

Screening Form

- 1. Is this a** Plan
- 2. Name of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service** Ards and North Down Mini Digi Hub
- 3. Reference** 424
- 4. Category of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service** New

5. Please provide a description of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service

Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) is delivering a 42-month (East Border Region) partnership project "Mini Digi-Hubs", funded through PEACE PLUS, that will see Comber Community Centre developed as an IoT (Internet of Things) exemplar site.

Funding totalling €553K, includes one SO2 Project Officer 2 days a week in addition to:

€51K – External expertise – workshops/mentoring/masterclasses

€205K – Equipment Costs – hardware/software/connectivity

€196K – Capital Costs – development of Comber Community Centre to fitout for the purpose of a Mini Digi Hub

The centre will be used to showcase the value of IoT solutions to the surrounding community and will host workshops and mentoring. It will address the following 2 key points:

1. IoT solution for Comber Community Centre. The purpose is to maximise the potential for the effective management of the centre by ANDBC. The design will aim to include:
 - a. Live people counting
 - b. Humidity, light, temperature readings
 - c. Water leak sensors
 - d. Sound levels
 - e. Energy measurement

2. Following development of the Community Centre, the project will showcase the Centre to the surrounding residents and business community. This will involve setting up an accessible dashboard that showcases the live data in a user friendly manner.

6. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The Ards and North Down Mini Digi Hub Project is delivered by a cross border partnership led by the East Border Region and fully funded by PEACEPLUS, Specifically the investment area 2.4 "Smart Towns and Villages" which supports the economic and social transformation of rural towns, villages, and communities across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland through digital innovation, telecommunications access, and ICT enabled solutions.

Core Purpose

The aim of Investment Area 2.4 is to:

- Increase access to and awareness of digital technologies, especially in rural areas where

connectivity and service access are often limited.

- Use ICT to drive social, economic, and environmental improvements, building more cohesive, sustainable, and resilient communities.
- Support socio economic inclusion, particularly for marginalised or disadvantaged groups, by enabling access to digital services and digital skills.

7. Who initiated or wrote the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?

Niall Drew/ East Border Region (lead partner)

8. Who is responsible for the implementation of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?

Development Projects within Place and Prosperity

9. Is this policy affected by timetables established by other relevant Public Authorities?

Yes

Equality

1. Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

Yes

1a. If Yes, which Section 75 categories are expected to benefit?

Religious Belief, Racial Group, Age, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Disability

1b. How are they expected to benefit?

The Centre will continue to be a safe and neutral place for people that fall into these categories. It will be a re-imagined building and will receive a significant face lift as a result allowing it to be a more attractive asset for future bookings of people within these categories.

2. Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Yes

2a. If yes, are they:

Financial - is it dependent on financial support of Council or another named Body or Organisation?

3. Who are the internal/external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff, Service Users, Other Public Sector organisations, Potential Visitors, SME's and Community Groups and users of community centre

4. Is this policy associated with any other Council Policy (or Policies)?

Yes

4a. If yes, please state the related Policy (or Policies)

The Action plan has been influenced by the Council's Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2029-2030 (130).

Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-2028

Ards and North Down Digital Strategy 2019 - 2022

5. Does this policy affect Internal or External users?

External

Evidence to help inform the Section 75 screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.

6. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy?

All

Religious belief evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless of religious belief.

Political opinion evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will

be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless of political affiliation or background.

Racial group evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless of racial identity or background.

Age evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all active suppliers regardless of age.

Marital status evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers independent to marital status.

Sexual orientation evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless sexual identity or orientation.

Men and women generally evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless of gender identity.

Disability evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all competent suppliers regardless of disability status.

Dependants evidence

All funding from the PEACEPLUS will be utilised following a procurement exercise that meets both Ards and North Down Borough Council and PEACEPLUS procurement policies. All procurement processes will be open and accessible to all suppliers regardless of number of dependants.

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy / decision?

7. Please provide details of different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the categories

na

8. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Religious belief?

Minor

8a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Religious belief

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

9. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Political opinion?

None

10. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Racial group?

Minor

10a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Racial group

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

11. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Age?

Minor

11a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Age

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

12. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Marital status?

Minor

12a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Marital status

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

13. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Sexual orientation?

Minor

13a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Sexual orientation

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

14. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Men and women generally?

Minor

14a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Men and women generally

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

15. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Disability?

Minor

15a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Disability

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

16. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Dependants?

