA and all local councils. As of 2025, Northern Ireland became the second country in the world to have 50% of its schools holding an active Green Flag.[20]

Action 18 – Eco-Schools

DAERA will further support the Eco-Schools Programme to embed waste prevention and circular economy principles into the curriculum.

4.6.2 Circular - Schools

The Circular Schools Programme[21] in Northern Ireland is an educational initiative designed to embed circular economy and waste prevention principles into school communities. Its core aim is to help pupils understand how resources can be kept in use for as long as possible, reducing waste and promoting sustainability. Rather than focusing solely on recycling, the programme encourages schools to rethink consumption patterns, repair and reuse materials, and design out waste from everyday activities.

Delivered by NIRN the programme works with schools through interactive workshops and hands-on projects. These sessions cover practical topics such as food waste reduction, textile repair, and creative reuse of materials. Pupils are given opportunities to transform discarded items into useful products, fostering innovation and problem-solving skills while reinforcing the environmental benefits of circular practices.

Schools participating in the programme can earn recognition as Zero Waste Champions, showcasing their projects at a celebration event. This approach not only builds awareness but also equips young people with practical skills and a mindset that supports long-term sustainability. By introducing circular economy concepts early, the programme aims to influence future behaviours and create a culture of resource efficiency across Northern Ireland's education sector.

[20] MyEarth

[21] Zero Waste Schools Celebration in Derry City & Strabane District Council – Northern Ireland Resources Network

Action 19 – Circular Schools

DAERA will support NIRN to promote reuse and repair in school communities.

4.7 Support to the third sector

4.7.1 Support to the Third Sector and Zero Waste Projects

DAERA provides targeted support to the third sector in Northern Ireland to help tackle waste and promote circular economy practices. This includes funding, strategic partnerships, and programme delivery aimed at empowering charities, social enterprises, and community groups to reduce consumption, increase reuse, and divert waste from landfill.

DAERA also funds innovative education programmes like the Zero Waste Champion pilot, launched in partnership with NIRN and local councils. This initiative engages schools in workshops on circular economy, food waste, textile reuse, and repair skills, aiming to embed zero waste thinking in young people. The programme is supported by the Carrier Bag Levy, which DAERA uses to fund community-led environmental projects.

In addition, through the Carrier Bag Levy, DAERA's Environment Fund (2023–2028) provides strategic funding to NGOs and community groups delivering environmental outcomes, including waste reduction and circular economy initiatives. Projects that demonstrate strong community engagement and measurable impact are prioritised for support.

Action 20 – Support to the Third Sector for Zero Waste/Circular Economy Projects

The Department will continue to provide support to the Third Sector for zero waste/circular economy projects as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.

4.7.2 Reuse and Repair Week

Reuse and Repair Week 2025 marked a significant milestone for sustainability in Northern Ireland, running from 3rd to 9th March 2025. Led by NIRN and funded by DAERA through the Carrier Bag Levy, this was the first time an entire UK region hosted a dedicated Repair Week. The initiative aimed to foster a culture of repair and reuse, helping individuals and communities extend the life of everyday items, from textiles and furniture to bikes and electronics, while reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Throughout the week, a wide array of interactive workshops, repair cafés, and online seminars were held across the region. Events included textile upcycling sessions, bike maintenance workshops, and even a pre-loved fashion show. These activities not only provided hands-on learning but also celebrated the creativity and

resourcefulness of local communities. A standout event was the “Mending Our Ways” webinar, which brought together repair advocates and sustainability experts to discuss how businesses and communities can embed circular principles into their practices.

Action 21 – Reuse and Repair Week

DAERA will support NIRN to establish an annual Reuse and Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland.

5. Summary of Actions – DAERA Waste Prevention Programme 2026: From Waste to Worth

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (hereinafter referred to as the Department)

Action Heading	Action
1.Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging	DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments in the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging.
2.Collaboration with Defra and Other DA's in relation to Eco-Design and Eco-labelling	DAERA will continue to work collaboratively with the Devolved Governments to support eco-design and develop eco-label frameworks.
3. Deposit Return Scheme	DAERA will implement the Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers. This is due to go live from October 2027 to include PET plastic, steel, and aluminium drinks containers from 150ml to 3l to further drive-up recycling rates and reduce littering.
4. WEEE Reform	DAERA will collaborate with Defra and the other Devolved Governments to implement WEEE Reform.
5. Carrier Bag Levy	DAERA will continue to administer the levy and ensure the revenue is allocated to additional environmental projects within Northern Ireland.
6. Absorbent Hygiene Products	DAERA will support WRAP in conducting an AHP Collection study into the separation of AHP waste.
7. Waste Levies	DAERA will continue to tackle the problem of littering and work with stakeholders to advance the circular economy including the potential for introducing bans or levies on certain problematic product materials.
8. Plastic Pollution Plan	DAERA will publish a Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland to achieve a reduction in plastic pollution.
9. European Week for Waste Reduction	DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and will seek to build upon the outcomes and successes generated through participation in its associated competitions.

10. Circular Councils	DAERA will assist NIRN to establish a Circular Councils network and develop a co-created waste prevention education programme with councils.
11. Waste Prevention Metrics	DAERA will support NIRN to explore the establishment of a framework of metrics to monitor, evaluate, and report on waste prevention efforts across Northern Ireland.
12. Circular Communities	DAERA will support NIRN to develop and deliver a Circular Communities Programme to embed reuse and repair into everyday community life.
13. Recognised Awareness Days	DAERA will support NIRN to co-ordinate a schedule of recognised awareness day campaigns.
14. Consumer Food Waste Prevention	DAERA will maintain its partnership with WRAP to support the delivery of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, aimed at preventing consumer food waste. DAERA and WRAP will co-develop follow-up initiatives designed to strengthen behavioural change and enhance messaging around food waste prevention.
15. UK Food and Drink Pact	DAERA will continue to support WRAP with the UK Food and Drink Pact to deliver against UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: a 50% per capita reduction in food and drink waste by 2030 vs the UK 2007 baseline
16. Food Redistribution	DAERA will work in partnership with NIRN to collaborate with food redistribution networks to reduce avoidable food waste by enhancing their visibility and facilitating connections with businesses and public sector organisations. DAERA will provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention.
17. Industrial Symbiosis	DAERA will continue to collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis.
18. Eco-Schools	DAERA will further support the Eco-Schools Programme to embed waste prevention and circular economy principles into the curriculum.
19 Circular Schools	DAERA will support NIRN to promote reuse and repair in school communities.
20. Support to the Third Sector and Zero waste projects	DAERA will continue to provide support to the Third Sector for zero waste/circular economy projects as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.
21. Reuse and Repair Week	DAERA will support NIRN to establish an annual Reuse and Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland.

Annex A – Review of the 2019 Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme: Stopping Waste in its Tracks.

As required by Article 30 of the 2008 Waste Framework Directive and by Regulation 13 of the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme has been reviewed in its sixth year. The Waste Prevention Programme 2026: From Waste to Worth is an output of the 2025 review and includes actions following the introduction of the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

2019 Waste Prevention Programme - Stopping Waste it its Tracks – Actions

The following table lists each of the 22 actions set out in the Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme and describes the progress to date.

Action	Progress
Action 1 – Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging	
DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations to design and implement EPR schemes that are consistent with the polluter pays principle and which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle goods.	The Environment Act 2021 contains powers that allowed extended producer responsibility regimes to be introduced. The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 were laid in Westminster in October 2024 and came into force on 1 January 2025 enabling the scheme to go live in April 2025 on a UK-wide basis. Reform of producer responsibility for packaging and the introduction of pEPR was consulted upon on a UK-wide basis in 2019 and 2021. The 2021 consultation put forward proposals that provided the framework for a UK-wide approach, whilst making provision for the delivery of nation-specific requirements where necessary. DAERA in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments shared a draft of the main pEPR SI (the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations) in a consultation that ran from July-October 2023 to seek views on how the regulations implementation the policy decisions in the Government response to the pEPR consultation, (published in March 2022). These draft regulations were also shared with the World Trade Organisation and the European Union for notification purposes on 1 May 2024. **This action will be brought forward.**

Action 2 - Collaboration with Defra and Other DA's in relation to EcoDesign	
DAERA will collaborate with Defra and other devolved administrations to prepare to extend eco-design standards to a range of non-energy resource intensive product groups with the aim of preventing avoidable waste.	Part 3, Section 53 of the Environment Act 2021 introduced a framework for setting eco-design requirements for products to improve their resource efficiency. This section empowered the UK Government to regulate products beyond energy-related ones - extending to non-energy, resource-intensive goods - to reduce waste and environmental harm. The aim was to ensure products are designed with sustainability in mind, including aspects like durability, reparability, recyclability, and reduced environmental impact throughout their lifecycle. **This action will not be brought forward as a standalone action and will instead be amalgamated with action three.**
Action 3 - Collaboration with Defra and other DA's in Relation to Enhanced Eco-Labelling	
DAERA will collaborate with Defra and other DA's to develop new mandatory consumer information and labelling aimed at conserving resources and preventing waste.	DAERA has collaborated with Defra and other devolved administrations to explore how eco-design and eco-labelling standards can be applied to a broader range of products. Section 52 of Part 3 of the Environment Act 2021 introduced new powers to set resource efficiency requirements for products, with the aim of reducing environmental harm and promoting a circular economy. These gave power to set product standards related to durability, material composition and environmental impact. Manufacturers may be required to provide data on a product's environmental performance, lifespan, and recyclability. **This action will not be brought forward as a standalone action but will instead be amalgamated with action two.**
Action 4 - Tackling Plastics Project	
DAERA will aim to reduce plastic waste through a number of mechanisms being delivered as part of the Tackling Plastics Project that Keep	The Tackling Plastics Programme began in October 2018, with the inclusion of Textiles in 2022/23. The programme engaged four audiences: councils, schools, businesses, and the public. It was a multi-faceted programme to encourage elimination and reduction in Single-Use Plastic (SUP) consumption, including textiles.

Northern Ireland Beautiful are undertaking on behalf of the Department.	One initiative included developing a Tackling Plastics Toolkit which included template policies and practical steps to phase out single use plastics (SUPs) from estates, events and procurement practices. The toolkit accelerated the removal of SUPs across the NICS estate from October 2021. This also laid the groundwork for broader adoption of sustainable practices across councils and other public bodies. The programme also ran a Fashion Forever Festival that was an event designed to tackle textile waste and promote sustainable fashion in Northern Ireland. The festival featured a wide range of activities including pre-loved clothing stalls, swap shops, styling advice, mini workshops, and a community sew-along. It encouraged attendees to reuse, repair, and reimagine their clothing rather than discard it, especially during high-consumption periods like Christmas. The festival also included a plastic-free wrapping station, visits from Sustainable Santa, and exhibitions showcasing local sustainable designers. It aimed to raise awareness of the environmental impact of fast fashion - highlighting that one million tonnes of textiles are discarded annually in the UK, with a third ending up in landfill.  **This action will not be brought following the completion of the Programme and the development of a number of legislative interventions to tackle plastic pollution.**
Action 5 - Carrier Bag Levy	
DAERA will continue to support the	In November 2021, Minister Poots announced his intention to reform the Carrier Bag Levy. From 1st April 2022, the

Carrier Bag Levy charging administration.	Carrier Bags Charge Regulations were extended so that the levy is 25p and applies to all new carrier bags with a retail price of £5 or less. This is regardless of the material used and whether they are single use or reusable. The primary objective of the Carrier Bag Levy remains to protect our environment by influencing customer behaviour to promote a significant reduction in carrier bag usage. Since its introduction, dispensed single use bags have reduced from 84.5 million to 59.2 million bags issued per annum. Published annual usage statistics are available. The current Carrier Bag Levy legislation has been a huge success and has seen a significant reduction in the number of carrier bags from circulation.  **This action will be brought forward.**
Action 6 – Ban on Microbeads	
DAERA will continue to support the ban on microbeads by working with councils.	Councils have advised limited input required with regards to enforcement. Manufacturers have removed offending items from the Northern Ireland market prior to the enactment of the legislation. **This action point will not be brought forward as the action is complete following the introduction of the legislation.**
Action 7 - Consumer Food Waste Prevention	
DAERA will continue to work with WRAP to deliver its 'Love Food Hate Waste' consumer food waste prevention campaign. WRAP	Love Food Hate Waste is WRAP's national brand which runs campaigns to reduce the amount of food wasted in UK homes. 60% of food that is wasted in the UK is wasted by citizens in their own homes – roughly 4.7 million tonnes of edible food wasted each year. WRAP has worked with DAERA to produce Northern Ireland-specific resources under the Love Food Hate Waste brand to help reduce at-

will establish a network of campaign partners and will engage with consumers, community groups, local authorities and educational bodies. WRAP and DAERA will collaborate to develop follow-up campaigns to build capacity for behavioural change and waste prevention messaging aimed at food waste reduction.	home food waste. Since the launch of Food Waste Action Week in 2021, DAERA has contributed to the largest annual food waste reduction campaign in the UK. Working in partnership with local councils and through the National Communications Advisory Panel (NCAP) group, DAERA has supported WRAP to maintain and promote food waste prevention messages through its Love Food Hate Waste campaign. In the latest Northern Ireland Household Food Management Survey, published in March 2025, NI citizen recognition of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign has increased from 21% in 2018 to 40% in 2024. This level of recognition is higher than other areas of the UK (average of 32%). DAERA has encouraged businesses to join the Food Waste Reduction Roadmap, a voluntary agreement requiring food waste data reporting and action planning. This mirrors Champions 12.3's push for private sector leadership. Activities in Northern Ireland have included partnering with local councils, ministerial engagement, PR films and social media and educational information through the Love Food Hate Waste digital channels and website. **This action will be brought forward.**
Action 8 - Champions 12.3	
DAERA will learn from the Champions 12.3 coalition and will get involved in activities which are aligned with its goals.	DAERA has drawn several key lessons and influences from its engagement with the Champions 12.3 coalition, particularly in shaping its food waste prevention policies and aligning with UN SDG Target 12.3. DAERA has embraced the Target-Measure-Act framework promoted by Champions 12.3: • Target: Committed to the UK-wide goal of a 50% per capita reduction in food waste by 2030, using 2007 as the baseline.

	• Measure: Support data collection and reporting through the Courtauld Commitment 2030, which tracks food waste across households, manufacturing, hospitality, and retail. • Act: Implemented targeted interventions and supported voluntary agreements to reduce food waste. DAERA has also funded initiatives such as Love Food Hate Waste, Guardians of Grub and The Lyric Theatre Eco-Project to increase public awareness and focus on behaviour change in line with Champions 12.3. **This action will not be brought forward as a standalone action and will instead be amalgamated with a revised action nine.**
Action 9 - Courtauld 2025	
DAERA will continue to support WRAP and their work with local businesses, NGOs and sector organisations to reduce food and drinks waste arisings in the UK by 20% by 2025 compared to 2015.	The Courtauld Commitment 2025, a UK-wide voluntary agreement coordinated by WRAP, aimed at making food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. It brought together businesses, governments, and other stakeholders across the supply chain to tackle food waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and water stress. Between 2007 and 2021 WRAP's work with UK manufacturers reduced food waste by over 520,000 tonnes (27%), and their work with retailers prevented 19,500 tonnes of food waste (19%) over the same period. Between 2018 and 2021 their work with signatories led to a sector wide reduction in food waste of 8%. We have also seen food waste reduce by 22% in UK households and have around 400 organisations now signed up to the UK's Food Waste Reduction Roadmap. DAERA's support towards the governance of the voluntary agreement has been critical in providing the necessary resourcing to achieve these milestones but also to demonstrate the commitment of the Northern Ireland Executive to the public - private partnership which underpins the agreement. In 2025, the Courtauld Commitment was officially rebranded as the UK Food and Drink Pact to provide clearer recognition and reflect its growing international scope through the Global Food Pact Network. All major supermarkets that operate in Northern Ireland have become members of the UK Food and Drink Pact and

	key activities undertaken have included the removal of date labels from hundreds of fresh fruit and vegetable products to save equivalent of 400,000 baskets of food going to waste in Northern Ireland every year. Between 2015 and 2022, greenhouse gas emissions associated with food and drink production in Northern Ireland reduced by 12%. Guardians of Grub has supported hospitality and food service businesses to reduce food waste through toolkits, online courses, and case studies. Through DAERA's support WRAP rolled out Guardians of Grub in Northern Ireland and provided support to local councils to build awareness of the programme through NCAP (this included webinars and social media). **This action will be brought forward under the UK Food and Drink Pact.**
Action 10 - Food Redistribution	
DAERA will collaborate with FareShare and other food redistribution networks to minimise avoidable food waste by raising the profile of the organisation and identifying opportunities for them to partner with both businesses and public bodies. DAERA will support specific projects aimed at prevention of food waste.	DAERA, through its agency CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise), partnered with FareShare to tackle the challenge of redistributing surplus food that is close to expiry. Food technologists at CAFRE's Loughry Campus developed shelf-stable products (such as sauces) from fresh produce that would otherwise go to waste. These products are designed to be nutritious, easy to use, and suitable for distribution to charities and community groups. This initiative not only reduced food waste but also enhanced food security for vulnerable populations. DAERA also provided funding to FareShare to facilitate the role of a Food Source Officer to engage with the food industry in Northern Ireland. They developed and managed existing and new business relationships with companies to generate value and secured growing and sustainable volumes of surplus food for FareShare in Northern Ireland, cutting food surplus and waste in doing so. In addition, the funding enabled the employment of a Food Redistribution Driver allowing greater consistent, reliable and timely redistribution of surplus food. Last year, in Northern Ireland, FareShare prevented 727 tonnes of in-date food from going to landfill which is the equivalent to 1.7 million meals. WRAP has reported on progress on increasing surplus food redistribution since 2015. This work aligns with the UK Food and Drink Pact goals and SDG 12.3 on which DAERA

	contributes to the overall governance of the UK Food and Drink Pact. In 2025, Minister Muir launched DAERA's first Food Action Plan in as part of the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework which included specific actions on reducing food waste and promoting sustainable consumption.  **This action will be brought forward collaboratively through Northern Ireland Resources Network.**
Action 11 - Business Resource Efficiency - Invest NI	
DAERA will collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis.	DAERA has played a strategic role in promoting resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis in Northern Ireland through its delivery partner Invest NI. Through support from DAERA and DfE, Invest NI have delivered a number of financial and advisory supports to help businesses reduce waste and improve efficiency including Resource Efficiency capital grants, technical consultancy and sustainability reports. DAERA have also supported Invest NI's Resource Matching Service, which facilitates industrial symbiosis to assist with the of matching of underutilised resources (like materials, energy, water, or capacity) from one business with the needs of another. This offering has given businesses an idea of how they are performing across a range of areas including waste and makes recommendations as to how they can improve their environmental performance. The resource matching programme reports on waste diverted from landfill on performance since 2020.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Financial Year</th><th>Diverted from landfill</th></tr>
<tr><td>2020/21</td><td>1,589 Tonnes</td></tr>
<tr><td>2021/22</td><td>1,952 Tonnes</td></tr>
<tr><td>2022/23</td><td>271 Tonnes</td></tr>
<tr><td>2023/24</td><td>379 Tonnes</td></tr>
<tr><td>2024/25</td><td>19,095 Tonnes</td></tr>
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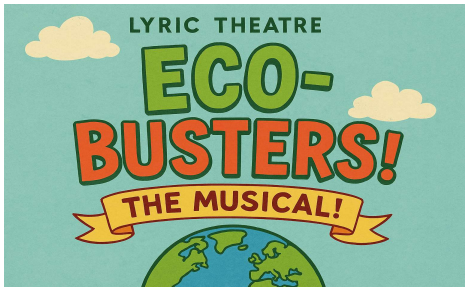
This action will be brought forward under Industrial Symbiosis
</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Action 12 - Prosperity Agreements</th></tr>
<tr><td>DAERA will work with Prosperity Agreement partners to identify opportunities to promote resource efficiency and waste prevention measures. In particular, and where possible, we will aim to include food redistribution actions and areas of agreement around the reduction of packaging to help reduce waste</td><td>From 2014 to 2021 10 Prosperity Agreements were signed with a range of Northern Ireland businesses. Benefits included reduction in energy usage, carbon emissions, waste production and water usage.

Actions relating to food redistribution and reduction of packaging are being taken forward under Extended Producer Responsibility, the Plastic Pollution Plan and food redistribution networks.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Action 13 - Eco-Schools Programme</th></tr>
<tr><td>DAERA will continue support for the Eco-Schools Programme in order to maximise opportunities for learning and teaching about waste prevention.</td><td>The Eco-Schools Programme aims to educate and empower young people to make positive decisions and become change makers for an environmentally sustainable world.
Topics relating to waste include carrying out Waste Audits, Tackling Fast fashion, Litter Less Campaign, Adopt-A-Spot and resources on the circular economy.</td></tr>
</table>

We will aim to introduce a specific topic on waste prevention into the EcoSchools curriculum.	Eco-Schools also covers topics looking at what happens to textile and electronic waste, and through the 'International Young Reporters for the Environment' Programme young people investigate issues around waste and waste prevention and its barriers. Northern Ireland have become the first country globally to have every school registered as an eco-school and during 2025 have become the second country globally to have achieved 50% of its schools holding a Green Flag, achieving the UNESCO target five years ahead of schedule. **This action will be brought forward.**
Action 14 - Eco-Hospitals Programme	
DAERA's is investigating the feasibility of introducing a similar scheme in Northern Ireland. By engaging staff, students, local businesses, contractors and suppliers as well as visitors, we will highlight the importance of environmental protection, and in particular, waste prevention. We aim to initiate a trial on one site to further assess the potential environmental and financial benefits of such a scheme. If successful, there is scope for a broader	Lockdown commenced officially on 26 March 2020, with the Health Service under significant pressure. This initiative did not go ahead. The feasibility of this initiative was explored again in early 2024, however the necessary level of buy in to proceed with the scheme could not be secured. **This action will not be brought forward.**

rollout within the health sector.	
Action 15 - Working with NI Education Authority	
DAERA will collaborate with the Education Authority to help reduce waste both in classrooms and in school catering services. DAERA will use the learning generated to help inform further waste prevention interventions with the wider public sector.	As part of the Tackling Plastic Tackling Textiles project a schools photography competition was launched by KNIB. It invited participants to submit images that raised awareness of plastic pollution and highlighted areas badly affected by plastic waste. The competition was part of a broader campaign to engage the public—especially young people—in environmental awareness and action around single-use plastics. While the first year of the competition was successfully delivered, plans for a second year were not taken forward due to a lack of match funding from the other funder involved. DAERA also attended meetings with the Education Authority to explore the creation of an education officer role. Due to cuts to other operational areas, there was feedback that it was not a suitable time. **This action will not be brought forward due to the significant demands on the EA none of the initiatives resulted in a viable outcome. However, work with the Education Authority will continue through the Eco-Schools programme and Northern Ireland Resources Network.**
Action 16 - Reuse and Repair Network	
DAERA will undertake a feasibility study into the economic and social benefits of establishing a reuse and repair network in Northern Ireland including establishing a reuse quality mark.	Community Resources Network Ireland (CRNI) were awarded funding to establish a new reuse and repair network in Northern Ireland. The primary aim was to explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated network to support and represent organisations involved in reuse and repair in Northern Ireland. The steering committee established a pilot which later was officially named Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN). NIRN became incorporated in February 2022, with two members of staff and membership growing to 23. NIRN is the representative body for reuse and repair organisations, established with support from DAERA, with the aim to promote sustainable reuse and repair as a practical and effective way of tackling Northern Ireland's waste generation. The network encompasses a diverse

	range of organisations including community groups, social enterprises, charities, and all eleven local authorities. Members of NIRN all share a commitment to community-driven initiatives with activities ranging from repair cafes, community fridges, and lending libraries. Membership has risen steadily since 2021 and in September 2025 totalled 54 members, including all eleven councils and now employ eight staff. NIRN provide training, advice, and support to their members, encouraging collaborations and actively publicising member's activities via social media, podcasts, interviews and monthly E-newsletter.  **This action will not be brought forward as NIRN are now well established as a reuse and repair network and will assist with delivery of actions in future programmes.**
Action 17- Support to the Third Sector	
The Department will continue to support the Third Sector as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.	DAERA have supported the Third Sector through a number of initiatives detailed in actions 4, 7, 9 10, 13, 16 & 19) One particular example of support to the third sector is that the Department funded The Lyric Theatre Eco-project "Waste busters the Musical" a musical production devised by the Lyric Theatre. It aimed to increase environmental awareness and promote positive behaviour change in relation to waste prevention, reuse, recycling and sustainability across Northern Ireland. The musical production acted as a creative and memorable tool to deliver a lasting message, educating young people on different forms of waste, the impact of this waste and how it can be prevented. It targeted KS2 pupils aiming to get the message home to parents and wider family circle, helping impact attitudes towards environmental issues through the influence of 'pester power.' This helped to

	disseminate the message much further than the approximately 4,300+ school children.  The project is currently in its fifth year of delivery and has received excellent feedback from schools and pupils and has been oversubscribed every year. To date the project has been delivered to 13,381 children in 152 schools across Northern Ireland over four years. There are currently no other projects of this scale addressing environmental issues through live theatre to primary school audiences in Northern Ireland. The project highlights the importance of young people being more environmentally aware and is an opportunity to educate and empower young people. **This action will be brought forward.**
Action 18 - Zero Waste/Circular Economy Projects	
DAERA will continue to support “zero waste” projects where objectives align and funding is available	DAERA has supported a diverse range of zero waste projects across Northern Ireland, reflecting its commitment to circular economy principles and community-led sustainability. One of the flagship initiatives is the Zero Waste Champion Education Programme, developed in partnership with NIRN. This pilot project engaged schools in reuse and repair activities, embedding circular thinking in education and inspiring young people to become sustainability advocates. DAERA has also played a key role in supporting the growth of NIRN, which connects community organisations and all 11 local councils promoting reuse and repair. Through this network, projects such as repair cafés, tool libraries, and zero waste hubs have flourished, helping to reduce waste and build local resilience. In addition to education and community engagement, DAERA has backed targeted campaigns to reduce plastic and textile waste, including the Plastic Reduction Action

	Plan (PRAP) and support for the UK Plastics Pact. It has also contributed to food waste prevention through partnerships with WRAP, the Courtauld Commitment, and redistribution efforts that helped surplus food reach those in need. **This action will not be brought forward as a standalone action and will instead be absorbed into action 17.**
Action 19 - European Week for Waste Reduction	
DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and build upon any successes arising from entries to its competitions.	The European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) is the annual European campaign to raise awareness of waste prevention. It provides a platform to celebrate and share good practices in Northern Ireland. Following on from the recognition of Cloughmill's Community Action Team's 'Library of Things' in 2019, the first Fashion Forever Festival in Northern Ireland was the winner of the Association/NGO category in European Week for Waste Reduction in 2022. NIRN's successful Sustainable Conversations podcast series was one of three finalists selected in the same Association/NGO category in 2023. This recognition, at a European level, demonstrates the value of waste prevention activities happening here in Northern Ireland.  **This action will be brought forward.**
Action 20 - Tap Water Refill Scheme	
DAERA will continue to promote water refilling schemes in conjunction with NI Water, local Councils and local businesses to	Figures from a Marine Litter report (2020) conducted by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful revealed that 67% of litter collected on Northern Ireland's beaches was plastic. In Northern Ireland it is estimated that 12,000 tonnes of plastic bottles are collected every year equating to 181 million plastic bottles per year.

reduce waste from single use plastic bottles and to promote reusable bottles.	NI Water ran a campaign under the banner of “Refillution” aimed at encouraging local businesses to offer tap water from their premises to those who ask for it using refillable bottles. Community Hydration Hubs were provided to local businesses who were willing to offer free water refills, increasing access in urban and rural areas. The scheme was integrated with the Refill UK app which helped users locate over 280 refill stations in Northern Ireland. Events and outreach campaigns have distributed free reusable bottles and encouraged uptake of the scheme. **This action will not be brought forward as refill stations are now becoming well established across Northern Ireland.**
Action 21 - Social Media & Internet Campaigns & Messaging	
DAERA will continue to promote reuse and reduction through social media campaigns MyNI, in tandem with existing more traditional messaging and associated social media posts to raise awareness of the content. The Department will develop specific campaigns in conjunction with these channels to raise awareness of waste prevention and zero waste.	The MyNI team was absorbed into DAERA central communications team at the end of December 2021. **This action will not be brought forward as a stand-alone action. Social media campaigns tend to form part of all actions and will continue to promote reuse and reduction through those.**
Action 22 - Local Authorities	
DAERA will continue to collaborate with local councils to	DAERA have funded NIRN through the Carrier Bag Levy who have secured membership of all 11 local authorities. NIRN have engaged with all councils through quarterly

develop waste prevention plans.	forums that have promoted collaboration and sharing of best practice. NIRN have assisted councils to implement community-based reuse and repair cafes and supported public education campaigns to encourage sustainable behaviours to push waste as far up the waste hierarchy as possible. **This action will not be brought forward as this will be incorporated as part of the work delivered by NIRN going forward.**

Annex B – Meeting Legal Requirements

The Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 include a number of review and participation requirements at regulation 10 and 13 to regulation 16. These regulations are reproduced below along with an explanation of how DAERA is following the regulations;

Waste Prevention Measures

10 — (1)(a) The waste prevention measures are measures to at least—

(a) promote and support sustainable production and consumption models;

(b) encourage the design, manufacturing and use of products that are resource-efficient, durable (including in terms of life span and absence of planned obsolescence), reparable, re-usable and upgradable;

(c) target products containing critical raw materials to prevent those materials becoming waste;

(d) encourage the re-use of products and the setting up of systems promoting repair and re-use activities, including in particular for electrical and electronic equipment, textiles and furniture, as well as packaging and construction materials and products;

(e) encourage, as appropriate and without prejudice to intellectual property rights, the availability of spare parts, instruction manuals, technical information, or other instruments, equipment or software enabling the repair and re-use of products without compromising their quality and safety;

(f) reduce waste generation in processes related to industrial production, extraction of minerals, manufacturing, construction and demolition, taking into account best available techniques;

(g) reduce the generation of food waste in primary production, in processing and manufacturing, in retail and other distribution of food, in restaurants and food services as well as in households;

(h) encourage food donation and other redistribution for human consumption, prioritising human use over animal feed and the reprocessing into non-food products;

(i) promote the reduction of the content of hazardous substances in materials and products;

(j) reduce the generation of waste, in particular waste that is not suitable for preparing for re-use or recycling;

(k) identify products that are the main sources of littering and take appropriate measures to prevent and reduce litter from such products;

(l) aim to halt the generation of marine litter; and

(m) develop and support information campaigns to raise awareness about waste prevention and littering."

The actions contained in in this document take all the waste prevention measures into account.

Review and modification of waste prevention programmes

13.—(1) The Department shall—

(a) shall review each waste prevention programme at least every sixth year; and

(b) may from time to time modify the waste prevention programmes in accordance with Article 30 of the Waste Framework Directive.

The Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland – Stopping Waste in its Tracks – was published in July 2020 and is now in its sixth year. In accordance with the requirement at Regulation 13(1)(a) (above) the Programme was reviewed between June 2025 and October 2025 and a modified programme with 21 proposed actions has been drafted in accordance with Regulation 13(1)(b);

Public participation in waste prevention programmes

14.—(1) Regulations 15 and 16 apply to the modification of a waste prevention programme as they apply to the preparation of such a programme.

(2) Regulations 15 and 16 do not apply to a waste prevention programme—

(a) designed for the sole purpose of serving national defence or taken in case of civil emergencies;

(b) for which a public participation procedure is carried out under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004(5);

(c) containing only provision relating to separation collection of waste, bio-waste, reuse, preparing for reuse, recovery and recycling targets;

(3) Steps taken before the coming into operation of these Regulations in relation to a waste prevention programme may be steps for the purposes of regulations 15 and 16.

Public participation procedures

15.—(1) As soon as reasonably practicable after preparing proposals for a waste prevention programme or for the modification of such a waste prevention programme, the Department shall—

(a) send a copy of the proposals to the consultation bodies;

(b) take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the proposals to the attention of the persons who in the Department's opinion—

(i) are, or are likely to be affected by the waste prevention programme; or

(ii) have an interest in the waste prevention programme;

(c) inform the public consultees of the address (which may include a website)—

(i) at which a copy of the proposals may be viewed; and

(ii) from which a copy of the proposals may be obtained;

(d) invite the consultation bodies and public consultees to express their opinion on the proposals, specifying the address to which, and the period within which opinions must be sent.

(2) The period referred to in paragraph (1)(d) must be of such length as will ensure that the consultation bodies and the public consultees are given an early and effective opportunity to express their opinion on the proposals.

(3) The Department shall keep a copy of the proposals for inspection by the public at all reasonable times free of charge.

(4) Nothing in paragraph (1)(c) requires the Department to provide copies of the proposals free of charge, but where a charge is made, it shall be a reasonable amount.

In accordance with Regulations 14 and 15 (above) DAERA will issue this draft Waste Prevention Programme for public consultation, including Northern Ireland local councils, Northern Ireland environmental groups, businesses and trade associations. The draft of the programme will be published on DAERA's website and the consultation will be promoted through DAERA's social media channels to encourage widespread participation. The consultation seeking replies and comments on the draft programme will be open for response for a period of 12 weeks.

Procedures following public participation

16.—(1) Before decisions on a waste management programme are made, the Department shall take account of any opinions expressed by a consultation body or public consultees.

(2) As soon as reasonably practicable after making decisions on a waste prevention programme the Department shall—

(a) inform the consultation bodies and the public consultees of the matters in paragraph (3);

(b) take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the matters in paragraph (3) to the attention of the public; and

(c) if it has adopted the waste prevention programme, place a copy of the programme on the Department's website and make a copy of the programme available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times and free of charge.

(3) The matters are—

(a) the decisions made by the Department on the waste prevention programme;

(b) the reasons and considerations on which those decisions are based; and

(c) information about the public participation procedure.

(4) Nothing in paragraph (2)(c) requires the Department to provide copies free of charge, but where a charge is made, it shall be a reasonable amount.

Following the end of the consultation period DAERA will publish on its website a summary of the responses received. The Department will analyse the consultation responses and comments to consider if changes are required to the draft programme taking account of the views expressed during the consultation.

In accordance with Regulation 16(3), DAERA will, as soon as reasonably practicable, publish on DAERA website its views and decisions on the consultation responses and send a copy to stakeholders and consultees. If appropriate a final modified programme will be published on the Departmental website and copied to stakeholders and consultees.

From Waste to Worth:

Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme Consultation

April 2026

Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
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Consultation: From Waste to Worth – Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme

Purpose

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is seeking views on the proposed Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland. This Programme sets out the actions we intend to take to reduce the generation of waste across our economy, encourage more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and support a transition to a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for as long as possible.

Waste prevention is the most effective way to reduce environmental harm, conserve resources, and limit carbon emissions associated with the extraction, manufacture, and disposal of products. By focusing on designing out waste, extending product lifetimes, and supporting reuse, repair, and remanufacture, the Programme aims to support long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits for individuals, businesses, and communities across Northern Ireland.

This consultation outlines the strategic priorities, proposed interventions, and supporting measures that will guide our approach over the coming years. It reflects our statutory obligations under the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, aligns with commitments in the Circular Economy Package, and supports Northern Ireland's wider climate and environmental ambitions.

We invite responses from Northern Ireland local councils and Northern Ireland environmental groups. Your feedback will help shape a Programme that is effective, evidence-based, and reflective of the needs and opportunities across Northern Ireland.

Making a Submission

This consultation is organised around each action area. Respondents are requested to consider the questions presented, acknowledging that not all questions will be relevant to all respondents.

The section on respondents' details is mandatory.

All submissions are welcome and will be considered in developing the new Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland.

Responses to this consultation are to be submitted online at the following link on Citizen Space: https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/waste-prevention-programme-from-waste-to-worth

Data Protection

DAERA is committed to engaging with stakeholders in a clear, open, and transparent manner. Any person or organisation can make a submission in relation to this consultation via Citizen Space. Guidance is provided on the 'Confidentiality' of

responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, in Annex 1 for your reference. Also, if you require any further information, please contact a member of the consultation team on WastePolicyTeam@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Consultation Questions

Respondent Details

A wide range of stakeholders generate and manage resources across Northern Ireland. Each sector produces different types and volumes of waste, shaped by their scale and operating models. These stakeholders also face varying levels of challenge in transitioning to more sustainable practices. To be effective, the Programme aims to deliver targeted actions that reduce burdens and provide tailored support, enabling each sector to make measurable improvements and identify further opportunities for waste prevention.

We expect this consultation to be of greatest interest to:

- Councils
- NI Environmental groups

Please complete all questions to allow us to capture the background and geographical location of respondents.

What is your name?

What is your email address?

What local Council area do you represent/live in?

Drop-down box

- **Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council**
- **Ards and North Down Borough Council**
- **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council**
- **Belfast City Council**
- **Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council**
- **Derry City and Strabane District Council**
- **Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**
- **Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council**
- **Mid and East Antrim Borough Council**
- **Mid Ulster District Council**
- **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**
- **Other – Republic of Ireland**
- **Other – UK**
- **Other – EU**
- **Other – Rest of World**

Which category best represents you from the list below?

Drop-down box

- **Local Government**
- **NI Environmental group**
- **Other, please specify.**

Actions

1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

A key form of producer responsibility is Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which is increasingly being adopted across the UK and internationally. Under EPR schemes, producers are required to fund or directly manage the collection and treatment of waste arising from their products. This encourages them to design products that are easier to reuse, recycle, or dispose of safely.

Action 1 - Extended Producer Responsibility and Reducing Packaging

DAERA will continue to work in conjunction with the UK Government and the Devolved Governments in the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024 which aims to reduce the amount of unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging.

Question 1 - Do you agree with action 1 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

2. Collaboration with Defra and Other DG's in relation to Eco-Design and Eco-labelling

Eco-design and eco-labelling are two complementary approaches aimed at reducing the environmental impact of products throughout their life cycle.

Eco-design refers to the process of integrating environmental considerations into the design and development of products while Eco-labelling is a communication tool that helps consumers identify products with lower environmental impacts.

Action 2 – Eco-Design and Eco-Labelling

DAERA will continue to work collaboratively with the Devolved Governments to support eco-design and develop eco-label frameworks.

Question 2 - Do you agree with action 2 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

3. Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) is a circular economy initiative designed to reduce litter and increase recycling rates by incentivising the return of single-use drinks containers. Under the scheme, consumers pay a small deposit when purchasing drinks in containers such as plastic bottles or aluminium/steel cans.

This deposit is refunded when the empty container is returned to a designated collection point, such as a shop or a reverse vending machine.

Action 3 – Deposit Return Scheme

DAERA will implement the Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers. This is due to go live from October 2027 to include PET plastic, steel, and aluminium drinks containers from 150ml to 3l to further drive-up recycling rates and reduce littering.

Question 3 - Do you agree with action 3 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

4. Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

WEEE refers to discarded electrical and electronic devices, such as computers, phones, household appliances, and lighting equipment. These products often contain critical raw materials like copper, lithium and cobalt, as well as hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, and flame retardants. Proper management of WEEE is essential to prevent environmental harm and recover resources.

Action 4 – WEEE Reform

DAERA will collaborate with Defra and the other Devolved Governments to implement WEEE Reform.

Question 4 - Do you agree with action 4 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

5. Carrier Bag Levy

The Carrier Bag Levy was introduced in Northern Ireland on 8 April 2013 through the introduction of The Single Use Carrier Bags Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 to address the environmental damage caused by the excessive use of carrier bags. Prior to its introduction, around 300 million bags were used annually across the region, contributing significantly to littler, landfill waste, and resource depletion. In April 2022 the levy increased to 25p per bag and still contains some exemptions, including an exemption for bags used to contain hot foods or hot drinks intended for consumption away from the premises on which they are sold.

Action 5 – Carrier Bag Levy

DAERA will continue to administer the levy and ensure the revenue is allocated to additional environmental projects within Northern Ireland

Question 5 - Do you agree with action 5 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

6. Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP's)

Absorbent hygiene products (AHPs) include disposable nappies, incontinence pads, sanitary products, and other single-use items designed to absorb bodily fluids. Due to their mixed material composition, often combining plastics, cellulose, and superabsorbent polymers, AHPs are challenging to recycle and are typically disposed of in landfill or through energy recovery processes.

Action 6 – Absorbent Hygiene Products

DAERA will support WRAP in conducting an AHP collection study into the separation of AHP waste.

Question 6 - Do you agree with action 6 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

7. Waste Levies

Levies applied to waste products offer a range of benefits for waste prevention, particularly when designed to influence consumer behaviour, support sustainable alternatives, and fund waste prevention initiatives.

Levies create a direct financial incentive for individuals and businesses to reduce waste. For example, charges on single-use items like plastic bags have led to dramatic reductions in consumption. By making wasteful choices more expensive, levies encourage consumers to opt for reusable or more sustainable alternatives.

Action 7 – Waste Levies

DAERA will continue to tackle the problem of littering and work with stakeholders to advance the circular economy including the potential for introducing bans or levies on certain problematic product materials.

Question 7 - Do you agree with action 7 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

8. Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan

DAERA's Plastic Pollution Plan is Northern Ireland's strategic approach to tackling plastic waste and its environmental impacts. The plan aims to reduce plastic pollution, particularly in marine environments, and to support the transition to a circular economy where resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised. It builds on previous initiatives, such as the successful removal of unnecessary single-use plastics (SUP) from the government estate and aligns with broader UK and EU commitments on waste prevention and resource efficiency.

Action 8 – Plastic Pollution Plan

DAERA will publish a Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland to achieve a reduction in plastic pollution.

Question 8 - Do you agree with action 8 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

9. European Week for Waste Reduction

The European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) is a major annual campaign across Europe that promotes awareness and action on sustainable resource and waste management. In Northern Ireland, it is coordinated by WRAP and supported by DAERA.

Local councils, businesses, schools, and community groups are encouraged to register and carry out awareness-raising actions. Participants can access toolkits,

communication resources, and even enter the EWWR Awards for outstanding initiatives.

Action 9 – European Week for Waste Reduction

DAERA will continue to support the European Week for Waste Reduction and will seek to build upon the outcomes and successes generated through participation in its associated competitions.

Question 9 - Do you agree with action 9 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

10. Circular Councils

DAERA delivery partner, Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN), through its Local Authority Forums is developing a co-created education programme with councils to raise awareness of the circular economy and waste hierarchy among council staff and elected members. They will showcase and celebrate reuse and repair initiatives currently being delivered by councils and to identify further opportunities for collaboration, innovation and public engagement.

Action 10 – Circular Councils

DAERA will assist NIRN to establish a Circular Councils network and develop a co-created waste prevention education programme with councils.

Question 10 - Do you agree with action 10 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**

- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

11. Waste Prevention Metrics

Waste prevention metrics are essential tools for evaluating the effectiveness of policies, programmes, and interventions aimed at reducing the generation of waste at source. Current waste prevention metrics in Northern Ireland and across the UK face several challenges that limit their effectiveness in guiding policy and evaluating progress. One of the most significant issues is the incomplete coverage of data. In Northern Ireland, detailed monitoring is largely confined to municipal waste collected by councils, which represents only about 10% of total waste.

Action 11 – Waste Prevention Metrics

DAERA will support NIRN to explore the establishment of a framework of metrics to monitor, evaluate, and report on waste prevention efforts across Northern Ireland.

Question 11 - Do you agree with action 11 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

12. Circular Communities

Circular Communities are grassroots initiatives that place community at the heart of the circular economy. These communities focus on waste reduction, reuse, repair, and sharing, creating local hubs where people can come together to extend the life of products, reduce consumption, and build social connections.

Examples include repair cafés, community fridges, tool libraries, and upcycling workshops, all designed to make sustainability accessible and practical for everyone

Action 12 – Circular Communities

DAERA will support NIRN to develop & deliver a Circular Communities Programme to embed reuse & repair into everyday community life.

Question 12 - Do you agree with action 12 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

13. Recognised Awareness Days

Recognised waste awareness days play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and reducing environmental impact. These days serve as focal points for education and advocacy, helping citizens and businesses understand the consequences of waste and the benefits of resource efficiency. By highlighting issues such as plastic pollution, food waste, and electronic waste, they encourage people to rethink consumption habits and adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Action 13 – Recognised Awareness Days

DAERA will support NIRN to co-ordinate a schedule of recognised awareness day campaigns.

Question 13 - Do you agree with action 13 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

14. Love Food Hate Waste Communications Campaign

The Love Food Hate Waste campaign is a UK-wide initiative launched in 2007 by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to tackle the growing issue of food waste, particularly in households. Its core mission is to help people reduce the amount of food they throw away by raising awareness, changing behaviours, and providing practical tools and advice.

Action 14 – Consumer Food Waste Prevention

DAERA will maintain its partnership with WRAP to support the delivery of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, aimed at preventing consumer food waste. DAERA and WRAP will co-develop follow-up initiatives designed to strengthen behavioural change and enhance messaging around food waste prevention.

Question 14 - Do you agree with action 14 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

15. UK Food and Drink Pact

The UK Food and Drink Pact, formerly known as the Courtauld Commitment 2030, is a voluntary agreement led by WRAP that brings together nearly 200 organisations across the food and drink supply chain including businesses, trade bodies, local authorities, and charities to tackle key sustainability challenges.

The Pact aims to build a circular food system that supports the planet, people, and business.

Action 15 – UK Food and Drink Pact

DAERA will continue to support WRAP with the UK Food and Drink Pact to deliver against UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: a 50% per capita reduction in food and drink waste by 2030 vs the UK 2007 baseline

Question 15 - Do you agree with action 15 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

16. Food Redistribution

Large quantities of edible food are wasted every year by producers, retailers, and consumers. This not only represents a loss of valuable resources such as water, energy, and labour but also contributes to environmental degradation through increased greenhouse gas emissions from landfill waste. Many individuals and families across Northern Ireland also face food poverty, struggling to access sufficient, nutritious food on a regular basis.

Food redistribution involves collecting surplus food, often from farms, manufacturers, supermarkets, and hospitality businesses and redirecting it to people in need through charities, food banks, and community organisations.

Action 16 – Food Redistribution

DAERA will work in partnership with NIRN to collaborate with food redistribution networks to reduce avoidable food waste by enhancing their visibility and facilitating connections with businesses and public sector organisations. DAERA will provide support for targeted projects focused on food waste prevention.

Question 16 - Do you agree with action 16 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

17. Industrial Symbiosis

Industrial symbiosis is a collaborative approach where traditionally separate industries work together to exchange materials, energy, water, and by products in ways that create mutual economic and environmental benefits. It is a key strategy in the circular economy, aiming to keep resources in productive use for longer and reduce waste generation.

Action 17 – Industrial Symbiosis

DAERA will continue to collaborate with Invest NI to promote its waste prevention initiatives, particularly those relating to resource efficiency and industrial symbiosis

Question 17 - Do you agree with action 17 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

18. Eco- Schools

Eco-Schools is the world's largest environmental education programme, empowering young people to lead sustainability efforts in their schools and communities. The programme began in 1994 and now spans 101 countries, with

over 52,000 registered schools and more than 13.7 million students participating globally.

The programme follows a seven-step Framework that guides schools through forming eco-committees, conducting environmental reviews, creating action plans, linking sustainability to the curriculum, and engaging the wider community. Schools work on up to 14 themes, including biodiversity, climate change, energy, litter, marine, transport, and waste.

Action 18 – Eco-Schools

DAERA will further support the Eco-Schools Programme to embed waste prevention and circular economy principles into the curriculum.

Question 18 - Do you agree with action 18 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

19. Circular Schools

The Circular Schools Programme in Northern Ireland is an educational initiative designed to embed circular economy and waste prevention principles into school communities. Its core aim is to help pupils understand how resources can be kept in use for as long as possible, reducing waste and promoting sustainability. Rather than focusing solely on recycling, the programme encourages schools to rethink consumption patterns, repair and reuse materials, and design out waste from everyday activities.

Action 19 – Circular Schools

DAERA will support NIRN to promote reuse and repair in school communities.

Question 19 - Do you agree with action 19 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**

- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

20. Support to the Third Sector & Zero Waste Projects

DAERA provides targeted support to the third sector in Northern Ireland to help tackle waste and promote circular economy practices. This includes funding, strategic partnerships, and programme delivery aimed at empowering charities, social enterprises, and community groups to reduce consumption, increase reuse, and divert waste from landfill.

Action 20 – Support to the Third Sector for Zero Waste/Circular Economy Projects

DAERA will continue to provide support to the Third Sector for zero waste/circular economy projects as part of ongoing funding operations and investigate new ways to do so.

Question 20 - Do you agree with action 20 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- Agree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)

21. Reuse & Repair Week

Reuse and Repair Week 2025 marked a significant milestone for sustainability in Northern Ireland, running from 3rd to 9th March 2025. Led by the Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN) and funded by DAERA through the Carrier Bag Levy, this was the first time an entire UK region hosted a dedicated Repair Week. The

initiative aimed to foster a culture of repair and reuse, helping individuals and communities extend the life of everyday items, from textiles and furniture to bikes and electronics, while reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Action 21 – Reuse & Repair Week

DAERA will support NIRN to establish an annual Reuse & Repair Week to promote waste prevention across Northern Ireland.

Question 21 - Do you agree with action 21 above? If your answer is no, please explain why.

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

22. Waste Prevention Programme

The Waste Prevention Programme has previously been published as a standalone document, aimed at recognising its importance in its own right, however, consideration is being given to integrating it into the Resources and Waste Management Strategy. As waste prevention is a fundamental component of effective resource and waste policy and the core purpose of the Strategy is to set the strategic direction for waste policy over the next six years, embedding waste prevention priorities within the Strategy could ensure clearer alignment, strengthen policy coherence, and signal a more ambitious, long-term commitment to reducing waste at source.

Question 22 - Do you agree that the Waste Prevention Programme should be incorporated into the Waste Management Strategy?

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

23. Equality Screening Assessment

An Equality Screening is one of the key tools to enable public authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations and mainstream the Section 75 equality and good relations duties into policy development. It provides an opportunity to improve decision-making, support 'evidence based' policy making and can help improve a public authority's service provision through a systematic review of all services, policies, procedures, practices and/or decisions.

Question 23 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Equality Screening Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme?

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

24. Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Public authorities must undertake a Rural Needs Impact Assessment when developing, adopting, implementing or revising polices, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment is a step-by-step process aimed at helping public authorities to ensure that the due regard duty imposed under section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ('the Act') duty is fulfilled.

Question 24 - Do you agree with the conclusions of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Waste Prevention Programme?

- **Agree**
- **Disagree**
- **No opinion**
- **If you disagree, please explain your answer, free text (max 500 words)**

HOW TO RESPOND

This consultation will run for 12 weeks, opening on 20 April 2026 and closing at 23:59 on 10 July 2026.

Responses to this consultation are to be completed online at the following link: https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/waste-prevention-programme-from-waste-to-worth

What we will do with your responses

When the consultation has closed, we will analyse your responses. Once analysed we will use these to publish a final Waste Prevention Programme.

ANNEX 1 Publication of Responses

Confidentiality

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation may be disclosed on request. The Department can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations as these provide guidance on the legal position of any information given by you in response to this consultation. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Data Protection

Section 8 (e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Department in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider information supplied to it as confidential in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office: Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Email: ni@ico.org.uk Website: https://ico.org.uk

ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036
Attachments	Appendix 1 Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036
File Reference (if applicable)	65374
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: Within agreed budgets
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening will be required if agreed
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Multiple Choose an item. If multiple: Economic and Environmental

Background

The Council's new Corporate Plan sets a clear direction for delivering high-quality, sustainable and resilient services that meet the needs of our residents, businesses

and visitors. The Property Maintenance Strategy 2026–2036 has been developed to support these priorities by ensuring that the Council's estate, comprising almost 200 diverse assets across the Borough, is managed in a proactive, efficient and financially responsible manner.

The 2016 Property Maintenance Strategy identified the need for a fundamental shift away from the predominantly reactive maintenance practices operated by the legacy councils. At that time, approximately 75% of maintenance expenditure was reactive, creating financial uncertainty, increased downtime and reduced service quality. Over the past decade, the Council has successfully transitioned to a planned and preventative maintenance model, with 78% of expenditure now directed to planned works. This shift has materially improved the condition, reliability and sustainability of the estate and established strong foundations for the next phase of strategic development.

The new strategy builds upon this progress and aligns maintenance activity with wider Council objectives, including environmental sustainability, statutory compliance, good governance and continuous improvement. It reflects emerging legislative requirements; most notably the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and the need to further enhance the resilience, energy performance and long-term value of the Council's property portfolio.

Key Issues

1. Modernising and Strengthening Maintenance Practices
Significant progress has been made in embedding planned preventative maintenance across the estate. The strategy outlines the continued use of cyclical condition surveys, structured refurbishment planning, statutory compliance regimes, and the integration of AssetHQ to monitor performance and prioritise works.

