August 26th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 2nd September 2026** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid - Church Street, Newtownards and via Zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

Attachment: EC 02.09.26 Agenda.pdf ***Page 1***

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. Glenford Park Playpark Provision

(Report attached)

Attachment: 3 Glenford Play Park Provision.pdf ***Page 5***

4. Loughries Play Provision Update

(Report attached)

Attachment: 4 Loughries Play Provision Update.pdf ***Page 8***

5. Promotional Parking Tariffs - Christmas 2026

(Report attached)

Attachment: 5 Promotional Parking Tariffs - Christmas 2026.pdf ***Page 13***

6. Update on Roadmap to Green Fleet

(Report attached)

Attachment: 6 Update on Roadmap to Green Fleet.pdf ***Page 17***

Attachment: 6APPEN~1.PDF ***Page 22***

7. Request to Name Council Facilities - Ballygowan Multi-Use Games Area

(Report attached)

Attachment: 7 Request to Name Council Faciltiies - Ballygowan Multi-Use Games Area.pdf ***Page 65***

8. Notice of Motion 713 Memorial Bench for Jaidyn Rice

(Report attached)

Attachment: 8 Notice of Motion 713 - Memorial Bench for Jaidyn Rice.pdf ***Page 69***

9. Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme

(Report attached)

Attachment: 9 Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme.pdf ***Page 73***

Attachment: 9 Appendix 1 30 June 2026 Department of Justice Letter to Council Chief Executives.pdf ***Page 75***

10. Response to Notice of Motion 632 HRC Pedestrian Access - Holywood and Millisle

(Report attached)

Attachment: 10 Response to Notice of Motion 632 HRC Pedestrian Access Holywood and Millisle.pdf ***Page 88***

Attachment: 10 Appendix 1 Holywood and Millisle HRC pedestrian access plan.pdf ***Page 92***

Reports for Noting

11. Response to Notice of Motion 700 - Linear Park Path Network

(Report attached)

Attachment: 11 Response to Notice of Motion 700 Linear Park Path Network.pdf ***Page 94***

12. Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2026-2027 Quarter 1

(Report attached)

Attachment: 12 Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2026-27 Q1.pdf ***Page 97***

Attachment: 12 Appendix 1 Updated Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Action Plan.pdf ***Page 108***

13. North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes

(Report attached)

Attachment: 13 North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes.pdf ***Page 126***

Attachment: 13 Appendix 1 Minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 27 April 2026.pdf ***Page 128***

14. Community Trails and Greenways

(Report attached)

Attachment: 14 Community Trails and Greenways.pdf ***Page 132***

Attachment: 14 Appendix 1 Calendar of Events 2025-2026.pdf ***Page 136***

15. Response to Notice of Motion 714 Request for Public Conveniences at Helen's Bay Train Station

(Report attached)

Attachment: 15 Response to Notice of Motion 714 Request for Public Conveniences at Helens Bay Train Station.pdf ***Page 139***

Attachment: 15 Appendix 1 Response from Translink.pdf ***Page 141***

16. Notice of Motion 706 Fallen Trees over Enler River

(Report attached)

Attachment: 16 Notice of Motion 706 Fallen Trees over Enler River.pdf ***Page 142***

17. Portavogie and Portaferry 3G Pitch Projects - Bi-monthly Update

(Report attached)

Attachment: 17 Portavogie and Portaferry 3G Pitch Projects Bi-Monthly Update.pdf ***Page 145***

Attachment: 17 Appendix 1 Portavogie Committee Update September 2026.pdf ***Page 147***

Attachment: 17 Appendix 2 Penninsula Committee Update September 2026.pdf ***Page 154***

18. Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics

Attachment: 18 Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, January to March 2026.pdf ***Page 158***

Attachment: 18 Appendix 2 LACMW Q4 2025-26 Report.pdf ***Page 176***

19. H2 Performance Reports 2025/26

19.1 Estates

(Report attached)

Attachment: 19.1 Estates Service Performance Report (H2) 2025-26.pdf ***Page 192***

19.2 Parks and Cemeteries

Attachment: 19.2 Parks and Cemeteries Service Performance Report (H2).pdf ***Page 198***

19.3 Waste and Cleansing

Attachment: 19.3 Waste & Cleansing Service Performance Report (H2) 2025-26.pdf ***Page 208***

20. Depot Rationalisation Project Update

(Report attached)

Attachment: 20 Depot Rationalisation Project Update.pdf ***Page 214***

21. Notices of Motion

21.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Cochrane, Alderman Brooks, Councillor Chambers, Councillor Quinn, Councillor Thompson and Councillor Hennessy

That this Council notes the publication of NICCAP3 and recognises the need for practical measures to address coastal erosion, flooding and infrastructure resilience in Northern Ireland.

Further to this, Council notes that the delivery of the associated Adaptation Delivery Plan would 'designate responsibility to a NICS department to oversee coastal management and bring forward policy and legislation on managing coastal change' and believes this designation must be supported with associated Executive funding.

• Recognises that coastal councils, including Ards and North Down Borough Council, are increasingly exposed to the impacts of coastal change, while lacking the statutory powers and resources to respond effectively;

• Further notes that Ards and North Down has the longest coastline of any council area in Northern Ireland and is therefore particularly affected by these risks;

• Further notes that the coast and coastal walks are arguably the ‘jewel in the crown’ of our community and tourism assets;

• Acknowledges the increasing evidence of coastal impacts within the Borough, including flooding, storm damage, and pressure on public infrastructure.

Accordingly, this Council calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to:

1. Designate a lead department or agency with statutory responsibility for both coastal flooding and coastal erosion and clarify its relationship with Councils in delivering improved intelligence, monitoring and protection;

2. Introduce a framework for long-term coastal planning, such as Shoreline Management Plans or a Northern Ireland equivalent;

3. Establish a dedicated coastal protection and resilience fund to support councils and relevant agencies in delivering necessary infrastructure and adaptation measures;

4. Bring forward proposals, within a defined timeframe, to address governance, funding, and delivery of coastal protection in Northern Ireland.

The Council further agrees to:

• Write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and relevant Executive Ministers, outlining this position;

• Engage with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and other coastal councils to seek a coordinated, regional approach to this issue;

• Support efforts to ensure that coastal communities are adequately protected from flooding, coastal erosion and other environmental pressures.

22. Any Other Notified Business

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

Reports for Approval Delegated to Committee (In Confidence)

23. Tenders

23.1 Framework Extension for Arboriculture Services

Attachment: 23.1 Framework Extension for Arboriculture Services.pdf ***Not included***

23.2 Tender for the Provision of 1 Mobile Roll Packer

Attachment: 23.2 Tender for the Provision of 1 Mobile Roll Packer.pdf ***Not included***

23.3 Extension of Mobile Sauna Services 2026-27

(Report attached)

Attachment: 23.3 Extension of Mobile Sauna Services 2026-27.pdf ***Not included***

23.4 Extension of Tender for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage

Attachment: 23.4 Extension of Tender for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage.pdf ***Not included***

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

24. Car Park Contract Debt

Attachment: 24 Car Park Contract Debt.pdf ***Not included***

Reports for Noting (In Confidence)

25. Update on Storm Eowyn Damage at Aurora - Project Completion

(Report attached)

Attachment: 25 Update on Storm Eowyn Damage at Aurora Project Completion.pdf ***Not included***

Attachment: 25 Appendix 1 Aurora Storm Eowyn Reinstatement Report_V3_2026.06.08 (1) LINK.pdf ***Not included***

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

27 August 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, 2 September 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. Glenford Park Playpark Provision (Report attached)

4. Loughries Play Provision Update (Report attached)

5. Promotional Parking Tariffs – Christmas 2026 (Report attached)

6. Update on Roadmap to Green Fleet (Report attached)

7. Request to Name Council Facilities – Ballygowan Multi-Use Games Area (Report attached)

8. Notice of Motion 713 Memorial Bench for Jaidyn Rice (Report attached)

9. Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme (Report attached)

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Reports for Noting

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14. Community Trails and Greenways (Report attached)

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17. Portavogie and Portaferry 3G Pitch Projects – Bi-monthly update (Report attached)

18. Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics, January to March 2026 (Report attached)

19. H2 Performance Reports 2025/26

19.1. Estates (Report attached)
19.2. Parks and Cemeteries (Report attached)
19.3. Waste and Cleansing (Report attached)

20. Depot Rationalisation Project Update (Report attached)

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Further to this, Council notes that the delivery of the associated Adaptation Delivery Plan would 'designate responsibility to a NICS department to oversee coastal management and bring forward policy and legislation on managing coastal change' and believes this designation must be supported with associated Executive funding.

• Recognises that coastal councils, including Ards and North Down Borough Council, are increasingly exposed to the impacts of coastal change, while lacking the statutory powers and resources to respond effectively;
• Further notes that Ards and North Down has the longest coastline of any council area in Northern Ireland and is therefore particularly affected by these risks;
• Further notes that the coast and coastal walks are arguably the 'jewel in the crown' of our community and tourism assets;
• Acknowledges the increasing evidence of coastal impacts within the Borough, including flooding, storm damage, and pressure on public infrastructure.

Accordingly, this Council calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to:

1. Designate a lead department or agency with statutory responsibility for both coastal flooding and coastal erosion and clarify its relationship with Councils in delivering improved intelligence, monitoring and protection;
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3. Establish a dedicated coastal protection and resilience fund to support councils and relevant agencies in delivering necessary infrastructure and adaptation measures;
4. Bring forward proposals, within a defined timeframe, to address governance, funding, and delivery of coastal protection in Northern Ireland.

The Council further agrees to:

• Write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and relevant Executive Ministers, outlining this position;
• Engage with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and other coastal councils to seek a coordinated, regional approach to this issue;
• Support efforts to ensure that coastal communities are adequately protected from flooding, coastal erosion and other environmental pressures.

22. Any Other Notified Business

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

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23.2. Tender for the Provision of 1 Mobile Roll Packer (Report attached)
23.3. Extension of Mobile Sauna Services 2026-27 (Report attached)
23.4. Extension of Tender for the Provision of External Cleaning and Tankerage

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

24. Car Park Contract Debt (Report attached)

Reports for Noting (In Confidence)

25. Update on Storm Éowyn Damage at Aurora – Project Completion (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (16 Members)

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

ITEM 3

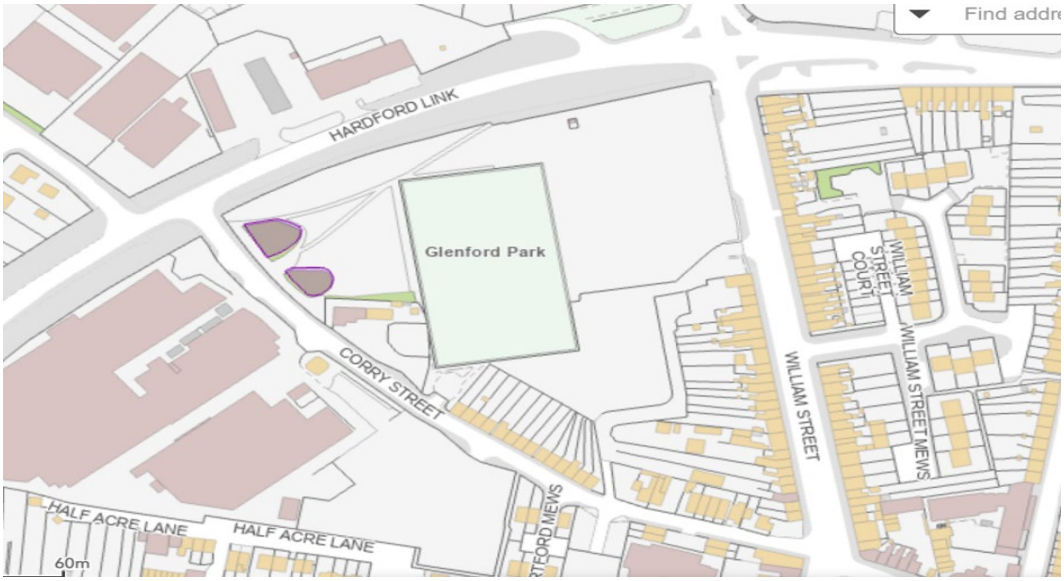
Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Glenford Play Park Provision
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	CW4 / 88003
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background

As Members will be aware, the site of the former Ards Leisure Centre was vested by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in May 2021 for use as a Park and Ride scheme. Glenford Play Park is currently located within this area, shown shaded purple in the image below. To facilitate the Park and Ride scheme, it was agreed that it was

necessary to relocate the play park to a new location. After detailed discussion, it was agreed this would be within the existing site, as outlined below.



Council has recently received the payment in respect of the site, together with compound interest. The planning permission granted for the site includes provision for a new play park at the William Street entrance, outlined in red in the image below.

Next Steps
Council is currently awaiting final design drawings for the play park site. The land required for the play park is to be transferred back to Council at no cost.

To ensure that the new play park can be installed in a timely manner in line with DfI's build programme, it is proposed that £170,000 from the compensation and interest payment be allocated to facilitate the relocation and installation of the play park.

In the meantime, Council had been granted a Licence of the area of land delineated red on the map below, located at the north-west corner of the site, for use as an informal play area. A draft licence was issued by DfI several years after the site was vested.

Land and Property Services (LPS) was appointed by DfI to assess a licence fee, which has been set at £3,300 per annum from the date of vesting. The terms of the licence have not yet been agreed by the Council's solicitor and, accordingly, no licence fee has been paid pending receipt of the compensation monies and interest from the DfI.

Summary
The licence terms and associated fee have yet to be formally agreed. In addition, the final extent of the play park footprint remains subject to agreement and transfer back of the land to Council. It is proposed that £170,000 from the compensation and interest payment is allocated to facilitate the relocation and refurbishment of the play park.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Approves** the allocation of £170,000 from the compensation and interest payment received from DfI to fund the relocation, installation and refurbishment of the new play park at Glenford.

ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Loughries Play Provision Update
Attachments	none
File Reference (if applicable)	CW4 / 88003
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background
A previous Notice of Motion was agreed by Council in October 2022:

"That Council task officers to carry out a review of Play Provision in Loughries with a view to its inclusion in the Councils Play Strategy going forward."

A report on this was brought to Council in November 2022 with the following recommendation which was agreed with an amendment:

"It is recommended that Council review the potential for play provision for Loughries in the future when the thresholds as outlined above have been met unless provision is made as a result of the planned discussion with others outside of Council. Council notes the report and will review Play Provision in Loughries in 2024."

A subsequent report was brought to Council in May 2024 and the following was agreed:

"That Council task officers to engage with local landowners with a view to providing an open green space/informal play area for the community of Loughries in line with the Council Play Strategy. Furthermore Council agree that officers review the potential for play provision for Loughries in the future when the thresholds as outlined above have been met."

Key Issues
Council does not own or manage any land within Loughries that could be utilised for the provision of formal or informal play facilities. As outlined in the report presented to Council in May 2024, land ownership within the settlement is limited, and investigations confirmed that Northern Ireland Housing Executive land holdings do not provide a suitable opportunity for the development of an open green space or informal play area.

The Council's Play Strategy establishes a number of criteria to guide investment in play provision and ensure resources are allocated consistently across the Borough. One of these criteria is that a settlement should contain a minimum of 100 residential properties before a formal play park is considered for delivery. Current records indicate that Loughries contains 97 residential properties. As such, the settlement does not currently meet the threshold required for consideration of a formal play park under the Play Strategy. While this position may be reviewed in the future should housing numbers increase, the threshold has not yet been achieved.

Following Council's decision in May 2024, Officers sought to identify potential opportunities for the provision of an open green space or informal play area through engagement with local landowners. Two parcels of privately owned land were identified in the area as having potential for further consideration. These sites are referred to as Site A and Site B.

Officers engaged the owner of Site A regarding the potential use for community recreation purposes. Following consideration, the owner advised that the land would not be suitable for informal play and recreation and did not wish to pursue the matter further. As a result, this option is no longer available for consideration.

A meeting was subsequently held with the owner of Site B. The landowners indicated that they were supportive in principle of the concept of local play provision and acknowledged the community benefit that such a facility could provide, particularly given the presence of children within the area and the site's proximity to the local primary school. The land is currently leased to a local farmer for grazing purposes under an informal agreement and is therefore available for consideration should alternative arrangements be agreed.

While the landowners expressed a positive attitude towards the proposal, they advised that they are currently seeking independent advice and have not reached a final decision on whether they would be prepared to lease the land to Council. A key issue raised during discussions was the potential duration of any lease agreement. The owner of Site B indicated that they would not be willing to enter into a lease exceeding five years in duration. Whilst they suggested that a future renewal may be possible, no commitment could be provided and any extension would be entirely at the discretion of the landowner.