Minor

16a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Dependants

The project is not expected to have any adverse impact on equality of opportunity in relation to religious belief. The Centre will continue to operate as an open, shared, and inclusive community facility. All services, programmes, training opportunities, and access to digital technologies will be available to individuals of all religious backgrounds, with no barriers to participation. The re-imagining of the centre as a digital hub enhances provision for the whole community and is designed to promote inclusion, neutrality, and equal access.

17. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? If Yes, provide details. If No, provide reasons.

Religious belief

Yes, the centre will provide a neutral, shared, and welcoming space accessible to people of all religious backgrounds.

Promote programmes and services in a way that avoids religious imagery or affiliation, ensuring everyone feels comfortable.

Encourage cross-community participation through mixed-group digital workshops and events

Political opinion

yes, the centre will continue as a politically neutral environment, ensuring no political symbolism or messaging is present.

Ensure outreach and service promotion is evenly distributed across communities with differing political identities.

Encourage participation in shared digital learning spaces that bring people together across political divides

Racial group

yes, the centre will offer digital skills sessions or support that are accessible to all groups including minority ethnic groups and newcomer communities.

Host inclusive digital workshops that foster integration and community cohesion

Age

Yes, the centre will provide tailored digital programmes for older people (e.g., confidence-building, online safety).

Offer youth-focused digital creativity, coding, innovation, and career-path sessions for younger people. Ensure the hub operates at accessible times to accommodate school hours, working patterns, and older people's needs. The Centre will continue to host events delivered by the University of the Third Age

Marital Status

Yes, the centre will ensure programmes are open and accessible to people regardless of marital or relationship status.

Provide flexible activities suitable for single people, couples and will be considerate in it's programming to how "time rich" it's potential users shall be their

Sexual orientation

Yes, the Centre will continue as a council asset that offers space, services and events that are open to people of all sexual identities

Men and women generally

Yes, the centre will encourage participation from all genders in training, workshops, and innovation programmes. It will provide a safe, inclusive environment free from gender-based harassment or bias

Disability

The centre will ensure full physical accessibility (ramps, wide doorways, accessible toilets).

Provide assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnification tools, adaptive keyboards, or sensory-friendly setups where possible.

Offer digital skills training at varied levels and aims to provide hardware and software to support the use and interaction of people that identify as having a physical disability such as Loop systems, brail and design solutions that address physical disability

Dependants

Yes, the centre will offer flexible, drop-in sessions that fit around caring responsibilities.

18. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Minor

18a. Please describe the details of the policy impact on good relations

The centre will act as an open, safe space that is free to be booked by people of different religious belief, political opinion and or racial groups

19. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Yes

19a. Please provide your reasons below

Yes, the centre has the clear potential to act as a venue to host events or facilitation of communication between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial groups

Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006

20. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability?

Yes

20a. Provide details of opportunities identified

Yes, because the design solutions as well as the hard ware and soft ware procured for the project will be in line with providing solutions that are of benefit to the people with a disability

21. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life?

Yes

21a. Provide details of opportunities identified

Yes, because the design solutions as well as the hard ware and soft ware procured for the project will be in line with providing solutions that are of benefit to the people with a disability

Additional Considerations

22. Are there any potential impacts of the policy / decision (positive or negative) on people with multiple identities?

Yes

22a. Where appropriate, provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned

The centre has the clear potential to act as a venue to host events or facilitation of communication between or for people of multiple identities.

Monitoring Arrangements

23. Outline what data you could collect in the future to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties

The centre plans to have sensors in place to monitor people usage of the centre, not just as a whole but specific to rooms and events. There will be digital solutions to address how the centre is being used, when, how often and by what groups at what frequency.

25. On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy/decision is

Screened Out - No negative impacts

Email

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Screening Panel Comments

Appendix - Religious Belief

Religious belief (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

	Catholic	Protestant & other Christian	Other religions	Total
Males F/T	33	388	34	425
	8%	84%	8%	100%
Males P/T	*	*	*	8
	25%	63%	13%	100%
Females F/T	58	223	6	287
	20%	78%	2%	100%
Females P/T	12	20	5	35
	32%	54%	14%	100%
Total	105	606	46	757
	14%	80%	6%	100%

Religious belief (External)

The Northern Ireland Census 2021 (NISRA) statistics for the Borough area show the religious group the person belongs to or for people with no current religion their religious group of upbringing. People with no current religion and no religion of upbringing are labelled 'None'.

On Census Day 2021 in Northern Ireland just under one person in five (19.0%) either had 'no religion' (17.4%) or 'religion not stated' (1.6%). Nearly one person in three in Ards and North Down (32.1%) had 'no

religion' or 'religion not stated' On census day 2021 bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 45.7% of the population were either Catholic or brought up as a Catholic, while 43.5% were recorded as 'Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related)'. Again, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 1.5% of the population are classified as 'other religions' and 9.3% of the population identified that they neither belonged to nor were brought up in a religion. This points to the increasingly secular nature of the population ('None').