2. Growing Sustainability and Net-Zero Obligations
The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 requires a 48% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net-zero by 2050. Meeting these targets will necessitate a substantial and sustained programme of energy-saving initiatives, integration of low-carbon technologies, and enhanced cross-departmental working. The improved condition of the estate now enables increased investment in Energy Saving Initiatives (ESIs) as reactive pressures continue to fall.

3. Long-Term Financial Planning
The current annual maintenance budget of approximately £3.4 million reflects the Council's commitment to proactive asset management. However, the ongoing replacement of mechanical and electrical assets, refurbishment of play areas, enhancements to public-realm assets, and harbour and car-park works will require careful long-term financial planning and prioritisation. The strategy clearly sets out the expected investment levels required over the next decade, including a £5 million rolling programme for M&E replacements and growing allocations for energy-efficiency work.

4. Ensuring Compliance and Governance
Statutory obligations relating to electrical safety, fire safety, lifting equipment, legionella and other regulated systems continue to expand. The strategy strengthens

governance arrangements and outlines improved oversight of third-party operated buildings, alongside greater technical involvement in new capital projects to ensure long-term affordability and maintainability.

5. Supporting Service Delivery and Community Outcomes
Well-maintained assets are essential for providing safe, reliable and fit-for-purpose facilities. The strategy includes targeted approaches to high-risk and high-use asset groups such as play parks, public conveniences, leisure centres, administrative buildings and public-realm spaces.

Next Steps
The following actions will support implementation of the strategy:

- Embed the new 10-year maintenance and refurbishment planning cycle, ensuring surveys, reporting and budget-setting processes are synchronised and transparent.
- Progressively scale investment in energy-saving measures, in line with statutory climate obligations and the long-term transition to a low-carbon estate.
- Deliver annual condition-survey programmes, ensuring that each building is surveyed on a three-year cycle, enabling data-driven prioritisation of works.
- Apply the agreed thresholds for refurbishment and replacement, ensuring investment is aligned with asset condition, statutory compliance and long-term strategic value.
- Strengthen cross-departmental collaboration, particularly around future capital planning, sustainability programmes and service transformation initiatives.
- Maintain a strong focus on public-realm and harbour assets, ensuring high-profile areas continue to meet public expectations and support the Borough's attractiveness.
- Monitor performance and report progress, with flexibility to adapt the strategy in response to budgetary, legislative or organisational changes.

Summary
The Property Maintenance Strategy 2026–2036 represents a major step forward in the strategic management of the Council's estate. It builds on a decade of transformation that successfully shifted the organisation from reactive to planned maintenance, significantly improved the condition and reliability of its buildings and assets, and placed the Council on a stronger footing to meet future challenges.

The strategy responds directly to the priorities of the new Corporate Plan and acknowledges the scale of the Council's obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. It sets out clear priorities for planned maintenance, refurbishment, statutory compliance, sustainability and long-term financial stewardship.

By adopting a structured, data-driven and proactive approach, the Council will ensure that its estate remains safe, compliant, resilient and aligned with community needs. The strategy provides a clear framework for future investment, supports long-term budget predictability and underpins the Council's broader ambition to deliver sustainable and high-quality services across the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Approves the implementation of the attached Property Maintenance Strategy 2026-2036.

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Property Maintenance Strategy

2026–2036

Version 1: June 2026



Document Control

Policy Title	Property Maintenance Strategy 2026–2036
Document Reference	POL – ENV – 426 - 1
Policy Summary	This strategy outlines the Council's approach to maintenance for the period 2026–2036.
Review Requirements	Formal review at the end of the period, and earlier if required to reflect emerging legislative requirements, changes in service delivery, budgetary considerations or shifts in corporate priorities.
Document Owner/Job title	Head of Estates
Document Owner is responsible for ensuring that it is reviewed in line with the requirements of the Council's Policy Review Procedure and is kept up to date.	
Council Approval Date	June 2026

Version Control Record

Version Number	Version Date	Author(s)	Comments
1.0	June 2026	Head of Estates	Council approval / Policy established

Consultation

	CLT	HOST	SCC	Unions
Date completed	May 2026	April 2026	n/a	n/a

Screening

Reference No	426
EQIA Required?	Yes No

The current version of this document is available to all individuals accessing the Council's information and other associated assets and is published on the Council's intranet.

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1 Introduction

The Council's new Corporate Plan sets out a clear ambition to deliver high quality, sustainable and resilient services for our residents, businesses and visitors. This Property Maintenance Strategy 2026–2036 has been developed to support those priorities by ensuring that our estate is managed in a proactive, efficient and financially responsible manner.

The foundations for this approach were established in the original Property Maintenance Strategy approved in 2016, which highlighted that both legacy councils were operating with a predominantly reactive maintenance model and emphasised the need to transition toward a planned, strategic and preventative maintenance regime. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in achieving this shift, with planned maintenance now forming the majority of our maintenance activity and expenditure.

This new strategy builds on that progress and sets out the next phase of the Council's approach. It reflects not only the maturing of our maintenance practices but also the wider organisational priorities contained within the Corporate Plan, including sustainability, financial stewardship, good governance and continuous improvement. It also recognises the growing need to enhance the resilience, energy performance and long-term viability of our estate in response to new legislative requirements, evolving service demands and increasing environmental responsibilities.

This Strategy supports delivery of the Council's Climate Action Plan (Mitigation) and Climate Adaptation Plan by embedding carbon reduction, energy efficiency and climate resilience considerations within planned maintenance, refurbishment and asset replacement decisions.

By aligning our maintenance activities with corporate objectives and embedding a more strategic, data-informed and forward-looking approach, this strategy will support the effective management of nearly 200 assets across the Borough, ensuring that they remain safe, compliant, fit for purpose and capable of supporting the Council's long-term vision.

The estate of Ards and North Down Borough Council comprises almost 200 properties, varying greatly in age and condition. The following chart shows its makeup:

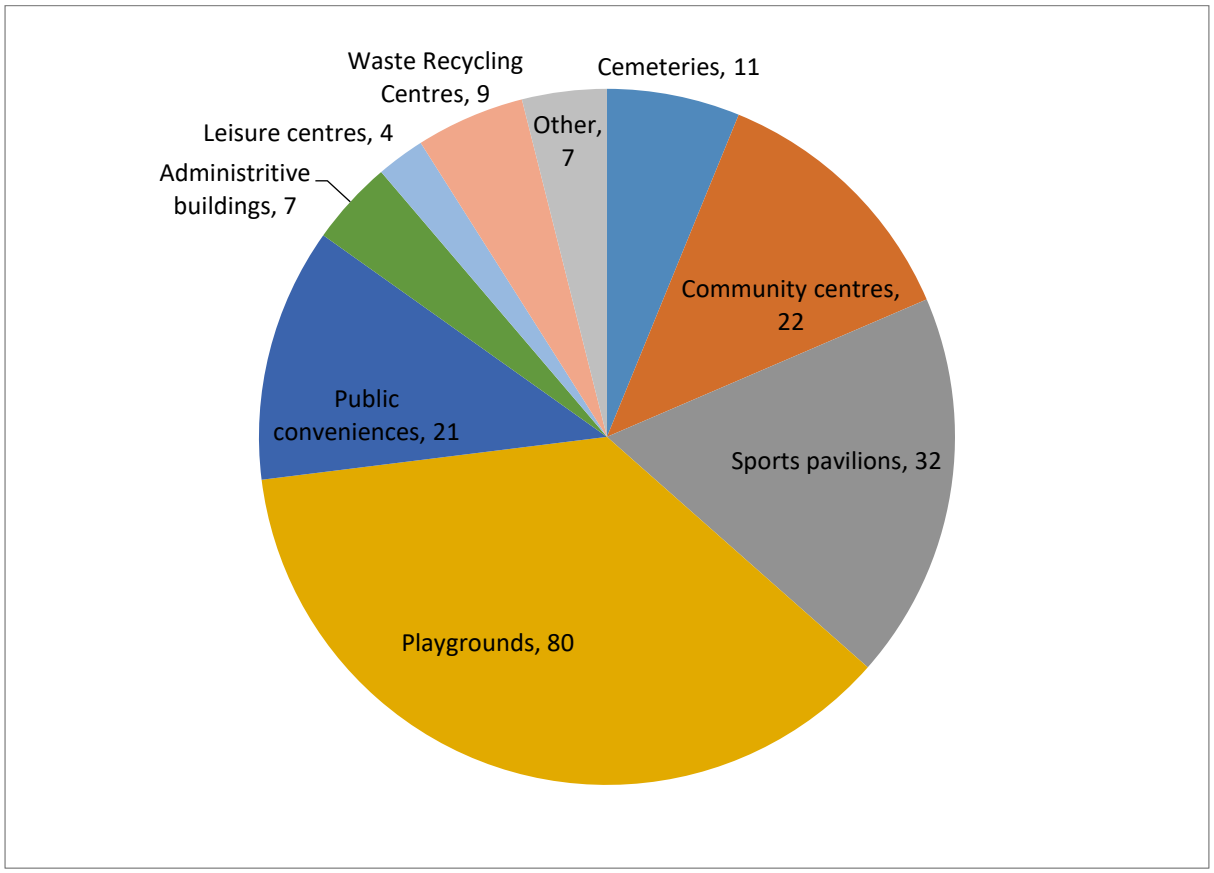


Figure 1. Breakdown of Ards & North Down Borough Council's Estate

There are many components required to effectively manage our estate, including:

- Acquisitions & Disposals
- Suitability
- Operation
- Design

- Maintenance
- Inspection

Each of these elements will be fully explored in a future Asset Management Strategy; this document will primarily focus on maintenance and inspection but also touch on suitability and design.

The effective maintenance of our estate is vital to:

- Ensure our buildings remain safe and operational
- Ensure compliance with legislation
- Ensure our residents and visitors have access to good-quality, fit-for-purpose facilities

2 Evolving Maintenance Practices

There are two overarching types of maintenance: reactive and planned. Insufficient attention to planned maintenance can potentially lead to a number of pitfalls:

- Budget uncertainty
- Increased downtime of assets
- Poor appearance of properties, generally with potential H&S implications
- Poor perception by the general public

Planned maintenance also supports climate adaptation by anticipating the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, allowing assets to be strengthened, protected and upgraded before failures occur.

Therefore, in order to mitigate these factors, we have made considerable investments in our planned maintenance activities over the past 10 years.

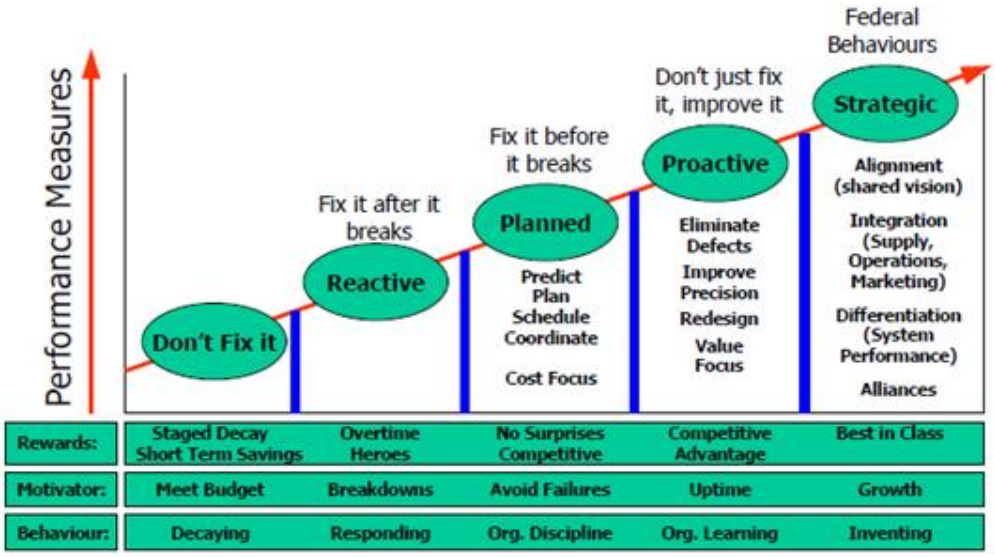
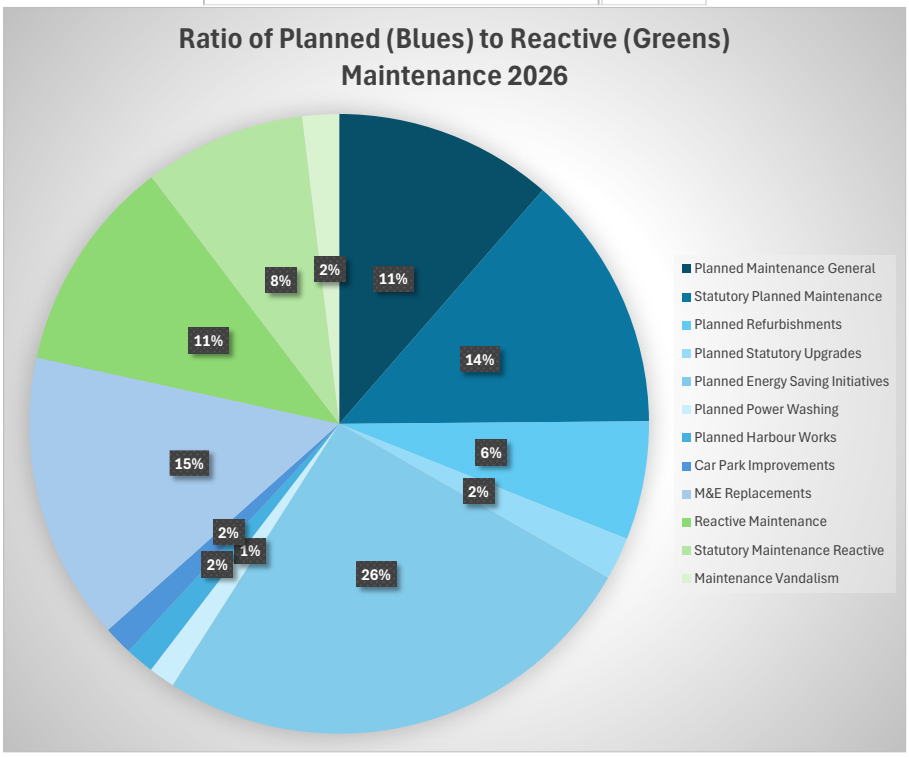


Figure 2. Journey from Repair-Focused to Reliability-Focused Culture

The Property Maintenance Strategy approved in 2016 highlighted that, in 2014/15, both legacy councils operated with a maintenance cost ratio of approximately 25% planned to 75% reactive. A key objective was therefore established to shift towards a more proactive, strategically managed estate by embedding a strong planned preventative maintenance approach. Best practice recommends that 75% of maintenance expenditure should be planned. Officers are pleased to report that the 2026/27 approved budget confirms this target has been exceeded, with 78% of maintenance costs now allocated to planned works and 22% to reactive works.

Planned Maintenance General	11%
Statutory Planned Maintenance	13%
Planned Refurbishments	6%
Planned Statutory Upgrades	2%
Planned Energy Saving Initiatives	26%
Planned Power Washing	1%
Planned Harbour Works	2%
Car Park Improvements	2%
M&E Replacements	15%
Total Planned	**78%**
Reactive Maintenance	11%
Statutory Maintenance Reactive	8%
Maintenance Vandalism	2%
Total Reactive	**22%**



3 10-Year Plan

Now that we have achieved the recognised best-practice balance between planned and reactive maintenance, we can redirect resources toward the continuous improvement of our estate. This enables us to:

- Enhance sustainability through better energy management, more efficient material and plant choices, and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.
- Deliver higher-quality facilities, moving beyond routine upkeep to genuine improvement and modernisation.

- Improve long-term financial predictability, with fewer unplanned failures and more accurate budgeting for future works.
- Reduce whole-life asset costs by intervening at optimal times, extending the lifespan of buildings and equipment.
- Minimise operational disruption, as fewer reactive failures mean fewer closures, downtime issues, or emergency interventions.
- Strengthen compliance and governance, ensuring assets are maintained in accordance with statutory and industry requirements through structured planned programmes.
- Enable more strategic decision-making, as budget is no longer consumed by unpredictable breakdowns and can instead be aligned with organisational priorities and long-term estate plans.
- Free capacity for innovation, allowing officers to focus on improvement projects, energy-saving initiatives, and enhancements that add value rather than managing crisis-level repairs.
- Support better contractor and supply-chain management, with planned works enabling more efficient procurement, improved pricing, and stronger performance management.
- Improve stakeholder confidence, demonstrating that the estate is being managed proactively, efficiently and in line with recognised best practice.
- In collaboration with colleagues in other departments, consider change of use and potential investment/commercial opportunities of buildings within the estate.

Over the lifetime of this 10-year strategy, our priority will be to embed and advance the principles outlined above, moving beyond simply maintaining our estate to actively enhancing its performance, resilience and long-term value. With the recognised best-practice balance between planned and reactive maintenance now achieved, we are positioned to focus on strategic improvements that strengthen the sustainability, efficiency and overall quality of our assets. This will include targeted investment in energy-saving initiatives, modernisation of

building systems, adoption of more sustainable materials and technologies, and the creation of a more future-ready estate aligned with wider organisational and environmental goals.

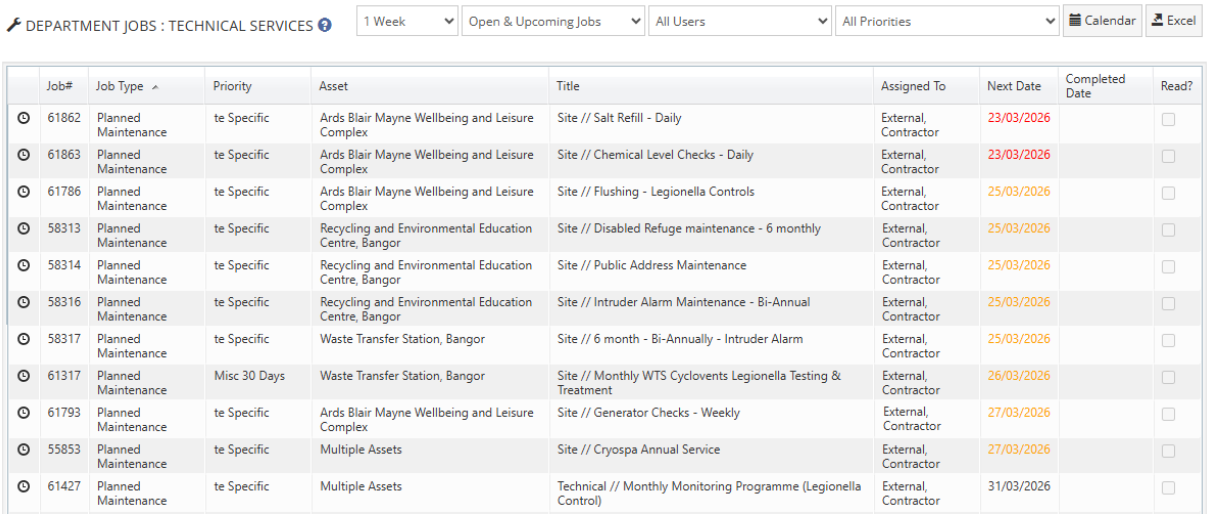
Over the lifetime of this strategy, it is anticipated that maintenance and investment decisions will increasingly reflect future climate risks, including increased rainfall, storm intensity, coastal exposure and higher summer temperatures.

Whilst we will continue to refine and strengthen our approach over the lifetime of this strategy, the core foundations of effective estate management such as statutory compliance and robust condition surveys remain essential. These established practices will continue to anchor our work as we move into the operational detail outlined in the following sections.

4 Planned Preventative Maintenance (including Statutory Compliance)

The Technical Service Unit operates a robust Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) regime to ensure that all maintenance duties, in line with statutory requirements and best-practice guidelines, are carried out across the estate.

We track performance against the schedule through regular monitoring using our web-based asset management software, Asset HQ.


DEPARTMENT JOBS : TECHNICAL SERVICES

1 Week | Open & Upcoming Jobs | All Users | All Priorities | Calendar | Excel

Job#	Job Type	Priority	Asset	Title	Assigned To	Next Date	Completed Date	Read?
61862	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex	Site // Salt Refill - Daily	External, Contractor	23/03/2026		
61863	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex	Site // Chemical Level Checks - Daily	External, Contractor	23/03/2026		
61786	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex	Site // Flushing - Legionella Controls	External, Contractor	25/03/2026		
58313	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Recycling and Environmental Education Centre, Bangor	Site // Disabled Refuge maintenance - 6 monthly	External, Contractor	25/03/2026		
58314	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Recycling and Environmental Education Centre, Bangor	Site // Public Address Maintenance	External, Contractor	25/03/2026		
58316	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Recycling and Environmental Education Centre, Bangor	Site // Intruder Alarm Maintenance - Bi-Annual	External, Contractor	25/03/2026		
58317	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Waste Transfer Station, Bangor	Site // 6 month - Bi-Annually - Intruder Alarm	External, Contractor	25/03/2026		
61317	Planned Maintenance	Misc 30 Days	Waste Transfer Station, Bangor	Site // Monthly WTS Cyclovents Legionella Testing & Treatment	External, Contractor	26/03/2026		
61793	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex	Site // Generator Checks - Weekly	External, Contractor	27/03/2026		
55853	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Multiple Assets	Site // Cryospa Annual Service	External, Contractor	27/03/2026		
61427	Planned Maintenance	te Specific	Multiple Assets	Technical // Monthly Monitoring Programme (Legionella Control)	External, Contractor	31/03/2026		

Figure 4. Screenshot of Planned Maintenance within Asset HQ

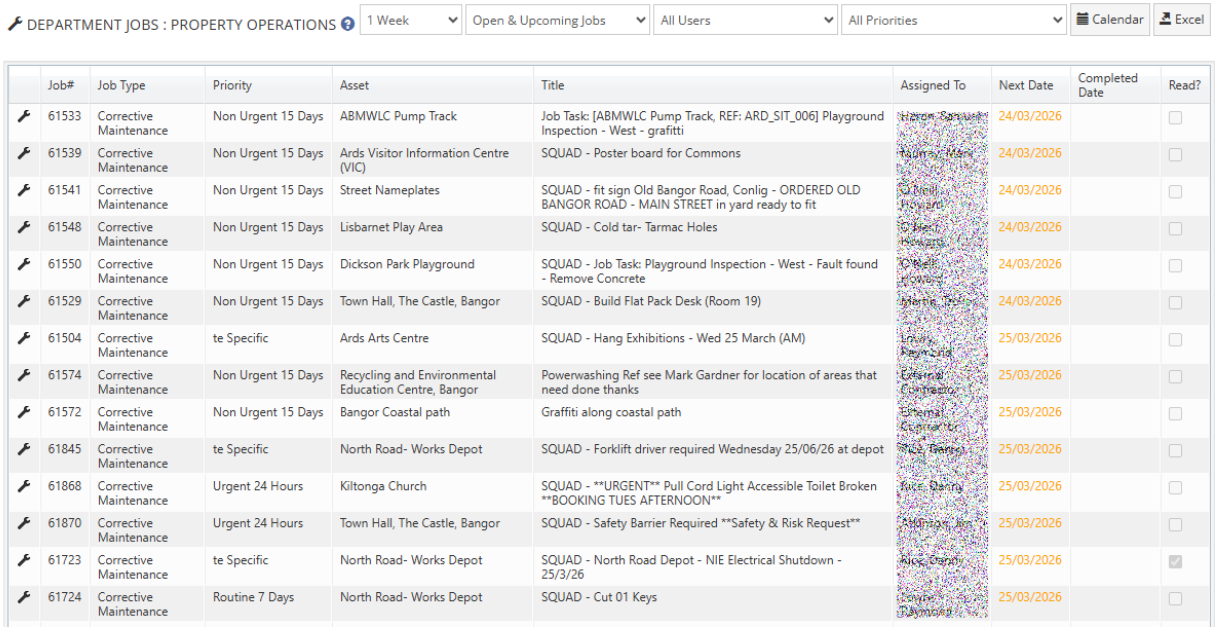
5 Reactive Maintenance

Reactive Maintenance is predominantly (with the exception of repairs related to statutory maintenance) carried out by our Property Maintenance team and direct labour workforce, supplemented by contractors.

Jobs are reported via Asset HQ, where users assign a priority rating for their request:

- 24-hour
- 7-day
- 15-day
- 30-day

The Property Maintenance team also uses Asset HQ to monitor progress and performance against targets.


DEPARTMENT JOBS : PROPERTY OPERATIONS | 1 Week | Open & Upcoming Jobs | All Users | All Priorities | Calendar | Excel

Job#	Job Type	Priority	Asset	Title	Assigned To	Next Date	Completed Date	Read?
61533	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	ABMWLC Pump Track	Job Task: [ABMWLC Pump Track, REF: ARD_SIT_006] Playground Inspection - West - grafitti		24/03/2026		
61539	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Ards Visitor Information Centre (VIC)	SQUAD - Poster board for Commons		24/03/2026		
61541	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Street Nameplates	SQUAD - fit sign Old Bangor Road, Conlig - ORDERED OLD BANGOR ROAD - MAIN STREET in yard ready to fit		24/03/2026		
61548	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Lisbarnet Play Area	SQUAD - Cold tar- Tarmac Holes		24/03/2026		
61550	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Dickson Park Playground	SQUAD - Job Task: Playground Inspection - West - Fault found - Remove Concrete		24/03/2026		
61529	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Town Hall, The Castle, Bangor	SQUAD - Build Flat Pack Desk (Room 19)		24/03/2026		
61504	Corrective Maintenance	te Specific	Ards Arts Centre	SQUAD - Hang Exhibitions - Wed 25 March (AM)		25/03/2026		
61574	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Recycling and Environmental Education Centre, Bangor	Powerwashing Ref see Mark Gardner for location of areas that need done thanks		25/03/2026		
61572	Corrective Maintenance	Non Urgent 15 Days	Bangor Coastal path	Graffiti along coastal path		25/03/2026		
61845	Corrective Maintenance	te Specific	North Road- Works Depot	SQUAD - Forklift driver required Wednesday 25/06/26 at depot		25/03/2026		
61868	Corrective Maintenance	Urgent 24 Hours	Kiltonga Church	SQUAD - **URGENT** Pull Cord Light Accessible Toilet Broken **BOOKING TUES AFTERNOON**		25/03/2026		
61870	Corrective Maintenance	Urgent 24 Hours	Town Hall, The Castle, Bangor	SQUAD - Safety Barrier Required **Safety & Risk Request**		25/03/2026		
61723	Corrective Maintenance	te Specific	North Road- Works Depot	SQUAD - North Road Depot - NIE Electrical Shutdown - 25/3/26		25/03/2026		
61724	Corrective Maintenance	Routine 7 Days	North Road- Works Depot	SQUAD - Cut 01 Keys		25/03/2026		

Figure 5. Screenshot of Reactive Maintenance within Asset HQ

6 Condition Surveys

Each year our Technical Officers will undertake condition surveys on approximately one third of the estate; thereby ensuring that each property is subject to a survey every three years (in line with industry best practice).

The survey will assign a condition-based quality score to each element of the building, including:

- Energy efficiency
- Car parks and surrounding areas
- Roof
- Rainwater goods
- External walls
- Windows
- Stairs
- Floor coverings
- Heating and plumbing
- Electrics
- Climate risk indicators such as exposure to severe weather and flood risk

However, Officers understand that it is not simply a building's condition that determines its need or suitability for refurbishment works; therefore, two additional criteria have been introduced.

6.1 Cognisance of Other Strategies

This criterion is designed to take into account the possibility of an asset being replaced, sold, developed or declared surplus as part of other Council plans and strategies.

The scoring ranges from 1: highly unlikely within the next 10 years, to 4: a planned future project within the next 2 years.

6.2 Social Adjustment

This criterion is designed to take into account the requirement for social need and service provision within the current stock of buildings. Factors such as the building's current layout, size and facilities will be taken into account when scoring.

The scoring ranges from 4: Good – an extensively used facility with high occupancy, performing as intended and operating efficiently, to 1: Bad – underutilised and requiring major improvements or redesign to be fit for purpose.

These two criteria will help ensure that our building stock remains fit for purpose in terms of both design and condition.

6.3 The Schedule of Surveys

Each building is grouped with other buildings of the same purpose/type and scheduled for survey together in the same year.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Cemeteries & assoc. buildings	Tourism Buildings	Administrative Buildings
Community Centres	Public Toilets	Leisure Centres
Leased-out Buildings	Waste Recycling Centres & Transfer Stations	Sports Pavilions

Figure 6. Cyclical Condition Surveys

Once the surveys are complete, the required remedial works will be costed, prioritised and grouped into refurbishment projects, and each property will be given a percentage quality score.

Urgent works (such as H&S issues) highlighted in the surveys will be logged as "Reactive Maintenance" for immediate repair.

6.4 Cross-Departmental Working

Cognisance of wider strategies and plans for these assets is essential to meet the expectations of our internal customers and reduce the likelihood of spending significant sums of money on assets that may be disposed of or replaced in the foreseeable future. Therefore, discussions with relevant officers take place at the time of survey, and the proposed works reflect any known plans for the assets concerned.

7 Planned Refurbishment Works

The refurbishment works lag one financial year behind the surveys, allowing for greater budgetary forecasting and ensuring a constant stream of projects that is not affected by any delay in the completion of the condition surveys.

Once the condition reports are complete, officers will prepare an annual report that highlights all planned schemes along with their percentage (condition) scores.

Officers recognise that whilst it would be desirable to have an exceptionally high standard of maintenance across the entire estate, it may not be practical in terms of the Council's overall budget situation. Therefore, before budgets are set at the end of the annual estimates process, a report to Committee will identify the value of works associated with the list of planned schemes, in the context of a threshold or 'benchmark' of acceptability.

The Council will then have an opportunity to determine whether the potential for any additional allocation to the prevailing maintenance budgets should be explored/prioritised during the process of preparing the estimates for the forthcoming year.

Depending on the overall financial position of the Council in any given year and the scale of competing pressures across other services and priorities, the decision-making process would allow members to revise the threshold/benchmark upwards in order to further improve the

quality of our buildings where finances can be made available or conversely, if budgets are under pressure, lower the threshold.

For example:

Threshold for Action	Indicative Value of work required*
Buildings scoring 60% or less	£200k
Buildings scoring 70% or less (recommended default)	£300k
Buildings scoring 80% or less	£400k

* The value of work shown is purely illustrative and will fluctuate from year to year depending on the condition of the buildings surveyed.

As stated above, these costs will generally sit within the revenue budget; however, larger projects may be capitalised where deemed appropriate. The threshold for action will still be applied in such cases, and the report to Committee will note whether projects are to be funded from revenue or capital budgets.

7.1 Planned Operational Works

In addition to the condition-based works arising from the condition surveys, there is also a need to carry out essential operational works that will be required regardless of the condition of the building. These may arise from:

a. a change in use,
b. localised deterioration to the point where service delivery is likely to be affected (where the overall condition score is not necessarily lowered below the threshold for action); or
c. legislative changes (for example asbestos removal, electrical wiring upgrades or emergency lighting upgrades).

These works will mostly be requested by the department responsible for the building and may be subject to business case sign-off where appropriate.

The budget for these works will sit alongside the condition-based works and will be agreed in the same report to Council.

8 Refurbish or Replace?

Rather than spending significant sums of money refurbishing older buildings in poor condition, an agreed threshold should be established at which a decision will be taken to replace the asset (subject to Planning and NIEA restrictions). The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors state that such a threshold should be 85% of the rebuild cost of the property, so Council deemed this to be a reasonable benchmark to adopt.

Therefore, if for example a basic public toilet building was valued at £50,000, it would be rebuilt rather than refurbished if the proposed refurbishment project value was estimated at more than £42.5k.

9 Play Areas

With around 82 play areas within the Borough, they present a significant maintenance liability. Furthermore, the purpose and target user group of play areas inherently create a requirement for an extremely robust and thorough maintenance regime.

Given these special circumstances, there is a requirement to operate a more intensive maintenance plan than for the rest of the estate, as recommended in BS 1176 and detailed below:

Daily Inspection (Routine) - Carried out by the Parks Operational Team to check for litter and empty bins and check for any issues that need reported for action.

Weekly Inspection (Routine) - Carried out by our in-house team. The main purpose of these inspections is to ensure the play area is safe to use. Evidence of anti-social behaviour is monitored, and repairs are made as necessary.

Quarterly Inspections (Operational) - Can be carried out by one of our technical officers or a specialist contractor. The purpose of this inspection is to carry out a more detailed inspection with a "fresh pair of eyes". Early signs of deterioration are noted, and individual items of equipment may be highlighted for replacement.

Annual Inspection - Carried out by an external contractor. This is a thorough inspection that independently risk-assesses and quality-scores every item within each play area.

Each of our 82 Play Areas represents a significant maintenance and capital investment. Replacement costs typically range from £85,000 to £250,000 depending on the tier of facility and the nature of the equipment, including specialist assets such as MUGAs, skateparks and pump tracks.

In line with recognised usage patterns and lifecycle expectations, Tier 1 play parks have an average lifespan of approximately eight years, Tier 2 play parks of ten years, and Tier 3 play parks of twelve years, reflecting the higher levels of wear experienced at larger and more heavily used sites. For MUGAs, skateparks, pump tracks and similar activity-based facilities, a replacement cycle of approximately fifteen years is envisaged. Each play area will be reviewed upon reaching these timeframes and, in conjunction with the respective independent inspector's report, an assessment of the need for replacement will be determined.

Based on these lifecycle requirements, independent assessments and usage levels, a sufficient annual capital budget is required to sustain the long-term replacement programme for play areas. The budget required will be reviewed regularly to account for inflationary pressures and evolving market costs. A 10-year Play Park Refurbishment Strategy, aligned to the

Council's broader Play Strategy, is currently being developed to support structured planning and prioritisation of future investment.

Annual refurbishment priorities are informed not only by the lifecycle timeframes outlined above but also by the results of independent annual inspections. Each play area is assigned a mean quality score, and these scores are used to generate a ranked list. Consistent with the Council's strategic approach to maintenance, the lowest scoring sites are prioritised for refurbishment within the available budget to ensure that investment is directed to areas of greatest need.

Where external funding opportunities arise, new or replacement playground projects will only be progressed where condition assessments indicate that substantial work is required. In such cases, the lowest scoring eligible play area will be put forward to ensure that external investment aligns with objective need and established refurbishment priorities.

All works relating to play areas will continue to be delivered in accordance with the Council's Policy for the Provision and Maintenance of Play Areas, ensuring compliance with relevant standards and supporting the long-term safety, quality and sustainability of these valued community assets.

10 Statutory Upgrades – Staying Abreast of Changing Legislation

As a local authority, it is essential that we maintain compliance with all our statutory obligations. This is particularly relevant to maintenance, as the vast majority of our buildings are accessed by the public, who rightly expect them to be fully compliant and safe. Some of the documents that govern the way we maintain our estate include:

- Lifting Equipment & Lifting Operations Regulations (LOLER)
- Fire detection & Fire alarm systems (BS5839)
- Emergency Lighting Regulations (BS5266)

- Pressure Systems Regulations
- IEE Wiring Regulations, BS7671 (18th Edition)
- The Control of Legionella in water systems (ACOP L8)

These documents stipulate the standards to which the various systems are to be designed, maintained and operated. They are all periodically revised to include significant improvements in safety or environmental performance. Our Technical team continually scan for changes to legislation so that we continue to stay fully compliant and ensure the estate operates as efficiently and safely as possible.

During any significant refurbishment work we will always take the opportunity to upgrade to the most recent regulatory requirements.

11 Planning for M&E Asset Replacement

Many types of mechanical and electrical (M&E) plant and equipment have very predictable lifespans. By analysing the relevant empirical data, we can predict with reasonable accuracy when certain types of plant and equipment are likely to fail. We can then use these predictions to forecast and plan for replacement expenditure. This is particularly relevant on large new-build sites such as Aurora, where many items of expensive plant were installed at the same time (i.e. during construction), have similar running hours, and are therefore likely to require replacement around the same time.

11.1 10-Year M&E Replacement Budgeting

Officers have compiled an asset list of all relevant M&E plant within the estate. This includes items such as boilers, air conditioning, generators, lifts and fire alarms. The installation date has been noted against each item and, from that, an expected replacement date has been calculated. Between 2026 and 2036, an estimated £5 million will be required to replace this plant. Historically, these assets were run until failure and replacements were funded through

reactive maintenance budgets. This was exceptionally difficult to manage due to the relatively unpredictable nature of failures and the greatly fluctuating costs from one year to the next.

We therefore introduced a 10 year rolling replacement plan that will:

- Spread the £5M costs out evenly at £500k per year.
- Devise a programme of replacement to utilise the annual budget.
- Review the programme each year, so that the most appropriate assets are selected for replacement.
- Reduce our reactive maintenance burden.
- Reduce the operational down time associated with failures and subsequent delays for parts delivery.

12 Planned Energy Saving Initiatives

Over the past decade, Council has invested heavily in improving the overall condition, resilience and compliance of its estate. This sustained programme of planned and reactive maintenance has significantly enhanced the quality of our buildings, enabling us to move from a predominantly repair focused model to one grounded in proactive asset management. With this improved baseline now established, resources can increasingly be redirected toward measures that strengthen the long-term sustainability and energy performance of our property portfolio.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a legally binding target for achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with an interim requirement for at least a 48% reduction in emissions by 2030. Meeting these obligations will require a structured and escalating programme of energy-saving initiatives across the estate. Recognising this, the Council has already taken steps to build internal capacity, creating specialist posts within the Estates Services structure to identify, assess and deliver energy-efficiency projects.

In support of this work, the Council will progressively increase its investment in energy efficiency improvements over the lifetime of this Strategy. An initial annual revenue budget allocation of £107k alongside a capital budget of £750,000 has been identified to commence delivery of priority Energy Saving Initiatives (ESIs). This level of funding will be kept under review to ensure that it remains proportionate to the statutory requirements arising from the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which mandates a 48% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

As the estate continues to mature and the demand for condition-based maintenance stabilises, additional resources will be redirected toward ESIs to accelerate carbon reduction and support the Council's wider sustainability objectives.

This strategic scaling up of investment will ensure that the Council is well positioned to meet its legislative obligations, respond to emerging technologies and deliver meaningful reductions in carbon emissions, energy consumption and whole life costs across the estate.

All proposed ESIs will be assessed using a cost-benefit methodology, ensuring that the most impactful projects are prioritised. Quarterly reporting to Council will provide transparency on the initiatives delivered, the savings achieved and the contribution made toward meeting carbon reduction targets.

This structured and scalable approach reflects the Council's commitment to embedding sustainability within all aspects of estate management and ensures that the momentum achieved through recent investments in property condition is effectively leveraged to support our transition to a more energy-efficient and environmentally responsible estate.

13 Sustainability

The Council recognises the critical importance of sustainability and the integral role it plays in the effective maintenance and long-term performance of our estate. As custodians of a diverse property portfolio, Officers are committed to embedding sustainable principles into all aspects of maintenance, refurbishment and operational decision making. This commitment reflects both our organisational values and the increasing environmental, financial and legislative imperatives associated with responsible asset management.

Sustainability considerations will be incorporated wherever practicable, including but not limited to:

- Selecting replacement components and systems that enhance the energy efficiency and environmental performance of our buildings, such as low energy lighting, efficient heat sources and modern building services technologies.
- Working with suppliers to ensure that construction materials are responsibly and sustainably sourced, supporting broader supply chain sustainability objectives.
- Ensuring that construction waste from maintenance and refurbishment projects is appropriately segregated, recycled and minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

Through these measures, we aim not only to reduce our environmental impact but also to support the wider programme of improving the condition, resilience and value of our estate.

13.1 Our Journey to Net Zero

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 establishes a legally binding pathway to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, including an interim requirement for at least a 48% reduction by 2030. Meeting these ambitious targets will require a sustained and structured approach to improving the energy efficiency of our estate, reducing carbon emissions and increasing the integration of renewable and low carbon technologies.

The significant investment made in recent years to improve the condition, compliance and reliability of our buildings has created a much stronger platform from which to advance our net zero objectives. As reactive failures reduce and planned maintenance becomes more predictable, resources can be increasingly redirected toward targeted Energy Saving Initiatives (ESIs) and broader sustainability measures.

Refurbishment projects continue to offer the most effective opportunity to incorporate energy efficient technologies, upgrade building systems and reduce long term operational carbon. As such, cognisance of sustainability opportunities will form a core element of project scoping and design development. Where appropriate, maintenance and refurbishment projects will incorporate nature-based solutions, sustainable drainage and green infrastructure to reduce flood risk, manage surface water and enhance resilience.

As part of the recent transformation of the Estates Services structure, the Council has established specialist roles with the expertise required to identify, appraise and deliver energy efficiency and carbon reduction projects. These officers work closely with colleagues responsible for delivering the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy and Action Plan to ensure alignment, avoid duplication and maximise strategic impact.

To support this programme, the Council intends to scale up its energy efficiency investment over the lifetime of this strategy, ensuring that budget provision reflects both the statutory obligations arising from the Climate Change Act and the increasing availability of effective, modern low carbon technologies. This phased and evidence based approach will ensure that the Council remains on a credible trajectory toward meeting its legislative commitments while delivering long-term savings in carbon, energy consumption and whole life costs.

14 Planned Maintenance of Public Realm Assets

This document has primarily focused on the maintenance of our buildings. It is important, however, to recognise that we also have significant assets throughout outdoor public spaces across the borough, and these too must be effectively maintained.

The recent public realm schemes in Bangor, Newtownards, Donaghadee, Comber and Holywood have changed the face of these towns in a very positive way. However, all stakeholders will now look to the Council to ensure these schemes are maintained to a high standard.

Such locations are of key strategic importance in terms of the aesthetic presentation and environmental attractiveness of the Borough, and failure to ensure that they are maintained to a consistently high standard significantly heightens the risk of reputational damage to the Council and compromises our ability to ensure that our Borough is regarded as an attractive place in which to live and visit.

A small team will dedicate approximately 19 weeks of the year to this specific aspect of proactive, preventative maintenance.

Our scope of works will generally be to repaint, repair or renew, as necessary, all paths, public art pieces, benches, picnic tables, signs and bins in the area. However, officers from the section will liaise with the Parks section to promote a joined-up planned preventative maintenance approach that covers all elements for which the Council has a remit. The opportunity will also be taken, where necessary, to liaise with and lobby any other relevant agency or department whose input is deemed necessary to achieve a comprehensive approach to protecting and enhancing the aesthetic quality of the location in question.

In 2026/27 a sum of £55k has been included in annual budgets to fund this work, increasing to £80k in 2027/28. The schedule is included below and focuses on 24 of the most prominent outdoor spaces in the Borough. This budget is considered to be sufficient for this planned work, with any subsequent remedial works to be completed from reactive budgets. Naturally, as this budget increases, the scope of works will increase and become more comprehensive.

Whilst this list obviously does not include every outdoor area in the Borough, it covers the most prominent locations in terms of popularity and level of footfall by residents and visitors. In this regard, focus on these locations for specific attention in terms of planned, preventative maintenance is considered to represent best use of the limited resource available and represents a spread of this resource fairly evenly across the Borough.

			2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1	Ballywalter	Promenade						
2	Bangor	Public realm works area						
3	Bangor	ward park						
4	Bangor	sea front						
5	Bangor	Long Hole/Eisenhower Pier						
6	Bangor	Pickie Pier						
7	Bangor	Ballyholme Promenade						
8	Bangor	Coastal Path Area 1						
9	Helens Bay	Coastal Path Area 2						
10	Holywood	Coastal Path Area 3						
11	Cloughey	Board Walk						
12	comber	Public realm works area						
13	Donaghadee	Public realm works area						
14	Donaghadee	Commons						
15	Groomsport	Throughout						
16	Holywood	Public realm works area						
17	Holywood	Seapark						
18	Kircubbin	Promenade						
19	Millisle	Beach Park						
20	Newtownards	Public realm works area						
21	Newtownards	Kiltonga duck pond						
22	Newtownards	Londonerry Park						
23	Portaferry	Castle Park						
24	Portavogie	Promenade & Anchor CP						
		No. of Large schemes	3	2	3	2	3	2
		No. of Medium schemes	5	5	4	5	5	4
		No. of small schemes	0	3	2	1	2	3
		Estimated Total No. of weeks required	**19**	**19**	**19**	**17**	**21**	**17**

Key:

	Relatively small area- 1 week allocated
	Medium sized area- 2 weeks allocated
	Large area- 3 weeks allocated

Any areas not currently on the list, for which the Council has responsibility, will by no means be neglected. However, maintenance work at such locations will be more reactive in nature, as has historically been the norm.

15 Planned Works to Harbours

Given the age, heritage value and exposed coastal locations of our harbour assets, a proactive and structured maintenance approach is essential to ensure their ongoing safety, functionality and preservation. In line with this requirement, the Marine Safety Management System established a five year rolling programme of condition and hydrographical surveys. Each year, one harbour is surveyed in detail, allowing officers to identify and assess any emerging defects, deterioration trends or compliance issues.

To support the delivery of the resulting works, an annual budget allocation of £50,000 has been established. Where surveys highlight more extensive or unexpected remedial needs, additional funding may be required to ensure that essential works can be delivered in full.

Consistent with the approach adopted for building condition surveys elsewhere in this strategy, the implementation of harbour maintenance works will occur one financial year after the completion of each survey. This lag provides sufficient time for officers to scope, prioritise and plan the required works, ensuring they are programmed efficiently and aligned with wider maintenance priorities and available resources.

16 Planned Works to Car Parks

In 2015, the transfer of 43 off street car parks from the Department for Infrastructure significantly expanded the portfolio of parking assets owned and managed by the Council. These facilities play a vital role in supporting the functionality and economic vitality of town

and village centres, and it is therefore essential that they are maintained to an appropriate and consistent standard.

The condition of the car parks at the point of transfer varied considerably, with many requiring substantial investment. Resurfacing, line marking, lighting upgrades and reconfiguration works have formed the core focus of refurbishment activity to date and are expected to remain key requirements in the coming years.

To ensure an objective and prioritised approach to maintenance, each of the Council's 70+ car parks will be subject to an annual condition survey. Quality scores will be generated and used to produce a ranked list based on mean condition score. As with other asset classes, priority will be given to the lowest-scoring car parks, with officers determining the most appropriate interventions to improve asset condition and functionality.

Given the scale and cost of works typically required, an annual capital allocation of £50,000 has been established to support ongoing improvements. However, this level of funding will not be sufficient in the longer term to maintain and upgrade the car parks to a standard that users may reasonably expect. As such, additional investment will be sought through the current Car Park Strategy and future revisions, which will aim to maximise the operational efficiency of these assets and provide a more sustainable funding model.

It is anticipated that future maintenance costs should be directly aligned with the income generated by the car parks, ensuring that expenditure is proportionate and that the wider ratepayer is not disproportionately burdened by the cost of maintaining these facilities.

17 Plant Maintenance

The Council owns a substantial range of plant and equipment that underpins its diverse operational services. This includes, among other items, excavators, trailers and roll-packers

used across our Household Recycling Centres. Historically, responsibility for maintaining this equipment rested with the individual Service Units to which each item belonged. However, this arrangement often resulted in inconsistent oversight and limited access to the specialised expertise required to ensure that maintenance was carried out to an appropriate standard.

Following a recent transformation within the Fleet Service Unit, responsibility for plant maintenance has now been centralised. This restructuring has enabled a more coordinated, professional and accountable approach to asset care. A subsequent gap analysis identified the need for additional maintenance contracts to ensure that all plant and equipment receive the appropriate level of servicing, inspection and lifecycle management.

To support this improved governance and maintenance regime, a dedicated annual budget allocation of £50,000 has been approved from 2026/27 as part of the rates setting process. This allocation will be kept under review as further information is gathered on the condition, usage patterns and long-term maintenance requirements of the Council's plant portfolio.

18 Technical Governance

At present, a number of buildings within our estate are managed by third parties. Whilst the responsibility for the maintenance of these buildings may lie elsewhere, some accountability is likely to remain with the Council to ensure there are adequate procedures in place.

Therefore, our Technical team will meet regularly with the various Contract Managers of the third party operators in order to be assured of their continued compliance with all relevant statutory regulations. A quarterly "statement of compliance" will be provided by the Operator, with any compliance issues noted for rectification and follow up at subsequent meetings.

Another aspect of Technical Governance is our engagement with the various stakeholders involved in the designing and construction of new facilities. It is imperative that the organisation has a holistic approach to maintenance, recognising the importance of selecting appropriate materials and learning from previous experience gained from our working knowledge of the estate. The Technical team will proactively promote a focus on the sustainability of capital schemes and their impact on revenue maintenance budgets, including the affordability of utility and other running costs.

19 The Role of the Premises Officer

Given the size and geographical spread of our estate, it is not feasible for us to coordinate and manage every element of maintenance work simultaneously. We therefore designate, in conjunction with relevant Heads of Service and Service Unit Managers, a 'Premises Officer' role for each building, usually from within the staff complement based at that building.

The main Premises Officer duties may include:

1. Key holder for the building
2. Safe isolation of utilities in the event of an emergency
3. Reading utility meters
4. Awareness of safe lowering procedures for lifts (where applicable)
5. Fire safety checks:
    - 5.1. Weekly fire alarm/call point checks
    - 5.2. 6 monthly fire drills
    - 5.3. Emergency lighting/exit signage checks

5.4. Fire extinguishers

5.5. Exit routes and fire doors

5.6. Up to date fire warden training

5.7. Updating fire log and ensuring contractors complete same

6. Familiar with the Fire Risk Assessment and ensure action plan is being progressed
7. Familiar with the Asbestos Register
8. Control of legionella – support planned maintenance and ensure log books are updated
9. Point of contact for any works contractors on site
10. Ensure compliance with EMS protocols and procedures

20 Working in Partnership with Elected Members

We recognise that, despite our best efforts to proactively manage our assets, there is always the potential for aspects to be overlooked. Furthermore, priorities identified by officers may not always be echoed by elected members and their constituents. In the interests of promoting a balanced and inclusive approach to the maintenance of our city, towns and villages, officers will look to incorporate structured arrangements for elected member feedback and suggestions for improvement in relation to the Council's estate across DEAs.

21 Financing

The total maintenance budget for Property Maintenance within the Estates Service is in the region of £3.4M, broken down as per the following chart:

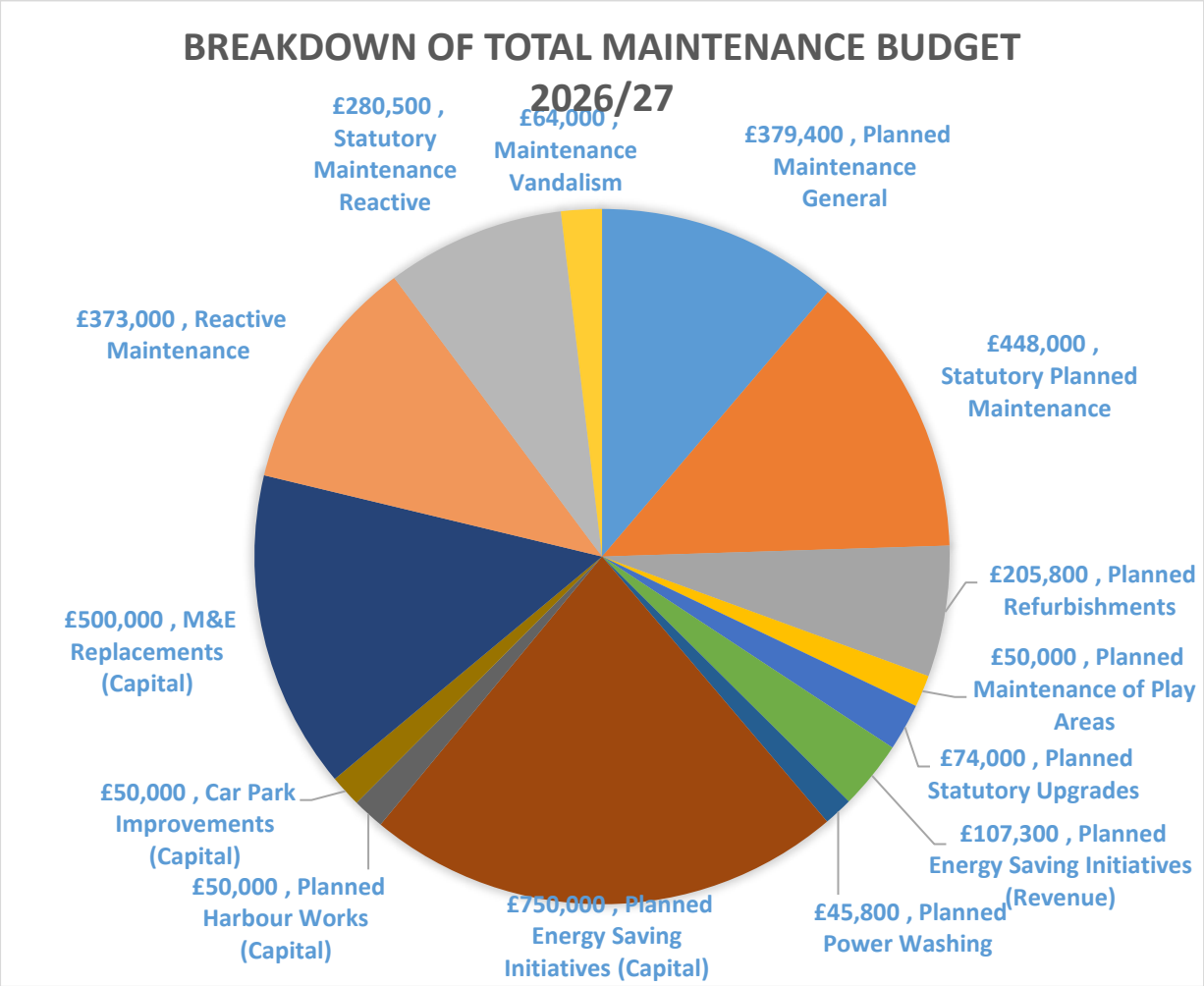


Figure 7. Breakdown of Maintenance Budgets

The chart clearly illustrates the significant and sustained investment the Council has made in recent years to enhance both the condition and long-term sustainability of the estate. This increased allocation of resources reflects a deliberate shift toward proactive asset management, enabling meaningful improvements across planned maintenance, statutory compliance, refurbishment programmes, energy efficiency and public realm enhancement. By prioritising planned works and strategically directing funding to areas of greatest need and greatest impact, the Council has strengthened the overall resilience, performance and future viability of its property portfolio.