The limited lease term presents a significant consideration for Council. Any investment in creating a public recreation space would require expenditure on design, site preparation, access improvements and potential future maintenance. A lease term of only five years may not provide sufficient certainty to justify a substantial capital investment, particularly where there is no guarantee that the lease could be renewed beyond the initial period. Should a lease not be extended, Council could be left with limited opportunity to realise the longer-term community benefits typically associated with such investment.

During the site visit, Officers assessed the physical characteristics of the site and identified a number of challenges which would require further investigation. Access to the land is currently provided through an agricultural field gate and there is no dedicated pedestrian access suitable for regular public use. To facilitate safe community access, infrastructure works would likely be required, including the provision of an appropriate access point and potential pathways within the site.

In addition, the land is uneven and contains significant undulations across much of the site. These ground conditions may limit the range of informal recreational activities that could take place without intervention and could necessitate site preparation works to create a safe and usable public space. The extent and cost of any such works would need to be established through further technical assessment and design development should Council wish to progress the proposal.

Financial considerations will also require careful evaluation. Council previously held a lease for this parcel of land at a cost of £3,000 per annum; however, any future lease arrangement would require an updated valuation and rental assessment through Council's independent valuer. In addition to annual lease costs, Council would need to consider the capital investment required to make the site accessible and fit for purpose, together with ongoing operational costs associated with grass cutting, inspections, maintenance and general management of the site.

Given the uncertainty surrounding lease renewal, together with the potential capital and revenue implications of developing the site, it is prudent that Council carefully considers whether the level of investment required would represent value for money over the maximum lease period currently proposed by the landowner. Any decision to progress the proposal would need to balance the potential community benefits of providing informal recreational space against the financial commitment required and the limited security of tenure available.

It should also be noted that a number of existing play facilities serve the wider area surrounding Loughries. Londonderry Park (Tier 1) is located approximately 2.4 miles away by road. Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC), a Tier 0 facility with a wider catchment area, is also accessible to residents, together with the Tier 2 play facility at Abbot Gardens.

Next Steps
No further action is proposed at this time. Officers will continue to monitor residential growth within Loughries and should the settlement meet the thresholds contained within the Council's Play Strategy, a further assessment of play provision will be undertaken and reported to Council for consideration.

Summary
This report provides an update on Council's consideration of play provision in Loughries following previous Council decisions in October 2022 and May 2024. Officers have reviewed opportunities for both formal and informal play provision in accordance with the Council's Play Strategy and have engaged with local landowners to explore the potential for an open green space or informal play area.

Officers reviewed the most recent available address data and identified 97 residential properties within the settlement boundary. Therefore, Loughries does not meet the Play Strategy threshold of 100 residential properties required before a formal play park can be considered. In addition, Council does not own any suitable land within the settlement and no appropriate Northern Ireland Housing Executive land has been identified.

Engagement with two local landowners identified one potential site for consideration; however, significant challenges exist including uncertainty over lease availability, a maximum lease term of five years, the requirement for access and site improvement works, and associated capital and ongoing maintenance costs.

Given these considerations, together with the availability of existing play facilities in nearby locations, no further action is proposed at this time. Officers will continue to monitor residential growth within Loughries and will review the potential for play provision should the thresholds contained within the Council's Play Strategy be met in the future.

In the absence of an offer of a longer-term lease and given the likely capital and revenue costs associated with developing the site, Officers do not consider the proposal to represent a sufficiently robust investment opportunity at this time or one which would provide adequate certainty to justify the level of investment required.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the outcome of engagement with local landowners regarding the potential provision of an open green space/informal play area in Loughries

It is further recommended that Council **Agrees** that Officers continue to monitor residential growth within the settlement and that the potential for play provision in Loughries will be reviewed in the future should the thresholds contained within the Council's Play Strategy be met.

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Promotional Parking Tariffs - Christmas 2026
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	65369
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Off Street Parking NI Order 2000
Resource Implications	Budget Narrative: Loss of revenue
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 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple:

Background
In February 2026, Council agreed the Ards and North Down Off-Street Parking Order 2025, with the following recommendation:

"That an officer report is brought back to the Committee on options around introducing free or reduced-price parking during the Christmas period when the new Order is implemented, similar to other local Councils."

It was envisaged that the new Order would be implemented in autumn 2026. However, no further communication has been received from the Department for Infrastructure confirming the timeline and therefore the new Order and associated tariff structure will not be implemented before Christmas 2026.

Although the new tariff structure will not be implemented before Christmas 2026, Officers have engaged with the Local Action Groups to discuss potential promotional Christmas tariffs for 2026.

Key Issues
Each Local Action Group (LAG) was provided with a summary of the promotional parking tariffs introduced by other Council areas within the NI Consortium in 2025, including the successes achieved and challenges encountered.

Newtownards
Newtownards Local Action Group met on 17 June 2026. During the meeting, members discussed the option of offering free parking. The LAG recognised the difficulties that free parking could create in Newtownards town centre, particularly in relation to space blocking and turnover in busy town centre car parks during the festive season, and the potential negative impact that could have on trade. As in previous discussions, members also considered the option of two hours' free parking, including the associated enforcement requirements and potential difficulties for car park users.

Members also noted that introducing a new promotional tariff for December, particularly if followed by the implementation of a new tariff structure in the new year, could cause confusion for car park users.

It was agreed that the existing £1 for five hours tariff should be promoted more effectively this year, and there was no support for free parking for Christmas 2026. As with previous discussions with the LAG, it was also agreed that an all-day parking rate in one of the peripheral car parks would be considered as part of the six-month review following implementation of the new Order.

Holywood
Holywood Local Action Group met on 30 June 2026. During the meeting, members raised similar concerns regarding the difficulties that free all-day parking could create, given the existing pressures on parking availability in the town. The LAG also discussed the desirability of achieving consistency across Bangor, Newtownards and Holywood.

It was agreed that the LAG was content with improved promotion of the existing £1 for five hours tariff this year and did not support free parking for Christmas 2026.
Bangor

Bangor Local Action Group met on 9 July 2026. During the meeting, members discussed how free parking on Saturdays from the Christmas light switch-on (21 November 2026) could support businesses within Bangor city centre over the Christmas period. The LAG considered that consistency with the other two towns was not required, as the needs of each area differ and it is the role of the LAGs to highlight those local needs.

Members also discussed how the impact of the promotional tariff could be measured, including the possibility of carrying out surveys on the ground each Saturday to establish uptake. However, it was agreed that it would be sufficient for Bangor Chamber to issue a survey to its businesses in January to assess the impact on December income.

An email was sent to members of the Newtownards and Holywood LAGs to advise them of the outcome of the Bangor meeting and invite comments. Newtownards Chamber urged Bangor to reconsider and adopt a consistent approach. Bangor Chamber maintained the position agreed at the LAG meeting.

Anticipated costs based on 2025 Income
There are 22 charged car parks: 9 in Bangor, 3 in Holywood and 10 in Newtownards. Introducing free Saturday parking from 21st November to 31st December as proposed by the LAG, would cost Council free Saturday parking in Bangor only as proposed by the LAG, at a cost to Council of £5,175.20.

The table below provides further information for Members on the total 2025 income for all 22 car parks, and the income broken down by city or town, for the relevant Saturday periods, and, therefore, the anticipated cost to Council of introducing free parking on Saturdays from the first Christmas light switch on (Bangor - 21 November) and for December only.

6 x Saturday income 21 November - 31 December	
All car parks (22 car parks)	£15,618.37
Bangor only (9 car parks)	£5,175.20
Holywood only (3 car parks)	£2,844.38
Newtownards only (10 car parks)	£7,598.79
4 x Saturday income December only	
All car parks (22 car parks)	£8,906.39
Bangor only (9 car parks)	£3,118.59
Holywood only (3 car parks)	£1,796.75
Newtownards only (10 car parks)	£3,991.05

Next Steps

Should members choose to introduce free Saturday parking in Bangor only, Officers will need to implement a clear communications plan to ensure that users understand the promotion applies to Bangor only. This would include liaising with the Council's enforcement partner to update messaging on the RingGo app and payment

machines. Enforcement patrols cannot be amended; however, they will remain necessary to address poor parking.

Summary
The report sets out the views of the Local Action Groups and the associated anticipated cost to Council. Proceeding on the basis of the feedback from the LAG meetings would result in free Saturday parking in Bangor from 21 November until 31 December 2026, at an anticipated loss of income of £5,175.20. Normal charging and promotion of the £1 for five hours parking rate in Newtownards and Holywood would continue.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council considers the information provided in this report and decides whether to approve promotional Christmas parking tariffs for 2026 in the manner suggested as a result of consultation undertaken with the main trade organisations.

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Update on Roadmap to Green Fleet
Attachments	DfE: A sustainable, regional approach for the production, storage, transport and use of hydrogen as a fuel
File Reference (if applicable)	79001
Legislation	Other Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
Resource Implications	Budget 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

Council previously agreed a phased Roadmap to Green Fleet. That roadmap identified battery electric vehicles as the most viable option for smaller vehicles, including light goods vehicles (LGVs), in the near term, while hydrogen was identified as the more likely long-term pathway for heavier fleet vehicles. However, the roadmap also recognised that hydrogen refuelling infrastructure, security of supply, depot readiness, costs, technology maturity and staff skills remain uncertain and will take time to resolve before the large-scale deployment of hydrogen-powered HGVs becomes practical. The approach therefore prioritises working towards the 2030 carbon reduction milestone through the rollout of battery electric vehicles where suitable, while continuing to monitor hydrogen for heavier fleet applications.

Following publication by the Department for the Economy of the results of its recent consultation on “A sustainable, regional approach for the production, storage, transport and use of hydrogen as a fuel” (attached at Appendix 1), officers considered it timely to update Members on progress to date and on the key issues identified.

Key Issues

The difficulties associated with implementing a hydrogen-powered HGV fleet remain significant. First, there is no established local refuelling network for hydrogen, and current demand is too low to justify immediate large-scale investment in dedicated transport, pipeline, or storage infrastructure.

In the short term, hydrogen transport would largely depend on road-based solutions such as tube trailers, which may be suitable for pilot activity but do not yet provide a comprehensive long-term refuelling solution for a large municipal heavy fleet.

Second, the supply of “green” hydrogen remains at an early stage of development and is materially more expensive than conventional fuels, with stakeholders consistently highlighting the challenges of production costs, grid-related charges, and the need for public funding support to make projects viable.

Third, the market for hydrogen HGVs remains immature, with limited vehicle availability, high capital costs, and continuing uncertainty over the pace of development relative to battery technology.

Fourth, the Department’s consultation confirms that hydrogen should be targeted at hard-to-electrify sectors but also notes that transport decarbonisation policy spans multiple bodies and requires coordinated action on infrastructure, regulation, and funding.

Finally, Council would need to address depot safety, maintenance arrangements, staff retraining, specialist workshop equipment, and wider regulatory compliance before any operational rollout could proceed at scale. Officers anticipate that some of these issues may be addressed through the previously reported depot rationalisation project; however, this will not be completed for a number of years and, given the current challenges associated with hydrogen as a fuel source, it is not yet possible to plan on the basis of hydrogen being a viable operational solution.

Risk to 2030 Target

Current fleet consumption data further illustrates the scale of the challenge. The latest quarterly sustainable energy update shows that combined diesel usage remains above the 2019/20 baseline, with overall diesel use in Quarter 4 increasing by 21.3% against the baseline and resulting in an increase of 94.35 tCO_2. For 2025/26, fleet-related emissions are reported at 2,224.22 tCO_2e, compared with a 2030 fleet target of 940.67 tCO_2e.

While some emissions savings are expected from transitioning smaller 4x4 vehicles and car-derived vans to battery electric vehicles, the number of LGV fleet vehicles suitable for BEV transition is relatively low and there are currently no fully implemented solutions for decarbonising the heavy goods fleet. Taken together, this means that, at present, Council is unlikely to achieve the 2030 target of a 48% reduction in carbon emissions from fleet operations unless there is significant technological, infrastructure, and funding progress in the coming years.

Proposed Electric Refuse Collection Vehicle Trial

Given the current risk to achieving the 2030 fleet emissions target, officers consider that Council should take a practical interim step by procuring one electric refuse collection vehicle (e-RCV) for use across the refuse collection service on a structured 18-month trial. The vehicle would be rotated around all bin routes during the trial period in order to test its operational suitability across the full range of local collection conditions, including route length, topography, payload, charging requirements, depot arrangements, crew feedback, service resilience, and seasonal variation. This approach would allow Council to gather robust local evidence on the potential role of e-RCVs within the fleet, while limiting the initial capital commitment to a single vehicle rather than a wider fleet replacement programme.

The proposal is consistent with the experience of other councils, particularly more urban authorities, where electric refuse collection vehicles have already been deployed successfully at scale or through operational pilots. Those examples demonstrate that e-RCVs can make a meaningful contribution to reducing fleet emissions, air pollution, and noise where route characteristics and charging infrastructure are suitable. Officers are confident that, although not every local route may prove suitable, at least one Council bin route is likely to be viable for permanent e-RCV operation. Therefore, irrespective of the outcome across the wider trial network, the vehicle could be retained in service at the end of the 18-month period and assigned permanently to the most viable route identified through the trial.

The trial would also provide an important evidence base for any future infrastructure decisions. Rather than investing prematurely in extensive charging or depot upgrades, Council would be able to identify the minimum practical infrastructure required to operate an e-RCV effectively, understand any constraints within existing depot arrangements, and assess whether future investment should be targeted at specific routes, depots, or charging arrangements. This would support a proportionate and data-led approach to decarbonising the heavier fleet while avoiding unnecessary outlay at this stage.

This is particularly important given the likelihood that Council may not meet the 2030 fleet emissions target under the current trajectory. By progressing a limited but

meaningful e-RCV trial, Council would be able to demonstrate that it has taken all reasonable and practicable steps to test available low-carbon alternatives, reduce reliance on diesel where possible, and build a clearer pathway for future fleet decarbonisation. The trial would therefore complement the continued review of hydrogen and other heavy fleet technologies, while providing an immediate opportunity to test an available solution in local operating conditions.

Although e-RCVs are currently approximately twice the cost of conventional diesel refuse collection vehicles, with an estimated purchase cost of around £500,000, the purchase of one vehicle is considered affordable within the agreed vehicle replacement budget. This would be achieved by rescheduling the replacement of other vehicles and retaining them in service for longer than originally planned. This approach would allow Council to undertake a meaningful trial without committing to a wider fleet replacement programme at this stage. How this pilot exercise would inform the longer-term fleet replacement strategy is of immense value.

Next Steps

In light of the constraints noted in previous sections of this report, the immediate priority should be to continue delivery of Phase 1 of the Green Fleet roadmap while taking forward a structured trial of one electric refuse collection vehicle. Officers recommend that Council should progress the procurement of a single e-RCV and prepare an 18-month route-rotation programme covering all bin routes, with clear monitoring arrangements for route performance, range, charging requirements, payload, service resilience, crew feedback, maintenance implications, seasonal variation, and any associated depot or infrastructure constraints. The findings from the trial should be used to identify the most viable permanent route for the vehicle and to inform any future business case for additional e-RCVs or targeted charging infrastructure.

Alongside this, officers should continue engagement with public sector and regional partners on shared hydrogen opportunities, monitor the Department's developing hydrogen policy and action plan, review options for future refuelling partnerships and depot suitability, and assess market developments, funding opportunities, safety and regulatory requirements, and the comparative position of battery, hydrogen, and other low-carbon technologies for heavy fleet applications.

Summary

In summary, hydrogen remains a potentially important long-term option for decarbonising HGVs and other hard-to-electrify heavy vehicles; however, the current barriers to implementation are substantial. The evidence reviewed indicates that the principal constraints relate to infrastructure, fuel supply, cost, technology maturity, regulatory development, and organisational readiness.