	All usual Residents	Catholic	Protestant and other Christian Religions	Other Reglions	None
Ards and North Down	163,659	22,912	111,288	1,636	27,822
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	875,461	818,366	19,031	171,286

	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual residents	163,659	1,903,178
Catholic	18,003	799,334
Presbyterian	47,461	323,540
Church of Ireland	22, 912	228,381
Methodist	6,546	38,063
Other Chrtistian Religions	16,365	133,222
Other Religions	1,636	19,031
No Religion/Not stated	52,370	361,603

Appendix - Political Opinion

Political opinion (External)

Electoral Office data from recent Local Government elections (2023) and Northern Ireland Assembly Elections (2022) detail the political representation on Ards and North Down. Data also shows the turnout to vote. This tends to be lower than the rest of Northern Ireland, suggesting less strong political opinions, however the results show a preference in Ards and North Down for Unionist Parties.

Constituency	Registered Voters	Turnout
North Down	70,176	60%
Strangford	70,755	68%
Northern Ireland	1,373,731	63%

District Electoral Area	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled
Overall Turnout (2023)		
Ards and North Down Borough Council Area	123,736	57,677
Overall Turnout (2023)		
Northern Ireland	1,380,372	745,400

Party	Local Government Seats Held	Local Government Seats Held	NI Assembly Elections seats held	NI Assembly Elections seats held
	ANDBC	Northern Ireland	North Down and Strangford	Northern Ireland
Alliance	12	67	4	17
Aontù	0	0	0	0
DUP	14	122	3	25
Green	2	5	0	0
Independants	3	19	1	2
People before Profit	0	1	0	1

SDLP	1	39	0	8
Sinn Fèin	0	144	0	27
TUV	0	9	0	1
UUP	8	54	2	9
Other	0	1	0	0

Appendix - Racial Group

Racial group (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

Racial Group	Total	Percentage
White	682	78.66%
Black	*	*
Chinese	*	*
Other	*	*
Did not want to answer	*	*
Left Black	176	20.30%

Racial group (External)

On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% – 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% – 14,300 people); Taken together the bulletin reports and tables released today show an increasing diversity from 2011 to 2021 in Northern Ireland's population across statistics on ethnic group, main language, country of birth and passports held. This increasing diversity is evident to a greater or lesser degree across all 11 Local Government Districts.

All Usual Residents	163,660
White	159,892
Irish Traveller	24
Roma	19
Indian	388
Chinese	500
Filipino	308
Pakistani	87
Arab	28
Other Asian	468
Black African	309

Black Other	135
Mixed	1,236
Other ethnicities	266

Main Language	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
English	160,385	1,808,019
Other	3,279	95,158

Passports Held	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual Residents	163,659	1,903,178
UK only	109,651	894,493
Ireland Only	13,092	513,858
Uk and Ireland	13,098	95,158
Other Passport(s)	4,909	95,158
No Passport	21,275	304,508

Appendix - Age

Age (Internal)

Age Profile	Female	Female %	Male	Male %
16 to 29	20	6%	26	65%
30 to 39	75	23%	83	19%
40 to 49	105	33%	121	27%
50 to 59	80	25%	176	39%
65+	42	13%	41	9%
Total	322	100%	447	100%

Age (External)

On Census Day 2021 Ards and North down had the largest increase in the number of people aged 65 and over. This rose from 27,692 (17.7%) in 2011 to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021, demonstrating the scale of population change due to ageing.

Age Profile	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
0 to 14	361,602	27,822
15 to 39	589,983	44,187
40 to 64	609,015	55,644
65+	323,539	36,226
Total	1,903,173	163,659

Appendix - Marital Status

Marital Status (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Single	180	20.76%
Married	405	46.71%
Divorced	35	4.04%
Co Habiting	14	1.61%
Separated	25	2.88%
Civil Partnership	*	*
Left Blank	207	23.88%

Marital Status (External)

Statistics classifies people aged 16 and over according to their legal marital or civil partnership status on Census Day 21 March 2021. The law in relation to marriage and civil partnership changed in the ten years to 2021. A summary of the changes in Northern Ireland is given below:

- civil partnership for opposite-sex couples became legal in late 2019;
- marriage for same-sex couples became legal in 2020; and
- in late 2020 a couple in a civil partnership could convert their status from civil partnership to marriage.