Inevitably, as our estate grows, the demand for an increased budget to maintain that estate is likely to grow. The Assets and Property Services Department of the Council will collaborate closely with the Capital Projects and Finance Departments, including through the Corporate Projects Portfolio Board, to ensure that adequate financial provision for effective maintenance of all proposed new capital assets is integrated into the planning process for such projects. This is fundamentally important for the medium to long term sustainability of our estate; the affordability of any proposed new capital project must factor in the annual revenue costs of maintaining the asset so that it continues to be fit for purpose over its lifespan.

21.1 Financial Risks

The delivery of this Strategy is subject to a range of financial risks that have the potential to impact both the affordability and the long-term sustainability of the Council's maintenance programme. As the Estates Service is funded almost entirely through the district rate, with no direct income streams or access to external funding sources, these risks must be clearly understood and proactively managed.

21.1.1 Compliance Risk

The Council must maintain full compliance with a wide range of statutory regulations and British Standards, including but not limited to LOLER, BS5839, BS5266, BS7671 and ACOP L8. These documents are routinely updated, often requiring additional inspections, system upgrades or replacement of existing equipment. Sudden changes to statutory requirements can create unplanned spikes in expenditure, placing pressure on already committed budgets and requiring rapid reprioritisation of planned works.

21.1.2 Asset Failure Risk

Despite the progress made in strengthening planned and preventative maintenance, the age and scale of the estate mean that unanticipated asset failures remain an ongoing financial risk. Key examples include:

Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) Plant Replacement: The Council has identified £5 million of M&E replacement needs over the next ten years, requiring a sustained annual allocation of £500k. Any interruption to this funding profile would significantly increase the likelihood of unexpected plant failure and associated operational disruption.

Harbour Infrastructure: Harbours are exposed, heritage assets with unpredictable deterioration patterns and, due to their locations, highly susceptible to climate risks. While £50k per year has been allocated to planned works, survey findings may identify major structural issues that exceed this provision, requiring additional capital investment.

Play Parks, Car Parks and other Outdoor Assets: These assets experience high utilisation and weathering, increasing the risk of unexpected failure where refurbishment budgets are not sufficient to keep pace with need.

Unexpected failures of any of these assets may necessitate emergency works funded from reactive budgets, diverting resources from planned programmes and increasing whole-life cost.

21.1.3 Long-Term Investment Gaps

Several asset classes require a level of long-term investment that significantly exceeds current budget provision. Key pressures include:

Car Parks: Although strategic in supporting the economic vitality of town centres, the current annual allocation of £50k is insufficient to address the long-term maintenance and

refurbishment needs of over 70 car parks. Without significant additional investment, deterioration will accelerate, requiring larger capital interventions in future years.

Play Parks: Replacement of play parks requires approximately £1.2 million annually, far in excess of current budget levels. This creates a structural funding gap that increases the risk of assets falling below acceptable standards.

New Capital Assets: Each new capital project introduces ongoing revenue maintenance obligations. Without corresponding budget growth, overall maintenance pressures will steadily increase, potentially reducing the quality and resilience of the estate.

21.1.4 Inflation and Market Volatility

Construction inflation, supply chain disruption and rising labour costs continue to impact the cost of maintenance, refurbishment and capital works. Material price volatility and tender price inflation can erode the purchasing power of agreed budgets, resulting in either reduced scope of works or the need for additional funding. These pressures are particularly acute in large-scale programmes such as play park renewals, M&E replacements and public realm maintenance.

21.1.5 Energy Price Volatility

Energy costs have become increasingly unpredictable. The Council's progress toward improving energy efficiency will help mitigate long-term exposure, but in the short to medium term, volatile energy markets pose a financial risk. Increases in energy costs place upward pressure on revenue budgets and reinforce the need for sustained investment in Energy Saving Initiatives to reduce consumption and support compliance with the Climate Change Act.

22 Performance Management

A strong emphasis on continuous improvement will underpin the delivery of this strategy. By routinely evaluating the effectiveness of maintenance activities and reviewing outcomes across planned, reactive and compliance-related work, Officers can ensure that services remain responsive, efficient and aligned with best practice. This ongoing assessment will help identify areas for refinement, support informed decision-making and maintain a high standard of estate management over the lifetime of the strategy.

To this end, a number of relevant KPIs are included in the Estates Service Plan, including:

- Percentage spend against budget
- Adherence to the annual target for CO_2 reduction across the estate in 2026/27
- Deliver regular refurbishment projects across the estate to ensure our facilities are maintained to an acceptable standard, in line with the agreed schedule.
- Inspect the car park estate in line with the agreed schedule to identify and prioritise key issues.

Performance against these KPIs will be routinely monitored and reported to Council at six-monthly intervals.

23 Review

This Strategy will remain in place for the ten-year period 2026–2036 and will serve as the overarching framework for the maintenance, improvement and long-term stewardship of the Council's estate. To ensure it remains relevant, effective and aligned with organisational priorities, the Strategy will be formally reviewed at the end of its lifecycle or at any earlier point deemed necessary by the Council.

In addition to the scheduled end of period review, the Strategy may also be revisited at interim stages to reflect emerging legislative requirements, changes in service delivery, budgetary considerations or shifts in corporate priorities. This flexible approach ensures that

the Strategy can adapt to changing organisational needs while maintaining a consistent commitment to proactive, sustainable and financially responsible asset management.

Regular monitoring of progress against the objectives set out in this document will support the review process and ensure that the Council continues to maintain a safe, resilient and fit for purpose estate throughout the duration of the Strategy.

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Off Street Parking Activity
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	65369
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Off Street Parking Order 2000 Ards and North Down Off Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2024
Resource Implications	None Narrative: Included in current budgets
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple: 3. A thriving and sustainable economy

Background
Members will be aware that Council has a vast car park estate, currently operating 22 pay and display car parks in Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards, and managing further car parks across the Borough.

This report aims to update Members on expenditure, income and PCNs generated at each of the relevant car parks in the period 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026. It will also provide Members with an update following some associated decisions related to the approval of a new car park order made at the February 2026 Council meeting, and general off-street parking information.

Key Issues
Off Street Parking Activity 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Table 1: Income from Ticket Sales

	1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026	Previous year 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025
Income from ticket sales	**£449,086**	**£450,854**

Table 2: PCN's Issued

	1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026	Previous year 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026
Total	**2090**	**2587**

Officers continue to monitor compliance with Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2024 and work with our enforcement partner to ensure compliance across our car park estate, introducing enforcement in additional car parks. The next car parks to progress to enforcement will be Spafield, Holywood and Newtownards Road/ Church Street, Bangor.

Table 3: Expenditure

	1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026
Enforcement Contract	**£77,179.35**
Maintenance	**£187,140.15**
Grounds Maintenance	**£2147.63**
Signage	**-**
Total	**£266,467.13**

Update from 4 February 2026 meeting

At its meeting on 4 February 2026, the Environment Committee agreed the Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2025 subject to additional decisions which included the following:

- That a parking app which sets a time limit on parking (rather than stop/start) is introduced as soon as possible.

- That the Chambers of Commerce and city/town advisory groups are consulted on their views on the introduction of 2 hour waiting restrictions (instead of one hour) for Department for Infrastructure managed on-street parking spaces, to inform the Committee before the Council lobby the Department on any potential changes.

Officers are continuing to liaise with DfI Transport Legislation Branch through the Regional Off Street Parking Group to agree a date for the revocation of the Off-Street Parking Order 2000 and implementation of Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2025, and a further update will be brought to Council as soon as possible.

Car Parking App Update

Officers liaised with our parking app provider RingGo and initiated a change from their “Start/Stop” model to their “Buy Time” model effective from 1 May 2026. This means that users now choose how long they wish to stay on arrival and pay up front for their parking in the same way as they do at the pay and display terminal.

A communications strategy to ensure app users were aware of the change was implemented, including posts on Council’s social media channels, signage in all 22 charged car parks and an updated webpage with a user video.

The model continues to provide flexibility by allowing users to extend their parking period without having to return to the car park which is assisted by a timer and removes the need to remember to stop your session on return to your vehicle; ensuring that users are not overpaying for their parking session.

Data from the first two weeks of ‘Buy-Time’ shows an increased uptake in app usage and an average saving per transaction for app users.

Consultation on 2 Hour waiting Restriction for on street parking

Officers met with Ards and North Down Business Forum, who represent the five Chambers of Commerce of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber, and Donaghadee, and with each of the Local Action Groups to discuss a possibility of lobbying the Department for Infrastructure and ask it to amend the current legislation which permits up to 1 hour on-street parking, to allow instead up to 2 hours on-street parking across the Borough.

The Newtownards Local Action Group were in support of Council lobbying the Department for Infrastructure to amend the current legislation which permits 1 hour on-street parking to allow 2 hours on-street parking.

The Local Action Group also requested that Council lobby the Department to resolve an anomaly in the legislation regarding the return within 1 hour clause which is leading to some vehicles parking all day, whereby the 'no return' is interpreted as no return to the exact same parking spot.

Donaghadee Local Action Group were in support of Council lobbying the Department for Infrastructure to amend the current legislation which permits 1 hour on-street parking to allow 2 hours on-street parking.

The Local Action Group also requested that Council lobby the Department to introduce a 2 hour on-street parking restriction on part of Shore Street and The Parade and echoed the request regarding the anomaly in the legislation regarding the return within 1 hour clause.

Comber Local Action Group highlighted the restricted on-street parking was more limited within Comber and this wasn't something they had previously considered. Following discussion and further consultation with the Chamber, they agreed to support Council lobbying the Department for Infrastructure to trial extending 1 hour on-street parking to 2 hours on-street parking, with the exception of the spaces in Castle Street and Mill Street.

Holywood Local Action Group discussed the matter and could see the benefits to both 1 hour and 2 hour on-street parking restrictions. It was noted that 1 hour assists turnover in Holywood town centre, and the town centre car parks are easily accessible for longer stays. The voluntary sector noted that a 2 hour on-street period would be beneficial for clients who attend counselling sessions, and discussion took place around the possibility of a trial period. Further consultation with the Chamber showed support for the extension but also concerns regarding extending the length of stay in the already limited number of available spaces.

The Local Action Group also requested that Council highlight to the Department their support for a Resident's On-Street Parking Permit Scheme in Holywood, and further lobby the Department to address on-pavement obstructions outside commercial premises, which extend beyond the current pavement café licensing scheme.

Bangor Local Action Group were in support of Council lobbying the Department for Infrastructure to amend the current legislation which permits 1 hour on-street parking to allow 2 hours on-street parking.

The Bangor Local Action Group also requested that Council lobby the Department to resolve the anomaly in the legislation regarding the return within 1 hour clause.

Next Steps

1. Lobbying

Council to give consideration to lobby the DFI on behalf of the groups consulted, as per the recommendations contained in this report

2. Replacement of car park machines

As part of the rate setting process, budget was allocated to replacement of the current pay and display machines across our charged car park estate, which transferred from DfI in 2015.

Officers are beginning to see increased machine failures as these approach the end of their lifespan, causing difficulties for car park users and a loss of revenue for Council. New machines will encompass a keypad and contactless payment technology which allow for future ticketless parking and support the overall modernisation of our car park estate.

These new machines also provide an opportunity for Council to make savings on cash collection costs and physical tickets, as well as supporting our net zero targets. The current machines require non-recyclable printed tickets to be issued for display with 672,662 non-recyclable paper tickets issued in 24/25 and 617,503 in 25/26, which end up in landfill or as litter on our streets, and a future campaign will be launched to remove the need to use this method.

Members have previously raised concerns about ticket transfers and the ability of car park users to transfer tickets, this will be resolved with the new machines, ensuring that all car park users pay for the service as they use it.

The replacement programme is expected to be completed over the coming months. New signage and a full communications strategy will be implemented by officers ensuring minimal disruption for car park users.

3. Grounds maintenance

A grounds maintenance programme has been initiated across the car park estate and will continue throughout the 26/27 financial year, enhancing the visual appeal of the car park estate and overall experience of those who use it.

Summary

Following consultation with the Local Action Groups as outlined in the report, Officers propose that Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure in respect of On-Street Parking.

A further activity report will be brought to Council in the autumn, outlining activity for the first half of 2026/27 and providing a further update on the ongoing work to enhance the car park estate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the information in this report and **Agrees** to

1. Lobby the Department for Infrastructure to extend the on-street parking waiting restriction to 2 hours in Bangor, Newtownards and Donaghadee.

2. Lobby the Department for Infrastructure to address the no return within 1 hour anomaly with on-street parking waiting legislation.

3. Lobby the Department for Infrastructure to extend the 2-hour on-street parking waiting restriction to include part of Shore Street and The Parade in Donaghadee.

4. Lobby the Department for Infrastructure to trial an extension of the on-street parking waiting restriction to 2 hours in Holywood and Comber, with the exception of Castle Street and Mill Street.

5. Lobby the Department for Infrastructure to address pavement obstructions outside commercial premises generally caused by inconsiderate parking.

6. Write to the Department for Infrastructure to support a Resident's On-Street Parking Permit Scheme in Holywood.

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Rollo Gillespie Monument, Comber - Phase 2 Works Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 Gillespie Monument Condition Report
File Reference (if applicable)	65383
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget: £90,000 included in the rates for 2026/27 Narrative: Provision has been made within the 2026/27 rates to enable the Phase 2 works to proceed.
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental

If multiple:

	2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background
A report was presented to the Environment Committee in February 2024 outlining the condition of the Rollo Gillespie Monument in Comber and the works required to address deterioration identified through a specialist conservation survey. At that time, officers recommended a two-stage approach, with the initial phase addressing urgent health and safety issues and essential repairs, together with investigative works to inform the scope and cost of the second phase.

Key Issues
Since the earlier report, officers have explored potential external funding opportunities to assist with delivery of Phase 2 works. No suitable external funding source has been identified for this project. In light of that position, a sum of £90,000 has been included in the rates for 2026/27 to provide for delivery of the Phase 2 works and to allow the required conservation repairs to progress.

Next Steps
Subject to Council approval, officers will proceed with the necessary actions to carry out the Phase 2 works. This will include progressing the required approvals, procuring the specialist conservation contractor input as necessary, and programming the works for delivery from the 2026/27 budget provision. The works to be carried out are detailed in the attached report.

Summary
The Phase 2 works to the Rollo Gillespie Monument remain necessary to protect the structure and address the issues identified through the condition survey. As no suitable external funding has been secured, provision has been made through the 2026/27 rates process. Officers therefore request permission to proceed with the Phase 2 works.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee grants approval for officers to proceed to carry out the Phase 2 works to the Rollo Gillespie Monument, Comber, funded from the £90,000 included in the rates for 2026/27.



GILLESPIE MONUMENT COMBER

CONDITION REPORT

Prepared for

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Prepared by

Alastair Coey Architects

October 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This condition report has been prepared by Alastair Coey Architects for Ards and North Down Borough Council. Alastair Coey Architects specialises exclusively in the conservation of historic buildings and places. The company is accredited by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland as a Grade One Conservation Practice. All professional and technical members of staff have specialist conservation training.

The report is concerned with The Gillespie Monument, The Square, Comber, County Down. The text represents a distillation of comprehensive contemporaneous survey notes.

1.1 Listed Status

The Gillespie Monument is designated by the Department for the Communities, Historic Environment Division, as a grade B1 listed structure Ref no: HB24/15/011.

The significance of the designation is that any alterations to a listed structure, require Listed Building Consent.

1.2 Orientation

For the purposes of this report the west elevation is deemed to face towards Killinchy Street. These notional compass references are used throughout this report.

1.3 Limitations of the Survey

The survey was carried out by visual observation with upper reaches inspected from an access boom. No opening up was carried out and therefore it was not possible to inspect voids etc. Alastair Coey Architects is therefore unable to report that such parts, and other hidden aspects of the monument, are free from defect.

1.4 Drawings

The plan and elevational drawings included in Appendix A are not to scale and are intended to assist in locating matters referred to in the report. For the purpose of the condition assessment the monument has been subdivided into stages as follows:

- Stage 1 – Steps
- Stage 2 – Pedestal
- Stage 3 – Column Shaft (Sub-divided into recessed panels)
- Stage 4 – Frieze and Moulded Cornice
- Stage 5 – Carved Statue and Base

1.5 Description

The Gillespie Monument is a free-standing sandstone square shaft column on a square stepped podium. The monument was erected under the oversight of John Fraser, the first county surveyor for Down and unveiled on 24 June 1845 (St. John's Day) 1844-5. It stands approximately 12 metres tall and is located in Comber town center within landscaped gardens with brick paviored paths. It was erected to the memory of local military hero Sir Robert Rollo Gillespie. Gillespie was born in Comber in 1766 in a house which stood on the south side of The Square, now demolished. Gillespie was educated at Norland House, Kensington, and later with a private tutor at Newmarket. It was intended that he would enter Cambridge University. After turning down the opportunity of going to Cambridge he joined the 3rd Irish Horse during 1783 as a Cornet. He served in many campaigns rising to the rank of Mayor General and played an important role in the success of many campaigns and helping to solidify the domain of the British crown in the West Indies, Java and India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On 31 October 1814 at the age of 48 he died in the invasion of Nepaul whist leading his army in an unsuccessful attempt to take the Fort of Kalunga. He was posthumously gazetted with the Knight Commander of Bath on 1 January 1815.

The Gillespie monument consists of a square stepped base with square pedestal containing rectangular panels on each face (Fig. 1) having limestone carved relief and inscribed tablets (Fig. 2) and moulded cornice capping supporting a tall tapered square section pillar shaft, panelled on each face with the place names of campaigns and battles in which Gillespie fought. The pillar is capped with a frieze and moulded cornice surmounted with a carved statue of Gillespie on a rounded base (Fig. 3).



Fig. 1 - Stepped base and pedestal


Fig. 2 - Inscribed tablet


Fig. 3 - Statue of Gillespie

The limestone tablet on the plinth panel to the north depicts Masonic symbols (Fig. 4), that to the south has a military style coat of arms, that to the west inscribed with details of Gillespie's military career and his famous last words "One shot more for the honour of Down". The panel to the east was added in 1897 as a memorial to Gillespie's (natural) grandson General Robert Rollo Gillespie (d.1890).


Fig. 4 - Masonic imagery

On the day of the unveiling the monument fifty lodges of the Masonic Order were present, in what is believed to be the biggest Masonic gathering in Irish history. It was calculated that between 25,000 to 30,000 people crowded into the town to witness the ceremony and celebrate the life of "The Strongest Man in Comber".

Freemasonry is "one of the world's oldest and largest non-religious, non-political, fraternal and charitable organisations", believed to have first been founded in the Middle Ages by organised lodges of highly-skilled stonemasons building castles and cathedrals. However, within the organisation a popular myth is that it was founded by the builders of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. In reality, the real foundation of Freemasonry came in 1717 with the opening of the first Grand Lodge in England. While it is a secular movement, members are expected to acknowledge the existence of a higher, God-like being, often referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe.

The north elevation of Gillespie Monument contains an Armagh limestone tablet set within recessed panel having relief carving depicting a number of Masonic sculptured symbols.

Freemasonry is an organisation which relies a lot on symbols and imagery as a means of communicating their principles. It is a global organisation and therefore this use of symbols allows fellow members to "speak without speaking" and form a worldwide community on the principles of "respect, brotherly love and truth".

There is a lot of imagery which is closely associated with Freemasonry. The most prominent of these symbols is the All-Seeing Eye which is also sometimes referred to as the Masonic Eye or the Eye of Providence. It can be seen at the top, centre portion of Gillespie Monument's limestone tablet. Within Freemasonry it represents the eye of God and acts as a reminder that God is always watching, encouraging Masons to uphold their values and beliefs. It is mainly recognisable due to its appearance on the American dollar bill.

At the centre of the tablet on Gillespie Monument is a square and compass, another prominent and recurring feature of Masonic imagery. It is said that the square represents a Mason's morality, encouraging them to "Square their actions by the square of virtue with all mankind". Furthermore, the compass represents the relationship between a Mason and society at large. Therefore together, the square and the compass remind Freemasons to explore their desires without stepping outside the realms of what is deemed to be moral behaviour by the organisation.

Within the square and compass on Gillespie Monument sits the letter "G", which is used frequently within Freemasonry. Its meaning is contentious as there are a series of words which it is believed it could stand for, including; God, geometry, or the Hebrew letter Gimmel.

The tablet is flanked by two columns which are themselves topped by globes. Every Masonic lodge has imagery depicting two pillars as a nod to the two columns which stood at the entrance of King Solomon's temple.

As is the case with Gillespie Monument's tablet, Masonic drawings tend to depict both the sun and the moon. It is said to encourage leaders to wield their power with fairness and consistency.

There are two phases in Latin displayed on the tablet. The first reads, "Sit lux et lux fuit", which translates to "let there be light and there was light". The second reads, "Audi, Vide, Tace", which translates to "Listen, observe, be silent". This phrase can be found on the Coat of arms of the United Grand Lodge of England and first made its appearance in the Freemasons' Calendar in 1777. George H. T. French, a Masonic author, described the meaning of the motto:

"The first two words, audi, vide, refer to the alertness conducive to the acquisition of knowledge. For it is through these two senses, hearing and seeing, that we absorb most of our information. Tace, or be silent, refers to the dissemination of information, and alerts one to the desirability of thinking before speaking, of deciding what should be kept hidden, of ever bearing in remembrance those truly Masonic virtues, silence and circumspection."

Masonic drawings also frequently depict the tools of masons such a mallet and a plumb. Both such tools are featured on Gillespie Monument. While at a surface level these represent the real apparatus used by stonemasons, however they are also a metaphor for the beliefs and attitudes of the Freemasons, for example, the plumb is representative of living in a moral, upright way.

Gillespie Monument also depicts the 47th Problem of Euclid (also known as the Pythagorean Theorem) which is represented by three squares. This is thought to be an important Masonic symbol due to its connection with architecture and geometry, and the Freemason's appreciation and reverence for both of these principles.

White lambskin aprons have been worn by Freemasons ever since the organisation's founding, a symbol depicting an apron can be seen on Gillespie Monument, symbolising honour, purity and achievement.

Gillespie Monument also features a five and six-pointed star. This is a common piece of imagery in Masonic temples, referring to the seal of the biblical King Solomon who provides the basis for much Masonic teaching and beliefs.

1.6 Methodology

The inspection was carried out on 25 September and 06 October 2023, by Adrian Curran a Senior Architectural Technologist was formerly a stone mason with wide-ranging experience of work on masonry structures and assisted by Katie Thorogood a part-one Architect's assistant, both members of staff at Alastair Coey Architects. Weather conditions on 25 September were calm, mild and dry with light showers on 06 October .

The survey was carried out using a Hinowa 20.10 MEWP with tracked undercarriage for inspection of the upper stages of the monument and on foot for the bottom stages.

During the survey a comprehensive digital photographic record was prepared.

2.0 CONDITION SURVEY

2.1 North Elevation

Freestanding square tapered column shaft consisting of 21 courses of polished ashlar Scrabo sandstone surmounted with a carved statue on frieze and moulded cornice and erected off ashlar sandstone tiered pedestal on stepped base with mouldings to plinth, cornice and panel surround. Armagh limestone tablet set within recessed panel having relief carving depicting Masonic sculptured symbols - at the sides, two pillars surmounted by a globe and in the centre, a hammer, nails, hand holding plumb-line, six pointed star, right-angled triangle with squares on the sides, sun, moon and stars, and the words, 'Sit lux et lux fuit' (let there be light and there was light), and 'Audi, vide, tace' (Listen, observe, be silent).

STAGE 1

Steps
Extensive decay and delamination to bottom steps to east and west ends (Fig. 05). Lime mortar patch repairs with possible cementitious content to nosing of steps to west end. Spalled edging to steps. Steps inadequately bed lapped with voids evident at bedding between steps. 2 no. replacement stone to bottom step (stone type not known). Widespread algae and lichen soiling (Fig. 06).

Pointing
Putty lime pointing with possible cementitious content. Pointing excessively applied over worn arrises.

STAGE 2

Plinth
Surface pitting throughout. Contour scaled delamination to 3 no. polished ashlar and minor delamination to moulded string course. Cementitious mortar repairs to 2 no. mounded string course and 1 no. ashlar stone (Fig. 07). Widespread algae and lichen soiling.

Pedestal
Cementitious mortar repairs carried out to face of ashlar quoin stones to west end and to moulded border surrounding recessed panel. Extensive contour scaled delamination to ashlar stone to east end and above recessed panel with fractured stone evident (Fig 08). Widespread algae and lichen soiling.

Recessed panel
Minor erosion to limestone relief carved tablet, metal fixings heavily corroded (Fig. 09), otherwise reasonable condition.

Cornice
Minor surface delamination. Extensive algae soiling with light vegetation growth in open joints.

Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints appear to have been widened during previous phase of repairs. Vegetation growth in open joints.


Fig.05 - Delamination to steps


Fig.06 - Algae and litchen soiling


Fig.07 - Cementitious mortar repairs



Fig.08 - Contour scaled delamination


Fig.09 - Corroded metal fixings

STAGE 3

Ashlar column shaft, Punjab four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out to stonework below inscribed panel, repairs detaching from background. Minor pitting, delamination and erosion to entire panel.
Pointing
Open joints with Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs (Fig. 10).


Fig.10 - Cementitious pointing

Ashlar column shaft, Sumatra four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out to stonework to west side of inscribed panel, repairs cracks in mortar repairs and detaching from background. Advanced decay to west side of panel and directly below raised lettering (Fig. 11). Minor fissures to raised lettering.
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.



Fig.11 - Advanced decay

Ashlar column shaft, Bangalore four coursed panel
Entire panel in advanced state of decay with inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out, mortar repairs failed and detaching from background and contributing to decay of surrounding stonework (Fig. 12).
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.



Fig.12 - Delamination

Ashlar column shaft, Waltervreden four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs, some detachment of mortar repairs. Early stages of decay to raised lettering.
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

Ashlar column shaft, Fort De L'Hopital four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs, some detachment of mortar repairs resulting in complete loss of raised lettering and decay of surrounding stone (Fig. 13).
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.13 - Loss of raised lettering


Fig.14 - Fractured stone

STAGE 4

Moulded frieze
Heavy algae staining, fractured stone to west end (Fig. 14), previous indent repair to west end stone showing rust marks possibly indicating ferrous metal fixings used, minor erosion, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Heavy algae staining, otherwise reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints with inappropriate cementitious pointing.


Fig.15 - Heavily fractured stone

STAGE 5

Statue base
Heavy algae staining, surface scaling on top surface, heavily fractured stone to north-west corner presenting a potential hazard (Fig. 15), otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Statue
Heavy algae staining. Fractured right hand repaired using epoxy resin. Crude wire strapping applied as secondary protection around hand and sword (Fig. 16). Metal sword reset in lead caulking and appears not to be in original location (Fig. 17), otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints between statue, base and moulded frieze. Light vegetation growth in open joints.


Fig.16 - Fractured hand


Fig.17 - Sword not in original location

2.2 South Elevation

Freestanding square tapered column shaft consisting of 21 courses of polished ashlar Scrabo sandstone surmounted with a carved statue on frieze and moulded cornice and erected off ashlar sandstone tiered pedestal on stepped base with mouldings to plinth, cornice and panel surround. Armagh limestone tablet set within recessed panel having relief carving depicting the Gillespie coat of arms, quartered with the ribbon and badge of the most Honourable Military Order of the Bath, on a background of crossed flags and cannon.

STAGE 1

Steps
Spalled edging to steps with minor lime mortar patch repairs with possible cementitious content (Fig. 18). Steps inadequately bed lapped with voids evident at bedding between steps. 1 no. replacement stone to bottom step (stone type not known). Widespread algae and lichen soiling.
Pointing
Putty lime pointing with possible cementitious content. Pointing excessively applied over worn arrises.

STAGE 2

Plinth
Surface pitting throughout (Fig. 19). Contour scaled delamination to 1 no. polished ashlar and minor delamination to moulded string course. Cementitious mortar repairs to 1 no. ashlar stone with fracture evident. Widespread algae and lichen soiling (Fig. 20).
Pedestal
Heavily worn with surface pitting throughout. Extensive cementitious mortar repairs carried out to face of ashlar quoin stones and moulded border surrounding recessed panel. Contour scaled delamination to ashlar stone to west end and above recessed panel. Fracture evident below panel passing through two rendered stones and extending onto plinth. Widespread algae and lichen soiling.
Recessed panel
Minor erosion to limestone relief carved tablet, metal fixings heavily corroded, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Minor surface delamination. Extensive algae soiling with light vegetation growth in open joints and ledges.
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints appear to have been widened during previous phase of repairs. Vegetation growth in open joints.

STAGE 3

Ashlar column shaft, Tiburon four coursed panel
Extensive delamination to stonework at bottom of panel (Fig. 21). Minor pitting and erosion to remainder of panel otherwise reasonable condition.


Fig.18 - Spalled edging to steps


Fig.19 - Surface pitting


Fig.20 - Algae and litchen soiling


Fig.21 - Delamination



Fig.22 - Partial loss of lettering

Pointing
Open joints with Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

Ashlar column shaft, St. Lucia four coursed panel
Extensive delamination resulting in partial loss of raised lettering, remaining lettering in poor condition (Fig. 22). Inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out stone on west side of panel. Minor fracture to stone below recessed panel.
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

Ashlar column shaft, Bizotton four coursed panel
Extensive delamination to recessed panel stonework and quoin to west site of panel, partial loss of raised lettering, remaining lettering subject to further delamination (Fig. 23). Minor fractures and decay to arrises of stone on east side of panel. Inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out, to 2 no. stones, repairs fractured.
Pointing
Open joints having minor vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

Ashlar column shaft, Fort Cornelis four coursed panel
Inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs carried out to 2 no. stones. Extensive delamination to lettered stone and quoin to west side of panel. Minor fracture to quoin to west side of panel (Fig. 24).
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

Ashlar column shaft, Port au Prince four coursed panel
Inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs carried out to 2 no. stones and lettered stone resulting in partial loss of raised lettering, remaining lettering in poor condition (Fig. 25). Delamination to east quoins. Minor pitting.
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth with inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.

STAGE 4

Moulded frieze
Algae staining (Fig. 26), minor erosion, fractured stone, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Algae staining, otherwise reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints with inappropriate cementitious pointing.



Fig.23 - Extensive delamination



Fig.24 - Extensive delamination



Fig.25 - Partial loss of lettering


Fig.26 - Algae staining


Fig.27 - Fracture

STAGE 5

Statue base
Heavy algae staining. Fracture between joint of statue and upper base stone with delamination of base bed, possibly indicating movement, otherwise stonework in reasonable condition (Fig. 27).
Statue
Heavy algae staining, otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints between statue, base and moulded frieze. Light

2.3 East Elevation

Freestanding square tapered column shaft consisting of 21 courses of polished ashlar Scrabo sandstone surmounted with a carved statue on frieze and moulded cornice and erected off ashlar sandstone tiered pedestal on stepped base with mouldings to plinth, cornice and panel surround. Armagh limestone tablet set within recessed panel having memorial inscription.

STAGE 1

Steps
Spalled edging to steps. Steps inadequately bed lapped with minor open joints revealing possible voids between steps. 1 no. replacement stone to bottom step (stone type not known), extensive delamination and decay to north end of bottom step (Fig. 28). Widespread algae and lichen soiling.
Pointing
Putty lime pointing with possible cementitious content. Pointing excessively applied over worn arrises (Fig. 29).

STAGE 2

Plinth
Surface pitting throughout (Fig. 30). Minor contour scaled delamination to 1 no. polished ashlar. Cementitious mortar repairs to 2 no. moulded string course and patch repair to south end. Widespread algae and lichen soiling.
Pedestal
Heavily worn with surface pitting throughout. Extensive cementitious mortar repairs carried out to face of ashlar stonework and quoin stones, concentrated below and to south side of recessed panel with extensive contour scaled delamination to remaining ashlar and moulded border surrounding recessed panel. Widespread algae and lichen soiling.
Recessed panel
Minor erosion to inscribed limestone tablet, metal fixings heavily corroded, fracture upper north corner, otherwise reasonable condition (Fig. 31).
Cornice
Minor surface delamination. Extensive algae soiling with light vegetation growth in open joints and ledges (Fig. 32).
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints appear to have been widened during previous phase of repairs. Vegetation growth in open joints.

STAGE 3

Ashlar column shaft, Banca four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repair carried out to 1 no. stone below inscribed panel. Fracture to quoin to north side of panel. Minor delamination to 1 no. stone.
Pointing
Open joints with Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.28 - Advanced decay of stone step


Fig.29 - Putty lime pointing


Fig.30 - Surface pitting


Fig.31 - Fracture on limestone tablet


Fig.32 - Vegetation growth in open joints

Ashlar column shaft, Batavia four coursed panel
Advanced decay to inscribed panel stones resulting in partial loss of raised lettering (Fig. 33).
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.33 - Advanced decay of stone

Ashlar column shaft, St. Domingo four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repair carried out to 3 no. stones below inscribed panel. Delamination to surrounding stone (Fig 34).
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.34 - Delamination

Ashlar column shaft, Deyrah Dhoon four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repair above inscribed panel. Delamination to stonework surrounding cementitious repair (Fig. 35). Fractured bed to stone below inscribed panel.
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.



Fig.35 - Delamination

Ashlar column shaft, Cape St. Nicholas four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs resulting in loss of raised lettering (Fig. 36), minor delamination decay to several stones.
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.36 - Loss of raised lettering

STAGE 4

Moulded frieze
Heavy algae staining, minor erosion, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Heavy algae staining, minor delamination along moulded face, otherwise reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints with inappropriate cementitious pointing.

STAGE 5

Statue base
Heavy algae staining (Fig. 37), minor spall marks having mortar infill, otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Statue
Heavy algae staining, otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints between statue, base and moulded frieze. Light vegetation growth in open joints.


Fig.37 - Heavy algae staining

2.4 West Elevation

Freestanding square tapered column shaft consisting of 21 courses of polished ashlar Scrabo sandstone surmounted with a carved statue on frieze and moulded cornice and erected off ashlar sandstone tiered pedestal on stepped base with mouldings to plinth, cornice and panel surround. Armagh limestone tablet set within recessed panel having epitaph inscription.

STAGE 1

Steps
Spalled edging to steps (Fig. 38). Steps inadequately bed lapped with minor open joints revealing possible voids between steps. 2 no. replacement stones to bottom step (stone type not known). Patch repair to central bottom step with metal rail stub (Fig. 39). Minor algae and lichen soiling.
Pointing
Putty lime pointing with possible cementitious content. Pointing excessively applied over worn arrises.

STAGE 2

Plinth
Surface pitting throughout, minor delamination to moulded plinth course, algae and lichen soiling, otherwise reasonable condition.
Pedestal
Heavily worn with surface pitting throughout. Extensive cementitious mortar repairs carried out to face of 1 no. ashlar stone and 5 no. quoin stones. Extensive contour scaled delamination to moulded border surrounding recessed panel and minor scaling throughout (Fig 40). Minor algae and lichen soiling.
Recessed panel
Minor erosion to inscribed limestone tablet, metal fixings heavily corroded, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Extensive delamination to upper moulded surface. Minor algae soiling with light vegetation growth in open joints and ledges (Fig. 41).
Pointing
Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints appear to have been widened during previous phase of repairs, widespread open joints mainly at upper end of pedestal. Vegetation growth in open joints and ledges.

STAGE 3

Ashlar column shaft, Java four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repair carried out to 1 no. stone below inscribed panel (Fig 42). Minor delamination to 2 no. stones.


Fig.38 - Spalled edging to steps


Fig.39 - Patch repair


Fig.40 - Delamination


Fig.41 - Algae and vegetation in open joints


Fig.42 - Cementitious mortar repair

Pointing
Open joints with inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs, angle grinder marks evident.

Ashlar column shaft, Vellore four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repair carried out to 1 no. stone to south side of panel. Delamination decay to 3 no. stones.
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth (Fig. 43). Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.



Fig.43 - Open joints with light vegetation

Ashlar column shaft, Palimbang four coursed panel
Inappropriate cementitious mortar repair carried out to 1 no. quoin to north side of panel and 2 no. below inscribed panel, repairs fractured. Widespread delamination to surrounding stone.
Pointing
Open joints. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.



Fig.44 - Delamination

Ashlar column shaft, Djoejocarta four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repair above and to south side of inscribed panel. Delamination to stonework surrounding cementitious repair and to north side of panel (Fig. 44). Fractured stone below inscribed panel.
Pointing
Open joints. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.45 - Fracture

Ashlar column shaft, Kalunga four coursed panel
Widespread inappropriate thinly applied cementitious mortar repairs resulting in partial loss of raised lettering, repairs failing, remaining lettering heavily fissured, minor delamination decay to several stones.
Pointing
Open joints having light vegetation growth. Inappropriate cementitious pointing throughout applied over original lime putty, joints widened during previous phase of repairs.


Fig.46 Heavily fractured stone

STAGE 4

Moulded frieze
Algae staining, minor erosion, otherwise reasonable condition.
Cornice
Fracture to north end of west face presenting a potential safety hazard (Fig. 45), algae staining, otherwise reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints with inappropriate cementitious pointing.


Fig.47 - Metal bolt

STAGE 5

Statue base
Heavy algae staining, heavily fractured stone to north-west corner (Fig. 46), otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Statue
Heavy algae staining. Metal bolt and threaded bar fixing of statue to base exposed (Fig. 47), light corrosion evident. Fractured right hand as described on north elevation, otherwise stonework in reasonable condition.
Pointing
Open joints between statue, base and moulded frieze. Light vegetation growth in open joints.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusions

Visual inspection of the ashlar stone dressings to the four main elevations indicated that the extent of stone decay is in places at an advanced stage of deterioration attributed mainly by extensive inappropriate cementitious mortar repairs carried out during a previous phase of repair work. Other defects include, surface spalling and fractures, isolated contour delamination. Light vegetation growth is evident in open joints, if left untreated, this will eventually lead to more significant problems. The main issue is the progressive decay of ashlar sandstone through contour scaling or delamination exacerbated by the use of cementitious mortar repairs which are impervious and trap moisture which in turn migrate gypsum salts within the stone to surrounding otherwise sound stone resulting in further accelerated decay. In many incidents these mortar repairs have been thinly applied and are failing with evidence of tooling carried out to remove delaminated stone back to a sound surface to provide a key for the mortar repairs.

Scrabo sandstone is very susceptible to weathering and deterioration which has continued as a result of some use of incorrectly bedded stone (termed face bedding) and contour scaling which appears similar to face bedding with the exception that the delamination occurs at right angles to the bedding plane, this is caused by surface wetting, moisture tends to migrate a certain distance into the stone by capillary action. As the stone dries, the moisture migrates back towards the surface, possibly taking with it dissolved silica or other materials. Repeated cycles may result in separation of the outer layer of the stone.

The use of impervious cementitious mortar is inappropriate and not advisable for several reasons. The cement mortar does not replace the load-bearing material of the original stone that has been lost. The different rate of expansion and contraction between the cement mortar and the sandstone will eventually lead to the two materials separating which is evident. Water also gets trapped behind the cement mortar and accelerates the rate at which the surrounding sandstone decays. This has been further exacerbated by the use of impermeable cementitious mortar to repoint joints resulting in further water retention. This causes water within the masonry to build up and through freeze/thaw cycles over many years leads to delamination. The migration of gypsum salts causes the silica binding matrix of sandstone to dissolve, leaving crumbling of the surface which is particularly noticeable on the arrises of each stone, resulting in accelerated decay. The original joints were as thin as 2-5mm and pointed in putty lime. This has since been inappropriately widened using angle grinders and over-pointed using a cementitious based mortar which in turn does not address the initial problem.

Scrabo sandstone is no longer available through quarrying although there is a limited supply through salvageable sources and possibly from the Department of Communities Historic Environment Division (Moira Central Depot) who retain a supply of various stone types for their own use to repair monuments in state care.

The condition survey of the monument has revealed that a number of major issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency to prevent further deterioration of the fabric.

Otherwise the structure generally remains largely stable and intact given that the monument has stood for over 179 years it has survived remarkably well.

In addition to the deterioration of pointing, there is a possibility of rusting iron cramps, expanding and shearing off fragments of stone in the ashlar facings. It is recommended that a metal detection survey is carried out to locate any concealed cramps and map their proximity to the location of spalling and fracturing of stonework.
Any failing cramps should be cut out and stone indents inserted to replace lost stone. However, some invasive survey will be necessary to confirm this.

Loose or fractured stonework and invasive plant growth at the top of the column and around the plinth pose a potential risk of falling or dislodged masonry. If not treated this will eventually lead to more serious structural and safety issues. Therefore fractured and loose masonry including treatment and removal of all invasive roots should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The limestone tablets set into recessed panels on the pedestal have minor wear and are generally in a stable condition with the exception of the east tablet which has fractured in the upper north corner. This could indicate to the possibility of voids behind each tablet, the fracture may be the result of over tightening of fixings in an area containing a void. The joints surrounding each tablet are in poor condition and many open joints are evident. The fixings themselves appear to be heavily corroded and should be replaced with appropriate stainless steel fixings.

Programme of repairs – Scaffolding will be essential to carry out a more detailed survey and inspection on a stone by stone basis. This will form the basis of a comprehensive detailed survey in order to prepare drawings and specification for any proposed repairs.

3.2 Recommendations

The condition survey of the monument has revealed that a number of issues need to be addressed to prevent further deterioration of the fabric. The following recommendations are prioritised into three categories:

Category 1 - Urgent Health & Safety Risks (Immediate action)

- Remove all dangerously loose stone as highlighted throughout the report.
- Undermined and heavily delaminated step to plinth should be replaced with a suitable stone replacement and any displaced stonework eased back into position.

Category 2 - Essential repairs within 1-3 years

- All vegetation should be sprayed with a systemic weedkiller during the active growth period in order to fully kill off the plant at root level. This work should be ideally be carried out in advance of any stonework repair project.
- Spalled and fractured stonework – Urgent attention is required to high level work which exhibits spalling and fracturing.
- All delaminated stone should be lightly scrapped to remove delaminated layers of stone. All delaminated stone should be lightly trowel scraped and surfaces cleaned with suitable bristle brushes (not wire brushes) or carborundum blocks.

Category 3 - Recommended repairs over 4-10 year period

- Stone cleaning – Algae and moss should be removed using an environmentally friendly biocide coupled with a light steam low pressure wash to remove staining.
- Material analysis – Samples of existing stone and mortars should be sent to a laboratory for full analysis. This will inform of compatible stone type for replacement repairs and replication of original mortars.
- Cementitious render repairs – These should be removed and underlying stone accessed individually by a suitably qualified conservation professional for indentation repair or full replacement using a compatible stone type.
- Delaminated stonework – All delaminated stonework should be individually assessed by a suitably qualified conservation professional for possible retention in order to retain as much of the original fabric, through consolidation, stabilisation or full replacement. Heavily delaminated ashlar stone beyond repair should be replaced using a compatible stone type.
- The fixing to the statue should be examined by a structural engineer to ensure that it is intact and fit for purpose. Some cracking around the base and surface corrosion on the expose ferrous metal bar may indicate possible movement. It may be necessary to remove the statue and replace the fixing with 304 marine grade stainless steel threaded bar and bolt.

- The previously repaired right hand of the statue and sword should be re-examined to determine if it is secure and fixings used are of non-ferrous metal.
- Limestone tablets – Relief carvings and incised lettering should be lightly cleaned and all fixings carefully removed and refixed with stainless steel fixings. Fractured panel should be repaired with epoxy resin. A low pressure lime based grout should be used to fill voids behind each tablet.
- All defective and inappropriate cement-based pointing should be raked-out using non-mechanical means and repointed using lime-based mortar. This will entail full repointing of the entire monument.
- Further inspection of the core using minimal invasive means by boring into the structure and inspecting the core with a borescope to determine of the central core of the column shaft and that behind inscribed panels is hollow or solid. This will inform the decision on grouting and the consistency and aggregate size required for injectability and flow rate. A metal detector survey will also confirm if the column shaft stonework is tied with metal cramps.
- A low pressure lime based grout should follow the re-pointing exercise and carried out in stages commencing at the bottom and working upwards.
- All fractures and open voids should be grout injected. The grouting material should be compatible with the existing material and not impose any additional loading or change in composition due to thermal variations which may put stress on the structure.
- Missing raised lettering inscription could be addressed with new indentation lettering or left alone. Fissured and remnants of raised or incised lettering and relief carvings should be preserved by consolidation treatment in order to stem the weathering process. It is essential this work is carried out by a qualified specialist stone conservator.

NOTE:

It is important to note that, while the recommended initial phase outlined at categories 1 and 2 will remove all loose and potentially dangerous stonework from the monument, deterioration will continue to occur and restoration work of a more permanent nature will be required within the timeframe outlined.

Record photographs of emergency work carried out will be useful for comparison of the rate of stonework deterioration between the date of first survey and interim periods in the future.

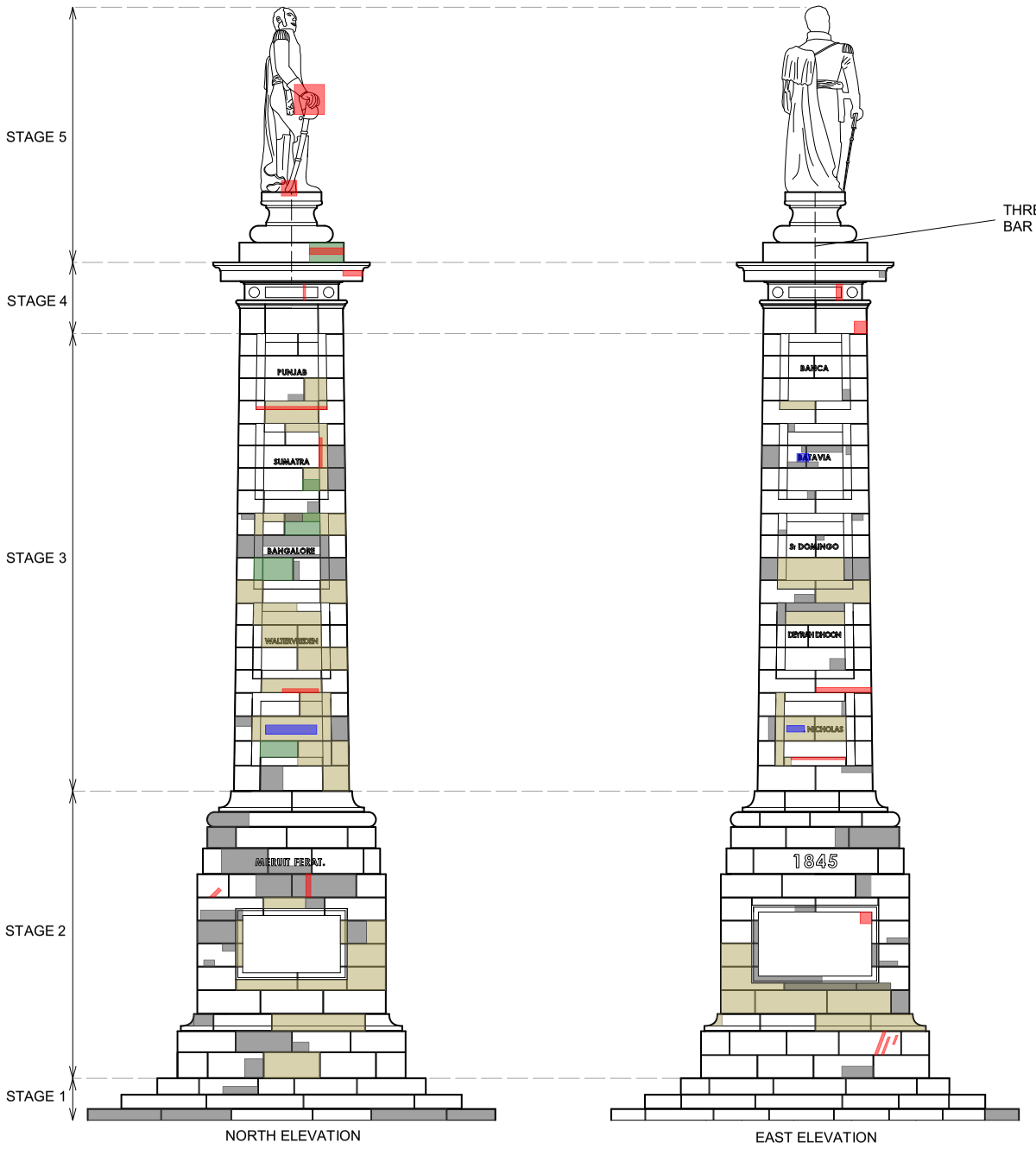
APPENDICES

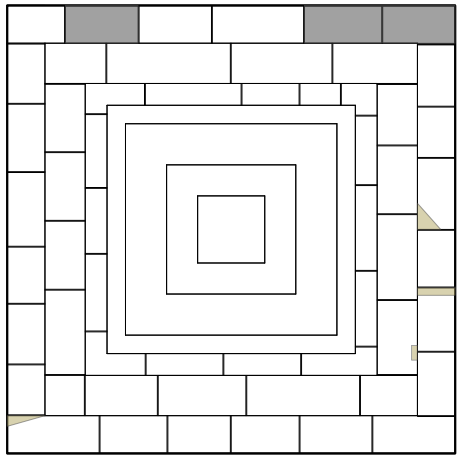
APPENDIX A

Drawings



Site Plan
NTS





PLAN VIEW TO SHOW DAMAGE TO STEPS

ADVANCED DECAY

DELAMINATION

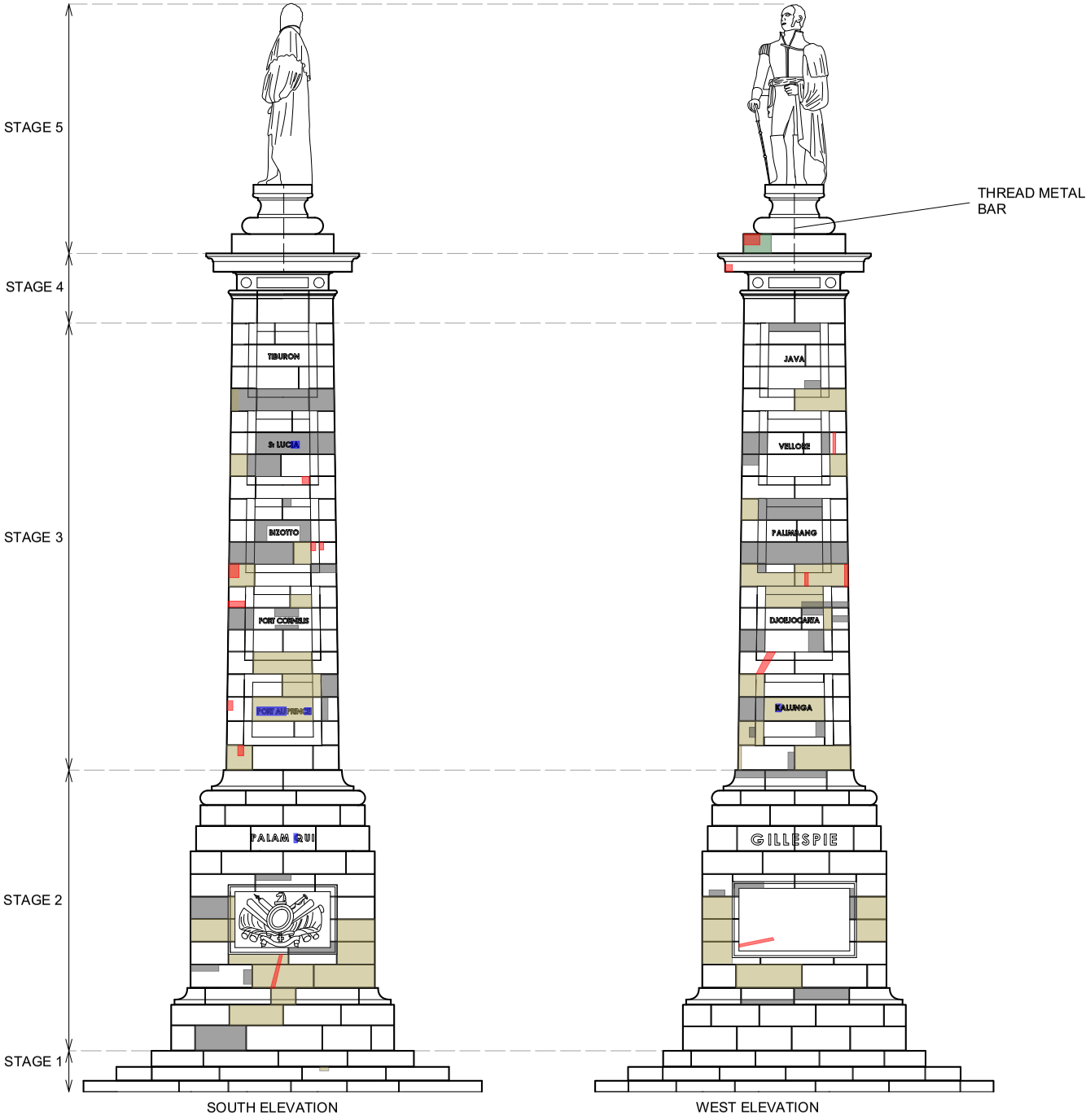
CEMENTITIOUS MORTAR REPAIRS

FRACTURES

MISSING / DAMAGED LETTERING

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

Back to Agenda



ADVANCED DECAY

DELAMINATION

CEMENTITIOUS MORTAR REPAIRS

FRACTURES

MISSING / DAMAGED LETTERING

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

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APPENDIX B

Indicative Cost Estimate

INDICATIVE COST ESTIMATE

The following cost estimate breakdown is provided for information and guidance purposes only. Estimates are based on the advisors industry knowledge.