Current diesel consumption and fleet emissions data also demonstrate that, given the limited number of vehicles suitable for transition to battery electric technology and the absence of an implemented decarbonisation solution for the heavy fleet, Council is unlikely at present to meet the 2030 target of a 48% reduction in carbon emissions from fleet operations. In that context, the proposed 18-month trial of a single electric refuse collection vehicle provides a proportionate and practical interim measure, enabling Council to test suitability across local bin routes, identify any infrastructure

requirements, and retain the vehicle for permanent use on the most viable route thereafter. A cautious and phased approach therefore remains justified, with hydrogen kept under active review while officers continue to explore feasible interim and longer-term decarbonisation measures.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council

1. notes the update, including current diesel consumption trends and the associated risk to achieving the 2030 fleet emissions target and agrees that officers should continue to progress Phase 1 of the Roadmap to Green Fleet, while keeping the feasibility of hydrogen-powered HGVs and other heavy fleet decarbonisation options under review and reporting back as the policy, infrastructure, technology, and funding landscape develops; and
2. approves the development of a plan to purchase one electric refuse collection vehicle for an 18-month trial across all bin routes, with the vehicle to be retained for permanent use on the most viable route identified through the trial, subject to suitable incorporation into the Council's fleet replacement strategy or business case if required. A future report will be brought in relation to the procurement of this vehicle, as per Council Procurement Policy.

Department for the Economy
An Roinn Geilleagair
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSE REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A SUSTAINABLE, REGIONAL APPROACH FOR THE PRODUCTION, STORAGE, TRANSPORT AND USE OF HYDROGEN AS A FUEL

MAY 2026

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1. BACKGROUND TO CONSULTATION AND RESPONSE STATISTICS

The *Energy Strategy: The Path to Net Zero Energy* (2021) recognised hydrogen as a key enabler for decarbonising sectors that are difficult to electrify, and as a means for enhancing energy security through more effective use of our renewable electricity resources. Since then, the policy landscape has evolved significantly, requiring refinement of the expected role of hydrogen in our future energy mix.

The consultation, conducted between 25 September and 18 December 2025, sought views on a sustainable, regional approach for the production, storage, transport and use of hydrogen as a fuel.[1] It was shaped through engagement with local industry, technical experts and independent research.[2] DfE convened the Hydrogen Industry Working Group in 2024, which informed policy development and refined the Department's vision for a competitive and resilient hydrogen sector. The preferred policy positions in the consultation are set out at Annex B.

The consultation enabled the Department to gather wider stakeholder views to refine policy and will support the development of a hydrogen policy action plan to help grow the sector. This report analyses the feedback to the consultation and responds to the issues raised.

Submissions were accepted via email, post, and Citizen Space. Citizen Space also enabled the Department to collect additional information from respondents such as their location and if their response was from them as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Where appropriate, this information may be used within this report.

The Department received 38 responses: 27 via email and 11 via Citizen Space. While some respondents engaged with most or all of the questions, others left some questions unanswered. Overall, stakeholders provided valuable and insightful feedback on the sections most relevant to their experience.

1 Consultation on a Sustainable, Regional Approach for the production, storage, transport and use of Hydrogen as a fuel - DfE
2 Publication of independent Hydrogen research - DfE

Of the 27 responses received via email:

27
respondents
submitted on behalf of an organisation.
Of these, **17** were from Northern Ireland.

21
were on behalf of companies in the energy sectors, **3** were on behalf of community organisations, **1** was on behalf of an academic institution and **2** were on behalf of public sector bodies.

In total, 11 responses were received via the Citizen Space survey.

10 OF THE 11
respondents
indicated their location was in Northern Ireland.

10 RESPONDENTS
who provided organisational information stated they were representing a group.

5 represented companies in the energy sector, **1** was on behalf of an academic institution, **2** were on behalf of public sector bodies and **2** were on behalf of local councils.

The Department also held an in-person stakeholder engagement event in November 2025 attended by over 40 participants.

Chapters 2-6 present high-level summaries of each consultation chapter, accompanied by thematic summaries of stakeholder feedback linked to the relevant questions, and the Department's response to that feedback.

Annex A provides a more detailed breakdown of responses to each individual consultation question, alongside a summary of any additional feedback shared at the stakeholder workshop.

2. HYDROGEN PRODUCTION

Consultation chapter overview

Hydrogen production in this region is still at a very early stage, and producing low carbon hydrogen (particularly green hydrogen from renewable electricity) remains significantly more expensive than traditional, carbon intensive methods. The consultation noted that connecting electrolysers to the grid currently attracts a range of regulated charges, while private-wire arrangements can avoid these costs but reduce opportunities for electrolysers to operate as flexible demand within the wider electricity system.

Against this backdrop, the consultation highlighted that the Executive's Energy Strategy[3] positions low carbon hydrogen as the most appropriate pathway, reflecting this region's strong renewable resource base and the absence of the large industrial clusters that might favour alternative production methods.

The consultation also explained that Northern Ireland aligns with the UK-wide Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard (LCHS), which defines the emissions threshold hydrogen must meet to be formally recognised as "low carbon" and to qualify for government support. It is the Department's preferred position to support this standard. Rather than prescribing specific technologies, the Department signalled openness to a range of production methods such as electrolysis and biohydrogen, provided they meet the LCHS.

Stakeholders were also advised that the Department's preferred approach is to make use of existing UK and all island funding schemes as the sector here is still developing. As evidence on viable production and usage levels is emerging, the consultation proposed not setting a hydrogen production target at this stage, while outlining a preferred position to develop a future target focused on energy security, shaped by further evidence and stakeholder input.

Overview of consultation response feedback

Stakeholders generally expressed strong support for the Department's overall preference for low carbon hydrogen production, with broad consensus on the importance of consistency with UK and Irish standards and a clear emphasis on prioritising green hydrogen.

Nearly all respondents (94%) endorsed the use of the LCHS, emphasising that cross-jurisdictional alignment is essential for investor confidence, regulatory certainty, and access to UK and EU-aligned funding. While a small minority felt the LCHS should be stricter or limited exclusively to renewable electrolysis, the overall sentiment was that a separate standard for here would only add unnecessary complexity.

In general, the feedback demonstrated considerable support (88%) for utilising dispatched-down wind for hydrogen production. However, most respondents emphasised that such support is contingent upon the need for a carefully designed framework that avoids perverse incentives, protects consumers, and considers alternative solutions such as long-duration battery storage and grid reinforcement.

3 NI Energy Strategy – economy-ni.gov.uk, p. 33

There was broad acknowledgment that the economics of hydrogen production remain challenging, with many respondents (65%) calling for reforms to grid-related charges to reflect the potential system benefits of electrolysers as controllable loads. Those in support felt that reform could stimulate investment, improve social equity, and reduce wasted renewable energy, while others cautioned that grid charging alone would not drive hydrogen deployment without parallel development of end-use markets and supporting infrastructure. Views on private-wire arrangements highlighted similar themes: while these may offer cost savings and certainty for developers, their viability depends on scale, stable offtake arrangements, supportive regulation, and alignment with wider system needs.

Respondents also emphasised the need for clarity and support in navigating UK and all-island funding mechanisms. The majority, (84%) agreed that we should remain aligned to these schemes, albeit with stronger cross jurisdictional engagement to improve local success rates. Finally, while opinions varied on whether a hydrogen production target should be set now, respondents agreed that any future target must be evidence-based, tied to genuine demand, and grounded in our energy security needs. Some suggested a potential target of 0.5 – 1 GW by 2035, while others urged caution until regulatory and market foundations are strengthened.

Departmental Response

The Department supports the LCHS, as it provides a clear basis for producers to access funding, and ensures a consistent definition of low carbon hydrogen. Version 4 of the LCHS has recently been announced, and the Department will continue to monitor its development.

On the issues of dispatch down wind and grid-related charges, the Department recognises that these cannot be considered in isolation. This is an evolving situation, with upgrades to the electricity grid and behavioural changes expected to influence usage patterns. Engagement continues with key stakeholders to understand the economic and operational viability of using dispatch down-wind to produce hydrogen. The Department will also work with key partners to ascertain whether reforming grid related charges is appropriate.

Consultation responses also highlight that many co-dependent factors must align for a private-wire electrolytic hydrogen project to be viable, such as production and storage costs, offtake agreements, scale and location. As stated in the consultation, the Department does not intend to be prescriptive about the method of low carbon hydrogen production (other than supporting compliance with the LCHS).

On funding, the priority is to utilise UK-wide and all-island schemes to support the local hydrogen sector, drawing on a range of other available funding sources where possible. The Department recognises the challenges facing industry and continues to advocate for fair and equitable access to funding.

Finally, regarding potential hydrogen targets, uptake globally and locally has been slower than previously expected, with more developed jurisdictions unable to meet ambitious targets. Based on the consultation responses, the Department is now minded to review progress in hydrogen deployment aligned to actual need, rather than set arbitrary targets.

Regardless of production pathways, outcomes must be in the best interest of consumers. As the hydrogen market evolves, what consumers pay should be subject to appropriate regulatory scrutiny, ensuring transparency and value for money.

3. HYDROGEN TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE

Overview of consultation chapter

The consultation outlined that hydrogen here is currently transported primarily by road, as demand levels remain too low to justify major investment in dedicated pipelines. While a proposal exists for a hydrogen pipeline, its commercial viability is still uncertain due to the scale of investment required and the limited level of current demand.

In the near term, many early hydrogen projects are expected to use hydrogen on-site, reducing the need for transport infrastructure, though the Department remains open to dedicated hydrogen transport infrastructure in the longer term if it becomes economically viable.

On storage, the consultation highlighted hydrogen's potential to support a renewable-led energy system by providing long-duration storage during periods of low wind or solar output. A range of storage options were presented, from short-term above-ground tanks to longer-term underground caverns such as those proposed at Islandmagee.

Research indicates that while batteries are more cost-effective for short-duration storage, salt cavern storage for hydrogen becomes more economical for longer periods and could play an important role in energy security. The Department therefore signalled a preferred position to support long-term hydrogen storage, while recognising that further work is required to determine how much storage may be required, and where it might be located.

Overview of consultation response feedback

Responses showed no clear consensus on the need for dedicated hydrogen pipeline infrastructure, with stakeholders almost evenly split (54% in favour). Supporters viewed pipelines as an eventual necessity to enable large-scale hydrogen deployment, support industrial clusters, integrate offshore renewable generation, and enhance energy security. Opponents emphasised that current hydrogen demand is too low and dispersed to justify the capital investment required, noting that near-term projects would rely on on-site use or road-based transport such as tube trailers.

On long-term storage, stakeholders broadly agreed that underground salt caverns represent the most viable and cost-effective option for high-capacity, inter-seasonal hydrogen storage, reflecting both international practice and our own geological potential. Many respondents also noted that a range of alternative storage methods may play a role depending on scale and duration.

Stakeholders emphasised that storage decisions should be informed by integrated whole-system energy system modelling, robust safety and environmental assessments, and ongoing research into emerging technologies. Several respondents also recommended close engagement with regulators, particularly the Health and Safety Executive NI, and encouraged further examination of how different storage approaches could contribute to energy security, system resilience, and the needs of future hydrogen markets.

Departmental Response

The Department notes that hydrogen transport and storage infrastructure must be viewed as interconnected, long-term investments. Both require sufficient production volumes and demand to be economically viable, as well as robust regulation to ensure safety, environmental compliance and community acceptance.

Given current levels of hydrogen activity, there is no immediate need for large scale transport or storage infrastructure. However, the Department considers that inter-seasonal hydrogen storage has a potentially important role in supporting a renewables-led electricity system. By enabling surplus renewable electricity to be converted to hydrogen and stored for use during periods of low generation, such storage could support system resilience, energy security and more efficient use of the electricity network. The Department will continue to engage the sector and review the evidence on how large-scale storage could be enabled in a way that delivers best value for consumers and the wider energy system.

4. HYDROGEN USE

Overview of consultation chapter

The consultation outlined that Northern Ireland's Fourth Carbon Budget anticipates hydrogen having a targeted but important role in the future energy system, particularly in hard-to-electrify sectors such as chemicals, cement, heavy transport, shipping, aviation and potentially in dispatchable power generation. The Climate Change Committee advises that hydrogen should have no role in home heating, and the consultation highlighted several barriers including low current demand and the need to align use with future transport and storage capabilities.

The chapter sought views on the most appropriate approach for hydrogen to power in this region, noting the UK Government's ongoing work on Hydrogen to Power (H2P) policy but recognising that, because Northern Ireland operates within the Single Electricity Market, the related consultation applied only to Great Britain.

For industry, the Department set out its preferred policy position that hydrogen should be deployed where it is economically viable and in sectors that cannot be easily electrified.

The chapter also explored the potential for hydrogen derived e-fuels and sustainable aviation fuels, reflecting CCC advice that these fuels may play a significant role in decarbonising shipping and aviation.

In relation to the gas network, the consultation outlined that blending hydrogen into gas grids is being explored in Great Britain, but that evidence remains mixed on its carbon impact and cost effectiveness. With the local network already largely hydrogen compliant but biomethane presenting a more realistic decarbonisation option, the Department signalled a preferred position to prioritise biomethane while gathering further evidence on blending. On home heating, the consultation emphasised existing UK Government work and strong evidence that electrification and heat pumps are more efficient and cost-effective than hydrogen.

Finally, on transport, the chapter noted rapid progress in battery technology and infrastructure, which has reduced the near-term role for hydrogen in buses and HGVs, though hydrogen is still expected to have value in sectors such as shipping, heavy goods vehicles, and large off-road machinery.

Overview of consultation response feedback

Stakeholders expressed strong support for developing e-fuels and SAFs, identifying them as one of the most strategically important opportunities for our hydrogen sector. Respondents emphasised that progress requires firm policy and regulatory frameworks, financial incentives for early-stage projects, targeted support such as grants or contracts for difference, and collaboration across producers, CO_2 suppliers, and end users. There was agreement that biogenic CO_2 will be central to e-fuel development, with sources ranging from anaerobic digestion, agricultural residues and industrial emissions to biogenic streams from energy-from-waste facilities. Many also encouraged the Department to support research, demonstration projects, and long-term demand signals, noting alignment with UK and EU aviation and maritime targets.

Views on hydrogen to power showed broad agreement that hydrogen could contribute to system flexibility, but stakeholders differed on how this could be delivered. Those supporting centralised power (11%) emphasised its potential role in balancing intermittent renewables and adapting existing power stations, while those favouring decentralised approaches (22%) stressed the efficiency, resilience, and lower cost of behind the meter fuel cells, especially in hard to electrify locations. The majority supported a dual approach (67%), recognising that both centralised and decentralised solutions may be needed, depending on evolving technologies, market conditions and local system needs.

On hydrogen blending, respondents were divided (61% supportive, 39% opposed). Supporters argued that blending could stimulate early hydrogen production, make use of the modern High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) gas network, and provide an interim offtake route while demand grows in industry and transport. Others strongly questioned its value, highlighting the modest emissions savings, the inefficiency of using scarce green hydrogen in the gas grid, and potential cost and metering challenges for consumers. Many felt blending risks delaying decisions about the future of the gas network and might divert hydrogen away from sectors where it delivers the highest impact.

Feedback on hydrogen for transport reflected a clear understanding of the rapid shift toward electrification. Stakeholders noted that hydrogen is unlikely to be cost competitive for most road transport though it may remain suitable for heavy goods vehicles, shipping, aviation, and large off-road machinery. Respondents identified high production costs, infrastructure gaps, and limited local demand as key challenges, and recommended a whole-system, technology-neutral approach that allows both electrification and hydrogen pathways to develop depending on need.

Finally, several respondents (61%) identified additional hydrogen uses worth considering, including its use as a feedstock for ammonia and chemical production, opportunities in wastewater treatment, enhanced biomethane production, local energy supply where grid extensions are impractical, and emerging synthetic fuel technologies.

Departmental Response

In considering the development of e-fuels and sustainable aviation fuels, the Department notes the strong stakeholder interest in e-fuels and sustainable aviation fuel as an emerging opportunity for local industry. The Sustainable Aviation Bill has completed its passage through Westminster and now applies here. This will help encourage investment in local sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production, supporting job creation in engineering, logistics, and research, and will back up the UK-wide SAF mandate introduced in 2025. Based on the evidence received, the Department recognises the potential contribution of e-fuels and SAF to decarbonisation, energy security and economic opportunity, and will continue to engage with stakeholders and encourage investment where development aligns with wider UK and EU policy. The Department also welcomes stakeholder views on the importance of biogenic carbon for e-fuel production.

On hydrogen-to-power, respondents offered a wide range of perspectives, highlighting issues such as adaptation costs, security of supply and strategic planning. While some referenced small modular reactors, nuclear power is a reserved matter for UK Government. Most respondents supported a flexible approach which reflects both the opportunities and uncertainties surrounding hydrogen-to-power, and that it would be premature to mandate a particular approach at this time.