The rise in the 'single' population and the fall in the 'married' population here is in line with results from recent censuses in England and Wales. These figures mirror changes in society and specifically in personal relationships that has been witnessed over the last 50 years. Ards & North Down LGD, which has the oldest demographic profile of all 11 LGDs, has the highest percentage of adults who were widowed, at 8%.



Marital Status	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
Single	575,966	41,540
Married or in Civil Partnership	682,065	68,340
Separated, Divorced or Formally in a Civil Partnership	151,570	13,400
Widowed or Surviving partner from a Civil Partnership	97,004	10,720

Appendix - Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation

Statistics show that 2.1% (31,600) of NI population aged 16 and over identified as 'lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGB+)' and 90.0% (1,363,900) identified as 'straight or heterosexual'. More urban LGDs have a higher percentage of people who identified as LGB+. Almost 8% of our population aged 16 and over (119,300) either ticked 'prefer not to say' or chose not to answer the question. Taken together, these are labelled 'No sexual orientation stated' in these statistics.

8.8% percent of people who identified as LGB+ in Northern Ireland live in the Ards and North Down Borough, Statistics also show that 800 Households in the Borough are living in a same sex couple relationship.

Living in households by relationship	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
Living in a Same Sex Couple	9,600	800
Not Living as a Couple	694,600	53,500
	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
All usual Residents (over 16)	1,515,700	134,000
Straight or Hetrosexual	1,364,130	121,940
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or other Sexual orientation	30,314	2,680
No sexual orientation stated	121,256	9,380

Appendix - Men and Women Generally

Men and women generally (Internal)

Male	Female	Total
511	356	867
58.94%	41.06%	100%

Men and women generally (External)

The Northern Ireland usually resident population increased by 5.1% (92,300) from 2011 to 2021. The Census 2021 population is recorded at 1,903,175 people up from 1,810,863 people in 2011. Ards & North Down had an increase of population from 2011 of 7,000, which is 4.5%.

The census day population comprised of 967,000 females and 936,100 males. Statistics show that for every 100 females in Ards and North Down Borough there were 94.9 males.

Statistics show that 54% of the Borough are employed 2% are Unemployed and 43% are Economically inactive. Of those employed, 37% were in the Public administration, education and health Industry and 2% were in the Agriculture, energy and water industry.

62% of employed people travelled to work in a car or van and 34% travelled 5km-20km to their place of work.

There were 70,445 households recorded in Ards and North Down 4,400, 5.9% were unoccupied at the time of the survey.

The average household size in sits at 2.30 (2.44 in NI). 31% are single occupancy and 6% had more than 6 people living in the property.

72% of the Borough owns their own property, this has decreased by 2% from 2011 where 13% are Social rented and increase of 2% increase in 2011.

LGD	Male	Female

Northern Ireland	932,554	970,618
Ards and North Down	80,192	83,466

Appendix - Disability

Disability (External)

A self-assessment of whether a person has a long-term health problem or disability that limits daily activities and which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. It includes problems that are due to old age. The 2021 Census (NIRSA) demonstrates an increase of 15% or more in the percentage of people who reported a long-term health problem or disability which limited day-to-day activities. 41,300 or 25.3% of people in Ards and North Down had a limiting long-term health problem or disability. Ards & North Down experienced an increase of 31.4% from 2011. These changes are in part a reflection of the Boroughs ageing population.

The following statistics show a breakdown in residents in Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down borough with a Disability that is expected to last 12 months or more.

The figures show that 7.2 per cent of the Borough have deafness or partial hearing loss, 68% being over the age of 65. 2% have blindness or partial sight loss, 11% of those people are aged 0-39 years. 1.6 % have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair, in comparison to Northern Ireland statics this means that 9.3% of all those who have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair reside in the Borough.

0.8% have an intellectual or learning disability including dyslexia and Downs Syndrome. 1.6% have Autism or Asperger syndrome, 49% are between 0-14 years whilst 40% are aged 15- 39 year. 8.1 % have an emotional, psychological or mental health condition, includes depression and schizophrenia, this is highest in the age ranges of 40 – 64 years (47%). 2% have frequent periods of confusion or memory loss, including Dementia, this is most prevalent with ages 65+. 10% of residents have another condition, for example Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes, again this is most prevalent in age 65+. Taken together these results show that policy making must consider Ards and north Down aging population and health and disability issues as well as recognition for those that provide unpaid care throughout the Borough.