Actual costs may be higher or lower.

The costs are exclusive of VAT, Professional and Statutory Fees

Construction inflation will be required to be added from the date of this estimate

1.00	Scaffolding	£ 7,000.00
2.00	Removal and treatment of Vegetation	£ 500.00
3.00	Biocide and power washing	£ 2,000.00
4.00	Raking out existing pointing and repoint with lime mortar	£ 8,000.00
5:00	Stonework repairs/replacement	£25,000.00
6:00	Dismantle statue/ replace structural fixing/reinstate statue	£ 7,000.00
7:00	Sone consolidation	£ 5,000.00
8:00	GPR investigation and report	£ 5,000.00
9:00	Stone and mortar analysis	£ 800.00
10:00	Backfilling deep voids	£ 3,000.00
	Prelims	£10,000.00
	Contingencies @ 20% of sub-total	£14,660.00
	Sub-total	**£87,960.00**
	Indicative Professional Fees (12%)	£10,555.20
	Total	**£98,515.20**

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Notice of Motion 629 Clandeboye Park and Pitch Update
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 629 / 88006
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Budget in Place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background
In September 2024, Council agreed a Notice of Motion stating:

"That this council notes that significant investment was previously made to deliver a play park, MUGA and amateur league sized football pitch on the Clandeboye road. Notes with regret there have been ongoing issues with the pitch. Instructs officers to reinstate the goalposts and mark out the pitch so that it can be played on by the local community. Furthermore, following consultation with the local community, that a report is brought back regarding the longer-term maintenance and enhancement of the site, to ensure any necessary provisions can be considered during the rate setting process to ensure that the football pitch is fit for purpose and can be used as previously agreed."

A report was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing Committee in January 2025, with a number of options and a recommendation. Elected Members decided to progress an option to reinstate the football pitch to intermediate dimensions with full size goal posts. A budget was agreed separately and within the 2025/6 financial year.

A programme of works was approved in June 2025 to prepare the pitch for the 2025 season. The following has been delivered as a result:

- Installation of full-size goalposts and ball stop fencing
- Overseeding, sand dressing and pitch aeration
- Weed treatment and fertiliser programme
- Line marking and inclusion in the annual maintenance programme
- Independent turf assessment and maintenance plan

These works have reinstated the pitch for community use. The current pitch measures 88m x 46m, below intermediate standards, initially requested by the local community. Constraints to widening include:

- Underground water infrastructure
- Sloping ground levels
- Proximity to the MUGA and paths

A feasibility study confirmed that widening would require significant works, including regrading, a retaining wall, and infrastructure adjustments (subject to external approvals). Estimated costs:

- Construction: £98,500
- Additional costs (fees, approvals, access changes etc.): approx. £30,000

The pitch would also be unavailable for approximately twelve months during establishment.

Engagement was undertaken with local stakeholders, including schools, community groups and sports clubs.

Key priorities identified:

- Toilet provision
- Dog exercise area to reduce fouling
- Outdoor learning and biodiversity spaces
- Intermediate football use would require 90m x 55m pitch dimensions
- Youth football requires smaller formats
- Changing, storage and toilet facilities would be needed

As reported to the Environment Committee in December 2025 the report considered that:

- The cost and scale of works are significant for an informal community facility
- There is no current strategic need for intermediate-level provision at this location
- The proposal does not represent value for money
- The upcoming Leisure Strategy audit should inform any future decision

It was recommended to the Environment Committee in December 2025 that Council:

1. Notes the reinstatement and ongoing maintenance of the pitch
2. Notes the engagement outcomes and current constraints; and
3. Agrees not to progress pitch widening at this time, pending the Leisure Strategy facilities audit.

Key Issues

At the Environment Committee meeting in December 2025 an alternative recommendation was agreed: “That the Item be deferred to allow officers to set up a meeting as soon as possible between:

- Council Officers,
- Clandeboye Village Community Association, and
- interested environment committee & Bangor West DEA elected reps.”

An on-site meeting was held on Monday 16 March 2026 which was attended by Council Officers, Clandeboye Village Community Association and Elected Representatives. The meeting was productive with views from all sides heard. It was agreed that a further report would be brought to Council outlining the findings.

On 23 March 2026 Officers received communication from Elected Members asking if the dimensions of the pitch could be extended, not to the previously requested intermediate dimensions of 90m by 55m, but to at least 90m by 50m.

Officers investigated this request and agreed it was achievable. This was agreed as acceptable by Clandeboye Village Community Association. During these communications, a request to increase the pitch length to between 95m and 100m was made by the Community Association. The request also included installation of stanchions in the corners of the existing posts to aid hanging of nets. Both these requests were investigated by Officers and were deemed to be achievable.

Next Steps

The following works are proposed:

1. Increase the pitch width to 50m

2. Increase the pitch length to 96m
3. Install corner stanchions on both sets of goalposts.

This approach was agreed in writing by Clandeboye Village Community Association on 13 May 2026. If this report is agreed, works will be progressed through the Summer months of 2026.

Summary
Council reinstated the football pitch at Clandeboye Road during 2025, including new goalposts, pitch improvements and ongoing maintenance, enabling continued community use. The pitch remains below the intermediate size initially requested, due to site constraints and the significant works required to achieve these dimensions were not recommended in December 2025.

Following further engagement with local stakeholders and Elected Members in early 2026, a revised and more achievable enhancement option has been agreed. This includes extension of the pitch to 96m x 50m and installation of corner stanchions.

These works have been agreed with the Clandeboye Village Community Association and are proposed for delivery during Summer 2026, subject to Council approval

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Agrees to the progression of the proposed works as outlined in this report.

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Local Biodiversity Action Plan Update 2026
Attachments	Appendix 1: Action Plan Update
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA1 / 88013
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: Budget in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background

Biodiversity is supported through a statutory duty under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The Act requires public bodies to take reasonable steps to further the conservation of priority habitats and species and to encourage others to do so. The development and delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) helps to demonstrate the Council's compliance with this duty. In line with the Act, the Council's responsibilities relate to five key aspects of biodiversity:

- Protection of Biodiversity
- Maintenance of Biodiversity
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Restoring Biodiversity
- Promoting Biodiversity

The Borough's second Biodiversity Action Plan was approved and adopted in April 2023. Since then, it has provided a framework for coordinating activity to protect and enhance biodiversity across the Borough. The preparation of the Plan marked an important step in recognising the value of local biodiversity and ensuring that international, national, regional, and local objectives are progressed through partnership working.

Key Issues

The LBAP sets out 84 actions across four themes. These actions are intended to protect, conserve and enhance the priority habitats and species identified through the Borough audit. For ease of reference, actions are grouped under the following themes:

- Theme 1: Education and Awareness
- Theme 2: Research and Monitoring
- Theme 3: Land Management
- Theme 4: Building Partnerships

The LBAP is embedded within the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan 2026–27 and supports delivery of the Plan's agreed strategic objectives and operational priorities. It reinforces the Council's wider commitment to environmental sustainability, climate resilience and community involvement by evidencing activity underway and progress achieved in improving local biodiversity. In particular, the LBAP aligns strongly with the Service Plan objectives for climate recovery and biodiversity gain.

This report highlights the Council's contribution to these aims through actions such as protecting and enhancing habitats, delivering education and engagement activity, and working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to support LBAP delivery. Collectively, these interventions can support carbon sequestration, improve air quality and strengthen biodiversity. Continued monitoring, through formal surveys and bioblitz events, alongside community-led and incidental records, will help build an increasingly robust understanding of the condition of local biodiversity and the Borough's green spaces over time.

The LBAP contributes to a number of Service Plan performance measures, including the management of 154,002m^2 of rewilded Council land. It also supports achievement

within wider quality and place-making programmes, including Bloom/Best Kept Awards, and the maintenance of seven Green Flag Award sites.

In addition to environmental and climate benefits, the LBAP supports community wellbeing and aligns with the Five Steps to Wellbeing framework. Outdoor initiatives, such as birdwatching sessions, bioblitzes, Bug ID activities and wider engagement events encouraging residents to spend time in green spaces and to value, enjoy and help safeguard the local environment. This can contribute to physical and mental health benefits associated with time outdoors, while also providing opportunities for social connection and helping to reduce isolation through shared participation.

Next Steps
Over the coming year, work will continue to progress and refine LBAP delivery by building on actions already underway, initiating actions that have not yet advanced, and prioritising activity where it can deliver the greatest benefit for priority habitats and species. The Council will also seek to strengthen and expand partnership working with key stakeholders to support coordinated delivery, share expertise and leverage resources. Community involvement will remain a key focus, with continued engagement through events, volunteering, education and citizen science initiatives to increase awareness, encourage positive behaviours and improve the evidence base through ongoing recording and monitoring.

Summary
This report provides an update on delivery of Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), which supports the Council's statutory duty under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and provides a framework for coordinated action following adoption of the Borough's second plan in April 2023. It outlines progress across the LBAP's 84 actions under four themes, Education and Awareness, Research and Monitoring, Land Management, and Building Partnerships, and highlights how this work is embedded within the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan 2026–27, to support agreed strategic objectives, including climate recovery and biodiversity gain.

The report also notes the wider benefits of LBAP activity, including habitat enhancement, engagement and partnership working, improved evidence through surveys and citizen science, contributions to performance measures (including rewilded Council land and Green Flag sites) and positive impacts for community wellbeing through nature-based participation. Next steps focus on progressing and prioritising outstanding actions, strengthening collaboration with stakeholders, and maintaining community involvement to build the evidence base and maximise benefits for priority habitats and species.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report.

	Appendix 1	Action Plan Update
1	Encourage participation in citizen science wildlife projects and engage the public in biodiversity recording and awareness.	**Bioblitz at Skipperstone Beach on 30th May 2025.** On Friday 30th May, naturalists and the public came together at Skipperstone Beach area of the North Down Coastal Path, to assist in the recording of the site's wildlife. This concerted effort, known as a BioBlitz, involved several naturalists with expertise in plants, fungi, tidal and terrestrial invertebrates, moths, birds and mammals to help identify and record as many species as possible within the 1-day set period. During the event the public were encouraged to attend and participate in several workshops, some tailored for adults and others for families. There was a total of five workshops held across the two days. Workshops included coastal bird identification, minibeast/bug hunts, tree identification, marine mammal surveying and coastal vegetation identification. A group of P7 children from Kilcooley Primary school joined us as part of the CONNECT Programme, by cycling to the event before taking part in rock pooling and invertebrate collection with TCV and Field Studies Ireland. A total of over 100 records were documented on the day including various birds, coastal plants, trees, invertebrates and intertidal rockpool species. All records from these events are provided to the Centre of Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) in due course.

		BTO Seabird Report Launch, 26th March 2026 Council recently hosted the 2026 BTO Seabird Report Launch. At this event BTO NI present the most up to date monitoring data on Seabirds in Northern Ireland. The event is an opportunity to celebrate the efforts of the NI Seabird Network including volunteers, NGO's and the NIEA. **Big Garden Bird Watching – Promotion Events** Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Every year, hundreds of thousands of nature lovers take part, helping to build a picture of how garden birds are faring. Ahead of the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch 2026, two bird identification events were held within the Borough. A Schools event was held in the Walled Garden, Bangor on Thursday 22nd January 2026. Two schools from across the Borough took part in the workshop lead by Adam Ringland (local bird expert). The workshop was to provide pupils with the knowledge to identify and record common garden birds within their own gardens, to feed into the big Garden birdwatch survey. A public bird identification event was held at Glen Lyon on Saturday 24th January 2026. The event focused on helping participants to learn how to identify key garden bird species and how to record their presence.

		Love Parks Week 2025 saw 18 events across 10 days celebrating everything parks and outdoors. This included bug hunts, writing workshops, family fun day at Linear Park, biodiversity walk at Movilla, park range experience, Tree Tour, Family Volunteering Day at Kiltonga, Women's event at Londonderry Park, Natural inks workshop, beach art, Dementia Friendly event at Ward Park Sensory Garden and Seaweed walk and cookery demo. **Wild Days Out** Delivered a programme of free, hands-on nature sessions across Ards and North Down in August, supporting children and families to connect with the outdoors through activities including bird-spotting at Kiltonga, shoreline exploration in Millisle and leaf-art workshops in Bangor. Attendance was strong, with positive feedback and high levels of engagement from families across the Borough. **Awake the Garden** Delivered on 24–28 March in Bangor Castle Walled Garden through a partnership between Parks and Cemeteries and Good Relations. The programme provided a range of nature-focused activities promoting biodiversity awareness and engagement, including spring horticultural showcases (daffodil and flower arranging competitions), outdoor film screenings with environmental themes, and practical sessions such as planting demonstrations, bug hunts and family nature activities. The initiative demonstrated the value of the Walled Garden as a shared green space supporting both environmental learning and community participation.

2	Encourage the public to get involved in practical activities and habitat restoration projects to increase the numbers of our priority species	To highlight National Hedgehog Day, an event with Castle Gardens pre-school took place on Wednesday 4th February 2026 with 28 pre-school pupils. Parks Development and Heart of Down Squirrel groups visited the school for a fact sharing session and story time with the pupils. Afterwards the children spent time exploring their outdoor space, scavenging for the natural materials we had talked about using as bedding for hedgehogs. The session then split into two with children helping to build and fill the hedgehog nest boxes with the Heart of Down Squirrel Group, while the other children created their own felt hedgehogs to take home. As part of Nest Box Week the Parks Development Team alongside the Heart of Down Red Squirrel Group visited Castle Gardens Primary School on 16th February 2026, to build nest boxes for the school and local parks and bird feeders for their homes. Over 70 children took part. This school sits adjacent to one of our developing Rewilding sites on the Bowtown Road, Newtownards. This type of engagement with children will encourage them to use the space as an outdoor classroom and educate them on the value of protecting our wildlife. This is part of the Bowtown Road Rewilding Site Habitat Management Plan which aims to demonstrate how appropriate management can benefit priority species and people. See action 27 Officers delivered a Sand Dunes Conference in October 2025 at Portavogie Community Centre. A range of Coastal experts delivered

		presentations on designations, modelling, current condition of our sand dunes and good case study examples. The event was well attended and received positive feedback. The conference was followed by some practical Marram Grass planting on Portavogie Beach. Through 2026 we hope to continue engagement activities with local communities in other sand dune locations. The Engagement Officer delivers an annual Shared Education programme in collaboration with Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, alongside pupils from Strangford College, Carrowdore and St Columba's, Portaferry, combining classroom learning with fieldwork on the sand dunes at Cloughey Beach. The programme strengthens understanding of coastal biodiversity, responsible recreation, and the pressures facing dune systems. Schools report that the joint sessions enhance curriculum learning, support cross-community engagement, and increase pupils' awareness of their role in environmental stewardship.
3	Support participation in national and international biodiversity awareness campaigns	To highlight National Hedgehog Day, an event with Castle Gardens pre-school took place on Wednesday 4th February 2026 with 28 pre-school pupils. See section 2. On Sunday the 4th of May 2025 local participants took part in a Dawn Chorus event, held at Stricklands Glen and the North Down Coastal Path. The event, hosted by Council and lead by expert guides, proved to be a huge success with a total of 26 Bird species identified by the end of the event. Taking place on the first Sunday every May is 'International Dawn Chorus Day', a worldwide celebration of nature's greatest festival, focusing on bird song.

		RSPB Big Garden bird watch is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Every year, hundreds of thousands of nature lovers take part, helping to build a picture of how garden birds are faring. See section 1 International Bat Night is held on the last weekend in August to promote the conservation of bats and educate the public on their ecological importance. (See Section 4)
4	Raise the profile of bats by running a programme of related activities and developing an information page on the council website.	Still to be progressed in terms of an information page within the Councils Website. To celebrate International Bat Night on the evening of August 29th, a group of enthusiasts gathered for a Bat Walk and Talk, a guided event celebrating one of nature's most misunderstood flying mammals, the bat. Hosted in the Men's Shed Holywood the event combined education, conservation and community connection. Participants enjoyed a talk by The Bat Group Northern Ireland on these fascinating creatures, separating fact from fiction and learning how we can help record the populations we have in Northern Ireland to help further our understanding. During the evening the group were able to register, by way of bat detectors, common pipistrelles, soprano pipistrelles and Leisler's Bats.
5	Encourage participation in SeaSearch via diving clubs https://www.seasearch.org.uk/	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7

6	Work in partnership to organise training in whale and dolphin identification and monitoring	Officers have made early contact with local groups who would be able to deliver this training.
7	Carry out an audit and mapping exercise of coastal interpretative panels on council owned land. Identify panels in need replacing, opportunities to combine panel information and potential new panel locations to promote marine biodiversity.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
8	Inform the public where land is being managed for biodiversity.	Rewilding signage has been added to sites at Whitespots and Brompton, Bangor. Additional signage will be rolled out to other sites as we progress each site.
9	Raise awareness on the biodiversity of our rivers and produce interpretation material on the biodiversity value of wetlands habitats and associated species at key sites.	A duck feeder was installed at Ward Park in partnership with the Feed the Ducks Initiative and has remained successful in steering visitors away from bread towards healthier, sustainable feed. The contactless, solar-powered unit provided 24/7 access to high-protein feed for ducks, geese and swans, while reducing litter and supporting pond health through on-site information and a location-specific QR code. Ulster Wildlife Trust have installed new Biodiversity sign at our land at Balloo Wetland showcasing what species can be seen around the walking trail.
10	Promote local biodiversity by creating new biodiversity trails (including interpretative signage) in selected woodland locations.	A new Tale Trail launched at Cairn Wood in November 2025. This new family friendly trail leads visitors around 2 themed woodland trails – one for Red Squirrel and one for Pine Martins. Using storyboards and wildlife clues visitors learn about the different

		species who call Cairn Wood home. A willow Pine Martin sculpture has placed at the end of the long trail by one of the viewpoints. The development of a Castle Park trail is underway with tree identification signage with seasonal trails showcasing the best trees for each season and a child's friendly trail.
11	Raise awareness regarding land management changes for barn owl conservation and promote recording sightings of barn owls.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
12	Promote 'Gardening for Wildlife' and support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025	Our biodiversity and gardening work this year focused on giving children and communities practical ways to support local wildlife. Five schools took part in the Schools Growing Clubs, where pupils learned about pollinator planting, companion planting and took part in bug hunts. Sunflower seeds were offered to all schools in Ards and North Down, helping more pupils grow plants that support pollinators. We also began trialling native Irish wildflower seed packets for the public, supplied by True Harvest Seeds. This small-scale pilot helps us promote the importance of local provenance, while recognising that moving all council wildflower planting to native mixes will take longer due to limited supplier capacity. Alongside this, we continued to promote Gardening for Wildlife, supported the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, completed the 2025 response, and used events such as National Gardening Day and the

		In Bloom Community Competition to encourage simple, wildlife-friendly gardening across the borough.
13	Raise awareness of red squirrel conservation and encourage local recording of the red squirrel and pine marten.	Council to work in partnership with the North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Martin group and support their activities to improve habitats within our borough for Red Squirrels. Officers attended the recent North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Martin group AGM and learnt about activity across a number of local sites which included a presentation on Red Squirrels from Ulster Wildlife Trust. A strong partnership has developed with North Down Group and members of the Heart of Down Group. The North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Martin group supported the launch of the Tale Trail at Cairn Wood with an information table.
14	Raise awareness on danger of rodenticides to non-target wildlife and the importance of using rodenticides correctly.	Herbicide Reduction Policy continues to be rolled out across Council sites steered by an internal Task & Finish group.
15	Engage with the PSNI Wildlife Officer to promote the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAWS) and raise public awareness of the threats and persecutions that face some of our most vulnerable and iconic species.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
16	Monitor the progress of this action plan through the setting up of a BAP implementation / partnership group	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7

	within the first year of the plan. To be made up partner organisations meeting on an annual basis.	
17	Publicize the BAP within the council and beyond through existing information centres and museums (e.g. Bangor Library)	Officers are currently working on a Community LBAP to create an 'easy read' version of the LBAP. This will progress to a Child friendly version for schools and youth groups. LBAP promoted and distributed at 'Awakening Garden Event' 28th March 2026 and all council events.
18	Ensure council land managers are familiar with the latest biodiversity guidance, policy and legislation through appropriate training.	Regular formal and informal training available for all staff. This includes face to face, webinars, emails/information circulated and through Council reports.
19	Provide invasive species identification, control and management training to council staff and the wider public and produce an Invasive Species Swatch for council staff to assist with identification in the field.	Invasive Species training for all staff is in the early stages of development.
20	Target and promote agri-environment scheme uptake around lanes, ponds and rivers - including buffer zones and ungrazed grass margins to reduce the impact of eutrophication and sedimentation. Highlight the importance of these features as wildlife corridors.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7

21	Promote the importance of cereal field margins for biodiversity	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
22	Raise awareness of the importance of our hedgerows for local biodiversity and its role as a vital ecological network and promote best practice management.	The importance of hedgerows and hedgerow planting is part of the Councils Tree & Woodland Strategy. 6000 whips were bought and planted during the 2025/26 planting season across 6 sites. These trees are planted in partnership with local communities.
23	Establish a 'Birds of the Borough' project group, to develop project ideas to promote the understanding and conservation of the Borough's iconic birds through education and outreach.	In partnership with the North Down Swift Group several sites have been located to site swift boxes and callers. These will be installed in time for swift nesting season. A walk and talk event, in partnership with the North Down Swift Group, is scheduled for June 2026 in Donaghadee. Swift boxes and callers are being installed at Hamilton Hub in May. Officers have been supporting a local bird expert in monitoring the black guillemot. By providing equipment and support to recruit volunteers, it is hoped that more up-to-date data on guillemot numbers can be recorded. There have been a number of events and activities which have provided an opportunity for members of the public to get involved in bird identification. These have included Bird ID as part of RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch and Coastal Bird Watching built into the Winter Walk series.
24	Raise awareness of Swift nesting habitat in our urban environment with the wider public and in all relevant sections of the council. Provide training in Swift identification and adequate habitat requirements	See action 23

25	Distribute guidance on habitat management that will benefit each of our priority bird species	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
26	Promote semi-natural grassland biodiversity through local events, and council publicity, hold lowland meadow identification and management training courses.	Continue to promote our Rewilding sites including the development of Seapark. Seapark rewilding site was identified as an area for a partnership project with Buglife. Buglife were keen to develop a coastal site for rewilding with a programme of monitoring to follow. To date the site has been scarified and seeded with yellow rattle. The site will be left to grow through this first stage. Parks staff will maintain the edges to keep paths clear and will litter pick as needed. The second phase will be the brush harvest of seed in the autumn. Signage will accompany this project to explain the process. A Rewilding update will be presented to Council in separate report.
27	Implement the **STAND4TREES** initiative by engaging stakeholders including local groups and communities through activity workshops to increase tree and hedgerow cover throughout the Borough.	Through planting season 2025-2026 in excess of 15,500 new trees were planting in the borough. For the majority of the sites, tree, hedgerow and orchard planting events were held in partnership with local community groups, schools and volunteers. Ards and North Down now has 15 new community orchards, with new sites at Cloughey Football Picth, Jacks Cutt and Castle Park. The target is for 3 new orchards per year. Regular events as part of the **STAND4TREES** campaign have happened throughout the year including: • Tree Tours • Orchard Planting & clear ups • National Hedgerow week promotions • Mindfullness sessions • Love Parks week activities • Tree and plant ID workshops • Tree seed gathering • National Tree Week

		• Community Tree Planting events
28	Raise awareness of the Borough's oldest and most important trees through the promotion of the Ancient Tree Inventory.	A recent year long time lapse video of the Ballymenoch Park Turkey Oak was recorded to showcase its season al changes. This will be added to the Council website in due course. It is thought this oak is one of the largest in the country standing at 27m high. To achieve this it would need to be around 500 years old. Regular surveying of our tree stock is capturing specimen age.
Theme 2. Research & Monitoring		
29	Facilitate and support survey work to understand current distribution and condition of priority habitats and priority species populations within the Borough.	A repeat (1 year post works) overwintering bird survey carried out at Bowtown Road, rewilding site in Newtownards. A number of priority bird species were reported to be identified on site.
30	Log 'Actions for Pollinators (www.pollinators.ie) to aid the tracking of resources in the landscape.	Officers continue to log these responses including through the All Ireland pollinator plan. .
31	Commission an invasive species audit of Council owned land and produce a Council Invasive Species Management Strategy; to include a 'traffic light' system to prioritise control of certain species	Officers are currently mapping our invasive species while staff are onsite. Future plans will be to further train staff on identification and management through new technologies and treatment.
32	Commission a survey of the distribution, extent and condition of Council hedgerow networks. Review council hedgerow management practices for the benefits of biodiversity. Identify areas for hedgerow enhancement and	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7

	establishment, particularly where habitats can be connected.	
33	Commission a desktop and field-based survey of woodland and parkland on key Council-owned sites including invertebrates and lower plants (lichens, bryophytes).	Surveys carried out on sites as required.
34	Commission a biodiversity audit, to include a Bryophyte and lichen survey, of all Council owned graveyards and cemeteries to guide conservation management	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
35	Support Ulster Wildlife (UW), NI Barn Owl Project, to include the surveying of Barn Owl hotspots on council owned land.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
Theme 3. Land Management		
36	Identify and declare Local Nature Reserves at appropriate sites in the Borough and manage accordingly.	Extension on Balloo Wetland feasibility study currently being completed for extending the route.
37	Commission conservation management plans for key Council owned sites detailing prescriptions to ensure relevant features remain in good condition, any features not in favourable condition are to be improved and maintained in good condition.	Conservation Management Plans have been completed for Bowtown Road Rewilding Area. Officers will be carrying out a Conservation Plan for Cloughey Sand Dunes. Other sand dune sites will be progressed in due course.
38	Encourage the concept of green walls/roofs where appropriate on new Council buildings.	Officers continue to encourage the use of green walls/roofs through capital projects. Strategic Capital Development are developing a Sustainable Building Criteria/Policy

Commented [EA1]: @Freeburn, Dylan do we have anything to add here?

39	Secure funding to commission a feasibility study exploring the potential of a local nature recovery network demonstration project on the Comber River (and its tributaries to connect fragmented habitat)	It is envisaged this will be progressed as part of the Landscapes Connection project with Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership. Council are awaiting the outcome of this funding application.
40	Secure funding to commission a feasibility study to explore the options for habitat restoration and management at Laurel Bank and Crawfordsburn Glen.	Full reports completed on both sites. Officers employed consultants to develop and feasibility study for Crawfordsburn Glen (undeveloped area – pond, walkways, signage, biodiversity and engagement enhancements etc). This report has been completed and officers will now review the suggestions alongside budgets. A recent business case was not progressed through budget setting to begin some of the initial recommendations within these report.
41	Control excessive gorse growth *Ulex* sp. on the rocky higher ground of Whitespots Country Park. Thin planted trees at the site to create a more open and biodiverse environment.	A significant Capital Project is being developed at Whitespots Country Park. This will be progressed when plans for this project are finalised.
42	Commission management plan for Cloughey sand dunes outlining conservation actions to effect favourable condition	Sand Dune mini conference delivered in October 2025, Cloughey was one of the sites surveyed by a Consultant. Officers have secured budget for a student. If successful in recruitment, the student will be working toward a management plan for our Coastal sites.
43	Create and install features in existing and newly created meadows, to benefit invertebrates including bug hotels and beetle and bee banks.	A Bee Bank management plan was develop and distributed to staff at Ward Park to ensure the bee bank at the park is managed correctly.

		Ward Park wooden habitat letters were installed a Ward Park with built in natural materials to support a range of invertebrates. Signage was created to educate the public. This is a temporary sign which will be changed to a permanent one in due course. A new wooden noticeboard with built in bug hotel frame has been installed at Linear Park, Bangor. Part of the Bowtown Road site includes a number of enhancements for habitats for birds, hedgehogs, bugs and bees. Officers have been working closely with Castle Gardens Primary School to build these. They will be placed on site in due course.
44	Avoid removing deadwood from woodlands unless there is over-riding health and safety reasons. Ensure this is incorporated into the management plans for all council managed woodlands.	We continue to leave some felled trees and branches to act as habitats. This is done as best practice across all our sites but is stipulated within 7 management plans as part of our Green Flag accreditations.
45	Look at opportunities to create new ponds across the Borough at suitable locations	Not progressed yet in terms of new ponds however the protection and enhancement of our existing ponds is a top priority. Officers continue to look at opportunities to attract external funding to progress this action.
46	Restore woodland and pond habitats at Strickland Glen for the benefit of biodiversity	Business Case for infrastructure improvements for pathways, railings and steps has been approved and will be progressed through 2026/27. Officers continue to progress volunteer opportunities for Volunteers work to remove invasive species onsite. .
47	Erect and maintain existing and newly installed bat boxes within key	New bat boxes were installed at Kiltonga and Crawfordsburn Glen in April 2026.

	council-owned woodland and parkland sites where suitable trees and stone structures exist, and along river banks within close proximity to ponds, lakes and canals.	
48	Restore or plant new native species-rich hedgerows for biodiversity with emphasis on connecting woodlands and other habitats. These hedgerows should act as demonstration sites for good practice hedgerow management.	See action 22
49	Identify suitable sites to install swift boxes on council buildings.	See actions 23 & 24
50	Improve land management in council owned land and identify and erect barn owl nesting boxes key locations within the Borough in collaboration with wildlife organisations.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
51	Continue to manage and monitor lowland meadows under the council rewilding initiative and increase the extent of species-rich wildflower meadow habitat by creating new meadows and expanding the area of existing meadows, in both urban and rural locations. Opportunities to connect to other habitats should be identified and prioritised.	We continue to develop the rewilding sites site by site. A seperate Rewilding Update report will be submitted to Council in Jun 2026. Bowtown Rewilding site is due to be reseeded this year. Seapark has been specifically managed in partnership with Buglife (action 26). Officers have also collected all GIS maps developed as part of Ulster Wildlife Trusts Nature Recovery Networks project and will use these to guide specific areas for habitat restoration and identify gaps to restore nature and develop vital nature networks.

52	Reduce the frequency of amenity grassland cutting per year at selected Council amenity areas including around sports facilities.	A Grassland Management Strategy has now been approved will be delivered to include a range of cutting regimes and frequencies.
53	Establish a network of native seed donor sites for habitat creation and restoration. Ensure that ENSCONET Seed Collecting Manual for Wild Species is utilised.	The Seed2Leaf Community Tree Nursery initiative continues annually with a target of 3 new sites per year. This year our wildflower seed packets have been filled with local native seed varieties and will be distributed with a stronger environmental message to set groups. Parks & Cemeteries operation staff received training from Buglife and True Harvest Seeds this year.
54	Actively pursue the use of local provenance seed (tree and wildflower) and hold workshops on seed harvesting, collection, storage and growing. Including the establishment of local / community tree nurseries.	See action 53 Officers also aim to develop their own tree nursery at a Parks site once suitably identified.
55	Actively excluding all peat-based compost from council use and aiming for a ban on peat-based compost sales. Encourage other organisations and the community to adopt a peat free approach to growing.	Council continues to promote the ‘Go Peat Free’ campaign through local groups and national / regional campaigns.
56	Ensure all built structures and mature trees on council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence of bats prior to any works	This is progressed as standard best practice in line with Council Tree and Woodland Strategy.

	(even minor works such as limb / ivy removal) occur.	
57	Creation of a council grassland management strategy.	Approved in November 2025 and currently being put into action through identifying areas with reduced mowing opportunities
58	Investigate with our partners the feasibility of providing wild bird cover for farmland birds	Working alongside RSPB a habitat management plan was produced for Bowtown Road, rewilding site in Newtownards. Wild bird cover for farmland birds identified for this site as part of this plan. This is now due to be reseeded in 2026.
59	Reduce, replace and where possible eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers on council land	Herbicide reduction policy and Task and Finish Group continues to be actioned with regular meetings
60	Increase accessible woodland (% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m) towards UK average of 21.1% by 2032. Increase woodland creation (% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km) towards UK average of 12.1% by 2030	Council undertakes to replace trees in numbers in excess of those that need to be felled and has an annual tree-planting programme which sees many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted over each Autumn/Winter season. For example, our **STAND4TREES** initiative aims to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that is approximately 160,000 trees. To date, council has planted over 77,206 new trees, the yearly breakdown is: • 2021/22 – 12,435 • 2022/23 – 15,223 • 2023/24 – 18,269 • 2024/25 – 15,532 • 2025-26 – 15,747

61	Ensure a collection of diverse tree colonies through the planting of native trees across the Borough with the creation of an equitable canopy map.	The Tree & Woodland Strategy aims to plant native trees but also now takes consideration for climate friendly species to ensure stability and longevity. The Council undertakes to replace trees in numbers in excess of those that need to be felled and has an annual tree-planting programme which sees many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted over each Autumn/Winter season.
62	Engage with all landowners in relation to the eutrophication issue at the ponds located in Whitespots Country Park	A significant Capital Project is being developed at Whitespots Country Park. This will be progressed when plans for this project are finalised.
63	Provide funding to create community wildlife gardens with pollinator-friendly wildflower areas	See action 12
64	Develop an ambitious planting plan starting with the planting of 160,000 native trees across the Borough with further increased planting to contribute to regional and national targets	See action 27
65	Investigate the potential for incorporating buffer zones around ponds and rivers on council owned land.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
66	Commission a resurvey of SLNCIs in the council area	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
67	Ensure all council owned sites are adequately scoped for the presence	This is completed as standard/best practice

	of badgers and/or setts prior to the commencement of any works, including maintenance works such as the removal of vegetation or scrub	
68	Review current rodenticide use across council services and promote the use of the CRRU code.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
Theme 4. Building Partnerships		
69	Promote biodiversity objectives in the management of golf courses and encourage all golf courses in the Borough to secure the GEO certified label.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
70	Engage with local businesses to encourage involvement in local biodiversity projects.	Within the In Bloom funding and awards Council encourages businesses to improve biodiversity in and around their sites. Corporate/Community Volunteering Days promoted by Parks Officers is ongoing on an adhoc basis as requested.
71	Engage with local operators of business parks and supermarkets to encourage biodiversity enhancements.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
72	Engage with local quarries in conservation actions for key habitats and species in conjunction with conservation NGOs.	Officers are currently undertaking initial conversations with Northstone Quarries and Forest Service regarding partnership opportunities at Cairn Wood..
73	Engage with local residents, businesses and schools to establish Swift nest boxes on their buildings / premises.	See actions 23 & 24.

74	Work in partnership promoting good practice in local provenance native woodland management.	As part of the development of volunteering Council aims to trial a core group to maintain the Community Orchard sites. To be progressed through 2026/27
75	Work in partnership to produce a rivers and streams biodiversity education pack	Officers have undergone training in order to deliver this across the borough.
76	Support a local biodiversity partnership collaboration between Camphill Community, Royal Belfast Golfclub and local schools	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
77	Work in partnership to highlight Irish hare identification and habitat requirements.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
78	Engage with and support local biodiversity partnerships between council and other landowners to increase the extent of land managed for biodiversity.	In Bloom Community Competition continues to encourage local businesses to create spaces for planting to encourage biodiversity.
79	Work in partnership with relevant statutory bodies, NGO's and local groups to support the conservation of the red squirrel and pine marten and identify road mortality black spots where warning signs can be erected.	Council continues to work with and support North Down Red Squirrel and Pine Martin Group to monitor grey and red squirrels and Pine Martins within the borough.
80	Work in partnership with DFI to manage key roadside verges for pollinators	Roundabout sponsorship Policy encourages local businesses to sponsor a roundabout with a key focus on a design for environmental sustainability.
81	Improve the value of urban green spaces for biodiversity by setting up ‘Friends of’ Groups at selected sites	Successful Friends of Group has been established at Linear Park. A meeting to re-establish Friend of Ballymenoch Park was held in May.

		Officers continue to focus on other woodlands and parklands for opportunities for groups, eg Castle Park, Cairn Wood and Kiltonga may have some interest.
82	Engage with local groups to help deliver community led biodiversity related projects and support them to develop and lead their own	31 In Bloom grants to be issued this year to support local groups in developing community growing spaces. Bowtown Road, Rewilding Site, Newtownards, Ards Canal Pathway Group continue to work on the site in an area available to them. They are keen to participate in any wider engagement with the school and the wider community. With PEACEPLUS funding we have launched a 'Your Place, Reimaging Our Space' project which will look at the development of 6 new community sites (growing and/or mens/hens sheds) and engagement with 300 people over 2 years. This engagement will be focused around nature, growing, outdoor environment, as well as more practical 'group' training on communication skills, equality, community relations etc.
83	Engage with stakeholders to facilitate the reduction in ammonia and nutrient run-off across landscapes.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7
84	Identify potential peatland restoration sites and engage with stakeholders to identify opportunities for restoring of sites into a semi natural state.	Being progressed by the Parks Team in 2026/7

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	03 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes
Attachments	Appendix 1 Minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 5 January 2026
File Reference (if applicable)	CW30 / 88005
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
The North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group was established in September 2023 to address issues of connectivity, access and maintenance along the North Down Coastal Path. This followed a decision to withdraw the planning application for the proposed Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway Scheme. The Working Group meet quarterly and is attended by Elected Members, community and business groups.

Key Issues
A meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group was held on 5 January 2026 and the minutes of the meeting were agreed by the Working Group at the 27 April 2026 meeting.

Next Steps
Council to note the minutes and note the progress of the North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group. Meetings will continue quarterly with the next meeting due on 29 June 2026. The minutes of the last meeting (27 April 2026) will be considered at this meeting, and a proposal made to agree future minutes by email to allow earlier reporting to Council and publication.

Summary
The North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group, formed in September 2023 to address maintenance and connectivity, has ratified minutes from its 5 January 2026 meeting. The Council is asked to note the progress made by the group, which holds quarterly meetings to oversee improvements along the North Down Coastal Path

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes the attached minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 5 January 2026.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday 5th January 2026 at 6:00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Brady
Alderman Graham
Councillor Holywood
Councillor McKee
James Hunter (Greenspaces)
Marianne Kennerley (Boom Incl/ Boom Studios)
Stephen McCrory (Ards and North Down Cycle Campaign Group)
Alison McQueen (For Another Path)

Officers: Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Park & Cemeteries Development Manager (J Bettes) and Democratic Services Officer (S McCrea)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors' Hennessy and McCollum for inability to attend and an apology was received from Councillor Newman for lateness. David Lennon (Friends of Columbanus) also issued apologies for inability to attend.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

Noted.

3. MINUTES OF NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH 6TH OCTOBER 2025

No issues were raised in regard to the previous minutes.

Noted.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Alison McQueen (For Another Path) explained that drainage which had been installed across parts of the pathway at the Pickie area appeared to have some

issues and was advised that this would be addressed during the update report and presentation.

5. UPDATE REPORT AND PRESENTATION

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager reported that there had been a slight change to the proposed planning application. The original intention had been to submit an application for the first 600 metres of the path from Royal Belfast Golf Club, as this section was considered the most problematic. However, following further professional advice, concerns were raised that submitting a smaller application and later extending the project could be viewed by Planning as “project splitting,” which is generally discouraged. He also noted that planning applications were costly, with approximately £20,000 already spent, and that submitting a second application in a year or two’s time would require repeating surveys and incurring significant additional expense. For this reason, he believed it was in the best interests of ratepayers to submit a single, larger application covering the full 2km stretch.

Alison McQueen referred to previous planning applications from her own work experience and asked to see the reasoning behind the advice received. She sought reassurance that the approach would not divert resources away from the section most in need of improvement. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that although the application would cover 2km, the business case would remain focused on the initial 600m, which remained the priority. He emphasised that securing planning permission did not oblige the Council to carry out all works immediately, but it would provide flexibility and avoid delays associated with future applications.

Alderman McRandal queried the extent of the 2km stretch. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed it would run from Station Road to the bridge at Seahill. In response to a further question, he advised that no works were proposed for the rocky outcrop and tunnel area, as the space was too narrow to accommodate meaningful intervention.

Alison McQueen reiterated her concern that obtaining approval for the full 2km might lead to funding being directed toward less essential sections. The Manager assured her that the Council remained obligated to address the most critical 600m first, and this would be clearly documented. Councillor Brady added that the group had a democratic mandate to prioritise the agreed section before progressing to others.

The Manager noted that once the initial 600m was completed, the remaining 1.4km could be approached in smaller phases if required, offering flexibility and reducing the financial burden of undertaking all works at once. Alison McQueen requested that these assurances be recorded to address ongoing concerns. The Manager

reiterated that planning approval did not predetermine the exact works to be carried out.

James Hunter concluded by stating that the purpose of the group was to ensure that no decisions or actions would be taken without full discussion.

Alison McQueen stated that, given the long-term nature of the project, it was essential for the group to scrutinise the detailed plans that would guide works over the next few years. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that the drawings were available and that, if those present were so minded, they could be shared, adding that there was a need for confidentiality with any imagery shared. Alison McQueen advised that she was unable to make any decisions at this meeting as there had not been enough time to review details within the presentation.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager noted that it was for the group to determine how it wished to proceed, adding that the planning application was ready and likely could be submitted within the next couple of weeks. Councillor Brady asked whether any further questions would assist members. Alison McQueen explained that she required the full drawings and input from someone with greater technical understanding, noting that a member of her group who normally reviewed such material was currently unavailable.

Councillor Brady suggested that her group might benefit from a separate meeting to examine the plans in more detail. Alison McQueen responded that she did not feel able to assess the material within a few hours and would welcome another opportunity to review it, acknowledging that there would also be a consultation stage.

Councillor McKee expressed confusion regarding the presentation, noting that the previous briefing had included more than 30 slides showing widths and detailed comparisons, whereas the current presentation contained only eight. He found it difficult to compare the two sets of images and felt that the reduced information made it harder to understand the proposals. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager explained that the intention had been to keep the presentation straightforward, as providing every drawing would have been overwhelming. The slides shown were intended to illustrate the design approach rather than provide full technical detail, although all drawings could be supplied if required. He added that the design principle involved a standard maximum width of 1.5 metres across the 2km route, except where the existing path was already wider.

Alderman McRandal commented on the proposed 2m width in certain areas, noting that the section beside the golf course wall was one of the worst parts of the path and clearly required upgrading, which he fully supported. However, he raised concerns about the rocky headland beyond, which formed part of the greenway route and was valued by some users in its current form, while others—particularly

cyclists—might favour improvements. He emphasised the need for transparency in how this sensitive section would be treated within the planning application. He added that the remainder of the route up to the bridge would require careful handling, as some areas needed upgrading while others were satisfactory as they were, and he anticipated differing views on whether the quarry-dust section beyond Rockport should be altered.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager clarified that Section 0.7, immediately after the golf course, involved one of the most significant widenings. He explained that the path had historically extended to the wall, and the proposal was simply to restore it to that original alignment by way of clearing overgrowth rather than create a new route.

[Alderman Graham joined the meeting at 18:20]

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager provided examples from Section 0.7 illustrating how the path currently extended beneath vegetation and how it could be widened. He also noted that at Section 11 the intention would be to return the path to the natural boundary of the existing wall.

Alison McQueen stated that she was content with the explanations but wished to see the full drawings before agreeing to proceed with a 2km application, emphasising the need to understand the totality of the proposals. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed he was happy to discuss the plans further but was conscious of the risks associated with wider circulation. Alison McQueen responded that the drawings would only be shared with four other individuals known to the group.

Stephen McCrory advised that he had first been made aware of the 1.5m width during the evening’s presentation. From a cycling perspective, he noted that shared-path guidance, including recommendations from Active Travel England, suggested a minimum width of 2m. While recognising the constraints along the route, he expressed concern that the proposals appeared to be gradually reducing the space available for cyclists, who would still be required to pass pedestrians in narrow sections. He added that although his members understood the value of the rocky outcrop and were pragmatic about its limitations, they had anticipated a smoother surface and adequate overtaking space along the full length of the path. He asked whether the standards and functionality of shared paths had been fully considered.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that such considerations had always formed part of the process. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to bring options to the group for discussion and that all user

needs were taken into account. He noted that when a 2m width had previously been proposed, objections had been raised.

Alison McQueen asked whether, once planning permission for the 2km stretch was secured, the plans could still be amended. She suggested that, with sufficient funding, passing places could be introduced similar to those on single-track roads, and she observed that much depended on the behaviour of all path users. She believed that a 1.5m width could be workable if users acted considerately.

James Hunter asked when the smaller, less complex works might begin. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager advised that the initial 600m would commence as soon as planning permission and the business case were approved. He cautioned that it could realistically take years before the 600m section was completed, as the planning process alone could take up to a year, followed by construction. James Hunter queried whether some of the lighter works could proceed sooner. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager replied that, subject to agreement, minor works could be undertaken while awaiting approval for the main section, but the priority had to remain the 600m. He expressed concern that focusing on “easy wins” could divert attention from the essential works.

Alison McQueen asked whether areas already in Council ownership could simply be scraped back as part of routine maintenance. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that this could be done easily.

Alderman Graham reflected on the ongoing tension between walkers and cyclists, noting that the group would eventually need to determine the primary purpose of the path. He shared observations from Helen’s Bay, where he and his wife had discussed the issue upon a stroll. From that conversation, he noted that some people believed if the path were improved too much, cyclists would travel too quickly, whereas a rougher surface naturally slowed them down. He added that most cyclists he encountered were courteous, though not all, and that while club cyclists tended to understand their responsibilities, others did not. He emphasised the need to reach a consensus.

Councillor Brady acknowledged the sentiment expressed. James Hunter observed that there were sections where a 2m width was simply not achievable, meaning the path would never be uniform. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager agreed, noting that towards Bangor the path already exceeded 2m in places, but in the section under discussion most of the route could only reach 1.5m due to boundary walls. He added that maintaining a consistent 1.5m width across the 2km stretch would provide coherence.

James Hunter noted the argument of whether the path was intended primarily as a leisure route or a commuter facility, advising that it was not used as a commuter corridor.

Stephen McCrory noted that cyclists had already accepted that the route would not function as a commuter path and would instead be a leisure facility. He said that while some issues raised by road cyclists might be addressed through the shared-path approach, he felt that the proposals were being scaled back. He highlighted that surface type and width were important factors, and that gravel differed significantly from tarmac. He anticipated that members of his group would question why the width was no longer 2m as previously discussed, adding that cyclists had already made concessions and did not want to see the width reduced to 1.2m or, in some places, 80cm, stressing that users would need to act responsibly to make the path work.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager returned to the presentation and stated that no further action should be taken until the plans and drawings had been shared. He asked the group how they wished to proceed and whether the planning application should be launched at this stage. Alderman McRandal agreed that the group should wait to see the photographs. Councillor W Irvine expressed concern that once images were shared, they could be posted online, which could undermine the group's work. Alison McQueen acknowledged this and said she understood the need to limit wider circulation of the drawings.

Councillor Brady asked those present to remember that reviewing plans for the full 2km would be more time-consuming and would require additional meetings. He asked whether the group wished to wait until the next meeting, by which time all members would have had the opportunity to examine the plans and consider a framework for how the remainder of the route should look, even if not in the same level of detail as the initial 600m. Alison McQueen said that while she believed few people would object to a 1.5m width, she was not prepared to agree to the proposals without having seen the actual drawings.

The Head of Parks and Cemeteries reminded the group that the parameters had already been set: the path would be 1.5m wide unless the existing path was already wider, in which case it would remain at its current width. Alison McQueen reiterated that she wished to see the drawings. James Hunter asked whether any works beyond scraping back vegetation were proposed. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that, aside from the initial 600m, no additional works were planned. In response to a further question from Alison McQueen, he confirmed that the surface would be tarmacked.

Councillor McClean observed that members normally received documents a week in advance of meetings, a timeframe that he believed would proffer sufficient time to consider the proposals without delaying the process for months. He acknowledged the concerns raised but felt that five or six days before the next meeting would be adequate, given the long-term nature of the project. He stressed that members could not make decisions without seeing the plans.

The group agreed with Councillor Brady's suggestion.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that once agreement was reached, the process could begin and that drawings would be circulated for further discussion. He also reported on maintenance issues raised earlier in the day: the contractor had observed that the new drainage was working so effectively that it was now overflowing, particularly during snowmelt, and would be returning to extend the system. He had hoped to report that work had begun that morning, but snow had delayed progress. The temporary barrier replacement remained on track for completion by the end of March.

Stephen McCrory raised concerns about the surfacing at Swinley Bay, noting that while the gravel was an improvement on the previous condition, it had made cycling uphill more difficult and did not reflect what had been agreed at earlier meetings, where a hard surface had been expected. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager said he would check this. Stephen McCrory added that the 5cm layer of gravel would wash away and that any wheeled users would find it problematic. Alison McQueen suggested that the gravel should be laid in a more uneven, "lumpy" form to reduce slipperiness. James Hunter asked whether the surface consisted only of stones, and Alison McQueen reiterated that it needed to be textured to prevent slipping.

Councillor Brady summarised that once the group agreed an action, it was important that it be carried out exactly as decided. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager reported that, as agreed at the previous meeting, an audit of assets had been completed. A total of 283 assets had been logged, each in varying condition. He noted that some signage was out of date, unclear or unusable, and that several benches required attention. With all assets now mapped, the next step would be to determine priorities. He suggested that safety issues should be addressed first, followed by bins, which were straightforward to replace. However, signage and interpretative material were in particularly poor condition, and he proposed bringing forward recommendations on what should be removed, replaced or added, subject to the group's agreement.

Councillor McKee asked whether all of this work would be completed by the end of the financial year or whether a business case would be required. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager explained that a budget was already in place for

upgrades, but progress would depend on the planning application being completed. He did not expect the work to be finished within the current financial year due to the need for design work, communications input and decisions on interpretative content. The first stage would be to determine what should be removed and what should replace it.

James Hunter asked whether the planning application was required simply to scrape back grass. Councillor Brady understood that it was not. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that scraping back vegetation fell under general maintenance, noting that the tarmac path already existed. When James Hunter queried the implications for the ASSI designation, the Manager explained that once the application formally established the route as a path, it could be maintained to that standard. In response to a further question about why scraping grass was an issue, he clarified that the concern related to altering the surface. While the tarmac section was clearly defined, the remaining 1.4km was not uniformly identifiable as a former path, particularly where the surface changed.

Councillor Brady observed that work was also required on the next section of the path beyond the agreed 600m, as it too needed repair.