With respect to hydrogen blending, DESNZ conducted a consultation on hydrogen blending at transmission level in 2025 and is due to set out the next steps very soon. The Department is continuing to work with local stakeholders to generate the evidence needed to support a decision on hydrogen blending. The gas network operators are conducting research into the preparedness of the local distribution network and future decisions about localised blending will need to consider the cost of any infrastructure changes, safety measures and whether blending is the best use for hydrogen.

On transport, the consultation reiterated that transport decarbonisation policy is the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). DfI and DfE are both part of a cross-border project with the Department of Transport to assess the feasibility of hydrogen refuelling stations, and DfI will continue to work with other public authorities and stakeholders to support the development of alternative fuel options on the transport system as appropriate.

The Department welcomes the information on further uses of low carbon hydrogen. Some of these are already taking place, for example Northern Ireland Water is testing the use of electrolysis to help in the treatment of wastewater. Research also highlights the potential use of hydrogen in various aspects of the chemical sector. In general, the Department will encourage the use of hydrogen in a targeted manner to ensure efficient deployment where it delivers greatest value.

Finally, the Department notes that some of the responses touch on areas outside its remit, including transport, agriculture and maritime policy. The Department agrees with suggestions to prioritise hard-to-electrify sectors, energy security and e-fuels. The Department does not see a role for hydrogen in home heating, rather it will focus on electrification and biomethane.

5. HYDROGEN SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Overview of consultation chapter

Whilst the consultation outlined local company activity, council-led projects and new skills development, it also emphasised that further coordinated action will be needed for the sector to reach its full potential.

A significant portion of the chapter focused on the strength of the local supply chain and industrial capability. Work undertaken by Invest NI highlights that the region has a strong manufacturing base, substantial service capability for project delivery, and an excellent R&D ecosystem that positions it well to grow as hydrogen markets expand. Strategic investments such as the Hydrogen Innovation Initiative, the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan, and City & Growth Deal projects are helping to build the technical, manufacturing and research capacity required.

Alongside these, substantial progress has been made in developing the skills pipeline, with the Skill Up programme and the Green Skills Action Plan supporting workforce transition. Collectively, these measures aim to equip this region with the supply chain depth, skills base and innovation capability needed to capitalise on the economic and decarbonisation opportunities presented by hydrogen.

Overview of consultation response feedback

Stakeholders highlighted that strong policy signals will be key to developing the hydrogen supply chain and emphasised that clear strategies, targets and timelines are essential to provide certainty for investors and to encourage industry commitment.

Respondents stressed the need for financial support such as grants, subsidies, loans, and revenue mechanisms to de-risk early-stage projects, and several suggested that mandating or incentivising hydrogen use in hard to electrify sectors could help create early, reliable demand. There were calls for enabling infrastructure, modernised regulation, and targeted support for local manufacturing, noting opportunities to grow high value production capability and to build on our strong engineering and project delivery base.

Skills development featured prominently in responses. Stakeholders agreed that workforce preparation will be critical as the hydrogen sector grows. Training in hydrogen safety, regulatory compliance and emergency response was seen as key, alongside enhanced engineering skills in mechanical, electrical, and chemical disciplines tailored to hydrogen technologies. Stakeholders encouraged developing partnerships between industry, universities and further education providers to deliver research informed modules, hands-on training and placement opportunities as well as the suggestion to reform the Apprenticeship Levy to increase flexibility in supporting shorter, targeted training initiatives.

Departmental Response

The Department recognises the important role policy plays in giving industry confidence to invest in the hydrogen sector. It remains committed to continuing engagement with stakeholders and to working closely with Invest NI, which is helping develop the local hydrogen sector through cluster development, fostering partnerships between industry, academia, and government. Green fuels including hydrogen is one of Invest NI's low carbon target sectors in their *Business Plan to 2027*, reflecting the strategic alignment between industrial growth and decarbonisation.

The Department also recognises the need to build green skills capability, as demonstrated by the Green Skills Action Plan. It will continue working with industry and education partners to support targeted training and upskilling. This includes ensuring the workforce is equipped with the specialised technical and safety skills needed to support the development of the hydrogen sector and the wider transition to net zero.

6. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Overview of consultation chapter

This chapter outlined the regulatory foundations needed to support the development of a hydrogen sector, focusing on economic regulation, health and safety, and certification.

Stakeholders were advised that the transport of 100% hydrogen through pipelines is not currently regulated and that industry has called for clearer arrangements to unlock investment and access funding. The Department's preferred policy position is to appoint the Utility Regulator as the economic regulator for hydrogen, which would require changes to existing legislation and ongoing engagement with system operators and other stakeholders.

Although there is no hydrogen-specific health and safety legislation at present, a range of existing regulations governing dangerous substances, pressure systems, major accident hazards and pipelines already apply to hydrogen activities. It noted that any future introduction of hydrogen or hydrogen blends into the gas network would require amendments to gas safety regulations.

The consultation further described the forthcoming UK-wide Low Carbon Hydrogen Certification Scheme (LCHCS), which will allow hydrogen producers to demonstrate eligibility for subsidy schemes, access low carbon markets and report decarbonisation progress. While the scheme is intended to apply UK-wide, final arrangements remain subject to review as the scheme moves toward a mandatory phase.

Reflecting this context, the Department's preferred policy position is to adopt the LCHCS rather than create a bespoke alternative, while continuing to engage with DESNZ to ensure the scheme meets the needs of local producers.

Overview of consultation response feedback

Stakeholders identified the need for a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework as one of the most important enablers for the hydrogen sector here. Respondents emphasised that regulation should span the entire hydrogen value chain, from production through to transport, storage, blending and end-use.

Feedback highlighted the importance of appointing a dedicated regulator and expanding the Utility Regulator's remit to explicitly support net zero objectives, improve coordination across energy systems, and enable access to UK-wide funding and business models. Stakeholders also stressed the need for streamlined planning and permitting processes, clearer routes to grid connections, and regulatory alignment with the UK and EU to facilitate trade and certification. Concerns were also raised about transparency, the need for independent oversight, and avoiding undue influence from large corporates as the sector grows.

There was very strong support (93%) for the intention to appoint the Utility Regulator as the economic regulator for hydrogen, with nearly all respondents agreeing that the Regulator's existing experience in gas, electricity and water makes it well placed to oversee the emerging hydrogen market. Stakeholders noted the importance of updating legislation such as the Gas Order (NI) 1996 to ensure the regulator has explicit powers and sufficient flexibility to access the hydrogen expertise required as the market develops.

With regards to the LCHCS, the response was unanimous. All respondents (100%) agreed that it should be adopted here. Stakeholders viewed the LCHCS as essential for market access, investor confidence, compliance with subsidy schemes, and alignment with both UK and EU standards. Respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring compatibility with RFNBO [4]rules, enabling access to renewable electricity across the Single Electricity Market, and maintaining close engagement with DESNZ as the scheme evolves.

Departmental Response

The Department notes that many of the concerns identified by stakeholders such as funding, electricity considerations, the role of the Utility Regulator and certification are addressed across other chapters. The Department will continue to work closely with the Health and Safety Executive NI and other statutory partners on a range of hydrogen issues including safety and planning, ensuring that regulatory processes keep pace with emerging needs.

The Department welcomes the endorsement of the Utility Regulator as economic regulator for hydrogen. The Utility Regulator has experience in the regulation of both gas and electricity, two key areas of importance for hydrogen. There will need to be changes to legislation to facilitate this as well as the development of appropriate regulation, and it will be vital to work with local stakeholders and statutory partners in this process.

On certification, the Department notes that this is a small region with a nascent hydrogen sector, so it is more appropriate to join an existing scheme like the LCHCS that has industry support.

4 Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBOs) are synthetic liquid or gaseous fuels (e.g., green hydrogen, e-methanol, e-kerosene) derived from renewable electricity and carbon sources rather than biomass.

7. NEXT STEPS

Hydrogen cannot be considered in isolation. Responses throughout the consultation highlighted its interconnected role across the energy system including gas, electricity, energy security, economic development and skills. The Department will use the evidence gathered through this consultation to inform the development of a finalised hydrogen policy and action plan for the local hydrogen sector.

ANNEX A: DETAILED FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EVENT

This section gives more detailed examples of the responses provided to the 22 questions asked in the consultation and the issues raised at the stakeholder engagement event.

Hydrogen Production

1. Do you agree with the Department's support for the Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard (LCHS)?

- 36 out of 38 respondents answered this question (11 on citizen space, 25 via email)
- Of the 36 respondents who answered this question, 34 (94%) responded "*yes*" and 2 (5%) responded, "*no*".

Those who answered "*yes*" (34 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Introducing a separate Northern Ireland specific standard is seen as unnecessary
- Consistency with UK wide standards is considered critical for market confidence, regulatory certainty, investor confidence, and access to funding mechanisms such as UK Hydrogen Allocation Rounds.
- There is consensus that hydrogen production should face strict thresholds on air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions and require permitting.
- Production should prioritise green hydrogen, with electrolysis ideally using excess renewable energy rather than grid electricity from fossil fuels. Concerns are raised about blue hydrogen pathways under the LCHS, with some opinion that green hydrogen is the only true low carbon option.
- Alignment with EU and Republic of Ireland standards is highlighted as essential due to the integrated electricity and gas markets and to prevent barriers to funding and market access.
- There was emphasis of the need to collaborate with DESNZ to align UK and Irish hydrogen standards, thereby safeguarding NI businesses' access to funding from both UK and ROI.
- Ongoing review is recommended to ensure LCHS reflects technological developments and regional needs, with clear guidance for SMEs.

Those who answered "*no*" (2 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- There is currently no viable mechanism to enable meaningful green hydrogen production before 2050.
- Production methods should include reactor-controlled pyrolysis with carbon capture and aluminium hydroxide generation, using hydrogen as a byproduct.
- The existing definition of "low carbon hydrogen" is overly broad and permissive.
- LCHS must exclude all fossil fuel–based hydrogen; only hydrogen produced via electrolysis using renewable energy (green hydrogen) should qualify.

2. Is it economically and/or environmentally beneficial to utilise otherwise dispatched down wind generation for hydrogen production? Explain your reasoning, highlighting any disincentives/perverse incentives not to and the circumstances in which you see temporal and geographic correlation as being important.

- 34 of the 38 respondents answered this question (11 on Citizen Space, 23 via email)
- 30 of the 34 (88%) respondents expressed support in principle, however, the vast majority of this support was qualified considering the economic and environmental contexts.
- 4 out of the 34 (12%) respondents advised they did not think it was economically and/or environmentally beneficial to produce hydrogen via dispatched down wind.

The respondents who expressed support provided reasons such as:

- When wind farms generate more electricity than the grid can accommodate, the surplus energy is often wasted. The current high level of curtailment wastes renewable resources and imposes substantial costs on consumers.
- Using dispatch down wind could provide a viable route to market for curtailed energy, help increase renewable penetration, help achieve renewable targets, accelerate decarbonisation and enhance energy security.
- Even with ambitious assumptions regarding interconnection, long-duration storage, and demand-side flexibility, it is predicted that over 20% of available renewable generation may be dispatched down by 2030 due to surplus availability.

Those who provided qualified support gave reasons such as:

- Increased electricity demand and renewable capacity would reduce levels of dispatch down for hydrogen production. Surplus energy production could be mitigated by smart meters and time of use tariffs, shaping demand to times of high renewable availability.
- Dispatch down for network constraint is sometimes necessary and despite best efforts, persistent dispatch down levels may remain. Long-duration storage could be a credible solution for storing dispatched down energy, but this is hampered by a lack of sufficient energy storage capacity in the north which increases dependence on fossil fuels during low wind periods.
- Quantifying hydrogen production from dispatch down requires careful consideration of the factors influencing dispatch down and avoids inadvertently incentivising surplus generation for hydrogen.
- The cost of electrolytic hydrogen is a key deployment constraint. Hydrogen policy should focus on creating investment friendly conditions.
- Wind resources are often remote and hydrogen demand industrial, so transport and infrastructure add costs and complexity which should be considered.
- Managing network congestion should be weighed against alternative options (energy storage, pumped hydro, grid reinforcement) for cost-optimal approaches; decisions could be accommodated through whole system planning frameworks.
- The Renewable Electricity Price Guarantee (REPG) would need a mechanism that allows curtailed electricity to be used for hydrogen while avoiding double compensation, since the REPG already provides full payment for constrained energy.

4 of the 34 respondents to this question advised that they did not feel that dispatched down hydrogen production was economically and/or environmentally beneficial, they provided reasons such as:

- The main hydrogen applications all rely on steady and predictable hydrogen flows. An electrolyser cannot supply these markets reliably.
- SONI's Shaping Our Electricity Future and Transmission Development Plan shows constraints peaking in the second half of the 2020s and then falling by 2030 as key reinforcements and interconnectors come online.
- The economics of this are unknown and there are significant technical reliability risks which would need to be assessed.
- Should not be viewed as a substitute for rapid grid development or investment in other forms of technically proven and readily available long duration energy storage.
- Hydrogen will always be substantially more expensive than the electricity needed to produce it due to the many efficiency losses. Replacing current energy used with hydrogen will require at least twice as much generation capacity as electrification.

3. Are there grounds (economic, environmental, social equity) for reforming the grid-related charges for connecting electrolysers as controllable loads?

- 26 of the 38 respondents answered this question (8 on Citizen Space,18 via email)
- 17 of the 26 (65%) respondents to this question expressed clear support for the reformation of grid-related charges.
- 7 of the 26 (27%) respondents to this question did not provide clear support for or against the reformation of grid-related charges.
- 2 of the 26 respondents to this question expressed that they did not support reforming grid related charges for connecting electrolysers as controllable loads.

Reasons in support of the reformation of grid related charges, included:

- Reforming grid charges would stimulate hydrogen production in Northern Ireland.
- High electricity costs are a major barrier to green hydrogen deployment.
- Applying standard charges to electrolysers ignores their potential system benefits and deters investment.
- Environmental advantages include facilitating decarbonisation of hard-to-electrify sectors and reducing renewable energy curtailment.
- Reforming charges or incentivising electrolyser connections would lower production costs and accelerate deployment. This would also allow electrolysers as controllable loads, improving system efficiency, grid stability and support net zero targets.
- High connection costs exclude smaller businesses, and reform would create a fairer market.
- Social equity benefits include lower consumer costs, improved efficiency, and greater energy security for all consumers.

Those who did not provide clear support for or against reforming grid related charges provided reasons such as:

- Electrolysers are intended to replace fossil fuels in difficult-to-electrify sectors, support industrial processes, and facilitate cleaner transport and e-fuels. Grid charging reform may assist this transition, but should be viewed as a supporting measure, not the main driver.
- Lower network charges during periods of high renewable output or spare grid capacity could enhance system efficiency, but such reform should not be pursued solely to promote electrolysers using curtailed electricity.
- Reducing charges alone will not guarantee new hydrogen projects or stimulate end use markets. Poorly designed reforms could distort locational incentives, causing projects to prioritise cheap grid access over proximity to genuine hydrogen demand or industrial use.
- If hydrogen and electrolysers are shown to provide system benefits, these should be reflected in grid charging, requiring thorough assessment by the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI).
- Reform of grid charges must be considered alongside the wider economics of electrolysers and green hydrogen, as well as the potential impacts on end consumers.

Those who expressed that they did not support grid related charges provided reasons such as:

- Prioritise co-location models with electrolysers close to renewables, and private wire arrangements, to avoid grid costs and reduce energy losses. However, these should not be a way to bypass grid accountability or disadvantage consumers.
- Require hydrogen project proponents to guarantee additional renewable energy (i.e. not diverting capacity already allocated) with clear additionality rules.

4. What are the minimum conditions (e.g. scale, off-take market, supply chain, etc.) that would need to pertain to make a "private wire" connection to renewable power generation for electrolytic production of hydrogen viable?

- 18 of the 38 respondents answered this question (7 on Citizen Space,11 via email)

A summary of the key findings from the responses is as follows:

- Sufficient project scale is necessary to justify capital investment in a dedicated private wire connection; smaller projects may face prohibitive costs relative to output. Economic viability is challenged by current high production, storage, and compression costs compared to fossil fuels.
- Reliable, long-term offtake agreements ideally with anchor customers in industry, transport, or energy are essential. The lack of significant and stable hydrogen demand is a major barrier, especially in regions with limited industrial use.
- Ready access to proven and reliable electrolyser technology, storage, and distribution infrastructure is vital to ensure efficient operation, maintenance, and scalability of hydrogen production systems.