LGD	All usual residents	Activites Not Limited	Limited a little	Limited a lot
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	1,446,415	247,413	209,349
Ards and North Down	163,659	122,744	22,912	18,002

Long term Health Conditions	None	1	2	3 or More
Northern Ireland	1,237,065	342,572	152,254	171,286
Ards and North Down	101,468	32,731	14,729	14,729
Disability Breakdown Age range (0 - 65+)	Ards and North Down		Northern Ireland	
Deafness or Partial Hearing loss	11,802		109,457	
Blindness or Partial Sightloss	3,214		33,961	

Mobility or dexterity difficulty that required the use of a wheelchair	2,641		28,138	
Intellectual or learning disability include dyslexia and Downs Syndrome	1,469		16,923	
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	2,628		35,367	
Emotional, psychological or mental health condition inc depression and schizophrenia	13,275		165,127	
Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss inc Dementia	3,432		37,789	
Other conditions E.g Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes	167,752		16,636	

Appendix - Dependants

Dependants (External)

For the Purposes of S75 a dependant can be classed as Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.

In Census 2021 one person in eight of NI population aged 5 or more (or 222,200 people) noted that they provided unpaid care. One important point to note in Policy making is that 2,600 children aged 5 to 14 in Northern Ireland provide unpaid care.

Ards & North Down LGD had the highest percentage of people who provide unpaid care throughout Northern Ireland , 13.7% estimated at 30,414 residents. 'Unpaid care' covers looking after, giving help or support to anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age

A dependent child is a person aged 0 to 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education and living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s). 'No dependent children' includes households with no children and households where all children are non-dependent.

In Ards and North Down there were 27,822 Children (defined as those aged 0 to 14). Children make up 19.2% of the Northern Ireland population. This percentage varies across the Local Government Districts and is lowest in Ards and North Down where the proportion is 17.0%.

According to Birth statistics on NISRA Ards and North Down recorded 2,854 births between 2020 and 2022 , giving an indication of the numbers using buggies or prams in use.

	Dependent children in household: None	Dependent children in household: one	Dependent children in household: Two	Dependent children in household: Three
Northern Ireland	71%	11%	11%	6%

Ards and North Down	74%	11%	11%	4%
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24. Does this policy require an Equality Impact Assessment?

No

1. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. E.g

Ards and North Down Mini Digi Hub

2. What definition of 'rural' is the Plan using in respect of Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition)

Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

3. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes

3a. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The project will see an existing council asset, the Comber Community Centre, develop in line with the wider ambitions of the cross border project to create a "Mini Digi Hub". This centre will continue to host existing community groups, add value to their experience of the centre and offer up more events and meaningful supports to the immediate rural community

3b. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The centre is a fixed asset, around which the financial support will be directed. As a centre in a rural area, it will see the benefit of the capital infrastructure and the delivery of workshops, events and masterclasses to benefit the community

3c. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on

Rural Business

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas

Agri-Environment

Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service? Deprivation levels can be found at Home Page | NI Area Statistics | NISRA

Yes

4a. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders

4b. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

Engagement (ongoing) with council officers in both economic development and regeneration
 Consultation with scoping studies carried out by council in late 2025 for the purposes of engaging with business to identify needs
 Engagement with business in the local area during the writing of the application form in mid 2024, largely farmer based industries

4c. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

Needs of consistent reliable digital connectivity

a place to host meeting with potential business clients

somewhere that can offer connectivity that meets the specific needs of the sreen industries (ultrafast reliable gigabite capable download speeds)

Lack of understanding of what IoT is and what the potential of Digital Transformation is - evidenced through NI Local authority engagement

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

5. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the Social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

A place to host meetings

A centre with reliable usable digital connectivity

demonstrations on the business use cases of IoT such as water leak sensors for farmers

A place that offers space and appropriate hard ware and software to deliver mentoring, workshops and masterclasses

Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

6. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes

6a. Please explain how the development, adopting, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service been influenced by the rural needs identified.

The delivery of the project is specifically based around IoT. Not only was this recommended as a focus of digital projects by the Ards and North Down Digital Strategy but it fits with the identified needs of the community.

Documenting and Recording

7. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information complied.

Sustainability is a holistic approach that considers ecological, social and economic dimensions, recognising that all must be considered together to find lasting prosperity.

Sustainable development is all about meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Depending on your answer your answer may be a 'positive' impact or a 'negative' impact. Specific guidance at each question.

There may be 'no impact'.