Marianne Kennerley asked whether assets such as boxes and junction cabinets had been included in the audit. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager explained that these had not been logged, as NIE had permission to install them. The audit focused on signage, bins and benches, some of which were located on third-party land. He noted that where assets were on land such as Crawfordsburn, there was a degree of uniformity that needed to be considered. Marianne Kennerley asked whether there was potential to address areas that bordered private property. The Manager said that while options were limited on private land, there was potential to enhance the surroundings—for example, by introducing artwork similar to installations in Ward Park, which could help change the atmosphere of the area.

Marianne Kennerley suggested that such considerations should be incorporated at an early stage, particularly in relation to raising awareness of shared-path use and addressing hotspots where private property adjoined the route. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager noted that in areas affected by graffiti or inappropriate language, one approach used elsewhere was to replace repeated repainting with organised, sanctioned artwork, as had been done in Ward Park.

Alison McQueen cautioned against following the example of Crawfordsburn Country Park signage, which she felt consisted largely of prohibitions.

James Hunter asked whether there were any plans to address antisocial behaviour along the route but, at the time of writing, this was not an action planned by Council.

Alderman Graham raised concerns about maintenance standards, noting that some seats were in such poor condition that they created a negative impression of the Council. He suggested that in some cases it might be better to remove certain items entirely rather than leave them in a deteriorated state, and that a smaller number of well-maintained assets could improve the overall appearance. He added that neglected spaces could contribute to antisocial behaviour and noted similar comments recently made about the Town Hall.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager responded that the issue was not simply the number of bins and benches but ensuring they were placed appropriately and used effectively. He advised that walkability and disability forums had been engaged to help shape the future design of the path, and that replacements would not be on a like-for-like basis. This would form part of the wider review.

He continued with an update on events, such as past events like the Outdoor Partnership inclusive walks on 30 October, a wintering birds and intertidal zone workshop on 4 December and the continued weekly mindful walks on Wednesdays from 10am to 12pm along the coastal path. Further walks were scheduled for 28 January at Seapark, 11 February at Helen's Bay, 25 February at Pickie Park, and 11 March at Groomsport.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager also provided an update on the cycle-friendly borough initiative. Work continued with the Department for Infrastructure on the active travel strategy, including discussions before Christmas regarding an interim link from Green Road to Bangor town centre. A cycling masterplan survey had recently been completed with over 300 responses. The greenway network continued to progress, with an official launch planned for 2 March 2026, at which point the Council's contribution to the project would be complete. A contractor had begun work on the section beside the floodgates, and a related application had been submitted to support that connection.

The final slide confirmed the next meeting dates as 27 April, 29 June and 28 September 2026, 18:00-21:00.

Councillor McKee referred to the previous slide on the cycle-friendly borough and questioned the purpose of an interim link, expressing doubt that the Department would deliver it.

[Councillor McClean left the meeting at 18:50.]

Councillor McKee asked what progress could realistically be expected, noting significant gaps between Green Road, Londonderry Park and Belvedere. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager explained that the greenway projects board

was working with the Department to advance the missing sections and that the new greenway would help highlight the need for further connections. He added that regular meetings took place outside the project board and that positive actions were expected to emerge from these discussions. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager noted that once the greenways were in active use, users would more clearly identify where gaps existed, which could help build momentum for completing the network.

6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

Councillor Brady asked whether there were any other AONB matters. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager said he had discussed relevant issues with Stephen McCrory before Christmas. Stephen McCrory confirmed that his points had largely been addressed during the meeting. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries noted that an invitation had been extended to DAERA regarding their work on the path, following a query raised by Councillor McKee.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As had been displayed at the end of the presentation, the next meeting dates were 27 April, 29 June and 28 September 2026, 18:00-21:00.

ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	03 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Tree and Woodland Update Report 2026
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA4 / 88013
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Budget and Staff in Place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy that was agreed in March 2021. The purpose of the Tree and Woodland Strategy is to recognise the importance of trees, the many benefits they afford us and the increasingly important role they can play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The strategy is required to ensure the Council's limited budget is focused on positive planting programmes and managing tree care and risks.

Our citizens are rightly proud of the greenness of our Borough, but it is something that is not static and which cannot be taken for granted. Trees play a significant role in improving environmental conditions and people's quality of life. Trees act as carbon sinks and absorb carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) and produce oxygen. In addition, trees filter, absorb and reduce pollutants. Trees can make our Borough a healthier, more attractive and more comfortable place to live and work. Trees provide food and shelter for wildlife such as birds, squirrels and insects, as well as for people. Trees have been proven to increase property value and to help relax people by lowering heart rates and reducing stress.

The Council is committed to conserving and retaining existing trees and other features where it is considered that they have landscape or amenity value and will use its powers to protect trees where necessary. Council is also committed to ensuring improved tree cover within the Borough, and to promote the importance of trees to ensure a number of Corporate and Community Plan objectives are met. Council has a legal 'duty of care' and will provide appropriate levels of management arrangements to ensure that users and neighbours of its land are reasonably safe.

The Tree and Woodland Report plays a vital role in supporting the strategic objectives and operational priorities set out in the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan for 2025–2026. It strengthens the Council's overarching commitment to environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and active community engagement by providing clear evidence of ongoing work and measurable progress in tree and woodland management.

A key area of alignment is with the strategic objectives of climate recovery and biodiversity gain. The report demonstrates significant contributions to these goals through large-scale tree planting, over 15,000 trees annually and the expansion of the urban tree canopy. These efforts contribute directly to carbon sequestration, improved air quality, and enhanced biodiversity. Notably, the **STAND4TREES** initiative, which aims to plant 160,000 trees by 2032, is a clear example of how the report's content supports the Council's net-zero and climate mitigation targets set out in the Corporate Plan.

In terms of community engagement and volunteering, the report highlights active partnerships with schools, community organisations, and volunteer groups. Initiatives such as Seed2Leaf nurseries and commemorative tree plantings foster a sense of ownership and inclusion within local communities. This is closely aligned with the Service Plan's objective to strengthen and grow Friends Groups and other volunteer-led programmes, enhancing the social value of parks and green spaces.

The Tree and Woodland Report contributes directly to several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the Service Plan. These include the annual planting of 15,000 trees in line with the **STAND4TREES** target, the delivery of over 70 community-focused projects such as orchard plantings and mindfulness sessions, a marked reduction in herbicide use through sustainable practices, and the expansion of rewilded land to a target of 130,000 square metres.

Environmental sustainability remains a core priority of the Service Plan, and the Tree and Woodland Report complements this through its promotion of native species, improved urban canopy equity, and increased resilience to storms. It also demonstrates economic and social value, with a Tree Asset Valuation estimating £277 million in amenity value and £7.6 million in carbon storage, figures that support the Service Plan's focus on income generation through green infrastructure.

The Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy not only advances environmental and climate goals but also significantly contributes to community wellbeing, aligning closely with the Five Steps to Wellbeing framework. Initiatives such as mindfulness sessions in Bangor Walled Garden, guided tree tours, and community planting events improve connections by bringing people together, while outdoor activities like orchard clean-ups and tree planting promote being active. Events like National Tree Week encourage participants to take notice of nature's beauty, and educational programs like Seed2Leaf nurseries and Forest Schools support continuous learning. Finally, volunteering opportunities and community-led projects embody the spirit of giving, strengthening social bonds and collective pride in local green spaces. By integrating these principles, the Strategy ensures that trees and woodlands serve as vital assets for both planetary and human health.

Key Issues

2025/2026 Tree Plantings
The Council undertakes to replace trees in numbers in excess of those that need to be felled and has an annual tree-planting programme which sees many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted over each Autumn/Winter season.

For example, our **STAND4TREES** initiative aims to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, that is approximately 160,000 trees. Through planting season 2025-2026 in excess of 15,000 new trees were planting in the Borough. To date, Council has planted over 77,206 new trees, the yearly breakdown is:

- 2021/22 – 12,435
- 2022/23 – 15,223
- 2023/24 – 18,269
- 2024/25 – 15,532
- 2025-26 – 15,747

In general, trees planted will be native species such as oak, elder, hazel, hawthorn and birch, in line with Councils Local Biodiversity Action Plan, unless there is a specific ornamental scheme which requires cultivated species. An example of this is Castle Park (Bangor) and Ballymenoch Park (Holywood) which are regarded as historic tree arboretums and would require rare and unusual trees as replacements. This is

intended to ensure that there is a diverse collection of tree colonies across the Borough.

Location	Standard (large trees)	Whip (small trees)	Orchard (fruit trees)	Total Trees
Castle Park, Bangor			15	**15**
Ward Park, Bangor	10			**10**
Smelt Bay, Bangor		500		**500**
Kerrs Wood, Bangor	100			**100**
Killaire Woods, Bangor		300		**300**
Lisnabreen Church, Bangor	10			**10**
Coastline, Groomsport	5			**5**
Playpark, Conlig	2			**2**
Jacks Cut, Newtownards		7,000	30	**7,030**
Frances Street, Newtownards	7			**7**
Regent Street, Newtownards	2			**2**
Conway Square, Newtownards	6			**6**
Greyabbey Cemetery, Greyabbey		800		**800**
Hunts Park, Donaghadee		500		**500**
Lawson Gardens Community Orchard, Portavogie		1500		**1500**
Football Pitch, Cloughey			10	**10**
Portaferry Community Orchard, Portaferry		451		**450**
Kircubbin Rewilding Site		3000		**3000**
Moss Road Football Pitch, Ballygowan		1500		**1500**
Overall Total	**142**	**15,550**	**55**	**15,747**

We planted 15,748 young trees (whips) between November 2025 and March 2026. Local schools, volunteers, and community groups led the way, helping install most of the new trees, hedgerows, and orchards.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is vital for successful tree and woodland initiatives. Involving residents, schools, and volunteer groups fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for our green spaces. Engaged communities are more likely to protect these areas, ensuring long-term sustainability. Furthermore, participating in planting and maintenance strengthens social bonds, promotes environmental awareness, and enhances well-being.

This Events Calendar is the foundation for our engagement activities. Each year will feature new initiatives alongside core activities to support our **STAND4TREES** goal: planting 160,000 trees by 2032, one for every resident in the Borough.

2025/2026 Tree and Woodland Calendar of Events

Tree and Woodland events are scheduled up to 31 March each year, aligning with the tree planting season (November–March). This timing allows Parks Officers to maximise engagement and deliver a wide range of activities for the local community. Below is a month-by-month engagement calendar highlighting major events from the past year. This template will guide future years' programming, with new activities introduced annually to keep engagement dynamic and inclusive.

April	Awake the Garden – Tree Officer hosted a tree tour of Castle Park, Bangor Groomsport Play Park – Community orchard planted with help from the local community.
May	National Hedgerow Week – Council promoted the beneficial impact of hedgerows. Linear Park, Bangor – an orchard clean-up was organised in which the local community came out to help clean and mulch around the fruit trees.
June	Each Thursday in June, Bangor Walled Garden hosted a Mindfulness Session which proved to be a massive hit.
July	Each Thursday in July, Bangor Walled Garden hosted a Mindfulness Session Tree officer hosted a tree tour of Castle Park, Bangor
Love Parks Week 25 July – 1 August	Love Parks Week is an annual campaign that celebrates parks, green spaces, and the dedicated volunteers and workers that look after them all year round. Parks are vibrant, living spaces bring communities together and provide an opportunity to connect with nature in the heart of our cities, towns, and neighbourhoods. Ards and North Down Borough Council ran a number of family-friendly events such as: • Bird Walk • Bat Night • Kids Park Art • Volunteering Promo and experience • Nature Skills for families • Tree and Plant ID
August	Wild Days Out – August saw a variety of child friendly outdoor events: **Feasts for Feathers** Location: Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Newtownards Get your binoculars ready! We'll go on a gentle guided walk to spot and identify native birds. Kids will also get to make eco-friendly bird treats using natural and recycled materials a fun way to support our feathered friends!

	Coastline Biodiversity Location: Coastal Playpark, Millisle Explore the shoreline and learn all about the animals and plants that call our coast home. This hands-on session will have kids discovering shells, seaweed, and even tiny sea creatures! **Tremendous Trees and Plants** Location: Walled Garden (Playpark), Bangor Learn how to identify native trees and wildflowers, then try 'Hapa Zome' a creative Japanese technique of leaf dyeing. Kids can make their own natural artwork to take home!
September	Tree Seed Gathering Season: Council welcomed Orchardville Community to Castle Park, Bangor for a tree seed gathering event.
October	Tree officer hosted a tree tour of Castle Park, Bangor for students from Greenmount Campus.
National Tree Week	National Tree Week, the UK's largest annual celebration of trees, is here! Each year, tree-lovers come together to kick off the tree planting season, and our Borough is taking huge strides to build a greener future with the **STAND4TREES** initiative. Since its launch in 2021, our goal has been to plant one tree for every person in the Borough – that's 160,000 trees by 2032! Ards and North Down Borough Council ran a number of family-friendly events such as: • Community orchard and hedgerow planting with Cloughey P.S and members from the Health and Social Trust. • Tree planting with TCV and local Scots group in Castle Park, Bangor • Tree Tour of Carin Wood
January	Tree planting event at Kerrs Wood, Bangor. This saw 40 standard trees being planted with the help of the local community. Tree planting event at Killaire Wood, Bangor. In association with Choice Housing, Council supplied and helped plant 300 tree whips in there new housing development.
February	Tree and hedgerow planting event at Smelt Mill Bay, Bangor. This saw 40 standard trees being planted with the help of the local community. Community orchard and tree planting event at Jacks Cut, Newtownards. Over two days, students from Bangor Assessment came out to help plant a new community orchard and 3,000 tree whips.
March	Tree planting event at Hunts Park, Donaghadee. In association with the local community of Donaghadee, parks officer helped organise a tree planting event which saw 500 tree whips being planted. Woodland Wellness Walks: Thursday 5 and Thursday 19 March saw the first Woodland Wellness Walks hosted in Stricklands Glen, Bangor. This event allows participants to unwind in amongst woodlands via a guided walk and mindfulness sessions.

Community Orchard Plantings
As part of the Council's commitment to the Tree and Woodland Strategy, Park Officers have identified potential sites for new community orchards. This selection follows a process of community engagement and internal site management, with the goal of planting three new orchards every year.

Community orchards are excellent places for people to connect, providing a space for celebrations and a local source of fresh food. They serve as an educational resource for schools and community groups. More broadly, trees help reduce stress and improve wellbeing by providing "psychological refreshment" and a sense of permanence.

Beyond encouraging healthy eating and outdoor activity, orchards make our neighbourhoods more pleasant places to live. These plantations serve as community focal points, offering aesthetic and historic value while acting as landmark features in both our towns and the open countryside.

Ards and North Down has reached its latest Tree and Woodland Strategy milestone with the addition of several new community orchards. These sites, planted by local groups and schools, include recent additions at Cloughey Playing Fields, Jacks Cut in Newtownards, and Castle Park in Bangor.

Ards and North Down Orchard Locations:

- Ann Street, Portaferry
- Lawson Gardens, Portavogie
- Village Hall, Greyabbey
- Brice Park, Bangor
- Londonderry Park, Newtownards
- Cottown Open Space, Six Roads Ends
- Kerr Park, Holywood
- Holywood Nature Park, Holywood
- The Green, Kircubbin
- Laurel Bank Lane, Comber
- Hunts Park, Donaghadee
- Springwell Crescent Playpark, Groomsport
- Linear Park, Bangor
- Helens Bay Playpark, Helens Bay
- Ward Park, Bangor
- Clifton School, Bangor
- Football Pitch, Cloughey
- Jacks Cut, Newtownards
- Castle Park, Bangor

Recently, Council has approved proposals to allow Peninsula Healthy Living (PHL) to expand its current premises at Kircubbin Community Centre. As a result, the community orchard that was planted on the site in February 2024 will need to be relocated.

Council officers have proposed contacting PHL to arrange for the orchard trees to be lifted and replanted by local residents who wish to have a fruit tree in their own garden. In addition, as part of Council's aim to provide a community orchard in every city, town, and village across the Borough, a new community orchard will be established at the recently developed Kircubbin Railway Site, located adjacent to Kircubbin Cemetery.

Seed2Leaf: Community Tree Nursery

The Seed2Leaf initiative is a cornerstone of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy. It directly supports the **STAND4TREES** target: planting 160,000 trees across the Borough by 2032. This programme invites residents to lead the full growth cycle, from gathering seeds to nurturing saplings. By doing so, it builds long-term environmental responsibility and local pride. Following a successful debut year with Portaferry In Bloom and Missile Youth Forum, this report outlines the programme's impact.

The primary objective of Seed2Leaf is to create a sustainable network of community-managed tree nurseries that serve multiple purposes. These nurseries increase the availability of locally sourced native tree stock for Council planting schemes while simultaneously strengthening community involvement in environmental initiatives. The programme provides valuable educational opportunities for schools and youth groups and offers a cost-effective approach to tree procurement through local seed collection and propagation.

The initiative moves through four key phases. The seed gathering phase involves Council officers and volunteers collecting locally adapted tree species such as oak, hazel, and rowan. Selected community groups then establish nurseries using Council-provided funding, materials such as raised beds and soil, and comprehensive training. Volunteers subsequently nurture the seeds into viable saplings over a one-to-three-year period. Finally, the mature saplings are replanted across the Borough in public parks, school grounds and housing estates, directly contributing to the **STAND4TREES** planting targets.

The programme has seen the successful establishment of three community nurseries through a competitive application process. Portaferry In Bloom created a fully operational nursery with Council-supported infrastructure and partnered with Portaferry Primary School to conduct seed-gathering activities, resulting in over 200 native saplings currently in propagation. Missile Youth Forum engaged young participants in urban greening projects with a particular focus on planting hedgerow species to enhance local biodiversity. Orchardville Community came to Castle Park, Bangor in September 2025 to collect tree seeds for their new community tree nursery.

Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA)

The Council is expanding environmental education through a formal partnership with the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA). This collaboration aims to establish three new Forest Schools annually, reinforcing our commitment to nature-based learning and community stewardship.

At its core, the initiative integrates outdoor education into the daily lives of residents. These structured experiences provide a unique environment for children to explore

and connect with nature, boosting physical health, creativity, and social skills. To ensure high standards, NIFSA provides the only nationally recognised Forest School qualification in Northern Ireland. To date, they have trained hundreds of accredited Level 3 Leaders, supporting over 5,000 pupils monthly across 200 official sites.

Sustainability is the partnership's primary focus. Rather than simply launching schools, the Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service ensures their longevity by funding five new Forest Schools per year at a cost of £1,000 each. By empowering teachers and pupils to become lifelong guardians of their local environment, Ards and North Down Borough Council is securing a greener, more interconnected future for the community.

Over the past two years, six schools have joined the programme:

- Andrews Memorial Primary School, Comber
- Camphill Community, Holywood
- Portavogie Primary School, Portavogie
- Clifton School, Bangor
- Kilmood Playgroup, Killinchy
- St Mary's Primary School, Kircubbin

Partnership with DFI Roads: Expanding Street Trees

Recognising the importance of urban forestry, Council officers have established a collaborative partnership with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads to identify suitable locations for future street tree planting across the Borough. This partnership creates a strategic approach to urban greening that aligns with both organisations' environmental objectives while addressing the practicalities of long-term maintenance.

Through this collaboration, officers are developing a systematic methodology to identify planting opportunities along urban streets. The process considers factors such as existing canopy coverage, soil conditions, underground utilities, and pedestrian safety. Particular attention is being given to areas that benefit most from increased cover, such as urban heat islands and neighbourhoods with limited access to green space.

Recent Tree Planting Successes: Hibernia Street – 2 x standard street trees planted; Frances Street – 7 x standard street trees planted; Regent Street – 2 x standard street trees planted; Conway Square – 6 x standard street trees planted.

These projects mark the first set of street tree initiatives delivered through this collaborative approach, providing a practical example of how coordinated planning can deliver high-quality urban greening. Initial discussions have identified additional locations for potential pilot schemes, with several sites in Bangor and Newtownards currently being assessed. These early projects establish a replicable framework for future initiatives that can be expanded across the Borough in the coming years.

Overall, this cooperative approach ensures that street tree planting complements existing infrastructure, remains deliverable within highway constraints, and maximises environmental and social benefits. Officers will continue to develop this partnership and pursue further opportunities to strategically expand the Borough's urban tree canopy, in line with the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy.

Opportunities for Land Acquisition to Support Canopy Expansion
In delivering the Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021–2032), Ards and North Down Borough Council is actively seeking to increase woodland cover, tree canopy, and biodiversity across the Borough. While the Council continues to maximise planting on its own land, the current estate is insufficient to meet long-term expansion targets or offset losses caused by storms, pests, diseases, and natural decline.

To address this, the Council is exploring land acquisition through targeted purchases, long-term leases, and partnership-based access. Securing new sites will enable the Council to:

- **Boost Biodiversity:** Establish larger woodland areas capable of delivering landscape-scale environmental benefits.
- **Climate Resilience:** Expand urban canopy to reduce heat-island effects and improve air quality.
- **Support Carbon Goals:** Increase long-term carbon sequestration / storage to meet climate-action commitments.
- **Public Wellbeing:** Improve access to green space in line with Community Plan priorities.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** Strengthen ecological networks by linking fragmented habitats and supporting species movement across the Borough.

Tree Works
Ards and North Down Borough Council manages its tree stock through a proactive, evidence-based, and responsible framework. In accordance with the Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021–2032), the Council maintains a legal duty of care to ensure public safety.

To manage risks as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP), the Council employs qualified arboricultural consultants and trained officers. These specialists conduct routine inspections to national standards, specifically Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) and BS 3998:2010 – Tree Work: Recommendations.

Scheduled Works during 2025/26
During the 2025/26 reporting period, the Council completed across the Borough:

- 51 scheduled tree fells
- 18 scheduled pruning operations

These works were recommended following routine inspections that identified foreseeable defects such as decay, structural weakness, or declining vitality. The Council currently has 6,028 trees recorded on the GIS Tree Map, representing approximately 80% of the Council's known tree stock. As surveying continues year-on-year, this figure will increase until full coverage is achieved.

The number of scheduled fells recorded for the year represents less than 1% of the overall tree population. In arboriculture, this is widely regarded as a healthy and expected proportion for a responsibly managed tree population. A well-balanced urban forest undergoes natural attrition as trees age, decline, or become unsafe; removing

up to 1% of the stock annually is typical across well-managed estates and ensures that long-term risks are controlled while maintaining overall canopy health. This level of removals reflects normal population dynamics, allowing for gradual replacement, improved species diversity, and increased resilience against pests, diseases, and storm events.

Unscheduled Works during 2025/26

While the Council aims to schedule as much essential tree work as possible, tree management is dynamic. Unscheduled, reactive works are regularly required in response to:

- Storm events, where trees or large branches have failed or become unstable.
- Public reports and house-call inspections, where trees have been identified as dangerous, dead, or structurally compromised.
- Emergency situations, where immediate intervention is required to maintain public safety.

These works are undertaken promptly, particularly in high-use public areas such as footpaths, play parks, town centres, and transport corridors. All reactive interventions follow the same professional standards as scheduled works: defects are assessed using QTRA, interventions are proportionate and justified, and all works comply with BS 3998 to support long-term tree health wherever practicable.

To support openness and community understanding, the Council provides a publicly accessible Tree Map on its website. This interactive tool enables residents to:

- View trees that have been inspected,
- Identify those scheduled for pruning, monitoring, or removal, and
- Access up-to-date information on location, condition, and required works.

By making this data available, the Council ensures residents can clearly see why works are being carried out and how decisions are made, balancing public safety, biodiversity protection, and the long-term sustainability of the Borough's urban forest.

Impact of Weather Conditions on Tree Works

Between April 2025 and March 2026, the UK and Ireland experienced a series of significant storm events that placed increased pressure on the Council's tree-risk management and maintenance operations. Notable storms during this period included Storm Floris (4–6 August 2025), one of the most severe summer windstorms on record for the wider UK; Storm Amy (3–4 October 2025), which brought wind gusts exceeding 80 kt (92 mph) to north-western regions; Storm Claudia (14 November 2025), producing widespread heavy rainfall and soil saturation; and Storm Bram (9–10 December 2025), which delivered strong winds and heavy rain across western and northern parts of the UK. In early 2026, Storm Goretti (8–9 January 2026) brought damaging winds to areas including Northern Ireland, followed later that month by Storm Chandra (26–27 January 2026), which resulted in exceptionally wet conditions affecting the east of Northern Ireland and further weakening root stability in saturated soils.

Although outside the main reporting window, residual impacts from Storm Éowyn (January 2025) continued to be evident, with the event recorded as the UK's most powerful windstorm in over a decade and the most significant for Northern Ireland since 1998, contributing to ongoing structural weaknesses in susceptible trees. Across the year, these combined storms led to repeated occurrences of uprooting, branch failure, and destabilisation, particularly following periods of prolonged rainfall and sequential storm cycles.

The Council's response has continued to be guided by the Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021–2032), which sets out a robust framework for managing storm-related risks. Proactive inspections, carried out using the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) methodology, enabled identification of high-risk trees prior to and following significant weather events, ensuring that interventions were proportionate and compliant with BS 3998:2010. Reactive works were prioritised in high-use public areas following major storms such as Bram, Amy and Chandra. Species diversification, with a focus on resilient native species, continues to strengthen long-term storm resilience across the Borough, contrasting the performance of storm-prone conifer blocks in areas like Cairn Wood.

Overall, the 2025/26 storm period reinforced the importance of sustained investment in proactive inspection regimes, species-resilient planting, rapid response capability, and ongoing public communication as climate-driven weather volatility continues to increase.

Tree Inspections

Ards and North Down Borough Council has a legal duty of care to take reasonable steps to ensure that people using Council-owned land are not exposed to unacceptable tree-related risks. This requires the identification of foreseeable hazards and the management of associated risks so far as is reasonably practicable, balancing public safety with the significant environmental, social and climate benefits provided by trees. Liability may arise where a defect or hazard was reasonably foreseeable and proportionate management action was not taken.

To meet this duty, the Council operates a structured, risk-based tree inspection programme aligned with industry best practice and the objectives of the Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021–2032). Inspections are undertaken using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) methodology, which evaluates tree health, vitality and structural condition through visual indicators. This approach supports informed, evidence-based decision-making and allows officers to distinguish between tolerable defects and those requiring intervention.

Tree-related risks are assessed in accordance with the National Tree Safety Group's Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011) and the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Risk Assessment Best Practice Guidance. Risk management decisions are guided by the principle of ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practicable), ensuring that risks are reduced to a level that is proportionate to both the likelihood of harm and the cost, practicality and environmental impact of mitigation.

The Council also applies Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) to support decision-making in higher-risk or more complex situations. QTRA provides a transparent and defensible framework for assessing tree risk by combining the

probability of failure, the likelihood of impact and the severity of consequences into a quantified assessment. This enables officers to prioritise works effectively while avoiding unnecessary tree removal or excessive intervention.

Recent investment in digital inspection tools has further strengthened this approach. Integrating VTA observations with ArcGIS-based mapping, photographic records and quantitative risk ratings allows inspections to be prioritised intelligently and managed consistently across the estate. This ensures that safety risks are addressed while retaining trees wherever possible and maximising long-term environmental value.

Through the combined application of VTA, structured risk assessment, ALARP principles and QTRA where appropriate, the Council maintains a proportionate, defensible and sustainable approach to tree safety management. This framework enables Ards and North Down Borough Council to meet its statutory responsibilities while supporting the resilience, biodiversity and climate-adaptation benefits of the Borough's tree stock.

Next Steps

New Woodland and Hedgerow Plantings 2026/2027
A total of 15,130 tree whips will be ordered this year for the next tree and hedgerow planting season, which runs from November 2026 through March 2027. The locations of the new tree and hedgerow plantings are outlined below. For many of the sites, tree and hedgerow planting events will be held in partnership with local community groups, volunteer days and local schools.

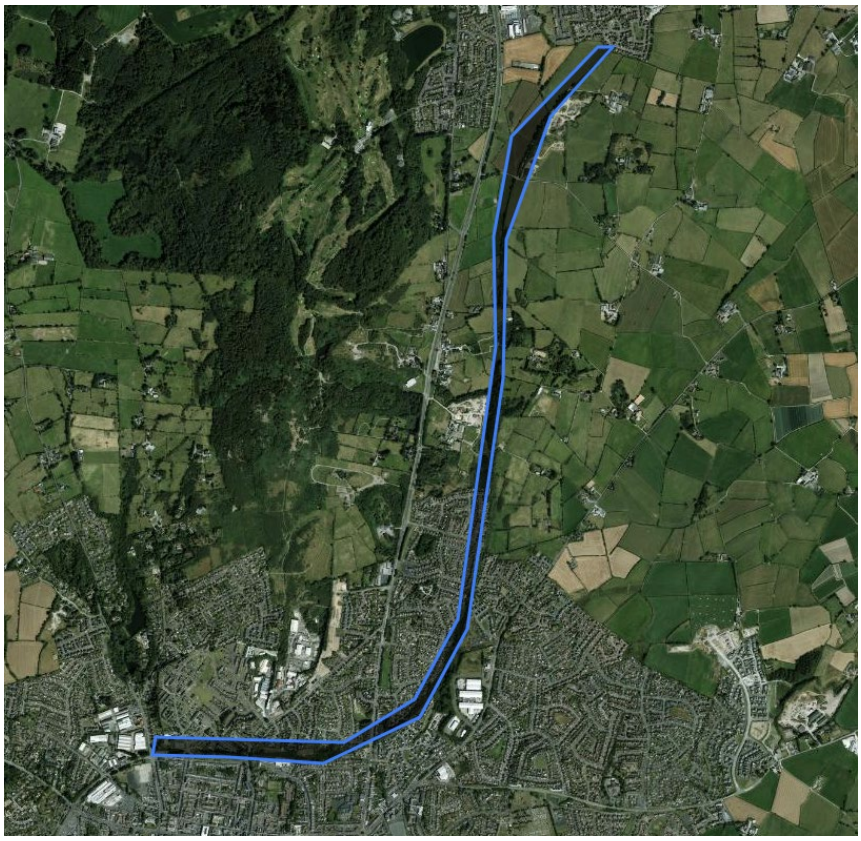
Bloomfield Playing Pitches, Bangor (Woodland Planting - 6,000 whips)



Stricklands Glen, Bangor (Hedgerow Planting – 1,250 whips)



Greenway, Newtownards/Bangor (Hedgerow Planting - 4,000 whips)



King John Walk (Right of Way), Holywood (Hedgerow Planting – 350 whips)



Ballymenoch Park, Holywood (Woodland Planting - 30 Light/Heavy Standards)



Moss Road Football Playing Pitches, Ballygowan (Woodland Planting - 2,500 whips)



Second Commons, Donaghadee (Woodland Planting – 1,000 whips)



Upcoming Community Orchard Plantings 2026/2027

For each of the proposed community orchard sites, Council officers conduct an onsite visit to determine the feasibility of the orchard. Where possible, officers will also invite local community group representatives who will provide feedback on the orchard site. While on site, officers and local community reps will assess the ground condition, usage and proximity of local schools and community groups who could potentially help plant and maintain the orchard. All the below community orchard sites have been identified as viable locations. Once approved, Council officers will begin to engage local schools and community groups regarding possible planting dates.

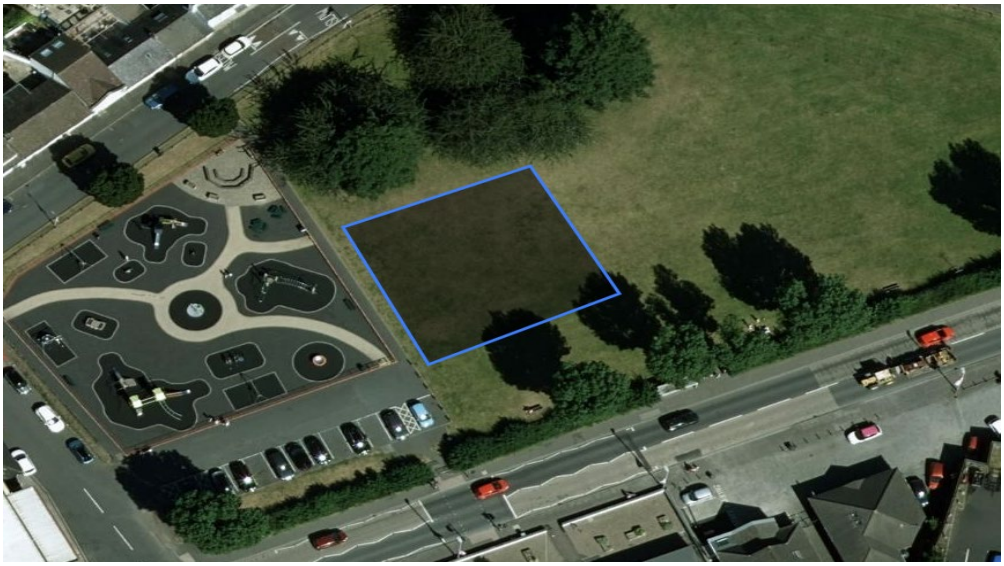
Ballymenoch Park, Holywood (30 mixed fruit trees)



Ards Blair Mayne, Newtownards (15 mixed fruit trees)



Bridge Street, Comber (15 mixed fruit trees)



Seed2Leaf: Community Tree Nursery

To build on this success, the programme will reopen for applications on 1 June 2026, with the aim of establishing additional nurseries in the coming year. Eligibility will extend to schools, residents' associations, environmental groups and youth organisations, prioritising areas with low tree canopy cover or higher levels of social deprivation. Each selected group will receive a comprehensive support package including grants for essential equipment such as raised beds and tools, specialised training in seed stratification and nursery maintenance, and ongoing mentorship from Council officers. The expansion will seek to develop new partnerships with local businesses for potential sponsorship opportunities and explore collaborations with health trusts to incorporate therapeutic horticulture elements.

Northern Ireland Forest School Association: Revised Application Timeline

Unlike previous years when applications opened in January, the window to apply for Forest School status will now reopen at the start of May. This change gives schools the opportunity to begin the programme at the start of the new academic year in September 2026.

Partnership with DFI Roads: Expanding Urban Street Trees
Initial discussions identifying additional sites for pilot schemes in Bangor and Newtownards, currently undergoing feasibility assessments. The partnership aims to create a replicable framework for future collaborative planting initiatives that can be expanded across the orough in coming years.

This cooperative approach ensures that street tree planting complements existing infrastructure while maximising the environmental and social benefits of urban trees. By working closely with DFI Roads, the Council can strategically expand the urban tree canopy in locations where it will have the greatest positive impact on local communities and the wider environment.

Opportunities for Land Acquisition to Support Canopy Expansion
To build on current progress, Officers propose further development of a structured land-search and site-suitability framework. This would assist in identifying potential sites based on ecological value, soil conditions, planting capacity, habitat connectivity and long-term management feasibility.

Tree Canopy Partnership Scheme
Alongside targeted land acquisition, Council Officers are further developing a Tree Canopy Partnership Scheme to support wider canopy expansion across privately owned land within Ards and North Down Borough. This programme builds on existing engagement with residents and landowners and provides a structured mechanism to extend woodland cover, hedgerows and ecological connectivity beyond the Council estate.

The programme enables eligible residents and landowners within the Borough to apply for free native tree whips, supported by professional advice and aftercare guidance. Planting proposals must meet minimum thresholds to ensure meaningful environmental outcomes, specifically:

- The creation of a new native woodland block of at least 0.1 hectares; or
- The establishment of a new native hedgerow of at least 20 metres in length.

Species supplied through the programme will be predominantly native and selected in line with the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plan, ensuring planting contributes to habitat creation, climate resilience and long-term ecological value. Species mixes will be tailored to site conditions where possible, supporting successful establishment and climate adaptability.
To ensure public investment delivers lasting benefit, participation will be subject to agreed conditions, including the retention and appropriate management of planted trees. Council Officers will undertake follow-up site checks over a three-year period to assess establishment success, offer practical aftercare advice and identify any issues affecting survival. This approach supports best-practice tree establishment while maintaining positive engagement with participants.

Summary
This report outlines the continued implementation of the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021–2032 and associated Action Plan. The strategy formalises the Council's commitment to enhancing local biodiversity and mitigating climate change. It provides a vital framework for prioritising limited budgets toward proactive planting, essential maintenance, and effective risk management across the Council's tree stock.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this report.

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Rewilding – 2026 Progress Report
Attachments	n/a
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA63 / 88003
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: budget in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background
This report provides Members with an update on the Council's Rewilding Initiative and the progress made in recent months. Rewilding focuses on restoring natural ecosystems and supporting a healthier balance between people and nature, enabling both to thrive.

Across the UK, public open spaces are increasingly being managed to create and maintain meadow grasslands. The Council's vision for the Rewilding Initiative is to manage our natural assets in a way that supports nature's recovery. Amenity grassland represents the Council's largest landholding, but it is also the least biodiverse. Changing how this land is managed therefore has the potential to make the greatest impact on local biodiversity. Promoting biodiversity is also a statutory requirement under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The sites currently being managed for rewilding cover a total of 154,002m², following the addition of a further 21,700m² last year (reported in May 2025). These sites will continue under an updated maintenance programme aimed at increasing the diversity and abundance of flowering plants, benefitting pollinators and enhancing overall biodiversity. Alongside routine maintenance, schedules will be adjusted to accommodate occasional event use at certain locations.

It is important that the rewilding initiative complements the wider use of parks, ensuring a balanced offer across the portfolio. Events and community use will therefore continue to be supported through an integrated grassland management approach tailored to each site. At this stage, there has been no further increase in the total area rewilded. The focus has instead been on transitioning each site, in turn, to a management approach that reflects its specific ground conditions and local climate.

Key Issues

<u>Key updates 2025-2026</u>



Rewilding Signage
Additional rewilding signs have been delivered ahead of installation across rewilding locations. The signs mirror the Brompton design and include information on rewilding, together with a QR code linking to the Council website.

Rewilding Through the Seasons: Staff from Parks and Cemeteries have engaged a local photographer to visually capture the rewilding process across sites managed under the initiative throughout the year. This will help us monitor seasonal landscape changes and track the evolution of these sites over time.

As an example, the Bowtown Rewilding Site was surveyed by the RSPB in 2023. It was recorded as a mix of poor semi-improved grassland, scrub, hedgerow, and a small number of trees. Species such as ragwort, dock, and spear thistle were found across the site, suggesting it had previously been managed intensively.



Following implementation of the site management plan, the ragwort, dock and thistle sward has been reduced, and a native wildflower meadow has been established. The images below show some of the new species recorded on site over the past twelve months.



Images above – bee on radish, bumblebee on cornflower, meadow brown butterfly



Images above – corn marigold, cornflower and forget-me-not

In the longer term, parts of the site will be transitioned to a wild bird cover crop to help support farmland bird species. The plan also includes developing other habitats by strengthening and extending native hedgerows, managing existing trees, and working in partnership with Castle Gardens Primary School and local community groups to install bird and hedgehog boxes. This approach helps build a community that is invested not just in using the site, but in looking after it for years to come.

We will continue to manage and monitor the site and will regularly engage with the local community to ensure it is used in a way that works for both people and nature.

Rewilding Workshop
On 18 March 2026, frontline Parks and Cemeteries staff participated in a rewilding workshop delivered by Buglife and True Harvest Seeds. Buglife, a UK charity dedicated to the conservation of invertebrates, provided an overview of the critical role insects play in supporting resilient and healthy ecosystems. The session highlighted practical actions that can be implemented locally to enhance habitats and support biodiversity across the Borough.

True Harvest Seeds, based in Strangford, outlined their work in the collection and preservation of native seed stocks, contributing to the long-term protection and restoration of indigenous plant species.

The workshop also included an update on the Council's current rewilding sites, demonstrating the positive impact these initiatives are having in improving biodiversity and ecological value within managed green spaces.

Feedback from staff was very positive, with strong engagement and interest in developing further knowledge and skills, particularly in insect identification and seed collection. In response, additional training opportunities are being planned to support ongoing capacity building within the service.

Seapark - In partnership with Buglife Northern Ireland, Seapark has been selected as a coastal rewilding pilot to enhance habitat and increase invertebrate diversity. Ground preparation was completed by EcoSeeds (cutting, lifting and scarifying to support locally sourced yellow rattle). The site will be sown in autumn (September/October, weather dependent) with locally sourced brush-harvested seed; in the interim, Parks staff will leave vegetation uncut, keep pathways clear and undertake litter picking as required. Staff training, new signage and ongoing monitoring will support delivery and evaluation.

Next Steps
There has been no increase in the area rewilded at this stage, as the focus has been and will continue to be on moving each site, one by one, to a management approach that suits the site and its specific ground conditions and local climate. We will continue to monitor these sites in terms of species and habitats whilst engaging with local communities to ensure sites are used and protected for people and for nature.

Summary
This report updates Members on the Council's Rewilding Initiative, which is enhancing biodiversity by adapting the management of amenity grassland in line with statutory duties. The programme currently covers 154,002 m² across identified sites (Appendix 1) and is being delivered on a site-by-site basis to increase flowering plant diversity for pollinators while maintaining provision for events and community use.

During 2025–2026, progress has included the installation of new public signage and the introduction of seasonal photography to monitor change; implementation of the Bowtown plan (including weed reduction, establishment of native meadow areas, and

wider habitat improvements); staff training through a workshop delivered in partnership with Buglife and True Harvest Seeds; and advancement of Seapark as a coastal rewilding pilot, where ground preparation has been completed and autumn seeding is planned.

Next steps include continued phased delivery across sites, ongoing monitoring, and further community engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report.

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2025-2026 Quarter 4
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Updated Sustainble Energy Manangment Stragety Action Plan
File Reference (if applicable)	QSEMSU/2526/Q4 / 50002
Legislation	Other Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland)
Resource Implications	Choose an item. Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening will be required if agreed
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background

In June 2024 Council agreed the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan. One of the actions within the Plan was to "Improve governance arrangements to ensure that energy management has effective oversight and accountability within the Council."

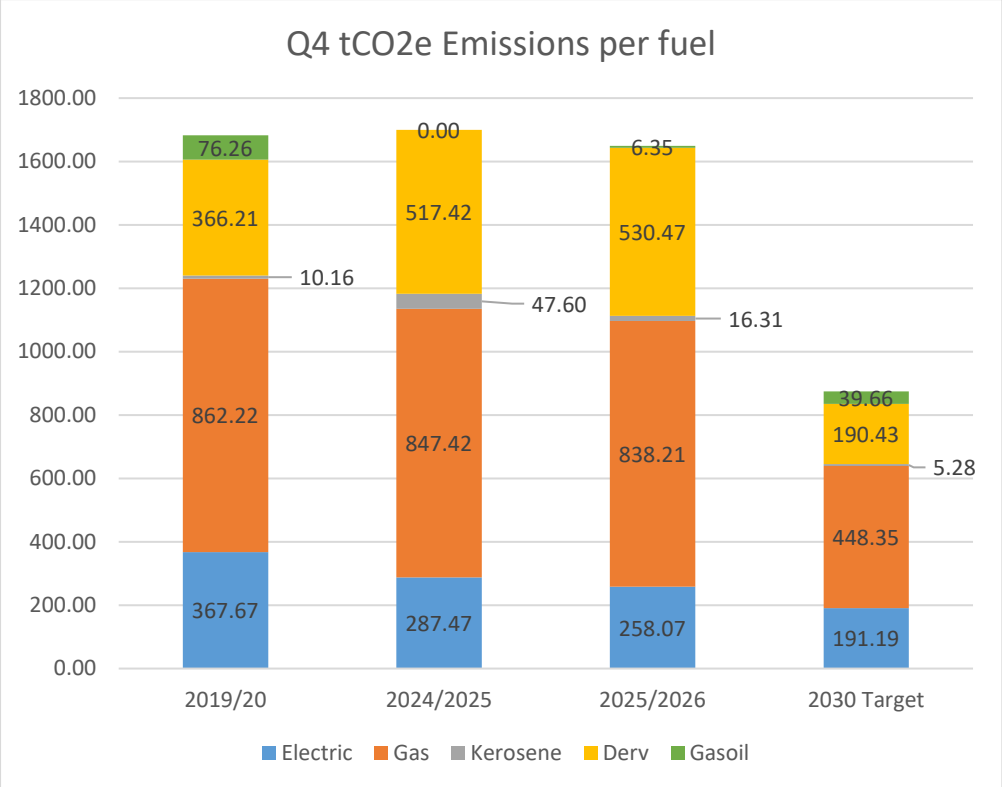
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management will ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan will be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance will improve energy performance by ensuring actions are effectively implemented and consumption trends routinely monitored, which should result in reduced consumption, costs, and emissions.

Key Issues

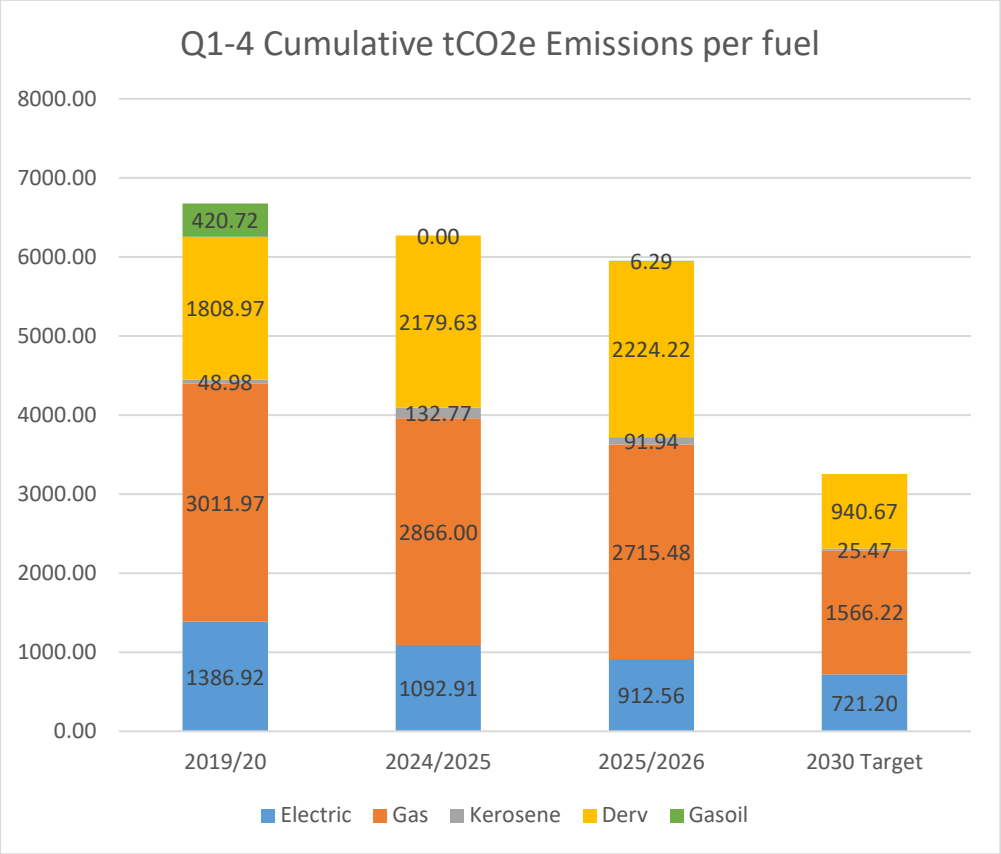
This report is part of our ongoing quarterly series, tracking energy consumption against our 2019/20 baseline and highlighting current and upcoming energy-saving initiatives.

Period:	**Reported in:**
Quarter 1: April to June	September
Quarter 2: July to September	December
Quarter 3: October to December	March
Quarter 4: January to March	June

Energy Consumption for this Period



Total Energy Consumption for 2025-2026



Electricity

As shown in the graphs above, electricity consumption increased in Q4, rising by 5% compared with the same period in the 2024/25 financial year. Despite this increase, the impact on emissions was mitigated by the use of green energy supply, resulting in a net reduction of 29.4 tCO_2.

When measured against our baseline year, Q4 also demonstrated a notable improvement, delivering a 29% reduction in carbon emissions, equivalent to 109.6 tCO_2. This reflects continued progress towards our emissions reduction objectives. We remain committed to building on this momentum through the implementation of additional energy-saving measures and by strengthening staff engagement across both new and existing initiatives, in support of our 2030 target.

Electricity consumption has continued to trend downward, with a cumulative reduction in carbon emissions of 16.5% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 180.35 tCO_2 reduction compared to the 2024/2025 financial year.

Carbon emissions from electricity consumption has reduced overall by 34% equating to 474.36 tCO_2 reduction from the 2019/2020 baseline year.

<u>Top 4 sites with the most significant decrease in electricity consumption in 2025-26</u>

- Aurora Leisure Centre

- North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station
- Queens Leisure Centre
- Bangor City Hall

Top 4 sites with the most significant increase in electricity consumption in 2025-26

- Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre
- Londonderry Park
- Comber Leisure Centre
- Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station

The increase in electricity consumption across the three leisure facilities appears primarily driven by increased membership from the previous year, resulting in higher occupancy and demand.

The waste transfer station has had its third compactor and 'cyclovent' re-commissioned following recent accommodation works. This equipment represents a significant electrical load on the site. Wind turbine generation remains consistent with the previous year, however export to grid reduced due to higher on-site electrical demand.

Gas

Natural gas carbon emissions decreased by 1.1% in Q4, compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year, resulting in an estimated 9.2 tCO_2 reduction in emissions.

Relative to our baseline year, Q4 also showed continued progress, with a 2.8% decrease in gas carbon emissions equivalent to a 24.01 tCO_2 reduction.

Gas carbon emissions has continued to trend downward, with a cumulative reduction of 5.5% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 150.52 tCO_2 emissions reduction compared to the 2024/2025 financial year.

A comparison of weather trend data for 2024/25 and 2025/26 indicates broadly similar temperature and climate conditions.

Carbon emissions from gas consumption has reduced overall by 9.8% equating to 296.49 tCO_2 reduction from the 2019/2020 baseline year.

Top 4 sites with the most significant decrease in gas consumption in 2025-26

- Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre
- Aurora Leisure Centre
- Queens Leisure Centre
- Londonderry Park

Top 4 sites with the most significant increase in gas consumption in 2025-26

- Comber Leisure Centre
- Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station

- North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station
- Spafield Pavilion

The increase in gas consumption across the two leisure facilities appears primarily driven by increased occupancy and demand.

The Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station experienced a major boiler failure during the height of winter. To maintain continuity of service, a temporary solution was implemented. However, the replacement boiler currently in use is slightly undersized compared to the original fixed installation, as it was the most suitable unit available at short notice. As a result, it is operating under greater demand to achieve ambient temperatures than the previous larger capacity system.

The North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station had an electric boiler installed last year to operate alongside a new gas boiler. Further optimisation is required to achieve the most effective balance between reducing carbon emission and managing operating costs, as the electric system offers lower emissions but higher running costs compared with the gas boiler.

Looking ahead, further action will be required to reduce gas consumption across the estate. Gas remains the Council's second-largest source of carbon emissions and addressing this is critical to achieving our 2030 emissions reduction targets. Planned measures include:

- Council Building Heating Policy - Reviewing and lowering existing heating control set-point temperatures to optimise energy use. Automating heating controls and expanding remote management capabilities to enhance control and consistency.
- Assessing the operational efficiencies of leisure centres with swimming pools. These are the Council's largest gas consumers and carbon emitters. This assessment should identify opportunities for further savings through behavioural change and system optimisation.
- Reviewing and lowering swimming pool temperatures where operationally feasible.
- Optimising and transitioning to electric heating systems, supported by solar PV and other low-carbon generation technologies, to support long-term decarbonisation.

Kerosene
Historical data from 2019/20 suggests that six community centre central heating systems were previously operating on Gas Oil (red diesel). These systems have since been upgraded to use Kerosene, which has contributed to an apparent increase in reported consumption. As such, caution should be exercised when comparing Kerosene usage data between 2025/26 and the baseline year, as the fuel switch impacts the comparability of figures.

As a result, the data shows an apparent increase in kerosene consumption compared to the baseline 2019/20 year, for the reasons outlined above.

Kerosene carbon emissions has seen a reduction of 65.8% in Q4 compared to the same period in 2024/25 financial year, resulting in a 31.29 tCO_2 emissions reduction.

Kerosene carbon emissions have continued to trend downward, with a cumulative reduction of 31.8% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 40.83 tCO_2 emissions reduction compared to the 2024/2025 financial year.

Diesel

Carbon emissions figures for gas oil (red diesel) used in small plant and Derv (diesel) used in the road fleet have been combined to provide a cumulative total for 2019/20 Q4 diesel emission, in line with the 2022 reform on red diesel usage.

Considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage has increased by 21.3% in Q4 compared to the 2019/20 baseline year, leading to an increase of 94.35 tCO_2 emissions.

Diesel consumption in Q4 was also higher than in the same reporting period in 2024/25. This increase is primarily attributable to reduced operating efficiency across several vehicle categories, including rear-end loaders (RELs), refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), MacPac units, 4x4s and van's.

Total fleet mileage for this reporting period was 398,192 miles, representing a 4.5% reduction compared with the same reporting period in the previous financial year. Fleet diesel consumption totalled 194,365 litres, reflecting a 0.8% increase compared with the same reporting period in the previous financial year.