- Regulatory and Policy Support: Clear regulatory frameworks, compliance with standards (e.g. UK Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard), and access to funding or incentives are needed to enhance project viability. Planning and permitting processes should facilitate behind-the-meter hydrogen production.
- Technical integration must match hydrogen production with renewable electricity availability. Private wire arrangements may limit grid flexibility and resilience, and grid connection may still be preferred for stable supply, especially for industrial demand users.
- Private wire connections may reduce grid costs but can remove benefits to the wider electricity network, such as grid balancing services, potentially impacting system management and resilience.
- Viability improves when hydrogen production is co-located with offtake (e.g. at ports, industrial estates) and when demand can absorb variable output. Most industrial users require stable supply, often necessitating both private wire and grid connections.
- The financial viability depends on predictable offtake, long-term renewable generation contracts, and financial support mechanisms to bridge cost gaps with fossil fuel alternatives.
- Interim funding may be needed until hydrogen achieves cost competitiveness.
- Optimised grid connections at renewable sites, transparent planning, and alignment with system objectives are required. Licensing from relevant regulators is necessary, and site-specific analysis needed.
- Reference points include 1–15 MW for projects under development; minimum project sizes under regulatory schemes are typically 5 MW.
- Detailed analysis of private wire benefits, grid impacts, regional curtailment, and hydrogen use cases before widespread adoption.

5. Do you agree with the Department's focus on UK and Ireland-wide funding streams to support the local industry?

- 32 of the 38 (84%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (11 on Citizen Space, 21 via email)
- 27 of the 32 (84%) respondents who answered this question said, *"yes",* indicating their agreement with the focus on UK and Ireland-wide funding. 5 of the 32 (16%) respondents answered, *"no".*

Those who answered *"yes"* (32 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- UK and Ireland-wide established funding streams offer transparency, access to larger pools of capital and reduce risk. This comes with increased competition, especially from more established clusters in Great Britain.
- Alignment with UK-wide frameworks avoids unnecessary duplication and helps Northern Ireland projects integrate more easily into the broader UK hydrogen market.
- Northern Ireland can benefit from regional policy complementarity, leveraging the Single Electricity Market (SEM) and participation in EU aligned certification schemes for cross-border opportunities.

- There is a need to improve the success rate of Northern Ireland projects in securing funding, as no local projects have so far benefited from Hydrogen Allocation Round (HAR) funding. Proactive engagement by the Department with stakeholders is essential to raise awareness, identify barriers in the application process, and support Northern Ireland projects to compete effectively.
- Consideration must be given to the impact of funding mechanisms (such as levies on gas shippers) on Northern Ireland consumers, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by increased costs without local benefit.
- While UK and Ireland-wide funding should remain the focus, complementary local funding and stronger market signals may be needed to stimulate demand and bridge gaps not addressed by wider schemes.
- Targeted support, such as development expenditure (DEVEX) funding and feasibility studies for decarbonisation, could help NI projects become more competitive and establish genuine hydrogen demand.
- The Department should continue to advocate for Northern Ireland specific considerations in the design of UK and Ireland-wide funding schemes and to collaborate with UK, Ireland, and EU partners.
- Limited resources make a bespoke Northern Ireland hydrogen support scheme infeasible in the short term; leveraging UK and Ireland-wide funding is therefore pragmatic, but ongoing engagement is needed to ensure fair access and support.
- Establishing an economic regulator for hydrogen in Northern Ireland is a priority to enable participation in certain UK funding models (e.g., for hydrogen transport and storage).

Those who answered, *"no"* (5 respondents), provided opinions such as:

- While there is a place for accessing UK and Ireland-wide funding streams, localised funding is also imperative to the speed and scale at which the opportunity for low carbon hydrogen can be exploited
- Northern Ireland's energy and industrial landscape differ from Great Britain. UK-wide funding schemes may not adequately accommodate these differences and risks Northern Ireland falling behind.
- The HAR process does not allow potential production projects to export. Any hydrogen produced in Northern Ireland using HAR subsidies should be eligible for export into the Republic of Ireland and not restricted to local offtake.

6. What sources of evidence, for example where demand growth is to arise from, should be used to help establish an energy security target for hydrogen in the region?

- 23 of the 38 respondents answered this question (9 on Citizen Space, 14 via email)

A summary of the key findings from the responses is as follows:

- Focus on hard-to-electrify sectors where hydrogen provides the most value, such as heavy industry, transport, and e-fuel production. Consider demand projections for e-fuels, map high-temperature industrial heat needs and assess demand from shipping, agriculture, and other sectors identified in Climate Change Committee reports.
- Include industrial feedstocks, especially chemicals, where hydrogen is essential for process decarbonisation.
- Evidence should also reflect the fact that today's energy security relies heavily on large volumes of liquid and gaseous fossil fuels, which will not exist in a net-zero system. Hydrogen, or another energy source with similar features, will be required to replace this role to provide sufficient energy security.
- Utilise data on current and planned renewable generation (wind, solar) to determine green hydrogen production capacity. Target areas with significant dispatch-down wind energy and renewable curtailment for potential electrolyser deployment.
- Analyse existing and future hydrogen off-takers, production capabilities (electrolysis and other methods), and infrastructure needs.
- Evaluate storage, distribution networks, and supply chain readiness to support reliable hydrogen production and use.
- Adopt integrated energy system modelling covering electricity, gas, transport, industry, and storage to assess hydrogen's role in resilience and seasonal variability. Draw on national energy and climate plans, long-term scenario modelling, and regional energy strategies for benchmarking and ambition setting.
- Benchmark against neighbouring regions, UK-wide and Irish hydrogen targets, and international best practices.
- Plan for hydrogen to replace fossil fuels in providing energy security and system resilience, especially during periods of low renewable generation.
- Prioritise energy security, curtailment reduction, and export capacity over headline production volumes.
- Recognise the value of over-providing strategic capacity for energy security, drawing lessons from recent EU energy crises.

7. What would be a realistic target for low-carbon hydrogen production in NI by 2035?

- 24 of the 38 respondents answered this question (8 on Citizen Space, 16 via email)

Some respondents provided figures to demonstrate a realistic target for Northern Ireland by 2035, summarised below:

- Some responses proposed targets of 0.5 –1 GW by 2035, reflecting Northern Ireland's population size (~3% of UK), strong wind resource, and the early stage of its hydrogen industry.
- Some respondents advocate for a lower target, e.g. 0.2–0.4 GW, based on grid capacity, industrial demand, and comparisons with Welsh and Irish targets.
- There is also reference to scaling up to 3 GW or more by 2050, if infrastructure and demand develop in line with broader UK and European expectations.
- Some advised that these targets should focus on installed electrolyser capacity, which can help manage wind dispatch down and support investor confidence, rather than solely on hydrogen volumes produced.
- Staged milestones (e.g. interim targets for 2030) and regular review were recommended to track progress and adjust to market and policy developments.

Some respondents did not provide a figure for what they would believe to be a realistic target, however, were supportive of a target being set:

- Some respondents suggested setting an ambitious hydrogen production target for Northern Ireland by 2035, as it could help drive investment and build industry confidence.
- They emphasised that any target should be informed by energy system modelling, considering renewable resources, infrastructure requirements, and demand across different sectors.
- Additionally, respondents highlighted the importance of considering export potential and opportunities for economic growth when setting these targets.

Some respondents did not support setting a hydrogen production target for Northern Ireland at this stage:

- Priority should be given to stimulating credible demand, supported by a stable regulatory framework and long-term certainty.
- Concerns were raised that premature targets could lead to a mismatch between supply and demand, resulting in underutilised assets.
- Removing policy and regulatory barriers to enable access to UK and all-island hydrogen funding was recommended, rather than establishing immediate production targets.
- A hydrogen investment target was noted as a potential way to signal departmental support and attract project funding.

Hydrogen Transport and Storage

8. Do stakeholders think Northern Ireland requires dedicated hydrogen pipeline infrastructure? Explain your reasons.

- 26 of the 38 (68%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (11 on Citizen Space, 15 via email) and 12 refrained to do so.
- 14 of the 26 (54%) respondents who answered this question said, *"yes",* indicating their agreement that dedicated hydrogen infrastructure was required. 12 of the 26 (46%) respondents answered, *"no".*

Those who answered, *"yes",* (14 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Northern Ireland's distribution network, is well positioned for conversion to hydrogen blends or pure hydrogen, minimising the upgrades needed.
- While there is currently insufficient demand to justify dedicated hydrogen pipelines, some respondents believe such infrastructure will become economically viable.
- Pipelines are viewed as the most cost-effective and efficient method for transporting large volumes of hydrogen.
- Repurposing existing natural gas pipelines is recommended as a transitional, cost-saving measure, with dedicated hydrogen networks to be developed as demand and production scale up.
- Some respondents see dedicated pipelines as essential for connecting industrial clusters, energy hubs, and supporting the decarbonisation of dispatchable power generation.
- Some respondents advised of the need for clear policy direction, regulatory frameworks, and mandates for network operators to prepare and deliver hydrogen-ready infrastructure, as well as alignment with plans in neighbouring regions.
- Adequate transport and storage infrastructure, including salt cavern storage, are identified as key enablers for large scale hydrogen deployment and energy security.
- Anticipatory investment in pipelines and storage is recommended to avoid infrastructure bottlenecks that could hinder market development.
- Dedicated hydrogen pipelines would enhance system flexibility, support future integration with offshore renewables, and enable participation in emerging hydrogen markets.

Those who answered, *"no",* (12 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen demand in Northern Ireland is currently too low and scattered to justify investing in dedicated pipeline infrastructure; most near term projects will likely use hydrogen on site.
- Pipelines should be considered only after demand rises significantly and is concentrated in locations that could benefit from major transmission assets.
- Investing in infrastructure prematurely risks creating underused systems and stranded assets, tying up capital unnecessarily.
- A decentralised approach focused on local hydrogen hubs and leveraging existing infrastructure is recommended, as this reduces transport needs and supports efficient decarbonisation.
- Current methods for hydrogen transport, such as tube trailers or compressed gas, are seen as adequate for requirements.

- Developing hydrogen pipelines involves technical and safety challenges, including leakage, integrity, and compatibility concerns; any conversion of existing pipelines must undergo thorough assessments.
- Both UK and EU strategies advocate phased development, aligning infrastructure growth with actual demand and focusing first on production and consumption clusters rather than national grids.
- To avoid inefficiencies, integrated planning with electricity networks is recommended, drawing lessons from Europe's experience.

9. Are there alternatives to underground caverns for high-capacity, long-term hydrogen storage that should be investigated?

- 24 of the 38 (63%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (7 on Citizen Space, 17 via email)

There was broad recognition throughout the majority of responses, that underground caverns for high capacity, long-term storage of hydrogen was the most optimal option, summarised below:

- Salt caverns are a cost effective and proven way to store very large volumes of pressurised hydrogen for extended periods with minimal losses. They are uniquely suited to interseasonal and strategic energy reserves, supporting system flexibility and energy security.
- Northern Ireland has geological potential for developing salt caverns, which is not the case for other alternatives like depleted gas reservoirs in the region.
- The chemicals industry has used salt caverns for hydrogen storage for decades in other regions, providing a track record of safety and reliability.

However, respondents provided opinions on alternatives including:

- Overground tanks for compressed hydrogen offer flexible storage options suitable for shorter-term needs. However, at high capacities and long durations, these become increasingly expensive, space-intensive, and face ongoing safety and leakage concerns.
- Storing hydrogen as a liquid at very low temperatures is technically feasible but comes with high costs and significant energy requirements for liquefaction. This option is generally considered too expensive for most large-scale applications.
- Emerging technologies such as metal hydrides can store hydrogen in solid form, though these solutions are still in development and may offer practical and economic benefits in the future.
- Storing hydrogen chemically bound in carriers like ammonia or methanol allows for easier handling and transport. These carriers can be converted back to hydrogen when needed and may also serve as low-carbon fuels, providing flexibility and dual benefits for energy security and decarbonisation.
- Using the hydrogen transport network itself to store gas (linepack) can provide some storage capacity, potentially reducing the need for dedicated storage assets, especially where demand and supply are well matched.
- Existing oil and gas storage facilities or floating storage vessels could be adapted for hydrogen storage, offering interim or distributed storage solutions.

Respondents also provided added additional advice, to include:

- Consult with relevant authorities such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regarding the siting and operation of hydrogen storage facilities.
- Ensure that hydrogen storage policy is informed by integrated energy system modelling to clarify storage needs, including quantity, duration, and usage, and to determine the most appropriate technology mix.
- Conduct transparent risk assessments and environmental impact assessments for all storage options, with robust monitoring and verification of hydrogen leakage.
- Support ongoing research and development into emerging storage technologies and alternative carriers to ensure future flexibility and cost effectiveness.

Uses of Hydrogen

10. What actions can the Department take to encourage the development of e-fuels as a use for hydrogen?

- 22 of the 38 (58%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (8 on Citizen Space, 14 via email).

Suggested actions included:

- Ensure strong legislative and policy foundations, to decarbonise sectors and incentivise fuel innovations and align UK policy frameworks with Northern Ireland's market.
- Provide financial support and incentives for e-fuel projects including R&D, pilots etc. Offer targeted incentives such as subsidies, contracts for difference, soft loans, capital grants etc. Leverage UK and cross border funding.
- Improve infrastructure and market development, including de-risking grid connections with conditional pathways and create a marketplace for contracts between producers and users from Anaerobic Digestion (AD), Direct Air Capture (DAC) and biomass sources.
- Provide sector support by mandating e-fuel adoption in aviation and shipping and facilitate upgrades of maritime vessels for e-fuel use and enable partnership and collaboration among hydrogen producers, CO2 and end users. The Department could also engage with UK and EU on e-fuels policy for shared learning, as well as a local working group.
- Biomethane – prioritise development of this industry to provide consistent supply of biogenic CO2 for e-fuels production.
- Research, to include outlining the wider benefits of e-fuels for air quality, health and decarbonisation. Fund government backed trials and projects.
- Establish long term policy signals and mandates to create demand, and secure initial offtakers as well as align with current UK and EU targets for aviation and maritime sectors.

11. What do you see being the sources of biogenic carbon for creating e-fuels?

- 15 of the 38 (39%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (6 on Citizen Space, 9 via email).

Suggested sources of biogenic carbon included:

- Biomass Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and/or Energy from Waste (EfW) Plants already operate at commercial scale in Northern Ireland and generate biogenic CO2 streams suitable for e-fuels and (in combination with hydrogen) sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) production.
- Agricultural and Organic Waste Streams: Livestock manure, crop residues, grass silage, and other agricultural by-products are abundant and can be processed via anaerobic digestion to produce biogas, containing carbon suitable for capture and conversion.
- Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and Biomethane Production: AD facilities produce biogas, which can be upgraded to biomethane with CO2 separated and captured in a concentrated stream.

- Industrial and Process Emissions: CO2 from incineration of sewage sludge, fermentation and digestion in the agri-food sector, and brewery/distillery operations are all established, geographically proximate sources of verifiably biogenic CO2.
- CO2 from unavoidable industrial emissions (cement, steel) can be used for Recycled Carbon Aviation Fuel (RCAF) until 2041 under ReFuelEU Aviation.
- Direct Air Carbon Capture (DAC): Technologies such as DAC, can capture CO2 directly from the atmosphere for use in e-fuel synthesis.
- As per the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II and III), eligible sources include CO2 released during: combustion of sustainably sourced biomass, anaerobic digestion, upgrade of biogas to biomethane, bio-alcohol production, processing of non-fossil organic waste.

12. What other sources of carbon do you see as being deemed sustainable for use in creating e-fuels?

- 15 of the 38 (39%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (6 on Citizen Space, 9 via email).

Other suggested forms of carbon for e-fuels included:

- For all non-biogenic sources, lifecycle emissions must be assessed to ensure genuine decarbonisation and to avoid simply shifting emissions elsewhere.
- Waste CO_2 from biorefineries and fermentation processes
- Emissions captured from cement, steel, chemical production and other industrial processes (notably cement factories in ROI and NI)
- Unavoidable process emissions from local industries (e.g. cement operations)
- CO_2 removed directly from the atmosphere, especially when combined with green hydrogen
- Recirculation of CO_2 from captive capture installations ('Carbon Loop')
- Combining local and international Direct Air Captures and Carbon Storage (DACCS), Bio Energy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) and Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) deployment to meet demand for synthetic fuels, particularly in aviation and maritime sectors.

13. Should hydrogen be used in the power sector in a centralised (power stations) or decentralised manner (fuel cells/engines), or both?