If you are not sure complete as 'don't know'

1. What impact will the proposal have on the local community including the ability of people to meet their essential needs?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Transport - Is the activity accessible to everyone via public transport or active travel, in a safe and sustainable way?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	Positive
<p>Public Placemaking, Community & Culture - Is the activity impacting on people's sense of place and community by being included and connected to the area?</p> <p>Is the activity impacting on our cultural offering, helping citizens, visitors and young people become acquainted with art and culture?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	Positive

Comments

	Comments
Transport	In addition to being connected to Bangor, Newtownards and Belfast and other areas by a heathy road network, Comber is accessible by taxis and bus routes
Public Placemaking, Community & Culture	The centre is a few minutes walk from town square and is well know to the town, largely due to it's proximity to sport pitches and use by groups such as the Park Run and various community groups

2. What impact will the proposals have on local, sustainable food supply chains?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Food - If this activity involves either the direct or indirect purchase of food or catering services will there be a negative impact on a sustainable food system?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Food systems currently account for 21-37% of total global greenhouse gases and are a primary cause of environmental degradation and significantly contribute to socio-economic and health inequalities. This can be mitigated by specifying sustainable food and catering services, fresh seasonal food of a high nutritional value produced through low environmental impact farming methods and high standards of animal welfare.</p>	Positive

Comments

	Comments
Food	The animation contract for the project intends to look at how Bee Hives, plant life and food producers can benefit from the IoT emerging technology

3. What impact will the proposals have on diversity and equality of opportunity?

	What is the impact of the activity?
Equal opportunity - Does the activity have a positive or negative impact on inclusivity and discrimination?	Positive

Comments

	Comments
Equal opportunity	The centre will be open and promoted to people of all groups and will managed as a safe and neutral space

4. What impact will the proposals have on prosperity, social value and fair trade?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Decent jobs and income - Are local employment opportunities being created removed 'or removed'? Will there be any volunteering opportunities?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	Positive
<p>Will the financial benefits help raise local income levels and tackle poverty and derivations of poverty such as food and fuel poverty?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	No Impact
<p>Social Value - Will the activity lead to the creation of works or services? Are there opportunities to support apprenticeships or training opportunities to combat social exclusion? Are there any opportunities to work with organisations with an environmental or social mission (e.g., from the VCSE sector)?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	Positive
<p>Human and labour rights - Will there be provisions to ensure workers up the supply chain have their human and labour rights respected?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Products at high risk of the use of child labour and contravention of human and labour rights include electronic equipment, textiles, agricultural commodities and construction materials.</p>	No Impact

Comments

	Comments
Decent jobs and income	There will be workshops, masterclasses and mentoring delivered in the Centre in line with economic development ambitions
Financial benefits	na
Social value	The animation contract will be expected to work with some social enterprises providing value to their organisation through IoT
Human and labour rights	na

5. What impact will the proposals have on greenhouse gas emissions, including energy and transport?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Greenhouse Gas Emmissions - Will this activity have a positive or negative impact on greenhouse gases (most commonly caused by fossil fuel burning or deforestation)?</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Greenhouse gases include CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFCs, PFCs or SF₆. The most common sources include consumption of brown (non-renewable) electricity, burning of coal, oil, petrol, diesel, natural gas, emissions from landfill sites, and the destruction of natural carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands, forests, grasslands, freshwater lakes, and wetlands.</p>	Positive
<p>Energy - Will the activity reduce energy demand through energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Will energy come from renewable energy sources e.g., solar, wind etc.? Will buildings be designed and constructed to high energy and environmental standards?</p>	Positive
<p>Transport - Will the activity be accessible to everyone via active travel (Bike/walking) or public transport? Does the proposal help to reduce non-essential travel and individual car use?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p>	Positive

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Embodied carbon - Will the activity use materials from 'heavy industries' such as cement, concrete, iron and steel, or require international transportation of materials using aviation or shipping?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p>	Don't know

Comments

	Comments
Greenhouse Gas Emmissions	The intention is that the project will improve operational efficiency of Comber Community Centre via provision of live data through the IoT solution
Energy	The centre will provide a digital solution to live readings on oil and electric consumption and be able to stack this data against initiatives to reduce operational cost
Transport	Thought not part of the project by design the initiatives will all be hosted in or around the Comber Community Centre which is walking distance from the town square and bus routes
Embodied carbon	This is unknown at this stage

6. What impact will the proposals have on waste generation or how waste is managed?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Waste generation - Will this activity lead to the production of waste?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Have you considered how to reduce waste through demand management and re-use strategies which support the circular economy?</p>	No Impact
<p>Waste Management - Is waste going to be managed in a responsible, sustainable way?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Will waste be monitored? What recycling provisions are there? Will any waste be sent to landfill?</p>	No Impact

