

## **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 27 April 2026 at 6:00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Brady (Chair)  
Alderman McRandal  
Councillor Cochrane  
Councillor Harbinson  
Councillor Hennessey  
Councillor W Irvine  
Councillor McClean  
Councillor McCollum (6.30 pm)  
Councillor McKee  
Councillor Newman  
Stephen McCrory (AND Cycle Campaign Group)  
Alison McQueen (For Another Path)  
Frank Shivers (Bangor Chamber of Commerce)

**Officers:** Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Park & Cemeteries Development Manager (J Bettes) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Marianne Kennerley, Frank Shivers and Councillor McBurney.

**Noted.**

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**Noted.**

### **3. MINUTES OF NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH 5<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

The external members explained that they had not received the minutes in advance and the meeting paused for ten minutes to allow them to have time to review them. It was agreed that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**Noted.**

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Alderman McRandal indicated that he had been present at the previous meeting and that this had not been recorded. Councillor Cochrane stated that he and Councillor W. Irvine had also been present without record. Councillor Newman said that she had been recorded as being late but would like to have her presence noted in the attendance record.

Alison McQueen referred to external members receiving the minutes and presentation late and, as a result, not having the opportunity to prepare for the meeting appropriately. She asked that officers bear that in mind moving forward.

**Noted.**

#### **5. UPDATE REPORT AND PRESENTATION**

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager outlined his presentation by explaining the planning application. Following the previous working group meeting full drawing packs had been issued to groups that had requested them and the feedback from these had been noted. A report had gone to the Council in September 2025 advising of the intention to submit the planning application which had been agreed.

Alison McQueen advised that her group was happy with a path width of 1.5 metres, except in areas where it already exceeded that width, but was concerned that that this position should be monitored carefully once the contractor began work. Her group accepted that the path would be tarmac but would prefer that it was not and asked about the option of a quarry dust path. The officer informed the meeting that the use of tarmac was an attempt to preserve the path rather than having run off from it. It was also noted that there would be some moving of rocks during the installation process of the path.

The Chair (Councillor Brady) did not think that there was too much tension between the groups represented on the panel and stated that the aim was to be careful and faithful to what had been agreed already. He urged the necessary work to be carried out but encouraged it to be as light-touch as possible and to follow the line of the existing path. Councillor McKee remarked that following the removal of vegetation on either side of the path there had been unintended consequences in terms of drainage and water flow. He felt that this issue should be flagged as something to consider further, particularly when the colder weather returned.

Alison McQueen referred to the wooden barriers on the part of the path viewed on the presentation which she liked, however she would have appreciated communication on the choice of material since metal had been in place before. The

Chair noted that, acknowledged the delegated decision-making power that the Council held, and suggested that quick update meetings could take place via MS Teams, for example, to keep the group informed. It was noted that there were budget considerations and that decisions needed to be made quickly at times, but the representatives did not want to be taken by surprise when communicating with their own groups.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager referred to the Council's audit of assets and stated that many of the bins and benches were not in good condition. In addition, information signage on the path itself was poor, with advice signs dated or broken and that was not adding to the user experience. The first step was now to focus on signage, with the removal, cleaning and updating of 37 signs. Alison McQueen queried who was in charge of the sign at Gray's Halt since she noticed that it had been forcibly removed. The officer was unsure but agreed to look at it. He added that 'places of interest' information signage would also be improved over the coming months. The Chair asked about the possibility of increasing dog bins at the areas close to entrance or access points to the path and it was agreed that that issue would be looked at as part of the review of assets. Councillor McKee was pleased with the priority given to that and agreed that the assets had become dated and shabby.

It was noted that officers had facilitated a programme of ongoing events along the coastal path such as Monthly Mindful Walks and Seabird Sightings and the Chair thought that those events and promotions were well worth checking out. The Trails & Greenway Officer would also be committed to this work and a further report on that activity would be brought to a future meeting.

Under the Council's 'Cycle Friendly Borough' initiative the working group was informed that the Council was continuing to work with the Department for Infrastructure on the Active Travel Strategy. It was aiming to find an interim link from the new Greenway at Green Road to Bangor City Centre. There were some continuing issues with residents but it was thought to be a positive thing to pursue and the Greenway network delivery between Bangor, Newtownards and Comber was being progressed.

Councillor W Irvine referred to the Green Road to Bangor link and that some parts already had cycle routes but it was noted that there had been a bit of work on that and it would be progressed. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries also referred to the further extension of the Greenway to Donaghadee.

Alison McQueen asked when the planning application would be submitted and it was noted that that would be in the coming weeks and members of the group would be informed at that time.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager informed members that the Greenway at the floodgates was expected to be signed off at the end of May. Once it was opened officially his team would carry out a series of events including consultation on information boards directing in to the town and local landmarks. There would also be engagement on the shared path aspect.

Councillor McCollum offered her apologies for lateness but referring to the area being discussed she described driving beside that recently on a beautiful day and it appeared that those jogging were doing so on water. She praised the accessibility of the path in Newtownards. Councillor McKee thought that, to avoid confusion to users, it should be made clear on signage that even though there were pointers to Scrabo it was not a complete route. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries noted that a route to Scrabo was being looked at.

**Noted.**

## **6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

There were no items of Any Other Notified Business.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

As had been displayed at the end of the presentation, the next meeting dates were:

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – 6 pm

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2026 – 6 pm

Meeting dates for 2027 would be confirmed at the June meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.41 pm.