- 18 out of 38 (47%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 7 via email).
- 9 respondents (via email) did not expressly answer the question with regards to giving their opinion on whether hydrogen should be used in the power sector via a centralised/ decentralised (or both) manner. However, the 9 respondents provided valuable insight and opinions on the matter.

Those who answered "*centralised*" (11%, 2 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen to power generation could play a central role in balancing intermittent renewable energy sources and maintaining a reliable electricity supply
- Existing power stations, may be adapted to become hydrogen capable, allowing for flexible, dispatchable power and reduced reliance on imported gas.

- The introduction of small modular reactors (SMRs) is suggested as a way to provide zero-carbon electricity and process heat for hydrogen production via electrolysis.
- Since nuclear generation is not permitted in the Republic of Ireland, SMRs located in Northern Ireland could export clean energy across the interconnectors, contributing to improved energy resilience on an all-island basis.

Those who answered "*decentralised*" (22%, 4 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen should primarily be used for hard to abate sectors, such as replacing diesel generators in decentralised power generation, where alternatives are limited.
- Limitations to centralised power systems - they can be more vulnerable to targeted disruption; they have higher transport needs, impacts and costs; and using hydrogen in traditional centralised steam production can result in higher Nitrous Oxide emission compared to natural gas.
- Technical and economic challenges with centralised use - significant retrofitting of existing power plants to use hydrogen increases costs and can impact operational stability during transition periods; long-term storage solutions, such as salt caverns at Islandmagee, are necessary but face legal and community objections delaying progress; centralised use needs a steady supply of affordable of CO2, transport and storage, or biomethane, both of which are currently uncertain; future production of low-carbon hydrogen may become more costly if reliant on grid electricity, especially as available wind and solar for hydrogen production are expected to decrease by 2031.
- Decentralised production and use of hydrogen on site with behind the meter renewable generation offers the greatest efficiency and lowest cost due to minimised transportation and associated emissions.

Those who answered, "*both*" (67%, 12 respondents) provided additional opinions such as:

- Both centralised and decentralised options are key for achieving decarbonisation and meeting diverse energy system requirements.
- Decentralised hydrogen technologies, such as fuel cells and engines, enable flexible, local power generation, reduce transmission losses, and support resilience in areas with limited grid access (e.g. remote regions or specific industries).
- A combination of both approaches enhances energy security; centralised systems provide substantial backup but rely on extensive infrastructure, while decentralised systems can be rapidly deployed and strengthen local resilience.
- Retaining both options allows for location and system-specific solutions as technologies and economics evolve; ongoing strategic modelling and policy support are essential.
- Fuel cells emit no air pollution at the point-of-use and achieve up to 60% efficiency; burning hydrogen can create NOx, a significant pollutant, though less particulate and carbon monoxide compared to fossil fuels. Effective NOx control (technical and regulatory) is needed for hydrogen combustion; UK interim guidance exists for regulating emissions.

- Fuel cell costs need to fall further and benefit from economies of scale; decentralised uptake is needed for manufacturing scale. Careful economic and environmental modelling is required, including impacts on market prices, generator/consumer effects, and participation in markets. If solutions are not competitive, they are unlikely to secure financial support; pilot projects should cover both scales for learning and flexibility.
- Strategic planning and flexible, evidence-based policy is essential; all options should remain open due to rapid technology evolution. Coordination with the all-island electricity market and regulatory bodies is necessary to align approaches.

There were 9 respondents who did not directly answer the question but provided some insight on the matter and provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen's role in the power sector should be determined through a comprehensive, evidence led, system wide study to identify the most cost-effective pathway to decarbonisation. This should consider alternatives such as storage, interconnection, and demand response avoiding assumptions that hydrogen is the default option.
- If hydrogen does have a role, evidence from system studies and recent international research suggests that decentralised, flexible generation is likely to provide greater value than large, centralised hydrogen power stations.

14. Do you see a role for local hydrogen blending in the gas network? If so, please provide evidence for how it can be economically viable.

- 28 out of 38 (74%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 17 via email).
- 17 of the 28 (61%) respondents who answered this question said, *"yes",* indicating their agreement that there is a role for local hydrogen blending. 11 of the 28 (39%) respondents answered, *"no".*
- 4 respondents did not expressly answer the question, but their response mirrored the information already captured in the yes/no responses.

Those who answered *"yes"* (17 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen blending into the gas network is best viewed as a transitional measure, supporting early hydrogen projects and market development. It provides a strategic bridge while dedicated hydrogen infrastructure and demand mature, helping producers reach financial close by acting as an offtaker of last resort.
- Northern Ireland's modern High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) based gas network is largely hydrogen compliant, minimising the investment needed for infrastructure upgrades.
- Essential preparatory work includes technical studies, regulatory changes, and stakeholder coordination to ensure safe implementation and market alignment with neighbouring jurisdictions.
- Alignment with GB and ROI blending policies is crucial for energy security and uninterrupted cross-border supply.
- Blending supports system resilience and flexibility, allowing practical experience in hydrogen safety and operation while demand matures in industrial, transport, and power sectors.

- Early hydrogen blending can contribute to job creation and economic growth, with sector analysis estimating significant employment and GVA benefits by 2030.
- International experience shows blending can unlock early hydrogen volumes.

In terms of economic viability:

- Blending leverages existing gas infrastructure, reducing the need for immediate large-scale investment and offering a cost-effective interim solution compared to building parallel hydrogen networks.
- Staged blends (up to 20%) can lower transition costs by building supply chains and operational experience before full conversion, with modest emissions reductions (e.g. a 7% CO_2 reduction from a 20% blend).
- Dynamic electricity tariffs and reforms to grid connection charges for controllable loads can lower green hydrogen production costs, improving economic viability.
- Policy incentives, carbon pricing mechanisms, and blend certificates linked to Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS) provide additional revenue streams and commercial incentives for producers and industrial users.
- Combining local hydrogen production with blending can reduce transport costs and further support economic viability.

Those who answered "*no*" (11 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Evidence suggests that blending hydrogen into the gas network achieves only modest reductions in carbon emissions. For example, a 20% hydrogen blend by volume results in only a 6.6–7% reduction in CO2 emissions due to hydrogen's lower energy content compared to natural gas.
- Adapting the existing gas infrastructure for hydrogen blending would incur significant costs, both for technical upgrades and for ongoing management.
- Green hydrogen, which is costly and limited in supply, would be used inefficiently if blended into the gas grid, as its greatest decarbonisation impact lies in sectors that are hard to electrify.
- Blending hydrogen into the distribution system complicates domestic metering and could result in higher costs for consumers. In the transmission system, it may introduce technical challenges and risks to the security of supply.
- Once hydrogen is blended, it becomes difficult to track for emissions reporting, potentially undermining transparency and the credibility of decarbonisation claims. There is also a risk that blending acts as a short-term fix, delaying necessary decisions on the long-term future of the gas network and possibly locking in fossil fuel infrastructure.

15. In light of the cited research, how can hydrogen for transport in Northern Ireland be cost-competitive?

- 24 of the 38 (63%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (8 on Citizen Space, 16 via email).

Suggested ways to keep hydrogen for transport cost competitive included:

- Reducing production costs, achieving economies of scale, and leveraging local renewable energy sources particularly by situating electrolysers near renewable generation and demand sites.
- Financial supports, such as grants and operational subsidies, are crucial to offset the higher costs of green hydrogen compared to fossil-derived alternatives. Early policy intervention, clear regulatory signals, and strategic investment in infrastructure (e.g. pipelines, refuelling stations, and storage) will drive down costs and foster market confidence.
- Hydrogen is most suited for transport sectors that are hard to electrify, such as heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), shipping, aviation (especially for larger aircraft), coaches, and off-road machinery.
- Policy neutrality and a whole system planning approach are recommended, allowing for both hydrogen and electric technologies to develop according to their strengths and market needs.
- The high upfront and operational costs of hydrogen vehicles, limited suppliers, and the requirement for specialised knowledge are significant barriers. The small regional scale and limited journey lengths in NI further restrict the scope for hydrogen in road transport, potentially confining its use to a few refuelling hubs or non-road sectors.

16. Are there other major uses for low-carbon hydrogen that the Department should consider? Explain your reasoning.

- 18 out of 38 (47%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 7 via email).
- 11 of the 18 (61%) respondents who answered this question said, *"yes",* indicating other major uses for low carbon hydrogen. 7 of the 18 (39%) respondents answered, *"no".*

Those who answered *"yes"* (11 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Low carbon hydrogen is used for ammonia and related chemicals, supporting local fertiliser production, reducing import reliance, and providing export opportunities both as fertiliser and as a hydrogen carrier for international trade.
- Hydrogen production via electrolysis creates oxygen as a co product, which can be used for oxygen enriched aeration in wastewater treatment plants, increasing throughput and reducing energy use compared to conventional systems.
- Fuel cell Combined Heat and Power (CHP) applications (such as Solid Oxide Fuel Cells (SOFC)) may become viable, especially for large residential or industrial settings with steady electrical and heat demands, offering economic and emissions benefits if production and capital costs decrease.

- Injecting hydrogen into anaerobic digestion (AD) plants can enhance biomethane output via biological methanation, improving productivity and the decarbonisation value of AD facilities.
- Hydrogen can be used for energy supply in locations where extending electricity networks is prohibitively expensive, providing a practical alternative to grid connection.
- Hydrogen serves as a feedstock for various chemicals and synthetic fuels (e-fuels), supporting non energy industrial uses and decarbonisation of chemical manufacturing.
- Potential roles include production of alcohol to jet fuels and Dimethyl Ether (DME) as a substitute for LPG, with ongoing innovation projects exploring this.
- Those who answered "*no*" (7 respondents) advised that there were no further uses beyond those mentioned in the consultation, that the Department should consider.

17. Are there sectors/uses where low-carbon hydrogen should be used instead of other alternative renewable fuels?

- 18 out of 38 (47%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 7 via email).
- 13 of the 18 (72%) respondents who answered this question said, "yes", indicating sectors/uses where low-carbon hydrogen should be used instead of other alternative renewable fuels. 5 of the 18 (28%) respondents answered, "*no*".

Those who answered "*yes*" (13 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Hydrogen is well suited for shipping, heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), long distance coaches, and large off-road agricultural machinery, where battery electric solutions face limitations in range, weight, or charging speed.
- Hydrogen provides long-term, large-scale energy storage, outperforming batteries for extended storage durations.
- Hydrogen is essential as a feedstock for producing ammonia, methanol, and synthetic fuels, and is crucial for e-fuels needed in shipping and aviation due to their energy density and storage requirements.
- While biomethane and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) have been used for decarbonising transport fleets to date, the development of hydrogen refuelling infrastructure could make hydrogen a viable option for converting existing fleets to low carbon fuels.
- Hydrogen should be prioritised in sectors where electrification and biofuels are not technically feasible, cost effective, or scalable, particularly in hard to abate sectors.
- Hydrogen blending for home heating may offer lower air pollutant emissions than biomass boilers but should only be pursued where it delivers co benefits for health and the environment.

Those who answered "*no*" (5 respondents) did not provide applicable additional information.

Hydrogen Sector Development

18. In your opinion, how can policy aid the development of hydrogen-related supply chains?

- 27 of the 38 (71%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (9 on Citizen Space, 18 via email).

Suggested actions to improve hydrogen supply chains include:

- Establishing robust national strategies, targets, and timelines to provide long term certainty and confidence for industry, investors, and stakeholders, enabling commitment to hydrogen projects.
- Offering grants, subsidies, tax credits, loans, and revenue support mechanisms to de risk investment and facilitate project development, particularly for first of a kind (FOAK) demonstrators and early-stage projects.
- Mandating or incentivising the use of hydrogen (and e-fuels) in hard-to-electrify sectors and potentially acting as an offtaker of last resort to guarantee demand and stimulate supply chain investment.
- Developing hydrogen infrastructure (pipelines, storage, distribution), modernising regulatory and certification frameworks, and enabling necessary grid and network upgrades to support hydrogen integration.
- Encouraging local manufacturing and the growth of high value component production through cluster development, local content requirements, strategic procurement, and coordinated public sector support.
- Fostering partnerships between industry, academia, and government to accelerate R&D, innovation, and best practice sharing supported by initiatives such as hydrogen innovation hubs and accelerators.
- Aligning hydrogen policy with wider energy, climate, and economic strategies, ensuring policy coherence across renewables, storage, and decarbonisation efforts.
- Providing consistent, long-term policy signals and stable regulatory frameworks to reduce perceived risks and attract capital.
- Removing barriers to entry and supporting technology and market development in the context of Northern Ireland's smaller scale and nascent hydrogen sector, including incremental and trial-based approaches.
- Developing supporting policies for feedstocks (e.g. biomethane) and biogenic CO2 to underpin hydrogen and e-fuel production.

19. What skills or courses should be considered to train or upskill the industry workforce to develop the hydrogen sector?

- 23 of the 38 (61%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (9 on Citizen Space, 14 via email).

Suggested actions to help with hydrogen-based skills included:

- Focus on hydrogen specific safety procedures, regulatory standards, and emergency response. Training should ensure safe handling and maintenance of hydrogen systems, particularly for zero emission fleets.
- Provide development in mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering, with advanced modules addressing hydrogen and clean energy technologies. Include maintenance and operation of hydrogen vehicles and infrastructure.
- Strengthen partnerships with universities and industry to offer research-led modules, hands on training, and industry placements, building local technical expertise and innovation.
- Embed hydrogen focused content into further education, apprenticeships, and short upskilling programmes, creating a coordinated pipeline of skills from construction through operation and maintenance for the hydrogen sector.
- Advocate for reforming the Apprenticeship Levy in Northern Ireland to allow greater flexibility such as supporting shorter training programmes to better address local workforce needs and skills shortages.
- Develop courses aimed at strengthening local hydrogen supply chains and building region specific specialist skills.
- Leverage Northern Ireland's established engineering base, acknowledging the need for targeted upskilling in emerging hydrogen related areas.
- A comprehensive skills strategy, including hydrogen safety, gas network integrity and integration with existing engineering qualifications.

Regulatory Framework

20. What are the priority regulatory issues for the local hydrogen sector?

- 24 of the 38 (63%) respondents to the consultation answered this question (10 on Citizen Space, 14 via email).

Suggested key regulatory priorities included:

- Establish a clear, and robust regulatory framework covering the entire hydrogen value chain from production, transport, storage, blending, and end use.
- Appoint an appropriate regulatory body to oversee hydrogen policies, procedures, and certification.
- Expand the Utility Regulator's remit to explicitly support net zero and decarbonisation, facilitating coordinated transition and investment.
- Guard against undue influence from large corporations and ensure independent oversight, transparency, and public engagement in project evaluation and funding decisions.
- Support local projects access to UK wide funding mechanisms and enable "stacking" of production and demand side incentives for e-fuels and hydrogen projects.
- Ensure NI hydrogen projects can compete for DESNZ Hydrogen Storage and Transport Business Models.
- Enable access to renewable electricity from the wider Single Electricity Market (SEM) and Great Britain.
- De-risk and streamline grid connection processes for large-scale projects, including conditional or "connection in principle" pathways.
- Accelerate infrastructure development for hydrogen transport and storage, ensuring sufficient capacity for energy security.
- Simplify and expedite planning and permitting processes, especially for first of a kind (FOAK) and emerging low-carbon technologies.
- Clarify and update health and safety regulations, considering hydrogen-specific risks in production, transport, blending, and use.
- Harmonise safety and handling standards with UK and EU requirements.
- Adopt UK-wide Low Carbon Hydrogen Certification Scheme to ensure market access, compliance with decarbonisation targets, and eligibility for subsidies.
- Comply with environmental permitting requirements, including pollution prevention and control and ensure projects meet EU Industrial Emissions Directive requirements and consider impacts such as NOx emissions and water use.
- Include sunset clauses or periodic review to shut down or reassess hydrogen infrastructure if uptake is weak or technology shifts.

21. Do you agree with the Department's intention to appoint the Utility Regulator as the economic regulator for hydrogen?