Comments

	Comments
Waste generation	na
Waste management	na

7. What impact will the proposals have on the direct consumption of natural resources, including materials, minerals and fresh water?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Materials - Will this activity lead to the consumption of raw materials? (Raw materials include steel, oil, corn, grain, gasoline, wood / forest resources, plastic, natural gas, and coal).</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative.</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Can materials be swapped or reduced, to minimize pressure on natural resources and reduce environmental impact?</p>	Positive
<p>Will lifecycle costing exercises be used in procurement (e.g., if purchasing vehicles, energy-intensive equipment or major capital projects) in order to minimise the consumption of natural resources and achieve value for money</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select positive</p>	No Impact
<p>Fresh water - Will this activity increase pressure on freshwater resources through direct water consumption?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	Positive
<p>Will the activity impact on the public's ability to access a clean and safe water supply?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Unsustainable water consumption includes use of mains water or other freshwater supplied without water efficiency or recycling measures.</p>	No Impact

Comments

	Comments
Materials	The intention is that the project will improve operational efficiency of Comber Community Centre via provision of live data through the IoT solution
Lifecycle costing exercises	na
Fresh water	Part of the animation contract is designed to promote and mentor farmers towards installing water leak sensors on thier land to identiy NI Water leaks immediately rather than waiting for visual clues in an already rainy cliamate
Accessing clean and safe water	na

8. What impact will the proposals have on local resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and severe weather events, including drought, landslips, flooding and sites designated as being at risk of flooding or sea level rise?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Adverse Weather and Climate Impacts - Will buildings, infrastructure, or natural assets be at risk to the adverse effects of climate change and extreme weather?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>For Northern Ireland, climate change is causing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more extreme weather and rising sea levels.</p> <p>A precautionary approach is advised for all planning and construction decisions, taking into account the latest UK Climate Change Projections and making sure that development is not permitted on flood plains and / or land at risk of flooding under future climate scenarios.</p> <p>Avoid activities that may be vulnerable to overheating or flood risk. New assets (e.g. landscaping, buildings etc.) should be future proofed, ensuring all investments are resilient to current and future climate conditions.</p>	No Impact

Comments

	Comments
Adverse Weather and Climate Impacts	na

9. What impact will the proposals have on the local environment (e.g., air/water/soil pollution, land conversion, visual impacts, traffic, noise, vibration, odour, dust, particulates, smoke), heritage (including designated heritage, archaeology sites or listed buildings) and wildlife (including protected sites and species)?

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Air pollution - Will the activity produce air pollutants?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Air pollutants include: Particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5); Ozone (O3) Nitrogen dioxide (NO2); Carbon Monoxide (CO); Sulphur Dioxide (SO2).</p> <p>The most common causes of air pollution are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel combustion from motor vehicles (e.g. cars and heavy-duty vehicles) • Heat and power generation (e.g. oil and coal power plants and boilers) • Industrial facilities (e.g. manufacturing factories, mines, and oil refineries) • Municipal and agricultural waste sites and waste incineration/burning. 	<p>Positive</p>
<p>Ozone layer depletion - Will this activity produce ozone depleting substances (fluorinated gases)?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Fluorinated greenhouse gases (F gases) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) • perfluorocarbons (PFCs) • sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) <p>For example through the use of refrigeration and air conditioning units.</p>	<p>No Impact</p>

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Water/soil pollution - Will this activity involve any construction work, street works or road deliveries of construction materials or other goods?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional Information:</p> <p>Soil and water pollution is caused from damaging rainwater run-off arising from road surface treatments, tyre abrasion, fuels and lubricants.</p> <p>Procurement and contractual mechanisms can be used to ensure that building and civil engineering contractors adhere take steps to ensure pollution is prevented from occurring or from dispersing to other areas. Contractors can minimise the use of all substances that could cause pollution and failing that, implement and communicate procedures to ensure the correct disposal (or release) of substances that could cause pollution.</p>	Positive
<p>Chemical pollution - Will there be any use of toxic chemicals including pesticides, paint or cleaning products?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	Negative
<p>Will there be any excess fertiliser use that could result in nitrogen or phosphorus runoff?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Noise pollution - Is the activity likely to create a noise nuisance?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Noise pollution can have detrimental effects on human health, amenity, productivity and the natural environment.</p> <p>Eliminating or reducing excessive noise is a legal responsibility and helps to limit the disturbance of residents and businesses, caused by activities and operations.</p>	Positive