Diesel carbon emissions has demonstrated a minor increase of 2.1% across Q1–Q4, resulting in a 45 tCO_2 emissions increase compared to the 2024/2025 financial year.

A review comparing fleet performance data from this year compared to the 2024/25 reporting period identified an increase in fuel consumption of 23,307 litres, associated with a rise in vehicle usage of 199,847 miles.

A comparison with the previous financial year shows no increase in fleet vehicles.

Consumption Costs

The table below presents fuel consumption costs for each year, along with the corresponding unit prices. This allows for a comparison of both usage and changes in market rates over time.

Quarter 4 Utility/Fuel Type	2019/20 Costs £(NET)	2019/20 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)	2025/26 Costs £(NET)	2025/26 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)
Electric	£223,293.85	£0.16	£426,752.72	£0.29
Gas	£187,824.39	£0.04	£304,892.85	£0.07
Kerosene	£1,539.07	£0.42	£4,020.26	£0.63
Derv	£136,267.76	£1.00	£224,115.85	£1.12
Gasoil	£14,282.96	£0.52	£1,867.17	£0.81

TOTAL	£563,208.03	-	£959,781.68	-

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Delivered this Reporting Period

List below of recent energy saving initiatives in Q4:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO_2e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)
Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre Solar PV	226,515 kWh	40	£67,107
TOTAL	**226,515 kWh**	**40**	**£67,107**

Refer to the attached updated Sustainable Energy Action Plan for comprehensive updates on all noted actions.

Next Steps

Future Measures Currently Under Consideration/Planning

- Fleet and Waste services will review the factor contributing to increased fuel consumption and identify opportunities to improve vehicle operational efficiency.
- Feasibility assessment into the trial of an Electric refuse collection vehicle (RCV)
- Use the Council's monthly newsletter to share energy-saving best practices with staff, encouraging their active participation in further reducing energy consumption.
- Develop and implement a Council-wide policy for the seasonal shutdown of heating systems during the summer months across the entire estate.
- Develop and implement an employee e-learning programme to promote awareness and best practices for energy conservation in the workplace.
- Replacement of boilers at various Council properties and upgrade of control systems.
- Survey and retrofit of LED lighting and lighting controls at various public toilets
- Solar PV Installation at chosen compatible Council properties.
- Continuation of Car Park lighting LED installation.
- Walk-round surveys of properties to examine and review existing controls and settings.
- Surveys of existing buildings for insulation installation to be carried out and implemented.
- Energy targets & KPI's for service unit managers to be agreed for 2025/2026.
- Introduction of half-hourly Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) systems in highest energy consuming buildings.
- Installation of Building Management System (BMS) with Energy monitoring at various Council buildings. Further development opportunities for improved zoning, remote heating controls, heating automation and sub-metering of equipment to enable accurate scrutiny.
- Optimising existing electric heating systems.
- Installation of double-glazed windows at Church Street Offices.
- Installation of double-glazed windows at Ballygowan Community Centre.

- Energy assessment and feasibility study of Ards Blair Mayne and Aurora Leisure Centres.

List below of future planned works

Description	**Annual energy saving estimate**	**Annual tCO_2e reduction estimate**	**Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)**
Queen's Leisure Centre – LED Lighting Upgrade	11,977 kWh	2.1	£3,114
Combers Leisure Centre – Dome Lighting	8,553 kWh	1.5	£2,224
Bangor Sportsplex LED Lighting (Outdoor Floodlights)	11,866 kWh	2.1	£3,085
Bangor Sportsplex LED Lighting (Car Park)	7854 kWh	1.4	£2,042
Signal Centre – LED Lighting Upgrade	5500 kWh	1.0	£1,430
Bangor Aurora Leisure Centre LED Lighting upgrade	37,739 kWh	6.6	£9,812
North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station LED lighting upgrade	17,860 kWh	3.2	£4,644
Environmental Resource Centre LED lighting upgrade	7,523 kWh	1.3	£1,956
Environmental Resource Centre Solar PV	81,358 kWh	14.4	£21,153
Londonderry Park Solar PV with Battery Storage	75,950 kWh	13.4	£19,747
Carrowdore Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080
Alderman George Green Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080
Glen Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080
Kilcooley Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080

Redburn Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080
West Winds Community Centre Solar PV with Battery Storage	~8,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	1.4	£2,080
Portavogie Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Ballygowan Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Green Road Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Skipperstone Road Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Donaghadee Parade – Public Toilets Refurb	2539 kWh	0.44	£660
Banks Lane – Public Toilet Refurb	1532 kWh	0.27	£398
Ballyholme – Public Toilet Refurb	1442 kWh	0.26	£375
TOTAL	**327,693 kWh**	**57.77**	**£85,200**

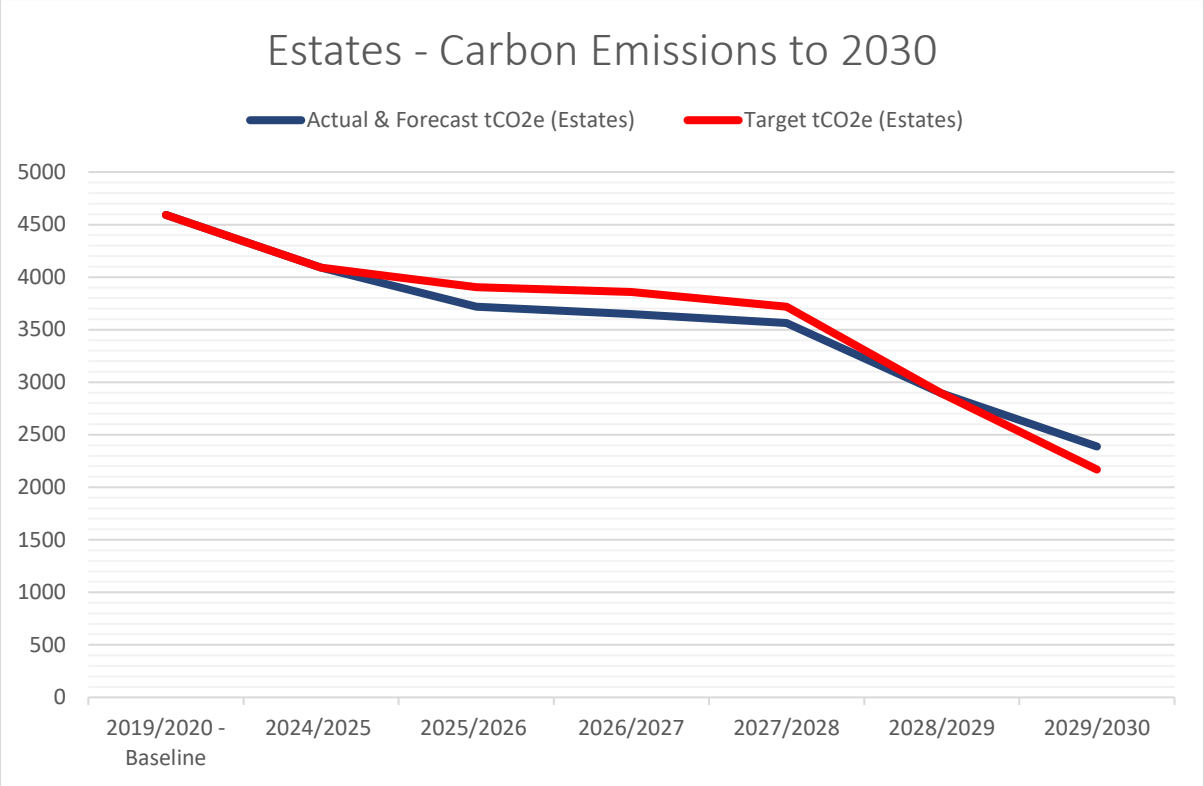
Summary

The graph below shows the overall reduction in energy-related emissions across the Estates assets since the 2019/20 baseline year.

The blue line represents the projected reduction pathway based on forecasted and actual savings achieved to date through planned works, while the red line shows the targets agreed within the Carbon Reduction Targets 2026–2030 framework.

Significant progress has been made towards achieving the Council's emissions reduction objectives. Current performance is ahead of the committed target trajectory and, with continued investment in resources and sustained delivery efforts, Officers are confident that the long-term targets can be achieved.

Additional resource and forward planning will be required to develop feasible and practical energy saving initiatives from 2028/29 onwards, in order to recover the foreast variance and remain aligned with the target.



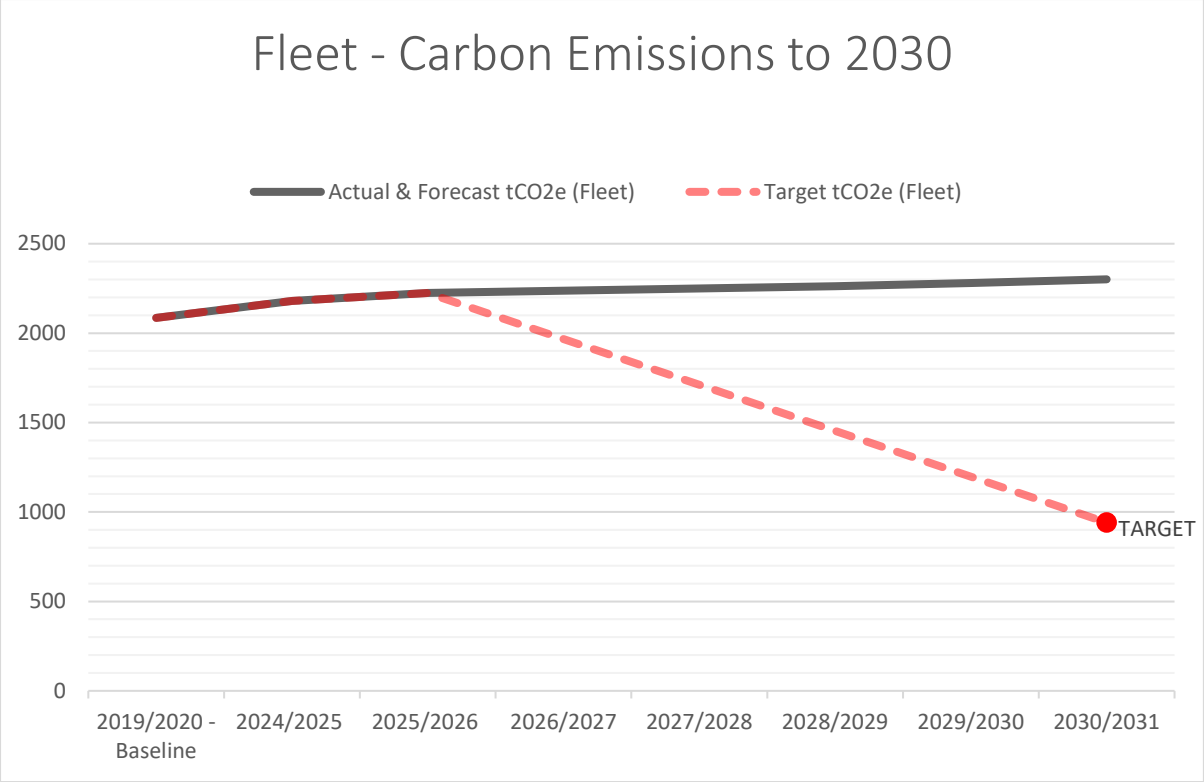
The graph below shows the overall change in fuel-related emissions across the Council's fleet since the 2019/20 baseline year.

The blue line represents the projected emissions pathway based on forecast data, including the anticipated year-on-year increase associated with service delivery demands. These projections also account for forecast emissions savings arising from the transition of the smaller fleet, including 4x4 vehicles and car-derived vans to electric vehicles (EVs).

The red line illustrates the emissions reduction targets and the incremental annual reductions required to achieve the Council's 2030 target.

At present, there are no fully implemented solutions for decarbonising the heavy goods vehicle (HGV) fleet. The Council is currently exploring the feasibility of introducing electric refuse collection vehicles and electrifying other HGVs within the fleet. However, full electrification of the HGV fleet will require significant investment and will lead to a substantial increase in electricity demand and associated carbon emissions from grid electricity consumption unless supported by low-carbon energy sources.

Significant investment in renewable energy generation infrastructure and grid reinforcement will therefore be required to realise the full carbon reduction benefits of fleet electrification.



RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes the latest quarterly energy consumption update.

Appendix 1

Ards and North Down Borough Council Sustainable Energy Management Strategy **ACTION PLAN**

This action plan has been divided into the following sections/ themes:

1. Enabling Actions
2. Generic/ Behavioural Actions; and
3. Building Specific Actions

This action plan shall be for a three-year period, after which a revised action plan will be developed with further details.

It is envisaged that the follow up action plan will include more specific actions in terms of buildings and systems improvements i.e. after the actions within this plan related to further detailed surveys and feasibility studies are completed.

This initial action plan focuses on getting the systems, governance, and oversight arrangements in place within the Council to ensure effective sustainable energy management, with some specific actions also included which were identified during the high-level energy surveys.

Further update reports will include costs and timescales for the actions.

The actions presented within each of these sections/ themes are in order of priority and benefit in terms of consumption and carbon emissions reduction potential.

The actions are also classified as follows:

1. Urgent- within 6-9 months of the Actions Plan being endorsed.
2. Short Term- within 12 months
3. Medium Term- -within 24- 36 months

The Action Plan will be subject to annual review. A Progress Report shall be prepared, presented, and approved by Environment Committee.

Enabling Actions

Theme	Priority/ Lead Responsibility	Action	Rationale/ Notes	Benefit	Progress
Enhanced Energy Management Governance	**Urgent** Head of Assets & Property Services Director of Environment	Improve governance arrangements to ensure that energy management has effective oversight and accountability within the Council.	Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management will ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan will be continuously monitored. Energy Management should be a standing agenda item to allow it to be regularly reviewed through the Council's 'Climate Change Working Group.	Improved monitoring and governance will improve energy performance by ensuring actions are effectively implemented, consumption trends routinely monitored, which should result in reduced consumption, costs, and emissions.	Ongoing
Formal Energy and Carbon Management Policy	**Urgent** Director Of Environment	Develop a formal policy for the Council to include a requirement for space heating to be switched off during a predetermined period during the summer.	Having a formal approved policy will support energy and carbon management efforts as well as demonstrate the Council's commitment to reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.	Enhanced Reputation (the Policy should be made publicly available) Should support efforts/ actions to reduce consumption, costs, and emissions.	All heating switched off in Council offices between May and September, with the exception of any sporadic period of cold. Policy to be drafted for review and approval
Energy check/ audit programme	**Urgent** Director of Environment	Introduce an energy check/ audit programme to introduce a structured review process for energy and carbon management in prioritised buildings.	Having a programme where energy checks/ audits are completed will proactively monitor performance. Key areas to review during these checks/ audits include: o Time and temperature set points on heating controls and building management systems (e.g. AHUs, boiler heating timers etc.)	Reduced energy consumption and costs A thorough, robust, proactive audit programme has the potential to realise considerable savings in consumption, costs, and emissions. Estimated realistic savings of between 3-5% of energy costs.	Ongoing

			○ Lighting and equipment left on unnecessarily. ○ Out of hours consumption (where aM&T systems have been installed or where half hourly electricity data is available.	<table><tr><td>Savings</td><td>Cost</td><td>Carbon</td></tr><tr><td>3%</td><td>£62k</td><td>124T</td></tr><tr><td>5%</td><td>£104k</td><td>207T</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	
Energy and Carbon Awareness	**Short term** Director of Environment Director of Corporate Services Development and Administration	Development and roll out of an energy and carbon awareness campaign to promote energy efficiency and carbon emissions reduction. Key content could include: ○ Lighting and equipment switch off messaging. ○ Heating set points ○ Other key behavioural messages The campaign should be designed and delivered to the following: ○ All staff, via generic sessions ○ Focussed sessions and materials for prioritised staff/ buildings i.e. those with high consumption e.g. leisure centres. This should be completed to complement the Council's existing Sustainability Communications Programme	Employee engagement in energy efficiency and carbon reduction has many benefits: ○ Energy savings: Saving energy saves money and reduces an organisation's carbon footprint. ○ Employee satisfaction: participation in employee engagement schemes can make employees feel valued. Knowing that their organisation cares about sustainability can improve employee satisfaction and employee retention. ○ Reputation: an employee engagement/ awareness scheme around sustainability shows that an organisation cares about both its employees and the environment. This can improve an organisation's reputation and improve employee attraction. The campaign should comprise information/ training sessions as well as the design and display of awareness messages e.g. posters/ signage with equipment and lighting switch off when not in use. Whilst the priority should be in higher consuming buildings, the messaging should be displayed throughout the Council Estate.	A well implemented employee engagement scheme can lead to energy savings of approximately 5-10%. <table><tr><td>Savings</td><td>Carbon</td></tr><tr><td>5%</td><td>207T</td></tr><tr><td>10%</td><td>414T</td></tr></table> It could also lead to: ○ Employee satisfaction ○ Council reputation The campaign would also support the related commitments and actions within the Council's wider 'Corporate Plan' and 'Roadmap to Sustainability'	Energy Officer has approached Energy Saving Trust to trial their corporate platform <u>Energy Officer has issued training material to sustainability team, who are now leading on this action.</u> Energy consumption figures shared with Leisure and Community Centres to show big users. <u>Estates to commission an audit of the leisure centre's operational efficiency in 2026/2027 to identify best practices and areas for improvement.</u>

Generic/ Behavioural Actions

Theme	Priority/ Responsibility	Action	Rationale/ Notes	Benefit	
Sustainable energy design	**Urgent** Director of Place plus Head of Strategic Capital Unit	Develop a Capital Projects Sustainability Policy to be agreed by Council	Consideration, in particular, should be given to the introduction of specifications which should include the following key criteria, subject to business cases: ○ Zero/ Low carbon technologies ○ Effective zoning e.g. of heating and lighting systems ○ Energy and carbon performance targets e.g. as set out in the BREEAM performance standard. ○ Effective commissioning of key plant and equipment e.g. AHUs, low carbon/ renewable technologies ○ Installation of efficient equipment, fittings, and controls e.g. boiler upgrades, LED lighting, PIR and daylight sensors, smart heating programmers, variable speed drives (VSDs) on pumps etc. Building sustainable structures not only reduces their environmental impact but also offers economic advantages. Sustainable buildings are more efficient and cost less to operate than conventionally built buildings.	Enhanced Corporate Reputation Consumption and carbon emissions reduction and cost savings. Although the upfront costs can be higher for more sustainable new builds and refurbishments, a newly built green asset has been found to have 14% lower operational costs over five years when compared to a conventionally designed and constructed building (World Green Building Council).[1] In addition, the briefing paper 'Assessing carbon emissions in BREEAM' published in 2016 demonstrated that the average CO2 savings for a BREEAM assessed building is 22%, whilst a BREEAM Excellent building is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 33% when compared to conventional builds.	Estates are implementing lighting controls and LED fittings in properties where feasible. Including implementing controls installations in larger consuming buildings to help reduce electric costs. Pursuing implementation of electric heating to reduce use of hydro-carbon heating systems. Future works to be aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal

[1] https://bregroup.com/breeam-news/six-ways-to-get-the-most-out-of-breeam/

Existing/ historic energy improvement quotations	**Urgent** Director of Environment	Complete an exercise to gather all energy efficiency related upgrade quotations e.g. LED lighting upgrades, which should then be reviewed with those deemed beneficial taken forward.	During the completion of the review and auditing project, it was advised that quotes had been received in the past which were not taken forward. Such quotes received would include estimated cost savings and payback. Reviewing these and revisiting them where the projects are deemed feasible will result in consumption and cost savings. LEDs are more energy efficient that traditional halogen bulbs. They also last five times longer and use 80% less energy to produce the same amount of light. (Energy Saving Trust)	Consumption and carbon emissions reduction and cost savings should projects be implemented. Considering that lighting can contribute to a third of a building's overall electricity consumption, transitioning to LED lighting is a swift and budget-friendly method to cut costs. For example, a traditional 600×600 4x18w fluorescent fitting, when swapped with a 600×600 30w LED panel, can reduce the related electricity consumption by approximately 55%. In many applications, the volume of fittings in-situ can multiply these savings even further. Adding lighting controls, such as dimming, and PIR sensors can also increase these savings further.	Ongoing Estates progressing car park lighting schemes currently.
Improve energy and carbon performance reporting	**Urgent** Director of Environment	Improve availability of energy consumption and carbon emissions information to high consuming building managers e.g. Leisure Centres	Examples of information which could be provided include: • Monthly reports on consumption and cost • Updates on work being completed e.g. related to actions contained within the action plan	This should promote and compliment energy awareness in the Leisure Centres and a sense of ownership to assist with energy management. Improved high level oversight of energy and	Ongoing Energy dashboard is progressing well. Year against year comparison capable within the dashboard.

		Improve reporting of energy and carbon performance through the Climate Change Working Group		carbon management through the Climate Change Working Group should increase the likelihood of energy improvements being realised.	Sub-dashboards are being created for the different department to easily view their own figures and compare to previous years.
Building insulation	**Short term** Director of Environment	Complete detailed building insulation reviews to identify opportunities to upgrade to improve efficiency	During construction, Council policy has been to typically to install insulation to meet but not exceed, the levels stipulated by the Building Control regulations at that time. These levels have varied over time and older buildings often suffer from inadequate insulation by modern standards. There therefore may be significant opportunities to complete insulation upgrades across the Council to reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency. Works and reviews should focus in on older buildings and those with higher heating related energy consumption. Improvements to insulation levels in buildings will also increase the potential to lower temperature set points in heating boilers due to the reduction in heat loss from those buildings.	Reduced heating related energy consumption, costs, and carbon emissions. Estimated savings of 10% across 30% of the Council's Estate/ Building Stock heating costs (Natural Gas & Kerosene). Savings • Costs £64.5k • Carbon 255 tonnes	Ongoing Insulation to be upgraded as part of any significant refurbishment project. Estates to carry out building surveys on existing insulation levels and recommendation reports.
Space Planning/Rationalisation	**Short term** Corporate Leadership Team	Develop an effective space rationalisation regime to complement existing work on flexible working arrangements.	Rationalisation of office and other Council space should be prioritised where possible to poorer energy performing buildings. Energy efficiency of existing building stock should be a key consideration for any space rationalisation efforts.	Closing down inefficient buildings/ areas will result in low-cost reduction in energy-related running costs, reducing consumption and carbon emissions	Ongoing as part of corporate centralisation strategy

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>No energy efficiency expenditure should be completed on buildings/ areas identified for closure (including those ‘at risk’)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Automatic Monitoring & Targeting (a M&T)</td><td>Medium term (Short term for the trial installation)

Director of Environment</td><td>Install an aM&T system in prioritised buildings on key energy supply meters to monitor consumption closely and proactively on a regular basis in targeted buildings.</td><td>aM&T is a key tool to proactively monitor and manage energy consumption.

Having aM&T systems available will vastly improve the Council’s energy management efforts through the timely identification of abnormal consumption patterns allowing them to be investigated and addressed quicker, resulting in reducing unnecessary consumption and costs.

It is recommended that such a system is installed in one trial building to assess suitability e.g. on the main incoming energy supplies in one of the leisure centres.

Linked to the need for dedicated energy management staff/ resource, aM&T systems are effective tools but only where there is enough time for them to be interrogated on a regular basis.

aM&T systems can be purchased outright or can be installed as part of a monthly management arrangement with a specialist consultant who install the system and monitor it on a client’s behalf.</td><td>It is estimated that this technology can help identify energy savings of 4 – 20% or more, with average cost savings of 10-15% being typically realised.

For the Council Estate, estimated carbon reduction would be on the lower side of the typical savings (estimated as 5%-10%) primarily due to the variance in the Estate’s building stock.

<table><tr><td>Savings</td><td>Carbon</td></tr><tr><td>5%</td><td>207T</td></tr><tr><td>10%</td><td>414T</td></tr></table></td><td>Ongoing

Further investigation into most suitable buildings required.

Investigation of costs, energy savings and payback period required for top consuming buildings initially, and then progress to other buildings.

Initial costings required to possibly address within 2025/26 budget.

Discussions are ongoing with the BMS supplier to assess the feasibility of integrating aM&T into the existing BMS infrastructure.</td></tr>
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Wind Turbine Generator feasibility study	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete an options appraisal/ feasibility study on the potential to install wind turbine generators at Council sites.	A specialist consultant should be engaged with knowledge of planning implications to complete such an appraisal/ study.	Increased use of renewable electricity, resulting in reduced grid dependency, cost reduction and carbon emissions reduction	Further investigation required.

Building Specific Actions

Note: buildings referenced in the Action column are presented in order of focus/ priority)

Theme	Priority/ Lead Responsibility	Action	Rationale/ Notes	Benefit	
Building Management Systems	**Urgent** Director of Environment	Complete detailed BMS reviews at the following locations with focus on energy efficiency to assess potential to reduce consumption through time settings, temperature settings, the installation of additional controls etc. ○ Bangor Sportsplex ○ Comber Leisure Centre ○ Town Hall, The Castle	High level reviews of existing BMSs in the locations identified have the potential to reduce energy consumption considerably. By way of example, it was noted that the Air Handling Units (AHU's) associated with the main pool area at Ards Blair Mayne were running 24 hours per day. There is an opportunity here to reduce these 'out of hours' i.e. when the facility is closed, and the pool cover is on. Similarly, there would also be potential to ramp back on the pool recirculation pumps 'out of hours. The completion of more focussed BMS audits/ reviews are likely to identify more opportunities to reduce consumption, costs, and emissions.	Consumption, cost, and emissions reduction.	Recently completed works to upgrade BMS controls for zoning of NRD. Work now required at Ards Blair Mayne, Bangor Sportsplex Comber LC and Town Hall to be aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal Explore the development of a framework to deliver improvements in BMS operational efficiency
Boiler temperature settings	**Short term** Director of Environment	Complete exercises at each of the following locations to optimise the temperature settings on the heating to maximise the efficiency of the condensing boilers: ○ Comber Leisure Centre ○ Queen's Leisure Complex ○ Donaghadee Community Centre ○ Kilcooley Community Centre	An ideal design temperature for a condensing boiler commercial heating system would be 65°C supply, 45°C return. The lower return temperature means it can operate in part-condensing mode all year round. Although this is the most efficient setting other factors need to be considered. Such factors include: ○ how well the building is insulated, ○ the pipe runs throughout the building/ building size; and ○ potential for legionella risk.	Reduced consumption, costs, and emissions	Ongoing Propose aligning this initiative with scheduled major building insulation works to maximise operational efficiency Energy officer is developing strategy to simulate and assess reducing setpoint temperatures in

		○ Waste Transfer Station, Baloo Drive ○ Ards Blair Mayne (pool water and pool hall temperatures)	To complement this action, it is therefore vital that building insulation is also upgraded to prevent heat loss and support the lowering of temperature set points on boilers. It is recommended that set points are gradually lowered e.g. by 1°C each time, with periods of monitoring between each lowering until the set points gets to an optimum point in terms of lower temperature set point and building comfort.		offices and public buildings to reflect energy savings in gas heating.
Solar Reflective/ Control film on Windows	**Short term** Director of Environment	Install Solar Reflective/ Control film on Windows on the Church Street building. Install Solar Reflective/Control film and UPVC double glazing on the NRD Building Install Solar Reflective/Control film and UPVC double glazing on the Ballygowan Community Centre	The identified buildings were very warm during the audit visits, with staff members mentioning the overheating and comfort issues. Additional portable air conditioning had been introduced to try to address the issue (with the associated energy consumption implications). The application of solar film to the windows in those areas experiencing overheating will reduce solar gain and will also retain heat, thereby improving both comfort levels and efficiency. Installing uPVC double glazing offers significant energy-saving benefits by providing enhanced insulation, which helps reduce heat loss in the winter and keeps your the building cooler in the summer, reducing energy costs. Consider contact sensors on windows for feedback to BMS to control heating zone to prevent wasted heating/cooling when windows are left open.	Electricity consumption, costs, and emissions reduction. Film is a widely used solution which can result in up to 1/3 savings on associated cooling requirements/ costs for those spaces which are subject to excessive solar gain. It also has comfort benefits for space users.	UPVC double glazing installed in the NRD Buildings Works progressing with Church Street offices Works to replace Ballygowan scheduled for 2026/27 FY. Good practice guidance will be issued to staff to promote effective use of office space for cooling. The need for this initiative will be reviewed following implementation of the above.

Pipework insulation	**Short term** Director of Environment	Complete insulation of pipework at the following locations: ○ City Hall, the Castle (significant lengths requiring insulation) ○ Ballygowan Village Hall ○ Marquis Hall, Bangor ○ Ards Blair Mayne (fit jackets to sand filters)	Insulating pipework will reduce heat loss, thereby improving the efficiency of the heating systems	Electricity consumption, costs, and emissions reduction. Generally, maximum savings of 10-20% can be realised. This however depends on the length of uninsulated pipe run, pipe/ valve size etc.	Quotes received but deemed no feasible as installation costs far outweighed the energy savings its would bring. Possibly look at again in the future if surplus budget available. Insulation was completed at City Hall Bangor previously. Opportunities for improvement will be highlighted during the statutory building surveys. To be aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal
Solar PV	**Short term** Director of Environment	Consider the installation of Solar PV at the following locations: ○ Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre (add to existing system and check that existing system is operational) ○ Bangor Sportsplex (add to existing system and check that existing system is operational) ○ Queen's Leisure Complex	Engage a specialist installer or independent solar consultant to design/ specify systems for each building which optimises the amount of generated renewable electricity used on site, thereby minimising grid electricity use and avoidance of associated carbon emissions. Designs/ specifications should be developed using half hourly consumption/ load data.	Increased use of renewable electricity, resulting in reduced grid dependency, cost reduction and carbon emissions reduction	100kWp Solar PV installation completed at North Road Depot. Solar PV Installation completed in Ballygowan, Manor Court, Green Road, Skipperstone and Portavogie community centres.

		○ Donaghadee Community Centre ○ Londonderry Park ○ Hamilton Road Community Hub ○ Manor Court Community Centre ○ Queen's Hall ○ Recycling Centre, Bangor ○ Skipperstone Community Centre ○ Glen Community Centre ○ Portavogie Community Centre ○ Green Road Community Centre ○ Alderman Green Community Centre ○ Kircubbin Community Centre ○ Redburn Community Centre ○ North Road Works Depot ○ Kilcooley Community Centre ○ Glen Community Centre ○ West Winds Community Centre ○ Carrowdore Community Centre ○ Portaferry Community Centre	There is likely to be potential to install additional PV systems at sites with such systems already installed. Consideration should also be given to the 'future proofing' of any installations i.e. to facilitate the introduction of battery storage systems once the technology is more commercially available.		Installation in completed in Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre, awaiting NIE Commissioning. Detailed design completed for Bangor Environmental Resource centre. Works to commence Q1/Q2 2026/27 financial year. Outline design completed for Londonderry Park with Battery Energy Storage. Concept to progress to detailed design. Works anticipated to commence Q3 2026/27 financial year. Outline design completed for Alderman George Green, Kilcooley, Redburn, Glen Carrowdore and West Winds community Centres with Battery Energy Storage. Works anticipated to commence Q3 2026/27 financial year.

					Outline design to retrofit Battery Energy Storage at Portavogie, Green Road, Skipperstone Road and Ballygowan Community Centres. Donaghadee and Portaferry Community Centre to progress into outline design and planning permission applications in Q3 Review of Bangor Aurora Leisure centre ongoing.
Northern Community Leisure Trust (Serco) Operated Facilities	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Completion of energy assessments for each building/ facility	The completion of the assessments will ensure opportunities to optimise consumption are identified an Due to the nature of the facilities multiple leisure sites and pavilions), these are high consuming buildings and as such have the potential for good energy reduction opportunities to be identified. Efforts should focus on BMS settings and controls on key plant such as AHUs, pumps etc. and the potential to upgrade existing inefficient fittings e.g. lighting as well as introduce/ increase the use of low/ zero carbon technologies such as solar PV.	Identification of reduction and other opportunities prior to facility handover and assessment of priority to rectify in terms of energy cost, consumption, and emissions reduction.	Explore the development of a framework to deliver improvements in BMS operational efficiency Engage a specialist external provider to conduct building performance assessments

Boiler replacement	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Upgrade the following, less efficient heating boilers to improve the efficient use of energy: ○ Comber Adult Learning Centre ○ Green Road Community Centre ○ Groomsport Boathouse ○ Kircubbin Community Centre ○ Manor Court ○ Portavogie Community Centre ○ Queen's Hall ○ Skipperstone Community Centre ○ Bangor Environmental Resource Centre ○ Ards Blair Mayne (replace existing hot water boilers with plater heat exchangers)	Upgrading to a more efficient heating boiler should result on average 5-10% energy efficiency improvement benefits and subsequent reduction in consumption, costs, and emissions. These upgrades should be prioritised based on consumption and building use/ occupancy levels at each location. Upgrades should be completed after consideration has been given to the fuel switching action point in locations using kerosene.	Consumption, cost, and emissions reduction.	Boilers to be replaced at end of life aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal Works to commence Bangor Environmental Resource Centre as part of 10 year M&E infrastructure renewal.
Low carbon fuel replacement	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete a feasibility review to assess potential to migrate to lower carbon fuels at the following locations: ○ Bangor Sportsplex ○ Kircubbin Community Centre ○ Portavogie Community Centre ○ Queen's Hall	The highlighted location using Kerosene as a heating fuel, which is a high carbon fuel when compared to others currently available. Lower carbon options include: ○ Natural Gas- limitations on availability may restrict this option. ○ Propane- this could be utilized where natural gas is not available. ○ BioLPG- a lower carbon alternative to 'virgin' propane, though it is a higher cost fuel.	Reduced carbon emissions Currently, LPG costs are comparable with natural gas and kerosene costs. The benefit would be on lowering carbon emissions. BioLPG costs are approximately 15-20%	Review will start upon completion of the installation of above boilers. Possible heat pump project at Kircubbin/Portavogie CC due to current UF heating. Feasibility Study to be carried out by Estates compliance team.

		○ Skipperstone Community Centre	○ Electric- electrification of heating in buildings could be considered, particularly along with the installation of solar PV. This action focuses on carbon reduction. Cost savings may be realized but its focus is more on reducing the Council's carbon emissions.	higher than standard LPG. Carbon emissions associated with standard LPG are approximately 40% less carbon intensive than kerosene. BioLPG is effectively zero carbon rated.	To be aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal. Pursuing implementation of electric heating to reduce use of hydro-carbon heating systems. To be aligned Solar PV installation programme to allow electrical consumption to be offset by solar generation. Water heaters in Donaghadee Parade, Banks Lane and Ballyholme public toilets to instantaneous on demand heating systems to eliminate immersion heater systems.
Lighting upgrades to LED equivalents	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete lighting upgrades to LED equivalents (and install PIR/ daylight controls) in the following buildings: ○ Baloo Environmental Resource Centre	Upgrading to LED lighting as well as introducing automated PIR and/ or daylight sensors will reduce electricity consumption, costs, and emissions. LED fittings also reduce 'whole life' maintenance costs due primarily to their longer life spans.	Electricity consumption, costs, and emissions reduction Typical savings of 30% can be realised through the installation of PIR controls and LED	Lighting controls added to dome area and internally within Ards Blair Mayne to control lights via daylight levels primarily and PIR

		○ Bangor Sportsplex (internal lighting T8 & pitches to LED) ○ Glen Community Centre (T8 fittings) ○ Kilcooley Community Centre (install PIRs to existing LED) ○ Kircubbin Community Centre (T8) ○ Church Street Office ○ Comber Adult Learning Centre ○ Conlig Community Centre ○ Alderman George Green Community Centre (PIR) ○ Redburn Community Centre ○ Tower House (PIR) ○ Portavogie Community Centre (PIR) ○ Queen's Hall (PIR) ○ Queen's Leisure Complex (PIR) ○ Manor Court (T5 fittings to be replaced with LED) ○ City Hall, The Castle (existing fittings to be replaced with LED and controls) ○ Ards Blair Mayne (microcell and PIR sensors fitted and time control added) ○ North Road Depot (fit LED lighting to all other		lighting when compared with older fittings.	sensing as secondary control. Detailed design completed at North Road Depot to allow costs to be understood for replacement of remaining fluorescent lights with lighting controls. Currently working through zone by zone to replace light fittings and controls at Aurora Leisure Centre, and is ongoing. Works completed in Signal Centre Works progressing in Queen's Leisure centre Detailed design completed for North Road Depot. Works anticipated to commence Q2. Detailed design ongoing for Bangor Waste Transfer station

		areas that currently do not have LED) ○ Aurora (LED replacements of fluorescent and microcell/PIR controls)			Upgrade of lighting at Donaghadee Parade, Banks Lane and Ballyholme public toilets to instantaneous heating systems to eliminate immersion heater systems. Surveys to commence at various public toilet buildings to assess feasibility of LED retrofit with PIR controls.
Electric Storage Heaters	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete upgrades to more efficient alternatives to existing, aged storage heater units in the following locations: ○ Ards Arts Centre (partial replacement) ○ North Down Museum ○ Portaferry Market House	Move to more efficient storage heaters will reduce consumption.	Electricity consumption, costs, and emissions reduction	Opportunities for improvement will be highlighted during the statutory building surveys. To be aligned with 10-Year programme for M&E infrastructure renewal Pursuing implementation of electric heating to reduce use of hydro-carbon heating systems.

					To be aligned Solar PV installation programme to allow electrical consumption to be offset by solar generation.
Glazing upgrades	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete glazing upgrades to the following buildings. Install secondary glazing in the following listed buildings: ○ North Road Depot ○ Ballygowan Community Centre ○ North Down Museum ○ Portaferry Market House (1st Floor) ○ Tower House	Upgrading glazing at the identified locations will reduce heat loss from the buildings, thereby improving energy efficiency.	Electricity consumption, costs, and emissions reduction. Glazing upgrades from single pane reduces heat loss from the respective areas being upgraded. Up to 15% savings on heating costs in those areas can be realised.	Works to install secondary glazed windows at Church Street offices to commence 2025/26 UPVC double glazing installed in the NRD Buildings Pre-construction information to be prepared and detailed designs to Ballygowan Community Centre in 2026/27 FY.

ITEM 13

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Notice of Motion 595 Bangor Christian Heritage Response
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	CW22 / NOM 595
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Partial Budget in Place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background
Council previously agreed the following Notice of Motion:

"This Council recognises the importance of Bangor's early Christian heritage in the story of our city, and its role in local tourism strategies. This Council requests that officers bring back a report which evaluates how the physical link between two main sites, Bangor Abbey and the North Down Museum, could be improved, to include the renovation and potential remodelling of Bell's Walk, with consideration for improved wayfinding and lighting. The motion also requests that officers consider how Bangor Castle Gardens and The Walled Garden could be better incorporated into the walking route, and how the overall attraction could be packaged to create a more complete tourism and placemaking experience."

Key Issues
A multi-departmental site visit took place on 9 August 2024, attended by officers from Parks and Leisure, Tourism, and Community and Culture. A second site visit was held on 26 November 2024, attended by Councillor McCracken and officers from Parks and Leisure, Community and Culture, Tourism, and Assets and Property to further explore opportunities and constraints.

The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 7 April 2025, during which a series of actions were agreed. Progress against these actions is summarised below.

Uplighting has been repaired and is operational on Fluctus Angelorum.

Cleaning of three existing bell sculptures has been completed and continues to be monitored. Replacement signage requested for these bells will be considered within the wider signage review process and the 'Castle Park Reimagined' project.

Discussions are ongoing with Historic Environment Division (HED) regarding uplighting of the significantly historic St Malachi's Wall Lighting structure.

The artist who originally created the bells has confirmed that they would have no issue with some bells being repositioned. Installation of a new path from the vicinity of bell 'Bregenz'' toward Bangor Castle is currently being constructed. Once complete, bells 'St Gallen' and 'Milan' will be relocated on this new section of path creating a better flow of the trail and placing the bells in a more prominent position. Relocation of the 'Bobbio' bell will be considered as part of the wider park project when potential impact of visitors to North Down Museum can be considered.

Relocation of the bells will require redevelopment of the Bangor Bell Trail physical maps and heritage interpretation materials. This will be put in place following installation when exact locations will be known.

The new path currently being installed will also improve access directly to 'Cross Hill.' While this is welcome, Officers have identified a significant amount of work required for this area of the Castle Park not only to reach its potential for promoting Christian

Hertitage, but also as a recreational offering for residents and visitors. Design of this area will be developed through the wider parks project.

Next Steps
Work to date is contributing towards a more cohesive and engaging visitor experience by strengthening physical and visual connections between Bangor Abbey, Bell's Walk and North Down Museum, while also enhancing interpretation of Bangor's early Christian heritage. However, much more can be done to integrate these areas as well as the wider Castle Park and Walled Garden footprint into a broader heritage and leisure offer. This can be achieved by Improving accessibility and navigation through upgraded paths and wayfinding while also supporting the development of a packaged tourism and placemaking experience.

To begin to achieve the full potential of Castle Park, a feasibility study will be commissioned through 2026/27 as part of the 'Castle Park Reimagined' project. The project aims to create a major nature-inspired visitor destination, cultural and business opportunities, exceptional recreational and visitor facilities. Central to achieving this will be promoting and enhancing the heritage offering, building on the offering already in place within Castle Park and the great success of Bangor Castle Walled Garden.

Summary
Council agreed to explore improvements to the links between Bangor Abbey, Bell's Walk and North Down Museum, including better paths, lighting, wayfinding, and integration with Castle Park and the Walled Garden to enhance the overall visitor experience.

Since then, works have progressed, including repairing lighting, cleaning, process of repositioning bell sculptures has started, constructing of new paths, and progressing discussions with heritage bodies. Further updates to signage and interpretation will follow once changes are complete.

While these works have improved connectivity and the visitor experience, further development is needed to fully realise the area's heritage and recreational potential. A feasibility study will be commissioned in 2026/27 as part of the '*Castle Park Reimagined'* project to develop a more integrated, high-quality tourism and placemaking offer.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report.

ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries Service
Report title	Donaghadee Football and Hockey Update
Attachments	n/a
File Reference (if applicable)	CW55 / 88007
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: business case required
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current position regarding an element of sports facility investment in Donaghadee, to outline the steps now being taken following the transfer of Outdoor Leisure responsibilities to the Parks and Cemeteries Service, and to confirm that an updated Outline Business Case will be

progressed to assess options, affordability, deliverability and stakeholder requirements.

The Donaghadee Sports Project has been under development since the project was managed by Ards Borough Council, since then a number of feasibility studies, business cases and site options have been explored. In 2017, Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) completed a Borough-wide facilities review on behalf of Sport NI which recommended the development of a single multi-sport hub to accommodate all four Donaghadee sports clubs (Rugby, Cricket, Football and Hockey) on one shared site. A subsequent Business Case and design process produced a shared site proposal estimated then at £7.6 million, aligned with Sport NI's recommendation at the time of strategic shared hubs. However, the proposal did not progress due to several factors, including planning advice indicating that development on designated Green Space was unlikely to be approved, not all clubs willing to co-operate sufficiently, and indicative costs of clubs booking and using new facilities. Further site investigations considered the potential expansion of Donaldson Park, including the purchase of adjacent land.

Council subsequently adopted the Treasury Green Book Business Case Model for projects of this size, and a review concluded that the original single site approach offered too narrow an options base in any case, and a new business case was commissioned.

This was completed in May 2022 by S3 Solutions. The new business case was approved by Council which found that cricket, rugby and football were generally content to remain at their current locations but required major facility upgrades. Hockey, based in Bangor, wished to return to Donaghadee, and several location options were assessed. S3 Solutions presented options outlining potential layouts and management models. Following discussions with clubs and stakeholders, two options were recommended to be progressed for further Council consideration. Clubs were asked for their input into developing operating models and their preferred location options. Engagement with the clubs continued as a result in an attempt to determine this. Some progress was made in relation to cricket and rugby which led to the development of leasing models at their existing sites.

On 15 January 2025, a report was presented to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in response to a Notice of Motion acknowledging the considerable delays and frustration experienced by the football club. The Motion requested that Officers engage meaningfully with all Donaghadee sports clubs and bring forward a report on external funding opportunities or, if necessary, options for direct Council investment. Football had not reciprocated the attempts by officers to obtain meaningful information that could be acted upon up to this time

In 2025, the Council also established a Member Working Group to review the Council's overall capital ambition. While no firm recommendations have yet been made, it is anticipated that this work will deliver recommendations for Councils consideration.

Key Issues

In October 2025, a structural change in Council was agreed whereby responsibility for Outdoor Leisure facilities operated by Council transferred to the Parks and Cemeteries

Service. This is significant in the context of the Donaghadee Sports Project, as Parks and Cemeteries now has operational responsibility for the management, maintenance and bookings of Crommelin Park, the location of Donaghadee Football Club.

Officers recognise that the clubs have experienced frustration due to the length of time this project has been under consideration. The project has been affected by a number of factors, including changes in stated preferences of delivery models by clubs, land availability, planning considerations, capital governance requirements and wider affordability pressures. However, the transfer of Outdoor Leisure to Parks and Cemeteries has provided an opportunity to reset the football club part of the project, establish a clearer operational lead and progress the next stage in a structured and evidence-based manner. Subsequent to the internal restructuring, the hockey club also confirmed its preference to relocate from Bangor to Crommelin Park, which allowed officers to re-engage on that basis.

Parks and Cemeteries Officers are currently therefore working with the hockey and football clubs regarding the Crommelin Park site, which is under Council management for maintenance and bookings. *(NB The Leisure Services Team under Active and healthy Communities continue to engage separately with Donaghadee Rugby Club regarding potential development of the leased arrangement at Donaldson Park, because that site is not Council Managed, and are working on developing the business case for that site.)*

Officers recently attended the Donaghadee Local Action Group meeting in April to provide an update on the current position. Further engagement will be undertaken as the Outline Business Cases progress, including direct discussions with the relevant clubs to confirm current demand, facility requirements, programming needs, potential partnership arrangements and any club-led funding opportunities.

While the long-term project has been under development, the Council has continued to invest in Donaghadee's existing sports facilities. Crommelin Park has recently benefited from approximately £80,000 of drainage improvements to the grass pitches, and significant works have been undertaken in previous years to upgrade the changing pavilions.

Next Steps

For Crommelin Park, an updated Outline Business Case (OBC) is now required and will be developed by Officers. The OBC will:

- Rigorously appraise all viable options
- Assess feasibility, affordability and sustainability
- Consider projected demand, programming requirements and partnership opportunities
- Identify a preferred delivery approach for Members' consideration.

As part of this process, Officers will implement a structured engagement plan with all clubs and stakeholders, including scheduled meetings, progress updates and opportunities for input into design and operational considerations.

The forthcoming regulatory changes relating to microplastic infill for synthetic pitches from 2031 will be factored into any future 3G development proposals at Crommelin Park. Officers will ensure that any recommended option is compliant, environmentally responsible and future-proofed. The site appraisal will also have to take into account DFI access requirements through a currently narrow entrance and any drainage infrastructure requirements from NIW.

Officers, as with all projects, will continue to support all clubs in identifying potential external funding opportunities, for example through the Sports Development team and the Borough's Sports Forum.

Parks and Cemeteries Officers will maintain close engagement with the Donaghadee Local Action Group and with the relevant sports clubs as proposals for Crommelin Park and other sites progress.

Summary
The Donaghadee Sports Project has been in development for over a decade, during which several feasibility studies, business cases and site options have been explored. Earlier proposals for a single shared multi-sport hub proved unviable due to planning constraints and land availability, leading to a renewed business case in 2022 that recommended upgrading existing club facilities and identifying a suitable location for hockey's return to Donaghadee.

The Council recognises the significant delays experienced by the clubs and acknowledges the frustration this has caused. Council officers are committed to communication, transparency and collaborative planning as the project moves into its next phase.

A key structural change in 2025 transferred responsibility for Outdoor Leisure to the Parks and Cemeteries Service. This provides a clearer operational pathway and will accelerate progress. Officers are working closely with stakeholders at Crommelin Park.

The next stage is the development of an updated Outline Business Case, which will rigorously assess all viable options, including feasibility, affordability, sustainability and compliance with forthcoming environmental regulations on synthetic pitch infill. Engagement with clubs and stakeholders will be central to this process, ensuring that needs, demand and partnership opportunities are fully reflected.

Officers will continue to report opportunities to members for decisions, while progressing the long-term development plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report update.

ITEM 15

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Cemetery Maintenance Six Monthly Update
Attachments	n/a
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA123 / 88004
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: budget and resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation If multiple:

Background
In September 2023, the following Notice of Motion was agreed by Council:

"That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks Officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries, which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones."

A response was tabled at the Community and Wellbeing Committee meeting in December 2023, at which Elected Members requested that a further report be brought forward setting out tangible options to improve cemetery maintenance. Further reports were subsequently submitted in June 2024, January 2025, June 2025 and December 2025.

At the above previous meetings, Council agreed that six-monthly review reports would continue to be submitted. This report provides a further six-month update on cemetery maintenance activity and outlines the operational position since the previous report.

The Parks and Cemeteries Service is responsible for burials in twelve active cemeteries and for the maintenance of nineteen cemeteries across the Borough, alongside a wider portfolio of parks, open spaces and associated assets. Cemetery operations are delivered by skilled in-house teams working to established Standard Operating Procedures and in accordance with the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

During the reporting period, Officers have continued to focus on maintaining safe, tidy and respectful cemetery facilities, progressing site improvements where possible, and responding to operational pressures including adverse weather, infrastructure issues, grave settlement and staffing constraints.

Routine inspections, supervisory oversight and ongoing improvement measures have supported the continued delivery of cemetery maintenance standards across the Borough.

Key Issues
Cemetery maintenance standards continue to be monitored through routine inspections, supervisory checks and issue reporting by operational staff. Priority continues to be given to burial operations, visitor safety, grass cutting, grave reinstatement, access routes, waste management, general appearance and the respectful upkeep of cemetery environments.

The reporting period has presented a number of operational challenges, particularly due to prolonged wet ground conditions at the beginning of 2026. These conditions affected the delivery of some routine maintenance activities and increased the number of grave settlement issues requiring reactive attention.

Burial operations also had an impact on lawn areas due to necessary machinery access. Staff mitigated this where possible through the use of ground boards and by undertaking remedial repairs following works.

Staffing levels have reduced in recent months due in particular to vacant posts. Operational capacity has been kept up with use of agency staff, parks staff and contractors carrying out duties were possible. Despite these pressures, cemetery standards have continued to be maintained within available resources, with Officers prioritising health and safety, burial operations, visitor access and site appearance. Cemetery maintenance standards continue to be monitored through routine inspections, supervisory checks and issue reporting by operational staff. Priority continues to be given to burial operations, visitor safety, grass cutting, grave reinstatement, access routes, waste management, general appearance and the respectful upkeep of cemetery environments.

The introduction of PSS Ultimate software has improved the recording and monitoring of these activities, supporting better visibility of service delivery and identifying areas for improvement. PSS Ultimate was implemented in September 2025. We are still at an early stage in the full utilisation of the system, with new sites, task types and asset details being added on an ongoing basis to build a more comprehensive dataset. Despite this, the system is already enabling us to monitor activity more effectively and provide clear, transparent information on service delivery.

The data captured is helping us to better understand where time and resources are predominantly being deployed, while also highlighting areas where service shortfalls may exist. This insight will support future decision-making and allow us to target resources more efficiently as the system continues to develop.

Adverse weather conditions and prolonged wet ground at the beginning of 2026 created operational challenges across cemetery sites. This affected routine grounds maintenance, machinery access and the condition of lawned areas. The wet conditions also contributed to increased grave settlement, requiring staff to respond reactively on a frequent basis. Grave settlement continues to be monitored and addressed in line with operational procedures and available resources.

Maintenance issues relating to roads, paths, potholes and other infrastructure continue to be identified and reported for repair. While these matters are being progressed through the appropriate channels, delays have been experienced due to contractor availability. Officers will continue to monitor infrastructure-related issues and escalate priority repairs where there are health and safety, access or visitor experience concerns.

Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of the one-way traffic management system at Movilla Cemetery, due to poor road markings and signage. Since these issues were reported, road markings are to be refreshed and additional signage has been installed. This has resulted in an improvement to site traffic management.

At Loughview Cemetery, issues were reported in relation to horses entering the site. Following engagement with horse owners, some progress was made by the adjoining landowner to repair boundary fencing. However, further reports were subsequently received. In response, Officers installed Heras-style fencing as an interim measure. No further incidents have been reported to date. Officers will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements.

Complaints and service requests relating to cemetery maintenance continue to be monitored by Officers. The majority of issues raised during the reporting period have related to weather-related ground conditions, grave settlement, infrastructure defects, grass cutting, access and site-specific maintenance matters.

Where issues are reported, they are reviewed and actioned where appropriate within available resources. Priority is given to matters involving health and safety, burial operations, visitor access, grave reinstatement and the appearance of all cemetery sites.