- 28 out of 38 (74%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 17 via email).
- 26 of the 28 (93%) respondents answered *"yes",* indicating support for the intention to appoint the Utility Regulator as the economic regulator for hydrogen. 2 of the 18 (7%) respondents answered, *"no".*

Those who answered *"yes"* (26 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Utility Regulator (UR) already has established experience and authority regulating gas, electricity, and water, making it well suited to include hydrogen.
- Extending the UR's remit to include hydrogen, enables an integrated approach across electricity, gas, and hydrogen networks, supporting efficient energy system planning and decarbonisation objectives.
- Appointing the UR provides a clear and consistent regulatory framework, which is crucial for attracting investment, securing funding, and giving confidence to industry participants in the emerging hydrogen sector.
- The UR's appointment aligns Northern Ireland's regulatory practice with the wider UK.
- Respondents emphasised the need to update legislation (such as the Gas Order (NI) 1996) to give the UR explicit powers over hydrogen, and to design a robust, future proof regulatory framework that avoids ambiguity, supports innovation, and remains flexible.
- Early, active engagement with stakeholders is recommended to ensure the regulatory approach is tailored to hydrogen, avoids unintended barriers, and supports new business models and technologies.
- It is recognised that the UR will need additional technical expertise, resources, and coordination with relevant bodies (e.g. Health and Safety Executive) to effectively regulate hydrogen.
- Although supporting the appointment, one response noted that the hydrogen market is still nascent and cautioned that regulation should be introduced in line with market development.

Those who answered *"no"* (2 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Argument for separation between general energy regulation and the specialised area of hydrogen, believing the regulator's broad remit limits effectiveness in the sector.
- The regulator's main focus should be on public costs and should not extend to commercial contractors or the provision of road and commercial fuels.

22. Do you agree with the Department's intention to adopt the Low Carbon Hydrogen Certification Scheme (LCHCS)?

- 29 out of 38 (76%) respondents answered this question fully (11 Citizen Space, 18 via email).
- All respondents who answered this question said, *"yes",* indicating support for the intention to adopt the LCHCS.

Those who answered, *"yes",* (29 respondents) provided opinions such as:

- Respondents cited the LCHCS credibility, transparency, and ability to ensure consistency across the UK market.
- Adopting the UK wide scheme is seen as critical to enabling cross-border trade and access to new low carbon markets, both within the UK and with the EU, particularly given NI's position in an all-island energy market.
- Respondents highlight that a common certification scheme supports investor confidence, unlocks funding and investment opportunities, and is key for large-scale projects, job creation, and industrial decarbonisation.
- There is consensus that the scheme must be compatible with EU Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBO) standards and allow flexible access to renewable electricity across the Single Electricity Market (SEM) and Great Britain, not just Northern Ireland generation.
- Several respondents advise ongoing engagement with relevant stakeholders including DESNZ to ensure continuous alignment and improvement.
- The need to monitor the evolving scheme, consider the potential for hydrogen imports/exports, and ensure compatibility with international regulations and certificate programmes is recognised as important for long term energy security and competitiveness.
- Respondents generally agree that Northern Ireland should mirror Great Britain standards to ensure parity and maximise benefits from UK-wide policies and funding

ANALYSIS OF ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EVENT

The stakeholder engagement workshop was attended by over 40 participants on 26th November 2025. Much of the feedback received from the participants mirrored the formal responses to the questions in the consultation. Therefore, the feedback presented below accounts for *exceptional information*, that does not appear in the formal consultation responses or provides additional information over and above the information included in the formal consultation responses. This information has been taken into consideration when providing the responses in chapters 2-6.

Funding for the local hydrogen sector

- Current curtailment funding methods are inefficient; resources should be redirected to support innovative solutions that utilise curtailed wind energy, such as hydrogen production via electrolysis.
- A flexible, regionally focused funding scheme—modelled on the HAR scheme but adapted for Northern Ireland—would better address local needs and encourage innovation.
- Legislation and funding frameworks should remain adaptable to support diverse project types and promote ongoing innovation in the sector.
- There is a supply and demand dilemma: investment in production is limited without guaranteed demand, and demand won't grow without reliable production; funding should support both sides, especially partnership-driven projects with anchor off-takers.
- Currently, reliance on private investment is restricting progress; dedicated and flexible public funding is required across the hydrogen value chain, including production, workforce development, and manufacturing support.
- Funding should accommodate the possibility of failure, recognising that unsuccessful projects still contribute valuable learning for the sector.

Dedicated hydrogen pipelines and alternative transport solutions

- Tube trailers currently provide a flexible transport and storage solution for NI's low hydrogen supply, especially for smaller or decentralised users. Road-based tanker transport remains important, especially in regions like the South West, and decarbonising vehicles could address emissions concerns.

Priorities for hydrogen storage in NI

- Prioritise immediate development of small-scale, localised hydrogen storage solutions due to current low production and demand. Tube trailers provide a practical and flexible method for transporting and storing hydrogen, particularly for decentralised or smaller users. These localised storage options are vital until hydrogen production scales up to justify larger, centralised storage facilities.
- Improving hydrogen compression technology is essential, as existing systems are bulky, expensive, and occupy substantial space. Efficient compression is critical for both storage and transport, influencing the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of all storage strategies.

Other major uses for low carbon hydrogen

- Data Centres: The potential exists for hydrogen to supply power to data centres, depending on their location and future development prospects in Ireland (e.g. subject to SONI approval) data centres, could be required to use hydrogen, which would stimulate demand and encourage investment in supporting infrastructure.
- Special Applications - Flexible, mobile hydrogen production units offer potential for diverse uses, including events (e.g. concerts) and construction sites. Military settings highlight hydrogen's value for off-grid power, for example by supplementing solar generation with fuel cells at army bases.

Support to develop the hydrogen supply chain

- Increased public education is needed to build acceptance and understanding of hydrogen.
- Clear communication should explain that hydrogen may not lead to immediate reductions in energy bills but can help stabilise costs and reduce volatility compared to natural gas.
- Widespread education also plays a crucial role in promoting the development of conversion skills in the workforce.

Gaps in skills or training provision

- Urgent requirement for upskilling in instrumentation, control, and engineering.
- Promotion of apprenticeships from age 16 and reskilling of existing trades for hydrogen and renewables.
- Curriculum updates and incentives to attract students to relevant courses.
- Funding challenges, particularly for conversion skills and older learners.
- Significant gaps at Level 3 and 5 qualifications—shortage of new entrants with hydrogen skills.
- Ongoing deficit in engineers, planners, M&E engineers, construction workers, and renewable technicians. Need to incentivise tradespeople to remain in Northern Ireland.
- Promotion of transferable skills (e.g. problem solving) inherent in trades like electricians.
- Knowledge sharing and project-based learning to build practical experience.
- Clearer certification standards and partnerships between industry and education providers required.
- Shortage of heat pump engineers and renewable technicians for routine work.
- Emerging need for hydrogen-to-power expertise, especially in Northern Ireland.

Regulatory barriers or uncertainties that need attention

- Planning procedures are described as complicated and drawn out, with statutory agencies working in isolation, contributing to significant project delays.
- Infrastructure expenses, particularly for grid connections, are increasing sharply (e.g. wind turbine costs have quadrupled), making projects financially challenging.
- Statutory consultees lack coordination, resulting in project applications being delayed until all agencies have responded.
- The presence of multiple regulators and departments with overlapping or unclear responsibilities leads to inconsistent procedures and additional delays. There are calls for a single regulatory body or team to streamline oversight for hydrogen and energy projects, especially in urgent situations.
- Certification procedures, are slow and burdensome (e.g. taking up to nine months), in contrast to more efficient processes in other parts of the UK.

ANNEX B: SUMMARY OF PREFERRED POLICY POSITIONS

Please find below a list of the Department's 'preferred policy positions' which were included in the consultation document:

- To ensure parity with the rest of the UK (and signatory partners on the international stage) on the standard of hydrogen being produced here, the Department will continue to promote the Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard.[5]
- The Department will focus on existing UK and island of Ireland wide funding streams as the means to support low carbon hydrogen production in the region.
- To reflect the role of hydrogen in our future energy mix, the Department will produce a hydrogen target focused on energy security.
- The Department is open to dedicated hydrogen infrastructure in the longer term, provided it is economically viable.
- The Department will support the long-term storage of hydrogen to help provide energy security and system flexibility.
- In relation to industry, the Department will support the use of hydrogen being focused in hard to electrify sectors across industry where economically viable.
- The Department will encourage the use of hydrogen to produce e-fuels and SAFs.
- The Department will prioritise biomethane as the primary means of decarbonising the gas distribution network. More evidence is needed before a final decision on hydrogen blending can be taken.
- The Department will promote electrification and explore renewable gases such as biomethane as pathways to decarbonise home heating, and to divert focus to areas where hydrogen has the most potential impact.
- The Department will appoint the Utility Regulator as the economic regulator for hydrogen.
- Rather than develop a local specific hydrogen certification scheme the Department will adopt the Low Carbon Hydrogen Certification Scheme.

5 UK Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard - GOV.UK

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Request to Name Council Facilities - Ballygowan Multi-Use Games Area
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA 153 / 88006
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
A request has been submitted in writing to the Chief Executive seeking approval to name the new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Moss Road, Ballygowan, in memory of the late Iris Oliver.

A new MUGA was constructed at the Moss Road Playing Field facility in 2026 as part of a wider development of the site, including a carpark upgrade and the installation of walking trails.

Iris Oliver joined Ballygowan and District Community Association (BDCA) in June 2014 and was elected Chairperson in October 2015. She served as Chairperson until her passing in September 2021. During her tenure, she provided leadership throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and remained in post despite a period of serious illness during 2020 and 2021.

For approximately seven years, Iris was an active member of BDCA, serving as Chairperson for six years. The request states that she made a significant contribution to the Ballygowan community and that naming the facility in her honour would provide a fitting tribute to her commitment and service.

In 2020, Iris received the Ards and North Down In Bloom Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of her contribution to transforming and enhancing the Ballygowan area. She played a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining attractive floral displays around the village hall and surrounding areas. Through successful applications for grant funding, Iris also helped secure seating, raised beds and picnic benches for community use.

The name proposed is "Iris Oliver Memorial Games Area"

Key Issues
Council has an agreed policy which ensures a consistent approach to the naming of Council facilities. Council is mindful that such decisions should promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Names should normally comprise two parts.

The first part of the name must:

- Not be considered offensive* to any group or individual within the Borough. A name will be considered offensive if it can be interpreted to be abusive, antagonistic, discourteous, disrespectful, lurid or rude.

- Not be the surname of any living person or a name which can be clearly attributed to any living person. Council will however consider an application to name a facility after an individual who is deceased and has made an extraordinary contribution* in some way to the Borough and its residents or public life in general.

- An extraordinary contribution must have benefitted a significant number of people and/or been made over a significant period of time, must be fundamentally philanthropic and must comply with the seven principles of conduct underpinning public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

The second part of the name should be appropriate to the physical resource, for example, "Hall", "Centre", "Playing Fields" or other similar descriptors.

Parks and Cemeteries Officers met with the committee of Ballygowan and District Community Association on 24 June 2026 to discuss the proposal. The group were supportive of the proposal and recognised the significant contribution Iris made to the area. Members also placed on record their recognition of the contributions made by former Chairs and members of the Association who have since passed away.

On 25 June 2026, Parks and Cemeteries Officers met with the family of Iris Oliver to discuss the proposal. The family expressed their support for the proposed naming.

Next Steps
In line with the 'Requests to Name Council Facilities' policy, Council will consider the proposal against the agreed principles contained within the policy.

Should the request be approved, Officers will take the appropriate steps to rename the facility and install appropriate signage.

Should Council reject the application, the applicant will be notified in writing, together with the reasons for the decision.

Summary
A request has been received to name the new Multi-Use Game Area (MUGA) at Moss Road, Ballygowan, the **"Iris Oliver Memorial Games Area"** in recognition of the significant contribution made by the late Iris Oliver to the Ballygowan community over many years.

Iris was a long-serving member of Ballygowan and District Community Association, including many years as Chairperson, and was recognised through the Council's In Bloom Volunteer of the Year Award in 2020 for her efforts in enhancing the village through environmental improvements and community initiatives.

Council's agreed policy for naming facilities permits consideration of naming a facility after a deceased individual where they have made an extraordinary contribution to the Borough and its residents. Officers have engaged with both Ballygowan and District Community Association and the family of Iris Oliver, all of whom have expressed support for the proposal.

Council is therefore asked to consider the request against the principles contained within its approved naming policy before determining whether the facility should be formally renamed.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Considers** this report and determines whether the proposed naming of the facility as the "**Iris Oliver Memorial Games Area**" should be approved in accordance with the Council's approved Policy for 'Requests to Name Council Facilities'.

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Notice of Motion 713 Memorial Bench for Jaidyn Rice
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	Notice of Motion 713
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
In March 2026 the following decision was agreed by Council as a result of a Notice of Motion:

"That this Council notes the profound impact on the Clandeboye Community of the tragic death of 16 year old DICE leader and Army Cadet Jaidyn Rice on the 8th July 2025 and further notes the terrible loss of seven other lives on roads in our Borough during 2025, the highest of any Council area. Further that this Council tasks officers to work with the Rice family to create a bench honouring Jaidyn's contribution to her community, such bench to be a place of reflection, connection and outreach, in an agreed location and incorporating Council's Here to Help app for signposting to vital support services around the Borough**."**

Following the Council decision, officers met with members of the Rice family to discuss the Notice of Motion, the Council's existing Memorial Bench Policy and the family's wider work to promote road safety awareness following Jaidyn's death.

Key Issues
Council currently operates an approved Memorial Bench Policy, which sets out the process for the provision of memorial benches on Council-owned land.

Under this policy, applications are accepted annually from 1st April and, where applications exceed availability, applicants are selected through the established process. A maximum of twenty memorial benches are approved each year to ensure consistency, fairness and the sustainable management of Council assets and open spaces. The existing policy is currently under review and an updated policy will be submitted to a future meeting.

The existing Memorial Bench Policy does not provide for individual benches to be allocated outside the established application process. Officers are required to administer all applications in accordance with the approved policy to ensure equitable treatment of all applicants and to avoid creating precedents that could undermine the integrity of the scheme. Officers therefore do not have delegated authority to make an individual allocation outside the approved policy.

To depart from the approved policy in this instance would create a precedent for future applications and could expose the Council to challenge on the grounds of inconsistency or unfairness in the application of an approved Council policy.

Officers met with members of the Rice family to discuss the Council decision and the requirements of the Memorial Bench Policy.

The family expressed their understanding of the current policy arrangements and indicated their willingness to submit an application through the established process. Subject to a successful application, officers will work with the family to identify an appropriate location and to incorporate a QR code linking directly to the Here2Help app.

During discussions with the family, it was recognised that Jaidyn's death formed part of a wider issue relating to road traffic fatalities and the significant impact these

incidents have on families, friends and local communities. Officers therefore explored the potential for a broader and more permanent memorial that would recognise all victims of road traffic collisions within the Borough while also promoting road safety awareness and access to support services.

Initial engagement has been undertaken with Road Safe NI, who have indicated a willingness to participate in the development of such a project in collaboration with their affiliated charity, The Road Ahead NI. Early discussions have identified opportunities to create a meaningful memorial and educational feature that could both commemorate lives lost and contribute to wider community awareness regarding road safety.

The development of a permanent road traffic victims memorial would require the allocation of capital funding and the preparation of an appropriate business case. Any funding requirement would need to be considered through the Council's annual rate-setting and budget process.

Should funding be approved, officers will adopt a collaborative co-design approach involving victims' families, relevant support organisations, Road Safe NI, The Road Ahead NI and the Policing and Community Safety Partnership. This approach would seek to ensure that any memorial is sensitive, meaningful and reflective of the experiences of those affected by road traffic fatalities.

It is noted that a similar collaborative design model was successfully employed in the delivery of the Dementia Friendly Sensory Garden in Ward Park.

The proposed road traffic victims memorial would be additional to, and not a replacement for, the memorial bench associated with Jaidyn Rice.

Next Steps
The Rice family will be invited to submit an application for a memorial bench through the Council's Memorial Bench Policy process. Subject to a successful application, officers will work with the family to identify an appropriate location and incorporating a QR code linking directly to the Here2Help app**.**

Officers will develop an outline proposal and business case for consideration of a memorial for all victims of road traffic collisions as part of the Council's rate-setting and budget process.

Subject to Council approval of funding, officers will establish a stakeholder working group consisting of families, charities and relevant Council officers, to commence a co-design process to develop the feasibility, scope and objectives of a permanent memorial recognising victims of road traffic fatalities.

Summary
Council has previously agreed to support the creation of a memorial bench recognising the contribution of Jaidyn Rice and incorporating access to support services through the Here2Help app. While the Council's approved Memorial Bench Policy does not allow for the allocation of benches outside the established application process. The

Rice family has indicated their willingness to proceed through the existing arrangements.