	What is the impact of the activity?
<p>Land conversion - Will this activity result in the reduction in the area of forested land, directly or indirectly?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Additional information:</p> <p>Deforestation usually arises from the clearing of land for development, agriculture, or logging for paper, wood, or minerals.</p>	No Impact
<p>Built Heritage - Will this activity impact on designated heritage sites such as a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Archaeology Site, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site or Registered Park and Garden?</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p>	No Impact
<p>Natural Heritage and Biodiversity - Will this activity result in any displacement or loss of biodiversity, overfishing or affect protected or designated sites (e.g. ASSIs, SPAs etc).</p> <p>Note: If the answer is yes, select negative</p> <p>Changes in land use exert the most significant effect on biodiversity. These changes include the conversion of natural ecosystems into agriculture or into urban areas; changes in frequency, duration or magnitude of wildfires and similar disturbances; and the introduction of new species into land and freshwater environments.</p>	No Impact

Comments

	Comments
Air pollution	It is intended the IoT solution will measure air pollutant where possible
Ozone layer depletion	na
Water/soil pollution	The IoT solution aims to work with groups to measure soil health
Chemical pollution	There will be a new paint job to the centre - Specifications can be built in the procurement process to ensure that the type of products used are environmentally friendly
Excess fertiliser use	na

	Comments
Noise pollution	The IoT solution plans to use sensors to measure noise level for more effective management of the centre both inside and outside. The building work may create increased noise levels for a limited period of time, but the finished building will be a result of largely interior work which will have limited noise pollution in both quantity and period of time
Land conversion	na
Built Heritage	na
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	na

Mitigation

	Mitigation
Air pollution	IoT sensors to measure air pollutants
Ozone layer depletion	na
Water/soil pollution	IoT sensors to measure soil health
Chemical pollution	na
Excess fertiliser use	na
Noise pollution	IoT sensors to measure noise levels
Land conversion	na
Built Heritage	na
Natural Heritage and Biodiversity	na

10 What impact will the proposals have on ensuring peace, justice, public participation and partnership working for sustainable development?

	What is the impact of the activity?
Peace - Will this activity have a negative or positive impact on community safety, crime or anti-social behaviour?	Positive
Justice - Are there safeguards in place to prevent against bribery and corruption? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive Decision making should be open and transparent with clear governance and accountability arrangements.	Positive
Political voice - Are citizens involved and do they have a role in deciding what happens and how it gets implemented? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive	Positive

	What is the impact of the activity?
Partnerships - Will this activity involve working with others either locally or at a national level to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development? Note: If the answer is yes, select positive	Positive

Comments

	Comments
Peace	This PEACEPLUS project will host events across all communities
Justice	Effective procurement policies and adhere to the policies
Political voice	Engagement with groups has taken place and will continue
Partnerships	procured services will be required to realise the programme ambitions

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is

Screened Out - No negative impacts

1. Is Data Protection relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes

2. Is the introduction or change of this policy or processing activity likely to result in a high risk to individuals' interests, including physical, material or non-material damage?

No

3. Explain broadly what the policy/strategy/plan or public service aims to achieve and what type of processing it involves.

An IoT Solution that allows Comber Community Centre to become an exemplar site for the IoT technology. It will improve operational efficiency and be used to showcase to the business community what IoT is.

All record keeping will be in line with GDPR and data protection and all data will be stored securely meeting the IT standards of Ards and North Down Borough Council

The only personal data will be names and personal emails provided during the booking system

4. Describe the nature of the processing

The names and emails will be provided by the attendees. It will be entered online using Eventbrite and the data will be held securely.

5. Describe the context of the processing

The attendees need to provide contact details for updates on the project. The data will be stored by the online events management system.

6. Describe the purposes of the processing.

The individuals provide their information to enrol and may also be contacted for any changes or updates.

7. Consultation

N/A

8. Necessity and Proportionality

The Lawful basis for processing is Consent.
No personal data will be provided to anyone else.

9. Identify and assess risk

	Describe the source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary.	Likelihood of harm	Severity of harm	Overall risk
Details	Email addresses shared to wrong recipients	Possible	Minimal	Medium

10. Identify measures to reduce risk

	Risk	Options to reduce to eliminate risk	Effect on risk	Residual risk	Measure approved
Details	Emails shared to wrong recipients	Staff training to ensure emails are BCC'ed	Reduced	Low	Yes

Data Protection Officer Comments

Sign off and record outcomes

	Name	Date	Notes
Measures approved by:	Maureen Crane	23/03/26	
Residual risks approved by:	Maureen Crane	23/03/26	
DPO advice provided:	Maureen Crane	23/03/26	

Summary of DPO advice:

Advised that the risk is low, provided that emails are not sent to the full list of registered individuals. They should be BCC'ed

Officer Details:

	Name	Title	Date
Data Protection Screening and Impact Assessment completed by:	Maureen Crane	DPO	23/03/26
Director/Head of Service decision approved by:			