Officers will continue to use inspection findings, staff feedback and service request information to identify recurring issues and inform future maintenance priorities.

The principal risks affecting cemetery maintenance continue to include:

- prolonged adverse weather and wet ground conditions
- increased grave settlement
- delays to infrastructure repairs
- temporary staffing pressures
- contractor availability
- visitor dissatisfaction where works are delayed; and
- the cumulative pressure of maintaining nineteen cemetery sites alongside wider Parks and Cemeteries responsibilities.

These risks are being mitigated through routine inspections and in particular the introduction of PSS Ultimate, manager oversight, prioritisation of health and safety issues, use of protective ground measures during burial operations, reactive grave reinstatement, escalation of infrastructure repairs and progression of approved improvement works.

It should be noted that continued delivery of improved cemetery maintenance standards will depend on maintaining appropriate staffing levels, timely recruitment, responsive contractor support and sufficient revenue and capital provision for repairs, maintenance and site improvements.

Officers will continue to identify and pursue opportunities to enhance cemetery appearance, improve the visitor experience, and increase operational efficiency, subject to available resources and approved budgets. Potential areas for continued review include:

- targeted resurfacing of roads and paths
- improved signage and wayfinding
- continued review of traffic management arrangements at larger cemetery sites
- prioritised response to recurring grave settlement issues
- further improvements to operational storage arrangements
- accessibility improvements where gradients, paths or surfacing present difficulties
- continued review of boundary security at sites where external access issues arise; and

- use of inspection and service request data to identify trends and future maintenance priorities.

These opportunities will be considered alongside existing operational commitments, budget availability and wider Parks and Cemeteries Service pressures.

Next Steps
Officers will continue to monitor cemetery maintenance standards across all sites through routine inspections, supervisory oversight and service request information. Recruitment activity to address current staffing pressures will continue to be progressed. Operational teams will also continue to respond to grave settlement issues, weather-related impacts and site upkeep matters as they arise. Planned capital and improvement works will continue to be advanced during 2026, including:

Cemetery	Issue / Improvement	Current Position
Bangor New Cemetery	Automatic gates	Business case approved; installation scheduled during 2026.
Redburn Cemetery	Automatic gates and path gradient concerns	Gates scheduled for 2026; options to improve path gradients under review.
Kirkistown Cemetery	Operational storage and site presentation	New gravediggers' storage area constructed at the far end of the cemetery, reducing impact on visitors and improving the entrance to the lawn sections.
Loughview Cemetery	Visitor shelter and horse access	Visitor shelter works underway; interim fencing installed to prevent horse access, with no further incidents reported to date.
Whitechurch Cemetery	'O' Section works	Scheduled to proceed in the coming months.
Movilla Cemetery	Traffic management system	The business case for improving site traffic management has been approved, with work scheduled to begin in the coming months.

Infrastructure repair requests will remain under review with the relevant contractors and services, with priority issues escalated as necessary.

Summary
This report provides a six-month update on cemetery maintenance activity and confirms that service delivery has continued broadly in line with expected standards.

While wet weather, grave settlement, temporary staffing pressures and delays to infrastructure repairs have presented challenges during the period, these have been managed within normal operational arrangements. Progress has also continued on several improvement projects, including planned automatic gate installations, new visitor facilities, site enhancement works, traffic management improvements and scheduled works at Whitechurch Cemetery following weather-related delay.

Overall, cemetery standards have been maintained within available resources, with Officers continuing to address site-specific issues, progress continuous improvement and monitor operational risks.

Officers will continue to review cemetery maintenance standards, respond to issues raised, progress agreed improvement works and identify further opportunities to enhance the appearance, safety and visitor experience of cemetery sites across the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this update report on cemetery maintenance and improvement made within the Borough.

ITEM 16

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates Head of Parks and Cemeteries Head of Waste and Cleansing
Report title	Proactive Cleaning and Maintenance Regimes including Response to Notice of Motion 702
Attachments	Appendix 1 Planned Maintenance Locations Appendix 2 Public Realm and Open Spaces Maintenance Appendix 3 Borough Cleansing Regimes
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 702
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Choose an item. Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening will be required if agreed
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental

If multiple:

	4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

The Council is responsible for maintaining and cleaning over 300 hectares of open public space including parks, path networks, and public realm areas. This responsibility falls mainly to staff in the Environmental Services Directorate, across all three departments namely Waste and Cleansing, Estates, and Parks and Cemeteries. The maintenance and cleansing is carried out mainly on a scheduled proactive basis, determined by implementing an appropriate balance between prioritised need and budget made available. These scheduled activities involve Power washing, street cleansing, maintenance of planted open space and grasslands, and significant proactive maintenance of fixed assets including benches, tables, hard standing areas and all Council buildings.

The need for a review was determined following restructuring as for the first time all the departments responsible for public open space maintenance and cleansing became part of one Directorate, so opportunities for improvement and efficiencies are being given ongoing and further consideration. More recently a Motion brought to Council and agreed asked for the ongoing review to be reported back with options for Members to consider which could improve outcomes. The Motion that was agreed at February 2026 Council was as follows:

"That this Council recognises its responsibility to ensure that our city, towns and villages are looking the best that they can be, to be welcoming places for visitors and our residents. It is therefore essential that the correct structures and policies are in place to ensure that within the resources made available all expected maintenance is being carried out efficiently and effectively.

A proactive maintenance regime was agreed when this Council was created and has worked well in some areas but has not had the desired impact in other areas. Basic maintenance and upkeep of our public realm particularly in our centres and prominent areas can and should be improved.

The Council therefore commits to reporting on a review of its current proactive maintenance and cleansing regimes, highlighting options and opportunities for improvement and associated budgetary requirements, so as to allow Members to consider potential improvements in outcomes concerning the maintenance of Council property and the public realm."

Current Proactive Activity

The proactive activity for ease is set out in two sections. Maintenance (repairs, repainting, grass cutting etc) and cleansing (washing, cleaning and litter control).

1. Maintenance

The Council approved a Property Maintenance Strategy in October 2016 which focused significantly on a move towards a more planned proactive approach to maintenance. This covered the period up to 2026 and is currently under review. This related to not just buildings and facilities but also our 'shop front' outdoor areas, particularly the busier areas where there was often higher footfall from residents and visitors alike. A full breakdown of our journey toward Planned Maintenance is included in the forthcoming Maintenance Strategy update report. This report however focusses solely on the maintenance of our prominent outdoor spaces.

The Estates Department, as part of its planned maintenance activity established a public realm maintenance initiative with an initial budget of £30k per year. Its scope of works was to proactively clean, repaint, renew or repair the paths, benches, picnic tables, signs and bins in 20 high profile locations as follows.

	Town	Area	Category	Time req'd	Frequency
1	Ballywalter	Promenade	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
2	Bangor	Public realm works area	large	3 weeks	2 years
3	Bangor	ward park	large	3 weeks	3 years
4	Bangor	sea front	large	3 weeks	2 years
5	Bangor	Coastal Path 1	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
6	Helens Bay	Coastal Path 2	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
7	Holywood	Coastal Path 3	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
8	Cloughey	Board Walk	medium	2 weeks	3 years
9	comber	Public realm works area	medium	2 weeks	2 years
10	Donaghadee	Public realm works area	large	3 weeks	2 years
11	Donaghadee	Commons	medium	2 weeks	3 years
12	Groomsport	Main St/Harbour Rd	medium	2 weeks	3 years
13	holywood	Public realm works area	medium	2 weeks	2 years
14	holywood	Seapark	small	1 week	3 years
15	Kircubbin	Promenade	small	1 week	3 years
16	Millisle	Beach park	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
17	Newtownards	Public realm works area	large	3 weeks	2 years
18	Newtownards	Kiltonga duck pond	medium	2 weeks	3 years
19	Portaferry	Castle Park	small	1 week	3 years
20	Portavogie	Promenade & Anchor CP	medium	2 weeks	3 years

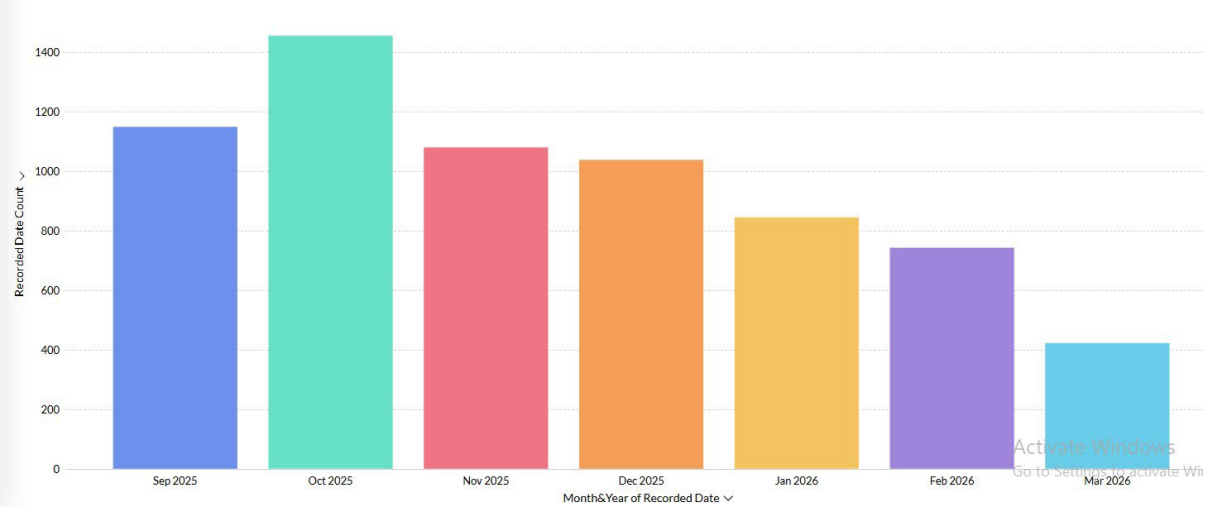
The location of these areas is highlighted in the map in Appendix 1.

Further details of the activities at each location are detailed in Appendix 2.

For financial year 2026/27, the Estates Service received Council approval to increase this £30k budget to £55k, with a further £25k to be added to the budget for 2027/28. This additional budget will considerably increase our ability to proactively maintain these public "shop front" areas.

Since the introduction of PSS Ultimate, the Parks and Cemeteries Service task management software, this moved to digitally recording operational tasks within the service. From implementation in September 2025 to date, a total of 7,694 task records have been logged across the department, alongside 8,966 site quality check records. We are still at an early stage in the full utilisation of the system, with new sites, task types and asset details being added on an ongoing basis to build a more comprehensive dataset. Despite this, the system is already enabling us to monitor activity more effectively and provide clear, transparent information on service delivery.

The data captured is helping us to better understand where time and resources are predominantly being deployed, while also highlighting areas where service shortfalls may exist. This insight will support future decision-making and allow us to target resources more efficiently as the system continues to develop.



2. Cleansing

The Council's cleansing service carries out a significant degree of proactive activity in order to keep streets, public toilets and other estate clean and free from litter.

This can be considered in four categories:

Public Litter Bins

Approximately £753k is spent on this aspect annually. (£487k by street cleansing and £266 by Parks) The five largest city and town centres are serviced daily by Cleansing and all other areas are serviced between one and three times per week. During the high season, tourist areas such as beaches and promenades are serviced up to three times per day. The Parks Service also carries out routine servicing of litter bins in public parks and Council managed open spaces. Since 2022 the Parks Service and Cleansing have rationalised activity where possible to avoid duplicate teams servicing the same area. To address the issues raised by the Notice of Motion, Council Managers from Parks and Cleansing have continued to meet to work more collaboratively in order to maximise efficiency and effectiveness of litter bin maintenance across all areas of the Borough and improve outcomes.
The key objective of this is to firstly ascertain where there were areas of service cross over and identify where both services can work in collaboration to address litter collection during peak demand. All litter bins (Parks and Cleansing) across the

Borough are now plotted on the Council's GIS system. This has allowed for greater route maximisation and sharing between departments. In addition, purchasing more bins, extending the use of larger capacity bins with anti-bird flaps, more targeted use of litter collection, weekend rangers and volunteering has seen a dramatic drop in litter complaints since 2023. Services continue to meet to tackle litter and deliver continuous improvement, through better operational activity, engagement with our community partners, education and behavioural change campaigns and enforcement.

Whilst it has proven impractical to transfer all waste bin maintenance to one department, the increased collaboration has improved the overall cleansing service provided by both departments. Furthermore, in the interests of providing an integrated, single point of contact to Members for the purpose of flagging up significant and urgent littering issues that arise at the weekend, whether they be in areas maintained by the Parks or Cleansing Service Units, a single email address is available (weekendlitter@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) for Elected Members to use.

Mechanical Road Sweeping
Council spends over £1.15m annually on road sweeping. The five largest town and city centres are swept daily 7 days per week, supplemented by town centre warden activity. Some of these are five days per week and some are seven. Other towns and villages are serviced between two and four times per week. Many high-density housing areas are also swept every four weeks with anti-litter teams inspecting these every few weeks.

Power washing
The main streets and public areas of the five largest towns and city centres are each power washed three times a year at a cost of circa £130k, including chewing gum removal.

There are also proactive cleaning regimes in place for our slipways, harbour steps, skateparks and pump tracks.

Members may recall that there was an issue reported with the cleansing of street and facility signage during the Christmas period in 2025. A number of the areas highlighted are under Council control however many are not. In order to address this issue going forward it has been agreed that the facility or building manager, which is identifiable in every case, will be reminded of their responsibility to carry out cleaning of such external elements as well as routinely ensuring the cleanliness and timely reporting of maintenance issues within the facilities. This has been endorsed by the Corporate Leadership Team and communicated to all Heads of Service for onward messaging to their teams.

Town Centre Wardens.
The town and city centre wardens are 'on the ground' carrying out routine litter picking duties and genal identification of issues for onward reporting. This regime was introduced in 2016 and has proven to be effective and any further opportunities for improvements to that service will be reviewed and introduced in so far as budgets permit.

Borough Cleansing Survey
Council recently re-commissioned Keep Northern Ireland beautiful (now rebranded as Live Here Love Here) to conduct quarterly independent surveys of the Borough's main town and city centres, and to provide a performance report provided to Council officers. Survey results will be included in regular KPI reporting to Council. In previous years' reports, this has provided evidence of positive outcomes of the Council's routine cleansing activities and litter levels at randomly sampled times. Permission has been given by Council to fund a similar monitoring arrangement going forward which will provide indication to officers on any areas that may require further attention.

3. Cleaning of Parks and Other Council Owned Open Spaces
The Parks and Cemeteries Service delivers routine cleaning and maintenance across a wide range of open spaces including parks, play parks, cemeteries, greenways, and landscaped areas. Planned activity includes:

- Litter picking and bin emptying
- Path and hard surface cleaning (as required via contractors or using department owned sweeping vehicles)
- Graffiti removal (where required)
- Inspection and cleaning of play areas

Frequencies vary depending on the classification of the site, with high-profile and high-footfall sites (e.g. destination parks and promenades) receiving more frequent attention, while lower footfall sites are serviced on a programmed basis.

The introduction of PSS Ultimate software has improved the recording and monitoring of these activities, supporting better visibility of service delivery and identifying areas for improvement.

The service has recently invested capital expenditure in the region of £200,000 in additional equipment to assist in the ongoing proactive maintenance of areas under the control of the parks service. These include up to date Parks sweeping vehicles, pedestrian footways sweeping equipment, and alternative weed control equipment. In addition to proactive maintenance equipment, the service is also a key stakeholder in all new infrastructure projects to ensure that it is best placed to effectively plan for and maintain and manage the public realm of such projects.

As a result of some now historic previous public realm schemes whereby the service was not considered as a stakeholder, there have been significant difficulties in efficiently maintaining certain locations. To that end, Officers are working to address such issues with particular regard, as an example to Abbey Street Roundabouts and High Street planters in Bangor. This is intended to create a more visually attractive street scene with a minimal impact upon current workstreams and reduce maintenance demands. An example of this can be seen in the photos below depicting Abbey Street roundabouts with the planned investment of a resin bound surface :-





As part of the ongoing process of continuous improvement across the Parks service, Officers have detailed service elements into Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). While currently in the development stage, once completed, the SOPs will provide the foundation to have greater standardisation across the service. This will inform the operational teams of the required level of maintenance across specific functions and bring uniformity to the service provision across the Borough.

Seasonally, high levels of waste can present difficulties across the service. In order to address this, the most efficient method of collection for both urban and rural locations is by way of compaction vehicles as currently deployed by Cleansing. This is an example of where greater collaboration has assisted in addressing peak waste flows during busy periods.

Ards and North Down has achieved a strong track record of success across both Best Kept and In Bloom competitions, with a number of towns and villages receiving top awards and runner-up positions. A Best Kept or In Bloom award demonstrates that a town is maintained to a high standard, with clean, attractive streets, well-kept parks, and strong attention to the overall environment. It reflects a commitment to good management of public spaces, including planting, biodiversity, and sustainability, which contributes to a positive and welcoming impression.

Locations including Comber, Groomsport and Donaghadee have secured category wins, while Bangor and Holywood have also been recognised at a high level. Donaghadee in particular has demonstrated consistent success across multiple competitions, including achieving top regional placings and national-level recognition and has qualified for the 2026 Ireland's Best Kept Town Awards. Importantly, these awards also highlight strong community pride and involvement. Success typically depends on collaboration between the Council, local groups, businesses, and volunteers, showing that people actively care about and take ownership of their area. As a result, the town is seen as a high-quality place to live and visit, supporting tourism, placemaking, and civic identity.

In addition to the above awards, external validation of the service is provided through the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Green Flag Awards. Essentially, this is an opportunity for elements of the service to be critiqued against quality standards set out in the Green Flag programme. Currently, Council have 7 Green Flag accredited sites. These are at the following locations:

- Castle Park and Walled Garden
- Clandeboye Cemetery

- Ballymenoch Park
- Kiltonga
- Londonderry Park
- Cairnwood
- Linear Park

Reactive Activity
The Estates service operates a reactive maintenance provision for all Council assets. Works requests are logged on an Asset Management System and assigned a priority timescale for completion, either by our in-house team or a contractor. Around 6000 such requests are received each year.

In Parks and Cemeteries in addition to planned maintenance and cleansing, a large proportion of resources is allocated to reactive activity. This includes responding to:

- Increased waste volumes as a result of high visitor numbers
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Storm or weather-related damage
- Repairs to paths, structures and street furniture
- Fly-tipping and illegal dumping
- Public reports of cleanliness or safety concerns

High visitor numbers during periods of good weather has a significant impact on the service's ability to deliver its core grounds maintenance activities. Key resources have to be diverted from grass cutting and other horticulture duties to litter picking and bin emptying. This has a significant impact on the cyclic maintenance schedules for key locations and present backlogs to key tasks.

Reactive work consists of a considerable proportion of the overall maintenance workload and represents a substantial financial pressure.

Reactive activity is inherently unpredictable and can divert resources away from planned maintenance programmes, reducing the overall effectiveness of proactive regimes as previously stated.

Key Issues
The various proactive regimes are determined by the prioritisation of need within available budgets. Therefore there are a number of ways, either individually or combined, in which the activity undertaken could be enhanced in order to achieve better outcomes. Ways this can be achieved include.

1. Rationalise activity in individual locations so that more is carried out by one individual team from one department.
2. Reallocate existing budgets towards the higher profile areas and shift the balance of activity from one location to another.
3. Inject additional resource specifically towards areas to which more attention to cleaning and maintenance is desired.

In order to implement elements of these options Officers have been working towards the following and will continue to do so over the next 12 to 18 months.

1. As a result of approvals given in the 2026/2027 rates, a Premises Officer will be appointed to each building within the estate as a central point of contact for any maintenance issues. These are not new posts but an enhancement to the role of facility owners to recognise the duties associated with taking responsibility for additional elements such as compliance checks. This will also provide an opportunity to streamline the understanding of other duties such as cleansing (including outdoor signage), reporting and generally ensuring that visually standards are maintained to an acceptable standard.

2. As a result of approvals given in the 2026/2027 rates, there is now an increase in the proactive maintenance budget for Estates (as noted above). This will allow further resource to be targeted at the higher priority areas.

3. As referred to above (Vibrant Towns and Cities Fund) Place and Prosperity colleagues have applied for an Injection of funding from DFC, circa £1m to allow targeting of maintenance and cleansing, repairs and a replacement of public realm furniture, fixtures and equipment in the 5 main settlements. This will be administered through the Regeneration unit of Place and Prosperity and will allow further higher profile targeting and investment as required for cleaning maintenance repairs and replacements of FF&E.

4. Additional high-profile areas are being created which will need prioritised in terms of maintaining their condition and acceptability in standards. Allocation of resources to these higher profile areas such Marine Gardens, the new Ward Park areas and Greenways will be as a result of reprofiling of budgets and reallocation of staff, and if necessary subject to future business case approvals.

5. As a result of liaising with business and trade representatives over the winter, it has been agreed to implement routine walkabouts to which Elected Members and trade representatives will be invited to identify further opportunities for suggesting changes to regimes and reprioritisation.

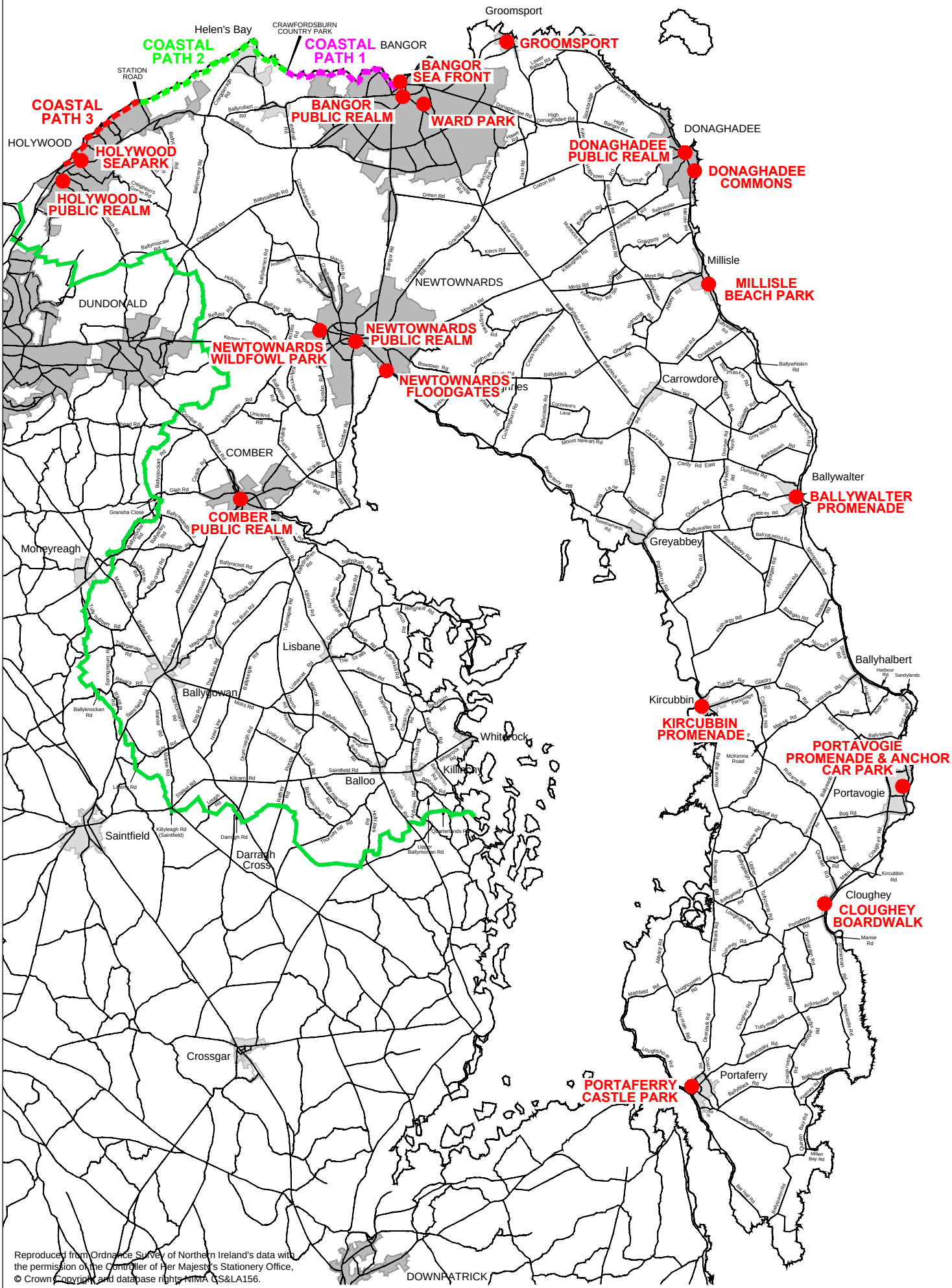
Next Steps
Officers will ensure that the above additional measures and activities are undertaken and that a progress report is brought back for Members' attention in 2027/2028 on the impacts of the changes that will be made to prioritisation and allocation of resources and adjustment of regimes.

Summary
A significant amount of resource both financial and staff is committed daily to routinely cleaning and maintaining council assets and the public realm as detailed in this report. Officers will continue to implement the changes and activities as detailed above over the next 12 to 18 months and report back to Members on the impacts of these for further consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes the significant amount of proactive cleaning and maintenance activity already undertaken in public areas and the additional activity and resources planned to be continued with or introduced during 2026 and 2027.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE OF PROMINENT AREAS



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Ballywalter	Promenade	repaint/repair benches, picnic tables & bins	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
Bangor	Public realm works area	repaint benches, feeder pillars. Check bike stands & bins	large	3 weeks	2 years
Bangor	ward park	Repaint benches, repairs to bitmac paths	large	3 weeks	3 years
Bangor	sea front	Relamp car park/prom. Powerwash prom. Fix rocking/broken paviors	large	3 weeks	2 years
Bangor	Long Hole/Eisenhower Pier	repaint/repair benches & bins	small	1 week	2 years
Bangor	Pickie Pier	repaint/repair benches & bins	small	1 week	3 years
Bangor	Ballyholme Promenade	Surface repairs, repaint benches etc	large	3 weeks	3 years
Bangor	Coastal Path 1	Repaint benches, check bins, repairs to bitmac paths	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
Helens Bay	Coastal Path 2	Repaint benches, check bins, repairs to bitmac paths	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
Holywood	Coastal Path 3	Repaint benches, check bins, repairs to bitmac paths	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
Cloughey	Board Walk	Repaint/repair benches throughout village, inspect baordwalk and replace boards as required	medium	2 weeks	3 years
comber	Public realm works area	repaint/repair benches, feeder pillars. Check bike stands & bins	medium	2 weeks	2 years
Donaghadee	Public realm works area	repaint/repair benches. Check bike stands & bins. Powerwash prom Incl. Lemon's wharf	large	3 weeks	2 years
Donaghadee	Commons	Repaint/repair benches, picnic tables, repair bitmac paths	medium	2 weeks	3 years
Groomsport	Main St/Harbour Rd	Repaint/repair benches, picnic tables, repair bitmac path at the greeen	medium	2 weeks	3 years

holywood	Public realm works area	repaint/repair benches, feeder pillars. Check bike stands & bins	medium	2 weeks	2 years
holywood	Seapark	Repaint/repair benches, repairs to bitmac paths	small	1 week	3 years
Kircubbin	Promenade	Repaint/repair benches, picnic tables, repair bitmac paths	small	1 week	3 years
Millisle	Beach park	Repaint/repair benches, picnic tables, repair bitmac paths	Medium	2 weeks	3 years
Newtownards	Public realm works area	repaint benches, feeder pillars. Check bike stands & bins	large	3 weeks	2 years
Newtownards	Kiltonga duck pond	Repaint/repair benches picnic tables & fences, repairs to bitmac paths	medium	2 weeks	3 years
Newtownards	Londonderry Park	Surface repairs, repaint benches etc	small	1 week	3 years
Portaferry	Castle Park	Repaint/repair benches, repairs to bitmac paths	small	1 week	3 years
Portavogie	Promenade & Anchor CP	Repaint/repair benches, repairs to paths, repair railings and lights	medium	2 weeks	3 years

Waste and Cleansing Services

Proactive and reactive services

Costs are 1 January to 31 December 2025

		Scheduled service	Additional
Public litter bins £486,792 (includes £388,415 for maintenance, and £148,377 for wages)	**City and town centres** (Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, Newtownards)	Serviced daily	Tourist areas / high footfall e.g., beaches, promenades, piers, may be serviced up to 3 times daily in high season
	All other areas	Serviced between one and three times per week	Tourist areas / high footfall e.g., beaches, promenades, piers, may be serviced up to 3 times daily in high season

		Scheduled service	Additional
Mechanical road sweeping £1,156,885 (includes £388,166 for maintenance, and £768,719 for wages)	**City and town centres** (Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, Newtownards)	Swept daily, including weekends (7 days)	Town Centre Wardens in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, and Newtownards will perform street cleansing duties over 7 days. Town Centre Wardens in Holywood will perform street cleansing duties over 5 days (Tuesday to Saturday).
	Other towns and villages	Serviced between two to four times per week	As required
	High density housing / estates	Swept very four weeks Anti-litter team visits estates every two to three weeks.	As required

	Other residential	Swept every eight to twelve weeks depending on available resource	As required

		Scheduled service	Additional
Street power washing (including chewing gum removal) £128,197 (includes £19,518 for maintenance, and £108,679 for wages)	**City and town centres** (Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, Newtownards)	Main streets and public areas of each city or town are power washed three times each year	Reactive power washing as required.
	All other areas	No scheduled power washing	Reactive power washing as required

Flytipping, removal of dead animals Specific cost not available, however, the cost for over Anti-litter team is £396,785, including £8,891 for maintenance and £387,894 for wages	**Borough-wide** (public land only)	As required

ITEM 17

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, October to December 2025
Attachments	Appendix 1 Social Media Summary (following report recommendation) Appendix 2 LACMW Q3 2025/26 Report
File Reference (if applicable)	53042
Legislation	Other Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 2: Environmental 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets If multiple:

Background

The official waste management statistics for the third quarter of 2025/2026 (October to December 2025) have been released by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The aim of this report is to:

1. Report key quarterly waste management performance statistics relative to the same period last year and other Northern Ireland councils.
2. Provide some detail around operational waste service management activities/actions that have been implemented during the quarter with the aim of improving performance.

In summary, key indicators remain positive for this reporting period. They show that we have been successful in maintaining high levels of reuse and recycling. More detailed analysis reveals a reliance of higher performing HRC diversion, with a reduction in the percentage of kerbside collected waste diverted for recycling.

Key headlines

Sources: Quarterly data from DAERA's quarterly waste statistics reports. Annual performance data from DAERA's waste statistics 2024/25 annual report. [www.daera-ni.gov.uk]

Table 1: Overall performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

Household Waste Recycling Rate (KPI(a2)) (National recycling performance indicator)					
	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Annual**
2024 - 2025	**59.8%**	**58.1%**	**53.6%**	**51.5%**	**56.1%**
2025 - 2026	**63.1%**	**61.0%**	**56.0%**		
CHANGE	**+3.3%**	**+2.9%**	**+2.4%**		
Waste From Household Recycling Rates (Official UK recycling measure)					
	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Annual**
2024 - 2025	**59.7%**	**58.0%**	**53.5%**	**51.4%**	**55.9%**
2025 - 2026	**62.7%**	**60.9%**	**55.4%**		
CHANGE	**+3.0%**	**+2.9%**	**+1.9%**		
NI Household Recycling Rate Ranking (KPI(a2))					
	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Annual**
2024 - 2025	**3rd**	**3rd**	**3rd**	**2nd**	**3rd**
2025 - 2026	**1st**	**2nd**	**2nd**		
CHANGE	**up 2**	**up 1**	**up 1**		
Composting Rate					
	Q1	**Q2**	**Q 3**	**Q 4**	**Annual**
2024 - 2025	**38.8%**	**38.1%**	**30.0%**	**25.7%**	**33.6%**
2025 - 2026	**37.3%**	**37.3%**	**29.4%**		
CHANGE	**-1.5%**	**-0.8%**	**-0.6%**		

Dry Recycling Rate					
	Q1	Q2	Q 3	Q 4	Annual
2024 - 2025	20.6%	19.5%	23.3%	25.4%	22.1%
2025 - 2026	25.4%	23.3%	26.2%		
CHANGE	+4.8%	+3.8%	+2.9%		

The headlines for household waste recycling are:

- **Household waste recycling rate (KPI(a2))** rose by 2.4% compared to the same quarter last year, from 53.6% to 56%. This is 5.6 percentage points higher than the NI average of 49.8%. We were ranked second out of the eleven NI councils for our household waste recycling rate, up one place from the same quarter last year.
- **Waste from Households recycling rate** rose 1.9% to 55.4% compared to the same quarter last year.
- **Household waste composting rate** fell by 0.6% compared to the same quarter last year - from 30% to 29.4%. Our household waste composting rate was 5.2% higher than the NI average of 24.2%. Ards and North Down was ranked 3rd in the council performance table for this stream.
- **Household waste dry recycling rate** rose by 2.9% compared to the same quarter last year - from 23.3% to 26.2%. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) was 0.9% higher than the N.I. average of 25.3%. Ards and North Down was ranked 3rd in the council performance table for this stream.
- **Kerbside compostables capture rate** is 71.8% compared to a NI Council average of 63.8%.

Table 2: HRC performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

HRC waste received (total tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	5,769	5,971	4,555	4,663	20,959
2025 - 2026	5,824	6,275	5,572		
CHANGE	+1%	+5.1%	+22.3%		
HRC residual (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	1,474	1,445	1,245	769	4,933
2025 - 2026	1,364	1,283	1,502		
CHANGE	down 7.5%	down 11%	up 20.6%		
HRC recycling (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	4,295	4,526	3,310	3,894	16,026
2025 - 2026	4,460	4,992	4,070		
CHANGE	up 3.8%	up 10.3%	up 22.9%		

HRC recycling (%)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	74.0%	75.8%	72.7%	83%	76.4%
2025 - 2026	76.6%	79.6%	73.0%		
CHANGE	up 2.6%	up 3.8%	up 0.3%		

The headlines for HRC performance are:

- **Total HRC waste per capita** averaged 33.7kg, compared to an average 39.9kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC residual waste per capita** was 9.1kg, compared to an average of 15.8kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC recycling percentage** was 73% in this quarter, compared to an average rate of 60.4% for other councils. During the same quarter the previous year, our HRC recycling rate was 72.7%, compared to an average of 62.2% for other councils.

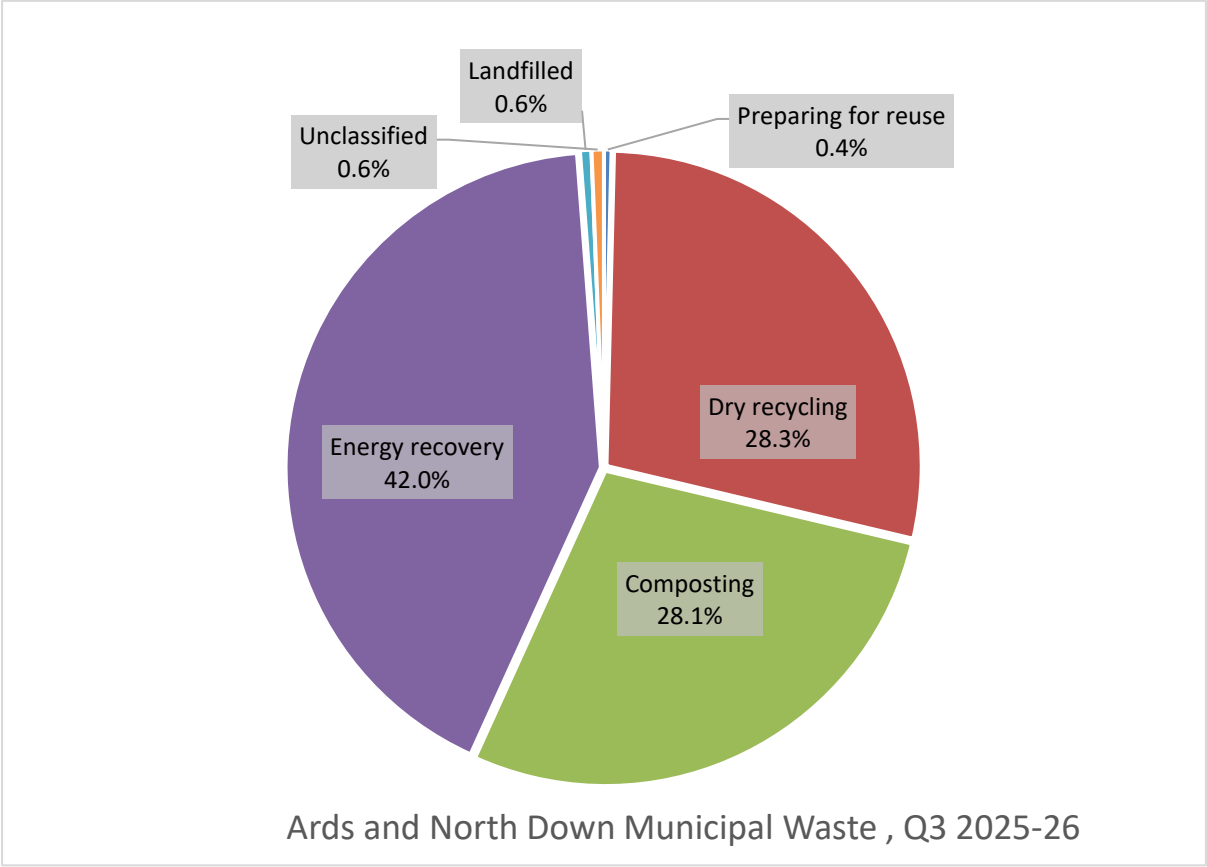
Table 3: Kerbside performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

Total kerbside waste collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	16,109	16,038	13,919	14,446	60,512
2025 - 2026	15,610	15,874	13,850		
CHANGE	down 3.1%	down 3.0%	down 0.5%		
Kerbside residual collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	6,029	6,543	6,143	7,205	25,920
2025 - 2026	5,992	6,744	6,428		
CHANGE	down 0.6%	up 3.0%	up 4.6%		
Kerbside recycling collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	10,080	9,495	7,776	7,241	34,592
2025 - 2026	9,618	9,130	7,422		
CHANGE	down 4.6%	down 3.0%	down 4.6%		
Kerbside collected for recycling (%)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	62.6%	59.5%	55.8%	50.1%	57.1%
2025 - 2026	61.6%	57.5%	53.6%		
CHANGE	down 1%	down 2.0%	down 2.2%		

The headlines for kerbside collection performance are:

- **Kerbside collected waste per capita** averaged 83.7kg during this quarter. The average for all other Northern Ireland councils was 82.2kg per capita.
- **Kerbside collected residual waste per capita** averaged 38.9kg per capita, compared to an average of 47.5kg per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside collected recycling per capita** averaged 44.9kg per capita, compared to an average of 34.8kg per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside recycling percentage** (the proportion of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside bin collection) was 53.6%. Although this is lower than for the same quarter in the previous year, it remains higher than the 42.3% average for other Northern Ireland councils.

Municipal waste overview



In Quarter 3 of 2025/26, 56.4% (11,473 tonnes) of the Council's municipal waste was sent for recycling or composting. This included all material received through kerbside collections, HRCs, bring sites, and non-household collections.

The Council reported that 0.4% (78 tonnes) was sent for re-use or repair.
For residual waste, 42% (8,546 tonnes) was sent for energy recovery during the quarter, and 0.6% (118 tonnes) was rejected as non-target material by our reprocessors and sent to landfill.

Operational Performance Improvement Measures

MC1 - Marketing and Communications Indicators
64 social media posts were issued across Facebook, Instagram and X. These represented a mix of educational and operational messages including:

- Recycle Week (follow up messages)
- E-Waste Recycling including International E-Waste Day,
- Foil Fridays and Seasonal (Halloween & Xmas)
- Foil Recycling (Alupro assets),
- Cloth Nappy Scheme promotion,
- Food Waste (Pumpkins),
- Battery Recycling
- Festive Food Waste Campaign (WRAP Assets),
- Recycle Your Electricals/Disposal of Old Tech,
- Operational messages re: Bin Collections/HRC opening hours over festive season,
- The Winter Coat Project.

1 x press release issued. Copy available on website atLove Your Leftovers: Feast Smart, Waste Less This Christmas in Ards and North Down - Ards and North Down Borough Council

More detail on social media posts during the quarter is included in Appendix 1.

MC2 Bin-Ovation

- 4 Bin-Ovation 'News and Info' articles were published including holiday collection/HRC arrangements for Christmas, Feast Smart, Waste Less, Battery Fire Risk and E-waste Day 2025
- 4 Bin-Ovation' push notifications issued.
- 1,621 Bin-Ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered 18 community and engagement events, reaching 1068 people.

- 2 x Events
- 8 x schools
- 2 x adult groups
- 1 x Brownies group
- 5 x Youth groups

Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC2 Number of visitors turned away from site: 436

HRC2a Number of HRC bookings: 77,429

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 1.08 (averaged across the 71,976 households in the Borough)

2.3 Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators







KSI – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 1612
KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 133
KS3 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 63

2.4 Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 10 (Apr to Jun 2025)	Monitoring Period 11 (Jul to Sept 2025)	Monitoring Period 12 (Oct to Dec 2025)
MC1 Social media posts	41	50	64
MC2 Print press and online articles	0	1	1
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	17	16	18
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	645	697	436
HRC2a No. of bookings	80,136	85,160	77,429
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household in the Borough	1.11	1.18	1.08
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	1938	1913	1612
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	161	133	133
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	88	53	63

Summary Analysis

Our overall recycling performance demonstrates an increase of 2.4 percentage points over the same quarter in 2024/25 with the Council maintaining its 2nd place ranking in the NI council recycling performance table. This quarter's performance is in part due to good diversion at the Council's network of HRCs.

During the quarter October to December 2025, ANDBC:

- Recorded household waste recycling rate of 56%; the second highest household recycling rate of the 11 NI councils. This is an increase of 2.4 percentage points from the same quarter in 2024/25.
- Maintained a 73% recycling rate at our HRCs.

The total tonnage of material collected at the kerbside was similar to the tonnage collected in the same quarter of 2024/25. There was, however, an increase of 285 tonnes (4.6%) in the tonnage of kerbside non-recyclable waste and a decrease of 354 tonnes (4.6%) in the tonnage of recycling collected. For the last three quarters, the kerbside recycling rate has remained consistently below the rate recorded in the corresponding quarters of the previous year. Council Officers are reviewing options to increase kerbside communications messages and necessary enforcement interventions.

Overall composting tonnages are lower than for the same period in the previous year. One of the reasons for this could be the sensitivity of garden waste to seasonal growth conditions. Autumn 2025 was the third wettest on record in Northern Ireland, with rainfall 39% above the long-term average. This may have reduced gardening activity during the period leading to less material being placed out for kerbside collection.

The Council's HRC network continues to perform well despite some limitations at smaller sites. The controlled access provided by the HRC booking system improves site flow and allows for better interaction between staff and users, helping to encourage correct segregation and higher recycling levels.

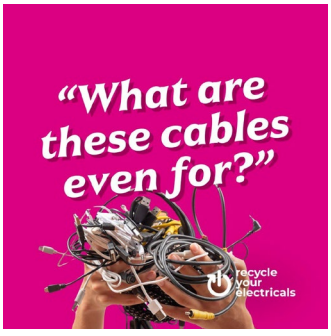
Council continues to anticipate DAERA's published response to its 2024 Rethinking Our Resources consultation. The recycling consultation response is expected to outline consistent material collection requirements and new opportunities to support workplace recycling. This will inform and shape the Council's future waste and recycling service plans.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report.

Appendix 1 – Social Media Summary

Title and Insights	Image / Screengrab
3 October 2025 Facebook Recycle Week **Views:** 6,930 **Viewers:** 4,571	
5 October 2025 Facebook Recycle Week Competition winner **Views:** 8,993 Viewers: 6,026	
5 October 2025 Instagram Recycle Week Competition winner Overview Views 1,726 Reach 811 Interactions 10 Follows 0	
6 October 2025 Facebook Int'l E-Waste Day is coming **Views:** 4,360 **Viewers:** 2,892	

6 October X 267 views	
7 October Instagram Recycle Week Follow Up – PR photo Overview Views 1,322 Reach 612 Interactions 8 Follows 0 7 October 2025 Facebook Recycle Week Follow Up – PR photo **Views:** 5,025 **Viewers:** 3,348	
8 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,765 Viewers: 1,779 8 October 2025 X 180 views	
10 October 2025 Facebook Great Cable Challenge **Views:** 2,781 **Viewers:** 1,966	

10 October 2025
Instagram

Overview

Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
1,162	445	7	0

10 October 2025
Facebook
Views: 2,215 Viewers: 1,493



12 October 2025
Facebook

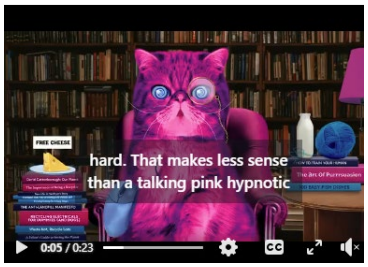
Overview

Views	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
1,451	0	2	0

Watch time

Average watch time	Watch time
4s	1h 19m

Audience retention
Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:10 mark and your average watch time is 0:04.



14 October 2025
Facebook
Views: 5,773 Viewers: 4,057

14 October 2025
X
169 views



15 October 2025
Facebook – video – Recycle Your Electricals

Overview

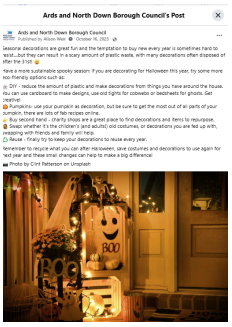
Views	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
1,507	0	1	0

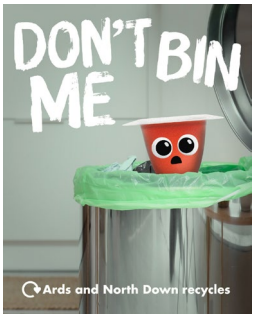
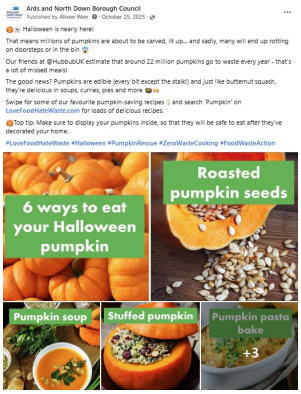
Watch time

Average watch time	Watch time
3s	1h 16m

Audience retention
Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:11 mark and your average watch time is 0:03.



16 October 2025 Facebook Sustainable Halloween ideas **Views:** 5,212 Viewers: 3,488	
16 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,562 **Viewers:** 1,746	
17 October 2025 X 179	
17 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 5,972 **Viewers:** 4,029	
17 October 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1,194 Reach 500 Interactions 3 Follows 1	
21 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 13,371 **Viewers:** 8,799	

21 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 4,857 Viewers: 3,349	
24 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 3,504 **Viewers :** 2,415 24 October 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1,263 Reach 513 Interactions 5	
25 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 10,210 Viewers: 6,169	
28 October 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,627 **Viewers:** 1,737 29 October 2025 Instagram Overview Views 790 Reach 286 Interactions 0	

31 October 2025
Facebook
Views: 4,907 **Viewers:** 3,389



18 November 2025
Facebook
Hidden Batteries/Safe Disposal / Bin lorry fires

Overview

Views	Interactions	Link clicks	Follows
10,728	19	6	0

Watch time

Average watch time	Watch time
5s	7h 32m

Audience retention
Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:00 mark and your average watch time is 0:05.



4 December 2025
Festive foil Recycling
Facebook
Views: 3,192 **Viewers:** 2,209

4 December 2025
Festive foil Recycling
Instagram

Overview

Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
999	557	3	0



5 December 2025
Instagram
Festive Food Waste

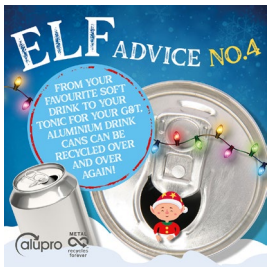
Overview

Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
1,109	396	3	0

5 December 2025
Facebook
Festive Food Waste
Views: 5,138 Viewers: 3,508



10 December 2025
Facebook
Views: 2,296 Viewers: 1,558

10 December Facebook **Views:** 5,789 Viewers: 3,928	
10 December Instagram Overview Views 1,097 Reach 620 Interactions 2 Follows 0	
12 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 1,659 Viewers: 1,126	
12 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 684 Reach 401 Interactions 2 Follows 0	
13 December 2025 Festive Food Waste **Views:** 2,698 Viewers:1,828	
14 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,645 **Viewers:**1,833	
14 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 691 Reach 395 Interactions 4 Follows 0	
15 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 1,400 **Viewers:** 990	

15 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 65,151 **Viewers:** 38,720	
16 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1.4K Reach 825 Interactions 17 Follows 0	
17 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,516 **Viewers:** 1,709	
17 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1.1K Reach 448 Interactions 3 Follows 0	
18 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 2,119 **Viewers:**1,402	

18 December 2025
Facebook
Views: 41,889 **Viewers:** 21,449

18 December 2025
Instagram

Overview

Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
1.0K	645	20	0

18 December 2025
X
220 views



19 December 2025
Instagram

Overview

Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
1.6K	646	3	0



19 December 2025
Facebook
Views: 2,072**Viewers:** 1,328

20 December 2025
Facebook
Views: 2,653 **Viewers:** 1,871

20 December 2025
Instagram

Overview

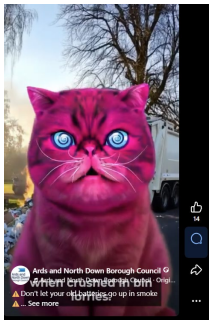
Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
763	492	3	0

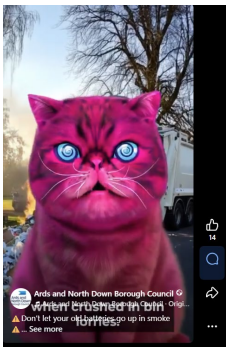


22 December 2025
Facebook
Views: 25,526 **Viewers:**17,664



22 December 2025 X 238 views	
23 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 3,148 **Viewers:**1,886	
23 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 6,668 **Viewers:** 4,309	
23 December Instagram Overview Views 1.2K Reach 744 Interactions 6 Follows 0	
27 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 54,551 **Viewers:** 29,053	
27 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1.2K Reach 760 Interactions 20 Follows 0	

27 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 7,270 **Viewers:** 5,130	
28 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 3,586 **Views:** 2,398	
28 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 31,247 **Viewers:** 19,270	
28 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 1.5K Reach 929 Interactions 3 Follows 0	
28 December 2025 Instagram Overview Views 931 Reach 589 Interactions 1 Follows 0	
29 December 2025 Facebook Overview Views 2.7K Viewers 2.1K Interactions 14 Watch time 2h 36m Follows 1 Viewer activities Average watch time 4s Watch time 2h 36m 15-second views 123	

29 December 2025 X 534 views	
30 December 2025 Facebook **Views:** 3,234 **Viewers:** 2,009	
30.12.25 Instagram Overview Views 820 Reach 649 Interactions 2 Watch time 49m 57s Follows 0	

NISRA
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Accredited Official Statistics

Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics

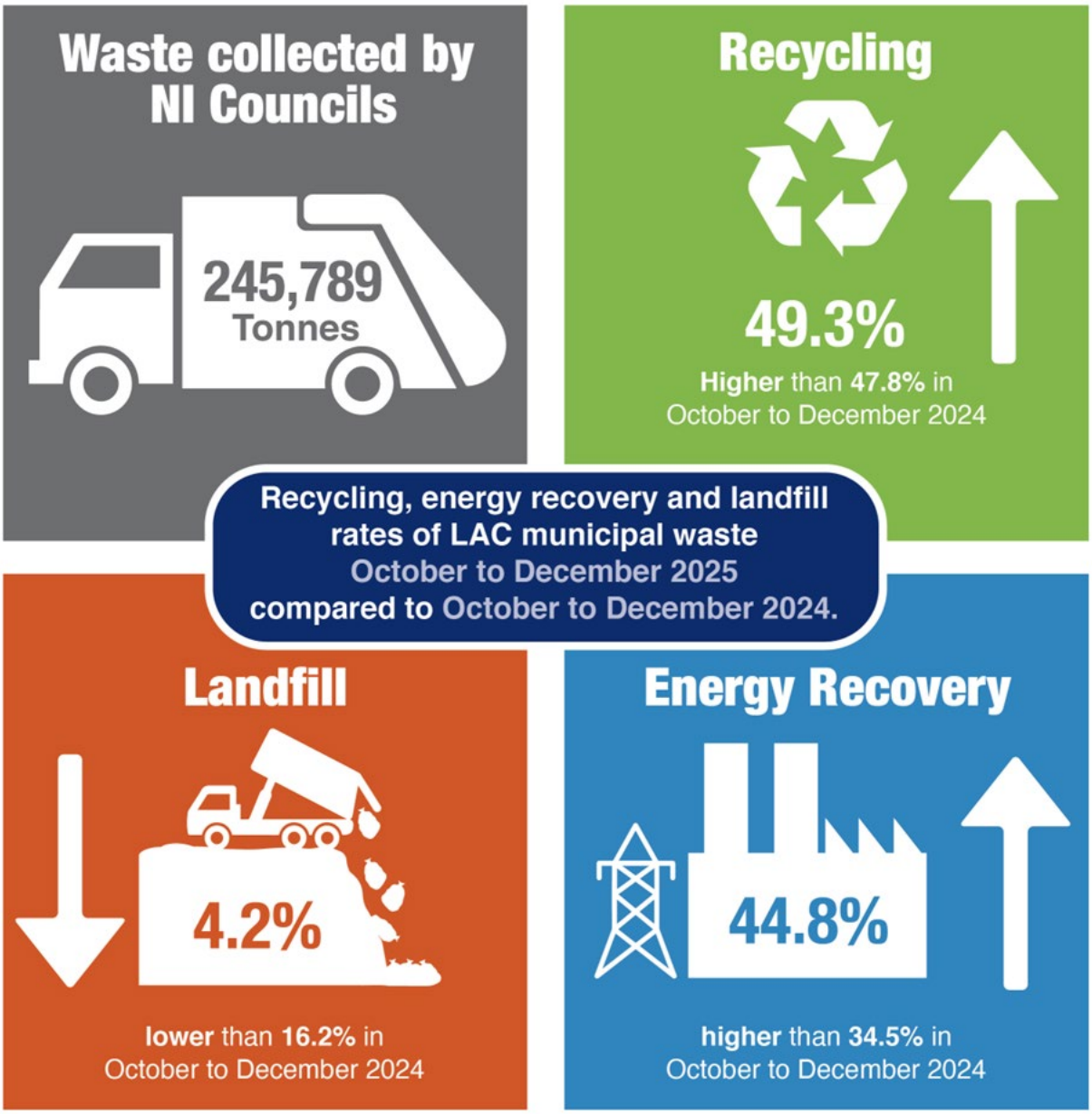
Quarterly provisional estimates for October to December 2025





Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Northern Ireland waste management statistics – October to December 2025



Key Points

- Northern Ireland's councils collected 245,789 tonnes of waste during October to December 2025. This was higher than the 234,230 tonnes collected during October to December 2024.
- During October to December 2025, 49.3 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for recycling which was an increase from the 47.8 per cent recycling rate recorded in the same quarter in 2024.
- The landfill rate for waste collected by councils was 4.2 per cent in October to December 2025 which was a fall from the rate recorded during October to December 2024 (16.2 per cent). In the longer term, landfill rates decreased from 75.4 per cent recorded in October to December 2006.
- During October to December 2025, 44.8 per cent of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery which was higher than the 34.5 per cent reported in October to December 2024. In the longer term, energy recovery rates have increased from 0.5 per cent recorded during October to December 2009.
- Household waste accounted for 87.0 per cent of all Local Authority collected (LAC) waste during this period.
- The recycling rate for household waste only was 49.8 per cent during October to December 2025, which was an increase from the 48.4 per cent recorded during October to December 2024. The landfill rate for household waste was 4.1 per cent which was lower than the rate recorded in October to December 2024 (16.0 per cent).

Issue No: 67
Date of Publication: 23 April 2026
Theme: Agriculture and Environment
Reporting Period:
1 October to 31 December 2025

URL: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-local-authority-collected-municipal-waste-management-statistics

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Landfill	8
Accredited Official Statistics	11

Reader Information

This document may be made available in alternative formats, please contact us to discuss your requirements. Definitions of key terms used in this publication are available in Appendix 2 – Glossary of the latest Annual Report.

Purpose

This is a quarterly publication which reports provisional statistics on the key measurements of local authority collected municipal waste for councils and waste management groups in Northern Ireland.

The data contained are used by local authorities, waste management groups, Devolved Administrations and UK Government to measure progress towards achieving targets from various waste strategies including:

- Previous and proposed[1] Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategies
- The Waste Framework Directive as revised by the Circular Economy package

Waste results are also used to inform waste indicators in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015 as well as the Annual progress report (APR) of the NI Environmental Improvement Plan.

Data on household recycling was a population indicator for the previous Programme for Government (PfG) and has been included as an indicator in the current PfG 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'.

The data are also used by media, the general public and special interest groups to inform policy and lifestyle choices related to the treatment of waste.

Further details are available in Appendix 1 – Main Uses of Data of the Annual Report.

Next Updates

- Provisional statistics for January to March 2026 are scheduled for publication in July 2026.
- Finalised data for 2025/26 are scheduled to be published in November 2026 and will supersede previously published data from the four quarterly returns for that financial year.
- The scheduled dates for all upcoming publications are available from the GOV.UK statistics release calendar: www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics

1 www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/rethinking-our-resources-northern-ireland-resources-and-waste-management-strategy

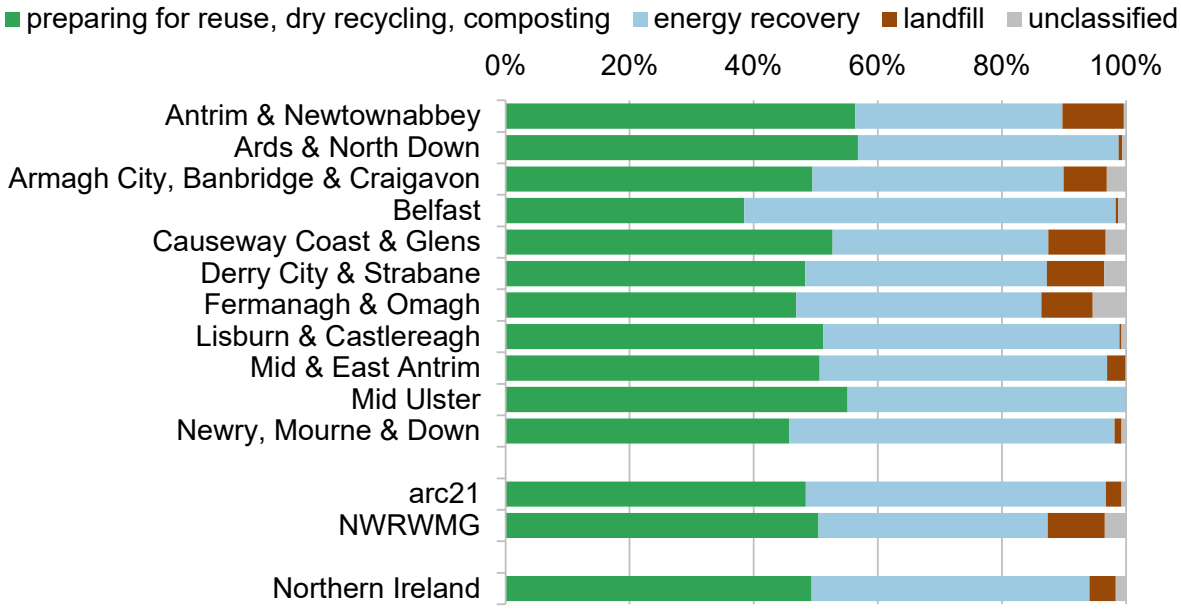
Overview

This report presents information on the quantities of Local Authority Collected (LAC) municipal waste managed in Northern Ireland between October and December 2025. The report is split into four sections, each of which cover local authority collected municipal waste and, where appropriate, household waste:

- **waste arisings (pages 2-3)**,
- **recycling (pages 4-5),**
- **energy recovery (pages 6-7),**
- **landfill (pages 8-10).**

Figure 1: Waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling, composting, energy recovery and landfill rates by council and waste management group

Northern Ireland, October to December 2025



At the Northern Ireland level, 49.3 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting between October and December 2025. Energy recovery accounted for 44.8 per cent and 4.2 per cent was landfilled. The remaining 1.6 per cent unaccounted for is likely to involve moisture and/or gaseous losses from the amount of waste collected. Each of the rates are discussed in detail in the appropriate section of the report.

The rate of waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting has increased compared to the rate reported in October to December 2024 (47.8 per cent). The landfill rate decreased by 12.0 percentage points whilst the energy recovery rate increased by 10.3 percentage points from October to December 2024. Household waste accounted for 87.0 per cent of total waste collected by councils. Household waste includes materials collected directly from households via kerbside collections, material taken to bring sites and civic amenity sites as well as several other smaller sources.

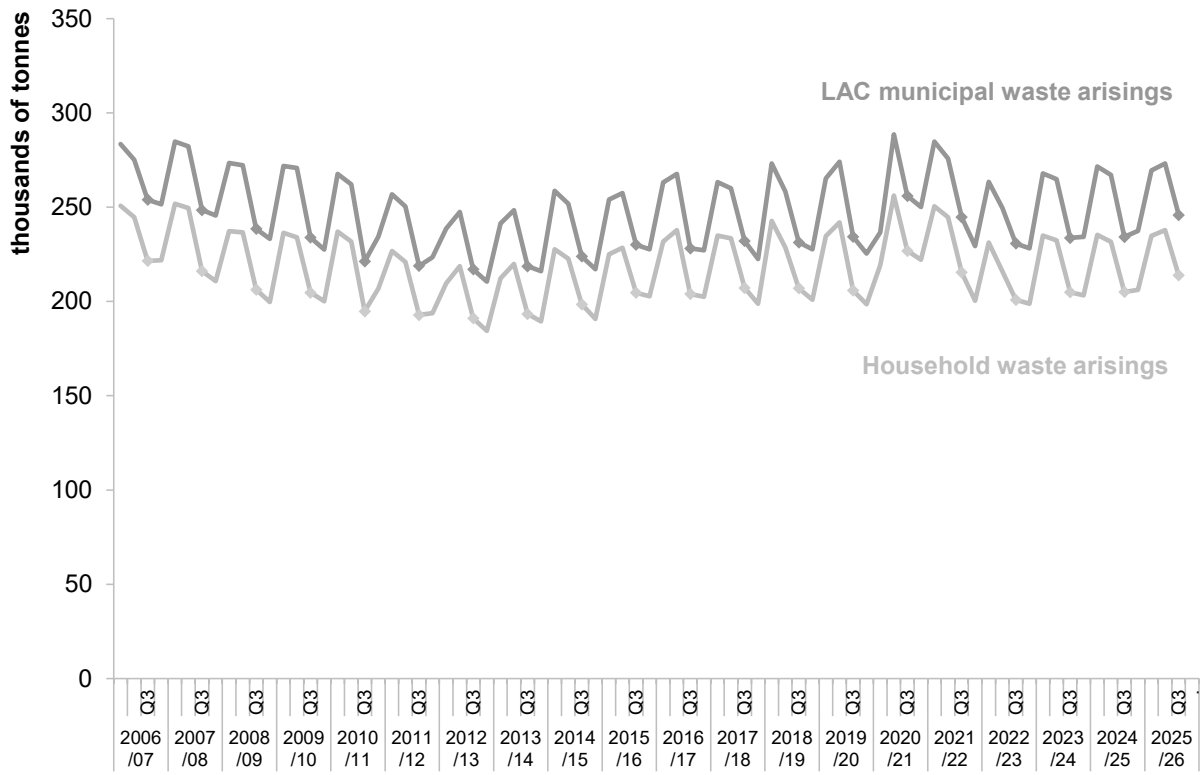
Waste arisings

Northern Ireland's councils collected 245,789 tonnes of waste between October and December 2025. This was higher than the 234,230 tonnes collected during October to December 2024. Factors affecting LAC municipal waste arisings, the majority of which is household waste, include individual household behaviours, the advice and collection services provided by councils, the state of the economy and weather conditions during the specific quarter.

The total quantity of local authority collected (LAC) municipal waste arisings is a key performance indicator, KPI (j). This indicator is used to monitor performance under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

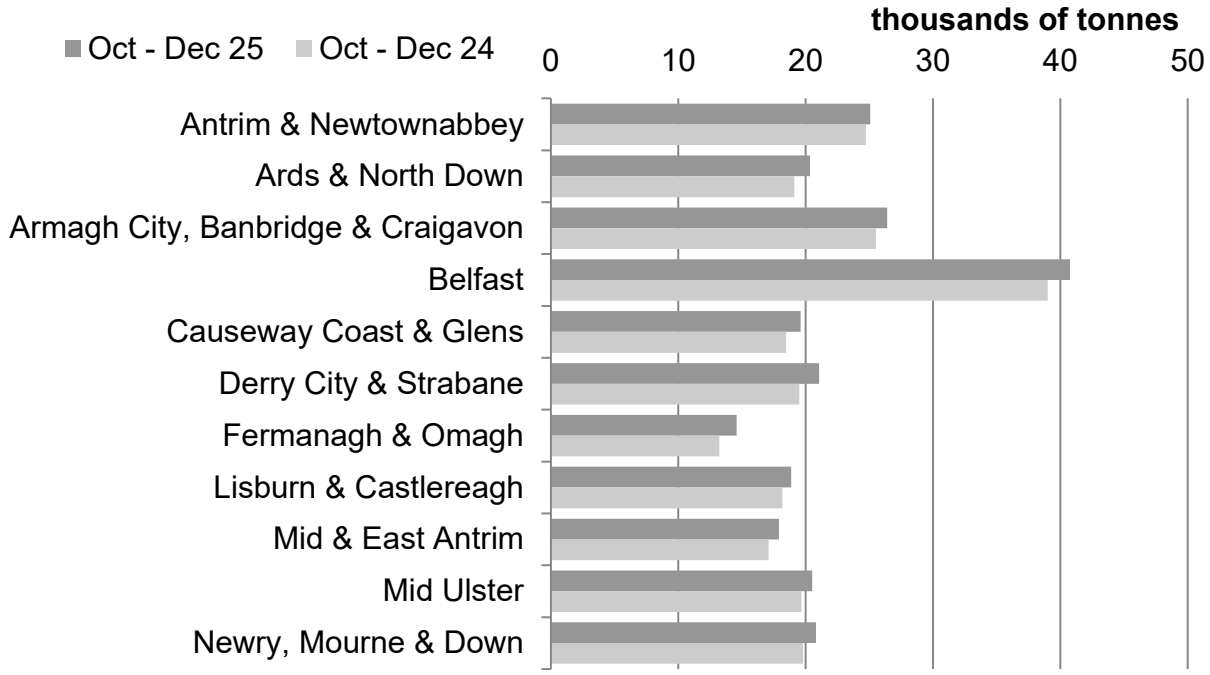
Since 2006/07 household waste has usually accounted for 86-90 per cent of total waste collected by councils each quarter, apart from April to June 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a larger than normal proportion of household waste being collected. During October to December 2025 household waste accounted for 87.0 per cent. The remaining 13 per cent was non-household waste such as rubble / soil and commercial / industrial waste.

Figure 2: Waste arisings
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26 KPI (j)



The longer-term trend for October to December saw a gradual reduction in LAC municipal waste arisings of 14.6 per cent across six years, from 253,956 tonnes between October to December 2006 to a low of 216,987 tonnes between the same three months of 2012. From October to December 2012 until a peak for the October to December quarter of 255,973 tonnes in 2020, arisings showed a generally increasing trend. From the October to December peak, arisings fell to 230,709 tonnes in October to December 2022 with 245,789 tonnes collected in the latest quarter.

Figure 3: Waste arisings by council
Northern Ireland, October to December 2024 and October to December 2025, KPI (j)



The proportion of waste collected by each council broadly reflects the population within the councils. Belfast collected the most waste at 40,749 tonnes, whilst Fermanagh & Omagh collected the least at 14,562 tonnes.

All eleven councils reported an increase in total arisings in October to December 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.

Fermanagh & Omagh reported the largest increase from October to December 2024 and October to December 2025 of 10.2 per cent followed by Derry City & Strabane, Ards & North Down and Causeway Coast & Glens with increases of 7.9, 6.4 and 6.1 per cent respectively.

The total quantity of waste collected at kerbside was 0.8 per cent higher than the amount collected in October to December 2024 while the quantity of waste collected at civic amenity sites increased by 14.0 per cent.

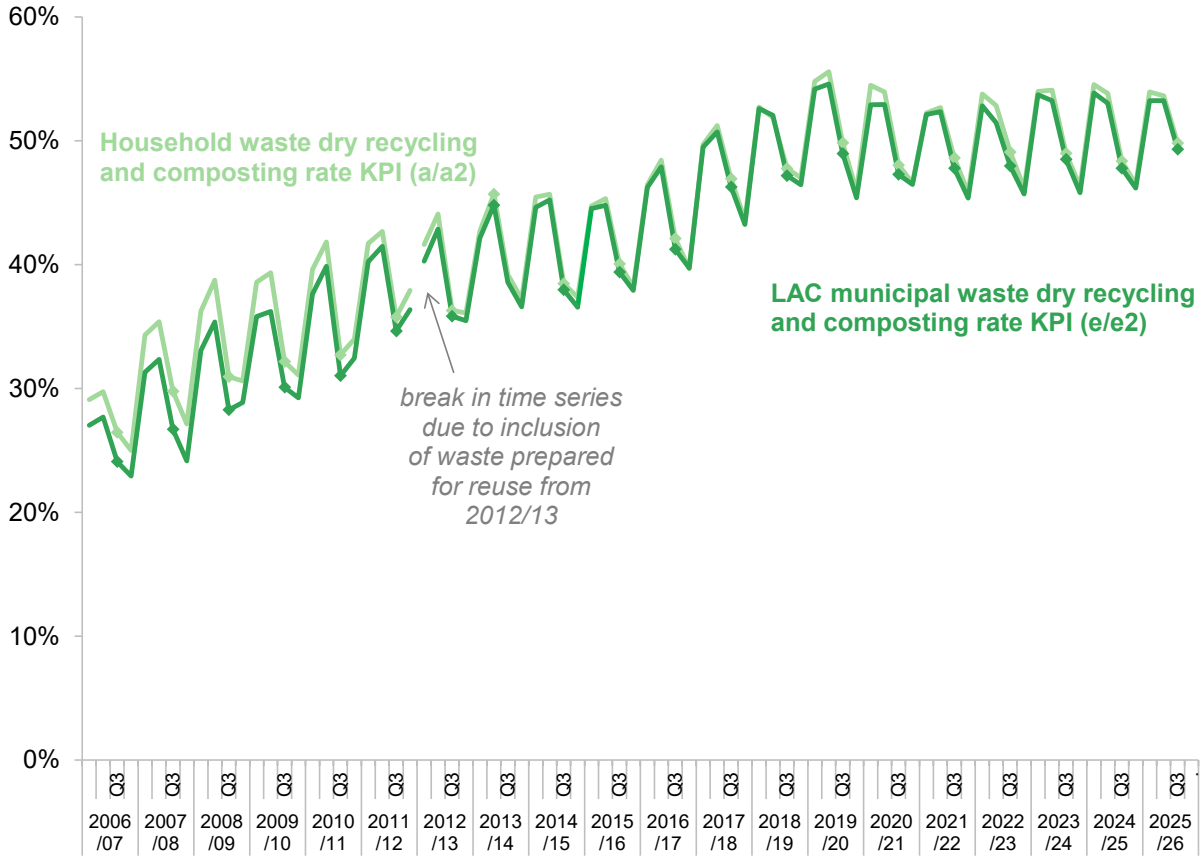
These statistics can be found in Table 1 and Table 2 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the time series dataset.

Recycling

This section of the report looks at local authority collected (LAC) municipal waste and household waste recycling rates, both of which include waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting.

There were 121,231 tonnes of LAC municipal waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting (referred to as 'recycling' for the rest of this section) during October to December 2025. The waste recycling rate was 49.3 per cent, an increase of 1.5 percentage points compared to October to December 2024.

Figure 4: Waste sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26, KPIs (a), (a2), (e) and (e2)



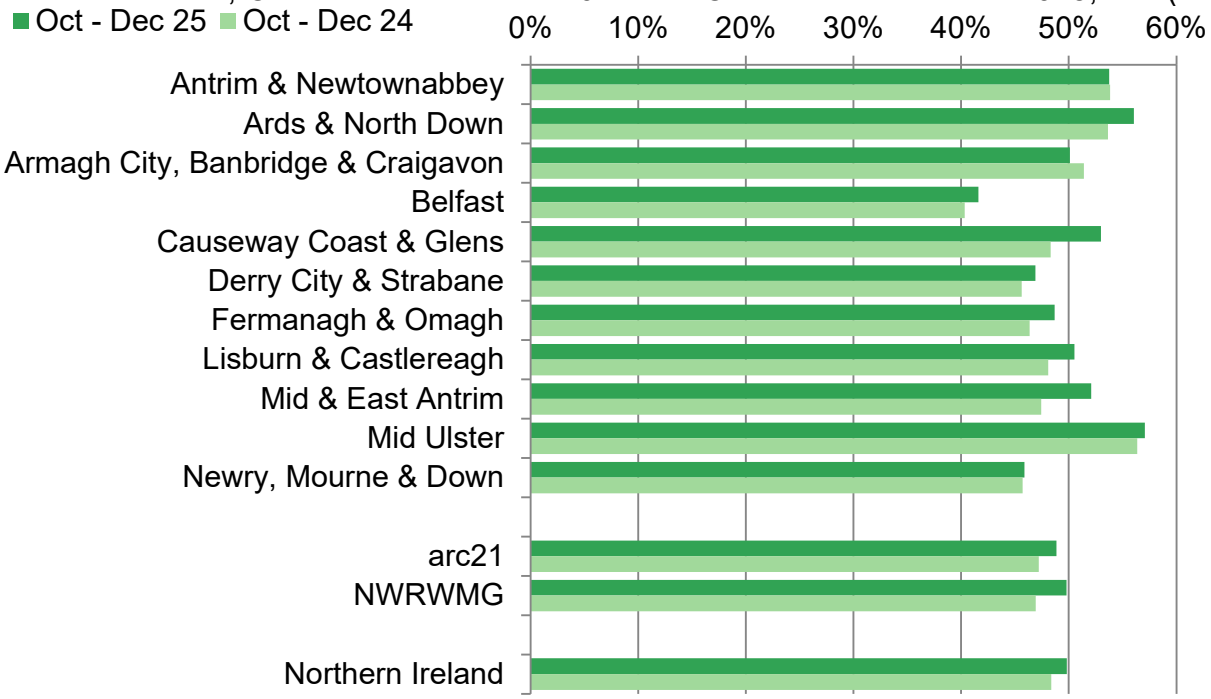
These statistics show seasonal variation which is driven by the quantities of garden waste sent for composting. Greater quantities of garden waste are collected and sent for composting during the spring and summer quarters, April to June and July to September.

The longer term trend for Local Authority Collected municipal waste recycling for the October to December quarter has been a general increase from 24.1 per cent in October to December 2006 to 49.0 per cent in October to December 2019. From October to December 2020 to October to December 2024 the local authority collected municipal waste recycling rate remained relatively similar. The latest Local Authority Collected municipal waste recycling rate (49.3 per cent) is the highest recorded for the October to December quarter. Waste sent for preparing for reuse (612 tonnes this quarter) has been included since 2012/13 and adds 0.3 percentage points to the overall LAC recycling rate in October to December 2025.

The recycling rate for household waste was 49.8 per cent during October to December 2025, an increase compared to October to December 2024 when 48.4 was recorded. The proportion of household waste sent for dry recycling made up 25.3 per cent, composting 24.2 per cent and preparing for reuse 0.3 per cent.

Figure 5: Household waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting rate by council and waste management group

Northern Ireland, October to December 2024 and October to December 2025, KPI (a2)



Causeway Coast & Glens reported the largest increase in their household recycling rate compared to October to December 2024 at 4.7 percentage points followed by Mid & East Antrim with an increase of 4.6 percentage points. Six other councils recorded an increase in their household recycling rates in October to December 2025 compared to October to December 2024[2]. The household recycling rate decreased in one council with a decrease of 1.3 percentage points recorded in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon.

The arc21 waste management group (Antrim & Newtownabbey; Ards & North Down; Belfast; Lisburn & Castlereagh; Mid & East Antrim; and Newry, Mourne & Down) recycling rate for household waste was 48.8 per cent while NWRWMG (Causeway Coast & Glens and Derry City & Strabane) had a recycling rate for household waste of 49.8 per cent during October to December 2025.

Waste sent for recycling is included in a number of key performance indicators, KPI (a), (a2), (e), and (e2). These indicators are used to monitor performance under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. The household waste annual recycling rate is included as an indicator for the current Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'.

These statistics can be found in Tables 4 and 12 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the time series dataset.

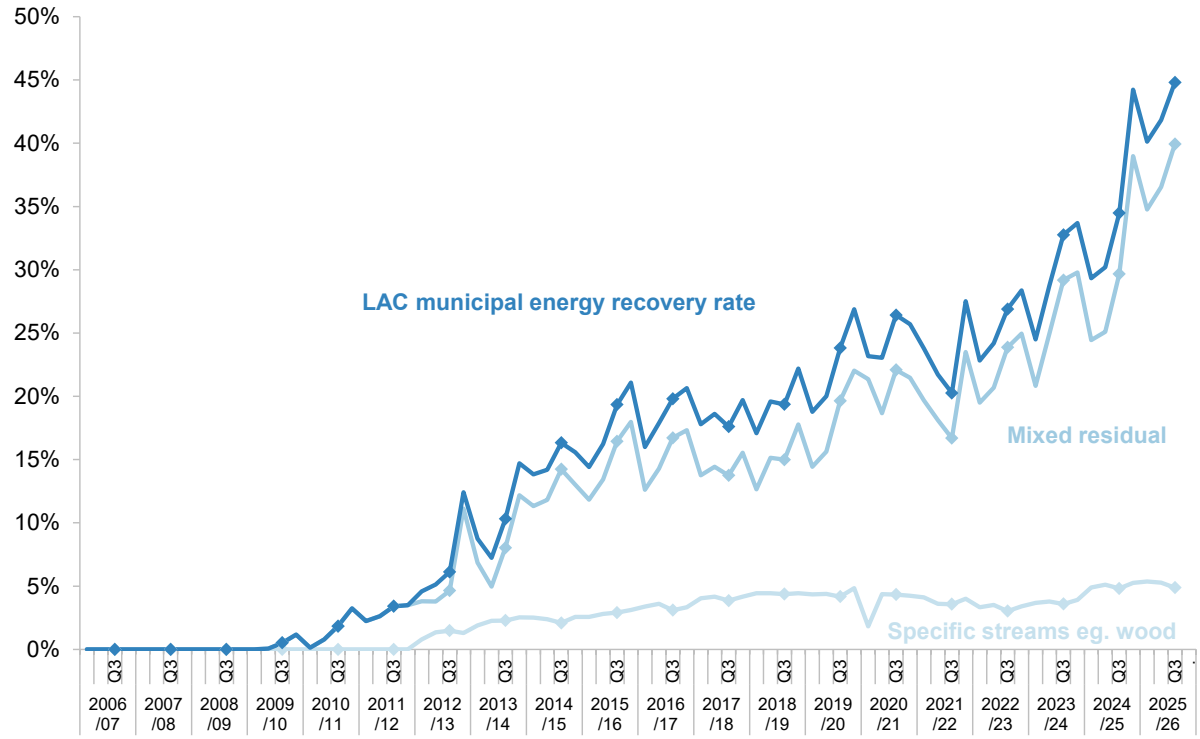
[2] Very small increases or decreases in figures (<0.5 per cent or <0.5 percentage points) are not highlighted in the commentary.

Energy recovery

This quarterly report includes statistics on energy recovery, which is the term used when value is gained from waste products by converting them into energy. All energy recovery statistics reported in this section are derived from material sent for energy recovery via incineration/gasification, although other technologies exist. Energy recovery via anaerobic digestion is not included in this section and is explained further in Appendix 1 – Limitations of Data of the latest Annual Report.

From October to December 2025, 110,143 tonnes of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery. This produced a waste energy recovery rate of 44.8 per cent, the highest quarterly energy recovery rate ever recorded for Northern Ireland. The majority of energy recovery comes from mixed residual waste, with a smaller proportion from specific streams, e.g. wood.

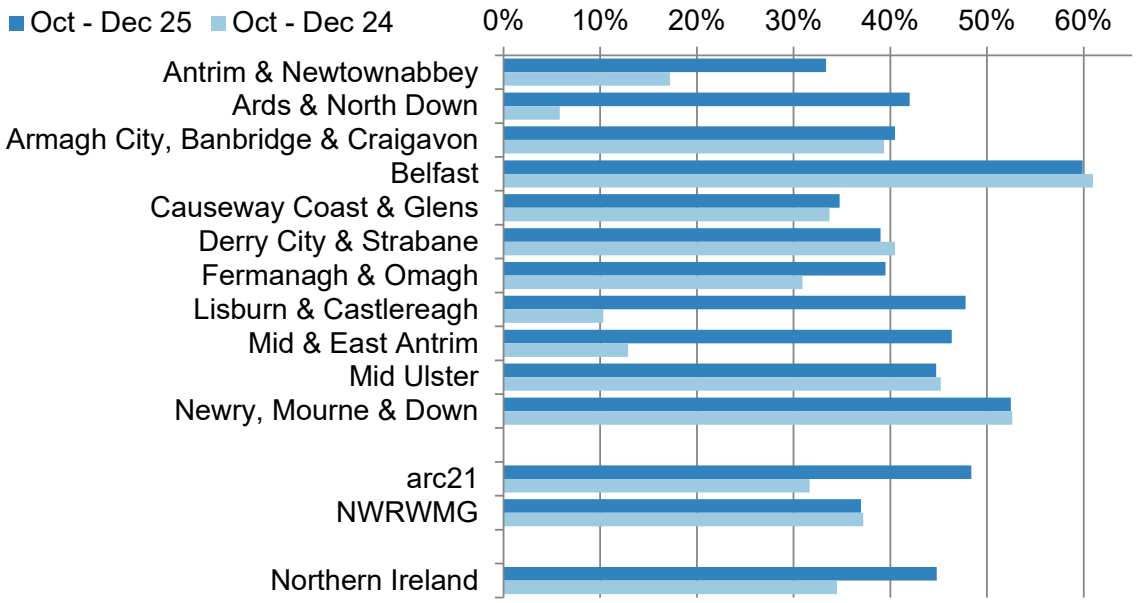
Figure 6: Waste sent for energy recovery via incineration
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26



There was zero, or very small quantities, of waste sent for energy recovery before 2009/10. Strong growth began during 2009/10 with the energy recovery rate increasing from 0.5 per cent during October to December 2009 to 44.8 per cent for the same three months of 2025. Most of the growth since 2009/10 has been driven by mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery (from 0.5 per cent during October to December 2009 to 39.9 per cent in October to December 2025). The specific stream proportion was 4.9 per cent in October to December 2025.

Mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery is combustible residual waste collected from the kerbside and from civic amenity sites which is processed into refuse derived fuel at material recovery facilities. The specific streams element of energy recovery is mostly wood but also includes furniture, carpets and mattresses, mostly collected from civic amenity sites.

Figure 7: Waste energy recovery rate by council and waste management group
Northern Ireland, October to December 2024 and October to December 2025



The highest waste energy recovery rate was recorded in Belfast at 59.9 per cent followed by Newry, Mourne & Down with 52.5 per cent. Seven councils recorded an increase in the waste energy recovery rate in October to December 2025 compared to the same quarter in 2024 with the largest increase of 37.5 percentage points recorded in Lisburn & Castlereagh followed by Ards & North Down with an increase of 36.2 percentage points and Mid & East Antrim reporting an increase of 33.5 percentage points. Antrim & Newtownabbey reported a 16.1 percentage points increase while Fermanagh & Omagh reported an increase of 8.6 percentage points. Three councils recorded a decrease in the waste energy recovery rate in October to December 2025 compared to the same quarter in 2024 with the largest decrease of 1.5 per cent in Derry City & Strabane.

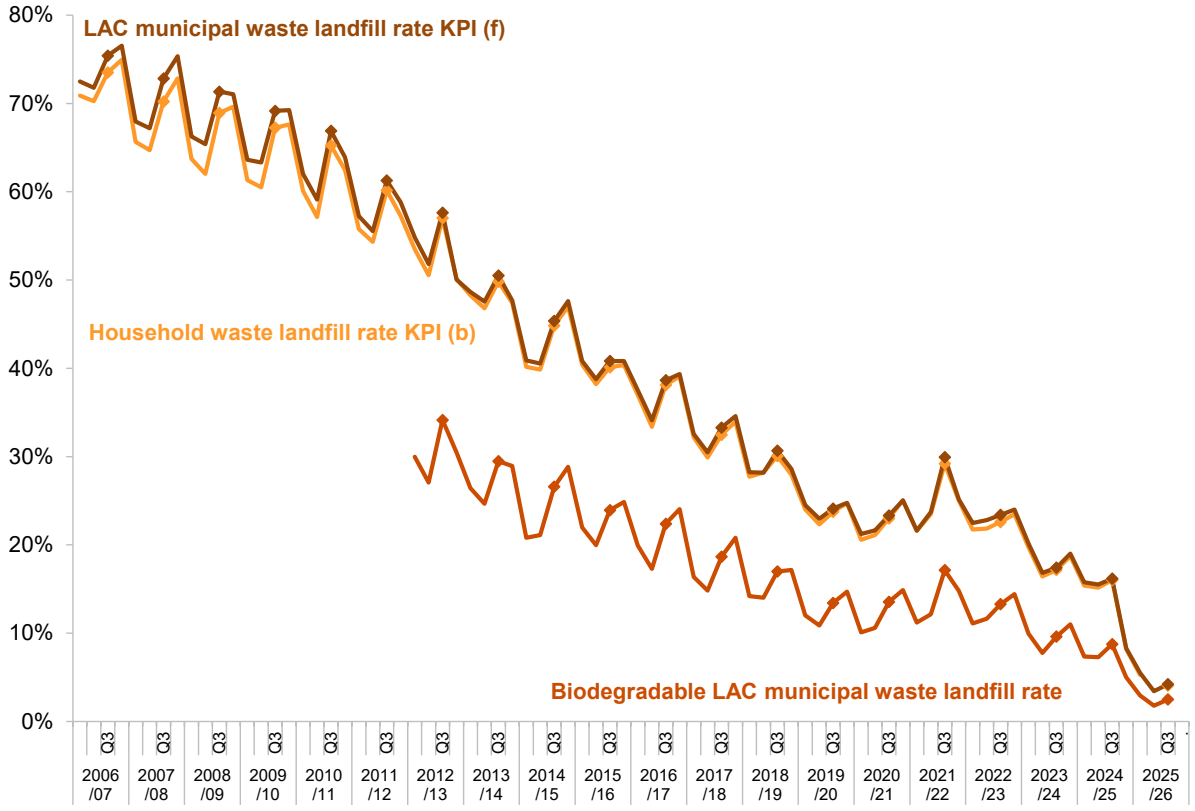
The arc21 waste energy recovery rate was 48.4 per cent while NWRWMG had a waste recovery rate of 36.9 per cent during October to December 2025. The energy recovery rate for arc21 increased by 16.7 percentage points in October to December 2025 compared to the same quarter in 2024.

These statistics can be found in Tables 3 and 4 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the time series dataset.

Landfill

The quantity of LAC municipal waste sent to landfill decreased by 72.6 per cent, from 37,890 tonnes during October to December 2024 to 10,366 tonnes during October to December 2025. The quarterly landfill rate for October to December 2025 is 4.2 per cent, lower than the 16.2 per cent recorded during the same quarter of 2024 and the lowest landfill rate recorded for Northern Ireland in the October to December quarter.

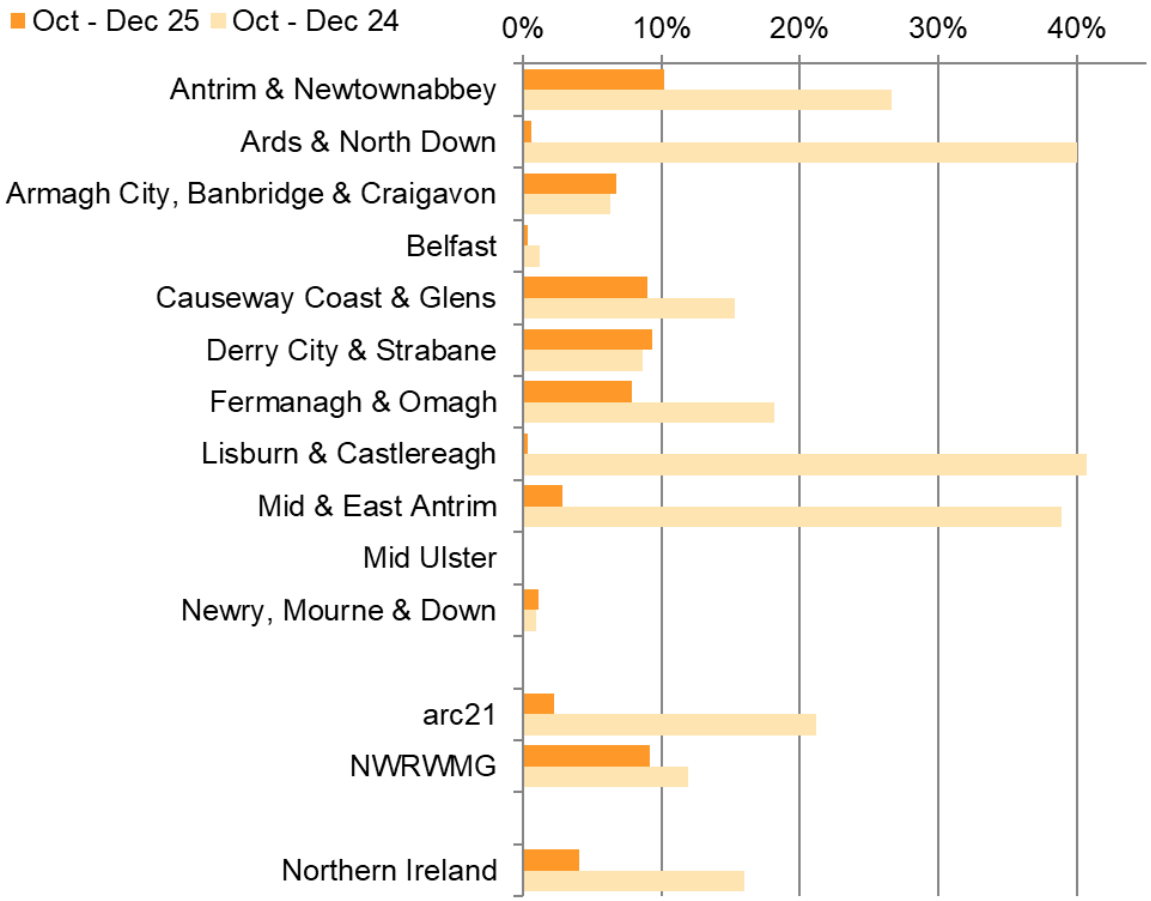
Figure 8: Waste sent to landfill
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26, KPIs (b) and (f)



The longer term trend has seen the October to December LAC municipal waste landfill rate fall from 75.4 per cent in 2006 to 4.2 per cent in 2025. Note that the landfill rate exhibits seasonality and the April to June and July to September quarters tend to have lower rates than October to December and January to March. The seasonality stems from the higher level of compostable garden waste arising during spring and summer. The latest quarterly landfill rate for household waste only is 4.1 per cent.

Increasing energy recovery rates, a landfill tax and statutory requirements, e.g. that all councils in Northern Ireland provide households with a container for food to enable its separate collection, have all contributed to the long-term reduction in landfill rates.

Figure 9: Household waste landfilled by council and waste management group
Northern Ireland, October to December 2024 and October to December 2025, KPI (b)



The highest household waste landfill rates in October to December 2025 were recorded in Antrim & Newtownabbey, Derry City & Strabane and Causeway Coast & Glens at 10.2, 9.3 and 9.0 per cent respectively. Ards & North Down, Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Mid Ulster each recorded a landfill rate of less than one per cent in October to December 2025.

The household waste landfill rate decreased in seven district councils in October to December 2025 compared to the same three months in 2024, with the largest decrease recorded in Lisburn & Castlereagh at 40.4 percentage points followed by Ards & North Down, Mid & East Antrim and Antrim & Newtownabbey with 39.4, 36.0 and 16.4 percentage points reduction respectively. One district council recorded an increase in the waste landfill rate in October to December 2025 compared to the same quarter in 2024 with an increase of 0.6 percentage points recorded in Derry City & Strabane.

The arc21 household waste landfill rate was 2.3 per cent while NWRWMG had a household waste landfill rate of 9.2 per cent during October to December 2025. The household waste landfill rate for arc21 decreased by 18.8 percentage points in October to December 2025 compared to the same quarter in 2024.

The large reductions in landfill recorded can be linked to the increase in waste sent for energy recovery over the same period.

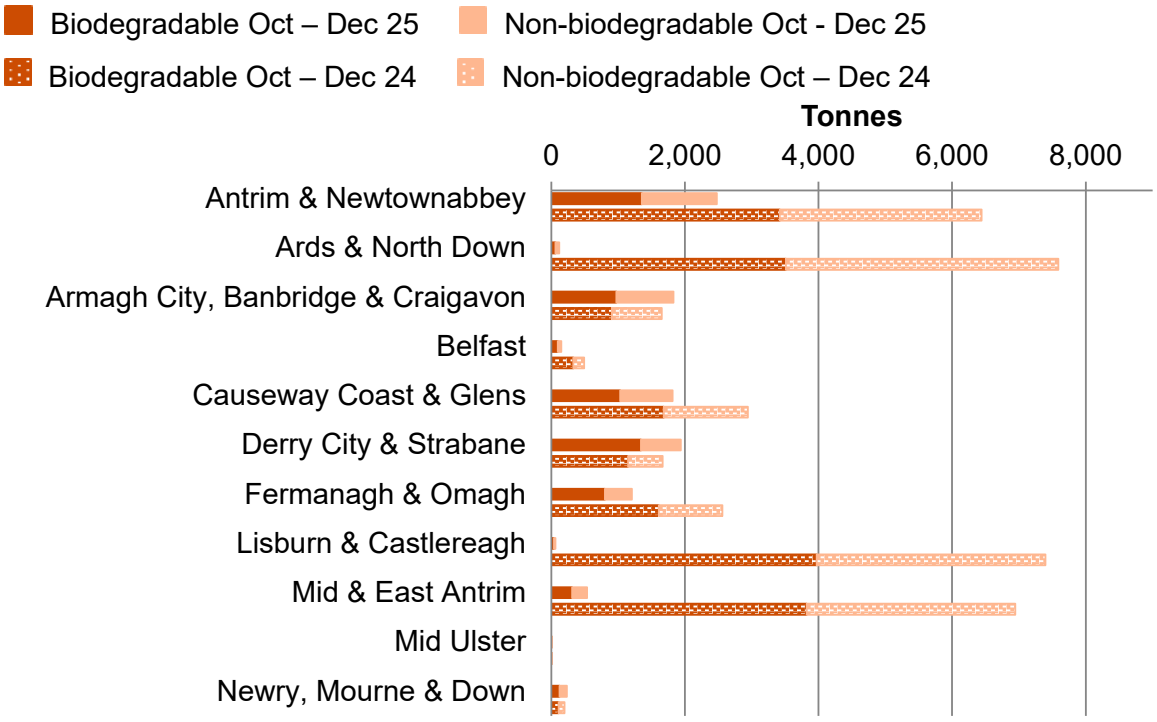
Biodegradable waste to landfill

The Landfill Allowance Scheme (NI) Regulations 2004 (as amended) placed a statutory responsibility on councils, in each scheme year, to landfill no more than the quantity of biodegradable waste for which they had allowances. The scheme concluded at the end of the 2019/20 financial year, however the continued monitoring of biodegradable waste is required for existing target commitments which specify that it must be reduced to 35 per cent of the total amount (by weight) of biodegradable municipal waste produced in 1995.

Northern Ireland's councils sent 6,133 tonnes of biodegradable waste to landfill during October to December 2025, which was 59.2 per cent of all LAC municipal waste sent to landfill. During the same quarter last year, 20,503 tonnes of biodegradable waste was sent to landfill which was 54.1 per cent of all LAC municipal waste sent to landfill.

Figure 10 displays the tonnages of LAC biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste sent to landfill by each council, comparing them with other councils and to the same quarter last year.

Figure 10: Biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste to landfill by council
Northern Ireland, October to December 2024 and October to December 2025



There is considerable variation between councils in the quantities of biodegradable waste sent to landfill, as well as the proportion of biodegradable waste in total landfill. The largest proportions of biodegradable waste in landfill were recorded in Derry City & Strabane, 69.3 per cent (1,341 tonnes) followed by Fermanagh & Omagh, 66.3 per cent (800 tonnes) and Belfast, 65.6 per cent (98 tonnes). Ards & North Down recorded the lowest proportion of biodegradable waste in landfill at 50.3 per cent (60 tonnes).

Accredited Official Statistics

Accredited Official Statistics are official statistics that have been independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) and confirmed to comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Producers of accredited official statistics[3] are legally required to ensure they maintain compliance with the Code.

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by OSR in September 2013 in the Assessment Report 263 Statistics on the Environment and Waste Management in Northern Ireland, with accreditation confirmed in January 2014. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice and should be labelled National Statistics (or 'accredited official statistics').

In October 2020, a compliance check was completed for the waste statistics produced by each of the UK regions and confirmed that the designation (or 'accredited official statistics' labelling) should continue. The trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics, including the coherence of the data source, methods and quality assurance (QA) arrangements, and the presentation of the statistics were reviewed with a final outcome that the statistics can continue to be designated as National Statistics (or 'accredited official statistics').

Our Statistics Charter provides further details of how we apply the principles and practices of the Code in the production and publication of our official statistics.

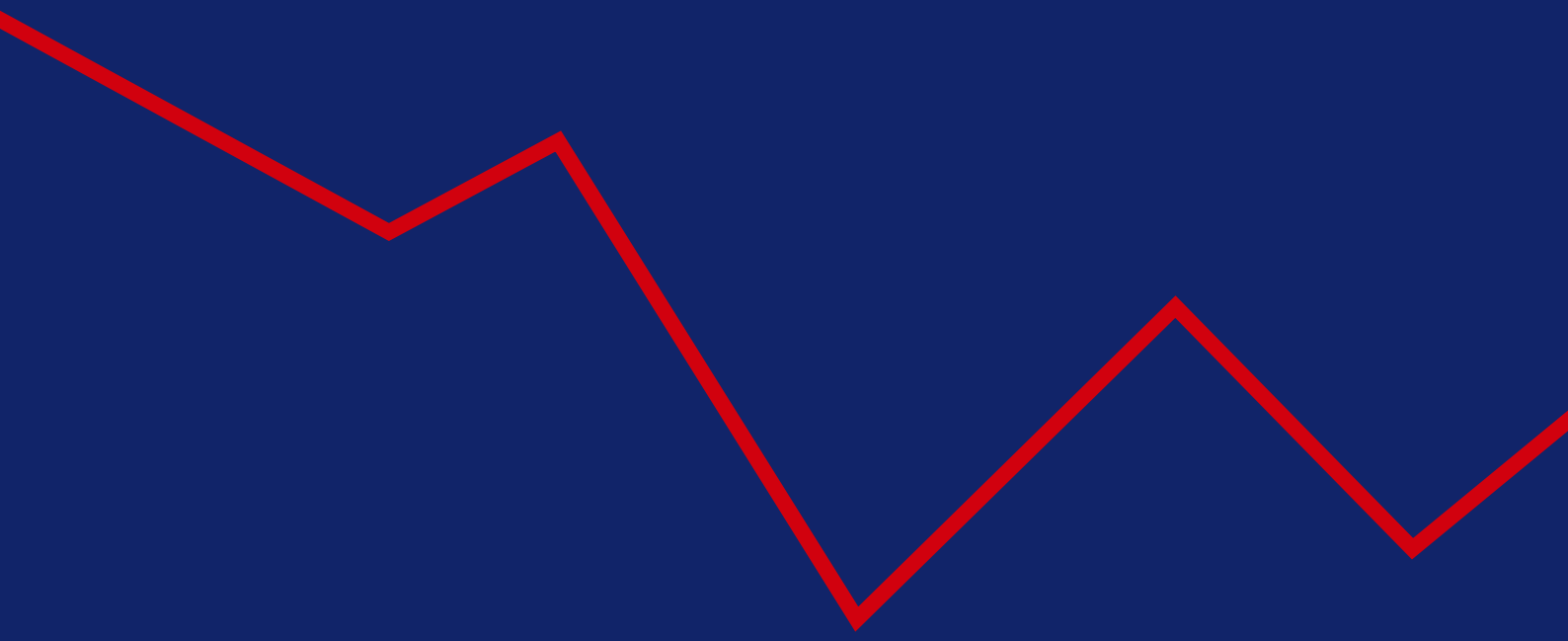
Our statistical practice is regulated by OSR. They set the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

[3] Accredited Official Statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007

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Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Clare House
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Belfast
BT3 9ED



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Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
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Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
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ITEM 18

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	10 June 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Report title	Isle of Man Visa Requirements for Fishing Vessels
Attachments	Letter from the Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 712
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple:

Background
In April 2026, Council agreed to the following as a result of a Notice of Motion.

That this Council is deeply concerned at the impact of the change to Isle of Man's visa requirements on the Northen Ireland fishing fleet. The changes which mean that overseas crew require an Isle of Mans work visa rather than the transit visa or UK skilled worker visa and therefore cannot fish within the Isle of Man 12 nautical mile limit, effectively excluding the Northern Ireland fishing fleet from its fishing traditional waters. Council requests that officers write to the Manx Government, to highlight the damage to the Northern Fishing and Fish Processing Industry and request that the relevant measures are taken by the Manx Government to reverse the impact of these changes.

Key Issues
The debate centred around the negative impacts understood to be experienced by the Northern Ireland Fishing Fleet due to changes in visa requirements. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Isle of Man Government asking that measures are taken to reverse the impact of these changes. A response was received from Hon Alfred Cannan MHK Chief Minister of the Isle of Man Government on 27 May 2026 and is attached.

Next Steps
Council is asked to note the contents of the response letter attached.

Summary
As a result of the notice of motion detailed in this report, a letter was sent as agreed to the Isle of Man Government. A response was received which members are asked to note.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the attached letter

Office of The Chief Minister
Oik yn Ard-Shirveishage
Government Office
Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 3PG

Ms Susie McCullough
Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council
Via email: lorna.watson@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

20 May 2026

Dear Susie,

Thank you for your letter dated 11 May 2026 regarding the legislation pertaining to fishing in the Isle of Man's waters, and for sharing the wording of the motion considered by the Council at its meeting on 08 April 2026.

I note the concerns expressed by Members of the Council in relation to the impact of immigration requirements on the Northern Ireland fishing fleet, and I recognise the importance of the fishing industry to coastal communities in both of our respective jurisdictions.

I wish to clarify that there have been no changes to the Isle of Man's immigration rules in relation to those working within our territorial waters in recent years. The Island's immigration framework, including the requirements placed upon overseas crew members, has remained consistent, and this position has been communicated publicly.

I can advise that the Isle of Man's Treasury Minister and the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture met with Northern Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir MLA, alongside officials on the Island in April 2026. This meeting was convened following correspondence from Minister Muir and provided an opportunity for a constructive and detailed discussion on the application of the Island's immigration framework to Northern Ireland fishing vessels operating in Manx waters.

The discussions also addressed wider industry matters, including the impact of elevated fuel prices, the importance of evidence-based decision-making, and the value of consultation on issues of shared concern. I am pleased to note that this meeting was regarded by all parties as productive, and that it was acknowledged by both jurisdictions that there have been no changes to the Island's immigration rules that would specifically relate to this situation in the past three years.

I note the concern set out in your letter that compliance with the Island's requirements would create financial and administrative burdens for vessel operators. I would advise,

Hon Alfred Cannan MHK
Chief Minister
Chiefminister.privateoffice@gov.im

Office of The Chief Minister
Oik yn Ard-Shirveishage
Government Office
Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 3PG

however, that discussions with Minister Muir MLA, and accompanying officials, indicated that the processes involved are relatively straightforward and modest in cost.

The Isle of Man Government remains committed to maintaining a sustainable and well-regulated fishing industry, while also ensuring compliance with our legislative framework. We recognise the importance of continued dialogue with our counterparts in Northern Ireland and with industry representatives to ensure that there is clarity around the existing requirements and to explore practical approaches to support the sector within the bounds of the Island's legal and immigration systems.

I welcome the opportunity to continue engagement on these matters and to work collaboratively with partners in Northern Ireland on areas of mutual concern.

Yours sincerely

Hon Alfred Cannan MHK
Chief Minister

Hon Alfred Cannan MHK
Chief Minister
Chiefminister.privateoffice@gov.im