In parallel, officers have started exploring the potential for a wider permanent memorial to commemorate victims of road traffic fatalities within the Borough. Early engagement with relevant road safety organisations has been positive, and subject to future funding approval, officers will develop proposals for consideration by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Agrees** to the approach below:

1. Note the engagement undertaken by officers with the Rice family following the Notice of Motion and the family's willingness to proceed through the Council's existing Memorial Bench Policy process.
2. Agree that any memorial bench application will be processed in accordance with the Council's approved Memorial Bench Policy.
3. Note officers' initial engagement with Road Safe NI and The Road Ahead NI regarding a wider road traffic victims memorial.
4. Agree that officers develop an outline proposal and business case for consideration of a memorial for all victims of road traffic collisions as part of the annual budget and rate-setting process.

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme
Attachments	30 June 2026 Department of Justice Letter to Council Chief Executives
File Reference (if applicable)	69001
Legislation	Other Offensive Weapons Act 2029
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 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 has received correspondence, dated 30 June 2026, from officials in the Department of Justice requesting its participation in an Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme in the autumn. A copy of the correspondence is included (attached) for Members' information.

Key Issues

As part of The Offensive Weapons Act 2019, the Department of Justice (NI) plans to make the private possession of a range of offensive weapons illegal. The possession of these items in a public place is already an offence. These offensive weapons include zombie knife, machete, flick knife and ninja sword and images are shown in the DoJ letter.

If the law changes to ban items that were previously legal to own, owners should be provided with a safe and legal way of disposing of said items before they become illegal. As a result, the DoJ intends to operate a "Surrender & Compensation Scheme" in 17 designated police stations and has requested that councils provide locations for "Community Surrender Bins" at Household Recycling Centres across Northern Ireland.

It is proposed that specially designed, secure wheelie bins are located in both Bangor (Balloo) and Newtownards Household Recycling Centres. Recycling Centre staff would have a very limited role except for signposting the location of the bins to the public and there will be no additional cost to Council. Subject to approval and confirmation of the scheme dates, it is envisaged that the Community Surrender Bins would be in location from October 2026 for three months.

The two legacy councils previously participated in initiatives to remove dangerous objects and on this basis, it is recommended that Council participates in the Department of Justice's Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme.

Summary

The Department of Justice has requested that local authorities assist in the introduction of new legislation to remove offensive weapons from the community by installing Community Surrender Bins at Bangor (Balloo) and Newtownards Household Recycling Centres. There would be no cost to Council and very limited involvement of Council staff with the bins envisaged to be in location for three months from October 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Approves participation in the Department of Justice's Offensive Weapon Surrender Scheme in autumn 2026.

Department of Justice
www.justice-ni.gov.uk

To Council Chief Executives

30 June 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: OFFENSIVE WEAPONS ACT 2019 & ASSOCIATED SURRENDER SCHEME

Background

Knife crime has a serious and wide-ranging impact, causing death and injury while also creating long-lasting psychological harm for victims, families, and communities. Offensive weapons and knives are involved in a large proportion of homicides, showing how lethal the problem can be. Beyond physical harm, it increases fear of crime, especially among young people who are disproportionately affected, with many witnessing or experiencing violence, which damages wellbeing and community cohesion.

The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 is UK Government legislation designed to reduce violent crime by tightening controls on the sale and ownership of corrosive substances, knives, offensive weapons and certain firearms.

Later this year, the Department of Justice (NI) plans to commence the parts of the Act that relate to private possession of a range of offensive weapons. Possession of these items in a public place is already an offence.

Essentially this means that if police currently find an offensive weapon such as a zombie knife, a zombie style knife, machete, flick knife, cyclone knife or a ninja sword in a private place, for example in someone's home, they can only take action and seize the knife in question if it is considered to be evidence in a criminal investigation. However, upon the commencement of relevant provisions of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 it will render possession alone an offence, thereby empowering police to seize such items and consider referral to the prosecution authorities.

Surrender Schemes

If the law changes to ban items that were previously legal to own, owners should be provided with a safe and legal way of disposing of said items before they become illegal.

The Department of Justice hopes to provide two ways to allow for the disposal of items made illegal to own under the 2019 Act

A **Surrender & Compensation Scheme** will allow people to bring weapons to one of 17 designated police stations around the country. They will receive a receipt for the items from police which they will submit to DOJ to claim compensation for surrendered items.

We also hope to arrange a second way to allow people to dispose of weapons and it is this strand that requires assistance from local councils.

Community Surrender Bins

For those individuals who do not want to be compensated but need somewhere safe to dispose of the weapons, we propose providing Community Surrender Bins to be located at council recycling centres throughout Northern Ireland.

We have already had positive engagement with the Council Waste Forum, providing a presentation of our proposals and we now seek the support of our local councils in relation to the Community Bin Scheme.

I have attached an overview of the proposed scheme which includes answers to some anticipated questions. The attachment also provides a list and pictures a of the items to be banned under the Offensive Weapons Act.

However, some key points that council officials may wish to know are:

- The Department of Justice will cover the cost of the community bins and will be responsible for ensuring they are emptied with the knives disposed of in a safe and ethical manner. There will be no additional cost to any council.

- Recycling centre staff will have a very limited role. They will be required to point people who wish to use the scheme to the bins. They will not be required to engage with those surrendering items or to touch or have any contact with the items being handed over. Council staff will not be expected to inspect any of the items being placed in the bins.

- We hope to introduce the legislative provisions in September 2026, with the surrender scheme to launch later in the autumn. The Department will publicise the scheme in advance of the launch with plans for posters, social media content and stories carried by local press and television media.

- The scheme will run for 3 months, after which the bins will be removed and possession of any of the items named in the legislation will be a criminal offence.

The legislation and surrender schemes will deliver a range of benefits intended to enhance community safety, including:

- removing dangerous knives and offensive weapons from the community, therefore lowering the risk that they could be used in violent crime;
- strengthening police powers in relation to knife crime by making it illegal to possess certain offensive weapons in private; and,
- ensuring that individuals who acquired items legally are treated fairly when those items become prohibited.

I am more than happy to answer any queries that council members may have and would be very grateful if you would support the scheme and allow us to engage further with your colleagues to finalise details.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Bloomer

Victims Support Division, DoJ

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS COMMUNITY SURRENDER BINS GUIDANCE & FAQS

WHAT IS THE SCHEME ABOUT?

The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 ('the Act') is UK Government legislation designed to reduce violent crime by tightening controls on the sale and ownership of corrosive substances, knives, offensive weapons and certain firearms.

In the absence of a functioning NI Assembly in 2018/19, the Head of the Civil Service and Northern Ireland Office gave agreement to the provisions in the Act extending to Northern Ireland; with a view to commencement taking place once the Assembly was restored.

The Department of Justice is now seeking to commence the provisions of the Act relating to private ownership or possession of certain knives and offensive weapons.

In practice, the introduction of this legislation will criminalise in Northern Ireland possession of a range offensive weapons that have already been outlawed in England and Wales, such as flick knives, zombie knives and ninja swords (possession in public is already an offence in Northern Ireland).

A list of the weapons included in the 2019 Act is provided at Annex A.

The Surrender & Compensation Scheme

Section 48 of the 2019 Act provides for a surrender scheme that will allow individuals who lawfully owned any of the weapons prior to the introduction of the new law, to be able to hand them in and in some cases, receive compensation reflecting the value of the surrendered item(s).

They will do this by completing a form and handing over the item(s) to one of 17 designated PSNI stations around the country,

The PSNI will process the form and send it to the Department of Justice who will arrange payment of the compensation. You will note from Annex A that none of the items carry a particularly high value. If the claimant believes their item is of greater value than that detailed at Annex A, they must provide proof such as a receipt of purchase or independent valuation.

The total value of the compensation claim must be over £30 in order to be eligible for compensation.

The purpose of the new laws and the surrender scheme is to:

- remove dangerous knives and offensive weapons from the community, lowering the risk that they could be used in violent crime;
- strengthen police powers in relation to knife crime by making it illegal to possess certain offensive weapons; and,
- ensure that individuals who acquired items legally are treated fairly when those items become prohibited.

THE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS COMMUNITY SURRENDER BINS

This scheme is to cater for those individuals who wish to surrender items but do not want to claim compensation.

Our suggestion is for collection bins to be left in council recycling centres to allow individuals to dispose of the items.

FAQS FOR COUNCIL OFFICIALS

1. What will the bins look like?

They will be modified, reinforced wheelie bins, as below.

2. How many bins will be provided?

We will be led by council officials put we plan to place one bin in each designated recycling centre.

3. Will the scheme be publicised?

Yes, publicity will be led by the Department with plans for posters, social media content and stories carried by local press and television media.

Obviously support in terms of publicity by councils will be welcomed.

We will also arrange for notices at council sites.

4. How many weapons do you think will be handed over?

It is difficult to say, we expect limited numbers of the items listed at Annex A. However, previous experience would show people tend to dispose of all kinds of knives in the bins, not just those set out in the legislation e.g. kitchen knives etc. We have no issue with that and do not require council staff to inspect any of the items.

5. How will weapons be brought to council sites?

It will be up to individuals to transport items to the council sites. They will receive clear instructions about packaging and safe transportation.

Council staff will not be expected to collect or transport any items as part of the scheme.

- ✓ Make sure the weapon is securely packaged / wrapped and placed inside a sealed bag, box or case;
- ✓ Keep it concealed in transit - ensure the weapon remains safely stored in its sealed box or bag at all times while traveling. It must not be held in your hands, put in a waistband, or left visible inside any vehicle
- ✓ Once you arrive at the site and establish where the surrender bin you can dispose of it carefully by placing it in the bin
- ✓ If you are surrendering a large quantity of weapons (typically more than 10), you should contact the Department of Justice before you travel to any site to dispose of the weapons.

6. Are there any costs for the council?

No, the Department of Justice will provide the bins, publicise the scheme and arrange for collection at the end of the surrender period (3 months).

7. What role will council staff play?

Recycling centre staff will have a very limited role. They will be required to point people who wish to use the scheme to the bins. They will not be required to engage with those surrendering items or to touch or have any contact with the items being handed over. As noted above, Council staff will not be expected to inspect any of the items being placed in the bins.

8. Is there a total 'amnesty' with the scheme?

In the main, yes. Police will not ordinarily check or test any weapon handed in. However, if they do suspect a weapon has been used in a crime they have the power to recover it and test it.

9. Is there any compensation element to the community bin scheme?

No, that will be made clear in the promotional documentation.

10. How long will the scheme last?

3 months – dates TBC, but will likely commence in October 2026.

11. What happens at the end of the scheme?

The Department will arrange collection and emptying the bins by an approved contractor. The items collected will be destroyed in an ethical and safe manner.
We will arrange collection from all sites at the end of the 3 month scheme. If bins are full before that, we can arrange interim collections (we think that is unlikely, but it can be arranged).

12. What happens the bins at the end of the 3 month scheme?

That has yet to be confirmed, we may ask the supplier if they will take them back to re-purpose and would obviously negotiate the cost on that basis.

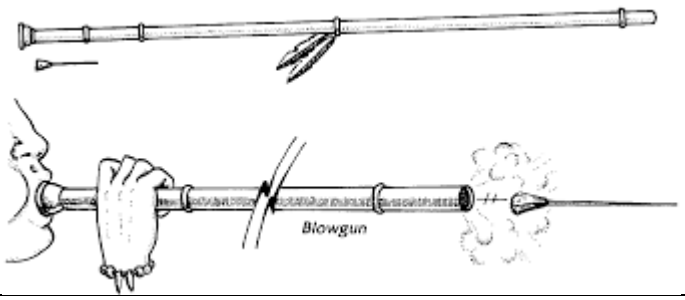
If that is not possible, we may ask councils if they wish to retain them (at no cost).

If councils do not want them, we will ensure they are removed from your sites.

ANNEX A - LIST OF WEAPONS COVERED UNDER THE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS ACT 2019

DESCRIPTION OF ITEM	PICTURE OF ITEM	VALUE OF EACH ITEM
Flick Knives: Knives with blades that spring open automatically by pressing a button, spring, or device on the handle.		**£20**
Gravity Knives: Knives where the blade is released from the handle by gravity or centrifugal force and locks into place.		**£40**
A knuckleduster, that is, a band of metal or other hard material worn on one or more fingers, and designed to cause injury, and any weapon incorporating a knuckleduster		**£2**
A swordstick, that is, a hollow walking stick or cane containing a blade which may be used as a sword.		**£12**

The weapon sometimes known as a "hand claw", being a band of metal or other hard material from which a number of sharp spikes protrude, and worn around the hand		**£9**
The weapon sometimes known as a "belt buckle knife", being a buckle which incorporates or conceals a knife		**£5**
The weapon sometimes known as a "push dagger", being a knife the handle of which fits within a clenched fist and the blade of which protrudes from between two fingers;		**£2**
The weapon sometimes known as a "hollow kubotan", being a cylindrical container containing a number of sharp spikes;		**£3**
The weapon sometimes known as a "footclaw", being a bar of metal or other hard material from which a number of sharp spikes protrude, and worn strapped to the foot;		**£7**

The weapon sometimes known as a "shuriken", "shaken" or "death star", being a hard non flexible plate having three or more sharp radiating points and designed to be thrown;		**£5**
The weapon sometimes known as a "balisong" or "butterfly knife", being a blade enclosed by its handle, which is designed to split down the middle, without the operation of a spring or other mechanical means, to reveal the blade		**£9**
The weapon sometimes known as a "telescopic truncheon", being a truncheon which extends automatically by hand pressure applied to a button, spring or other device in or attached to its handle;		**£20**
The weapon sometimes known as a "blowpipe" or "blow gun", being a hollow tube out of which hard pellets or darts are shot by the use of breath;		**£14**

The weapon sometimes known as a "kusari gama", being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at one end to a sickle;		**£35**
The weapon sometimes known as a "kyoketsu shoge", being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at one end to a hooked knife;		**£20**
The weapon sometimes known as a Manrikigusari "or "kusari", being a length of rope, cord, wire or chain fastened at each end to a hard weight or hand grip		**£10**
A disguised knife, that is any knife which has a concealed blade or concealed sharp point and is designed to appear to be an everyday object of a kind commonly carried on the person or in a handbag, briefcase, or other hand luggage (such as a comb, brush, writing instrument, cigarette lighter, key, lipstick or telephone);		**£5**

A stealth knife, that is a knife or spike, which has a blade, or sharp point, made from a material that is not readily detectable by apparatus used for detecting metal and which is not designed for domestic use or for use in the processing, preparation or consumption of food or as a toy;		**£3**
A straight, side handled or friction lock truncheon (sometimes known as a baton).		**£10**
Cyclone knives Section 47 of the 2019 Act amends includes cyclone/spiral knives and zombie knives, zombie killer knives, or zombie slayer knives.		**£10**
A "cyclone knife" or "spiral knife" - being a weapon with a handle, a blade with two or more cutting edges, each of which forms a helix, and a sharp point at the end of the blade.		**£30**

Zombie knives, Zombie-style' knives 'Zombie-style' machetes a blade with a cutting edge; a serrated edge; and images or words (whether on the blade or handle) that suggest that it is to be used for the purpose of violence.		**£10**
Ninja swords		**£5**

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	Response to NOM 632 HRC Pedestrian Access - Holywood and Millisle
Attachments	Holywood and Millisle HRC pedestrian access plan
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 632
Legislation	Other Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997
Resource Implications	Budget 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
From July 2025 to September 2025 the Council led a pedestrian access trial at two of the Council's smaller Household Recycling Centres - Holywood HRC and Donaghadee HRC. The pilot involved setting aside and publicising specific periods for pedestrian-only access. Evaluation of the trial found that these periods were not well used.

Following the presentation of a report summarising the results of the pedestrian access trial at Environment Committee in December 2025, Members requested a further report setting out industry good practice and other means by which safe pedestrian access might be introduced at HRCs.

A report was provided to Committee in April 2026. This report included, published good practice relating to pedestrian access in HRC operations, Healthy and Safety regulations and guidance relating to HRC operations, good operational practice at HRCs in NI Councils and a site-by site review of potential pedestrian access at AND's HRCs.

Key issues
The report offered three recommendations, with the below recommendation agreed.

To implement further measures to allow pedestrian access at the two sites Holywood HRC and Millisle HRC.

This would require additional works and a phased introduction as follows.

Holywood HRC has a separate pedestrian access gate; however, the current layout does not adequately segregate vehicles and pedestrians. It is recommended that pedestrian access is considered following improvements to the site layout, refreshed site markings, and introduction of bollards. This is subject to availability of budget.

Millisle HRC - A separate new pedestrian access gate is required. This would be in addition to refreshed site markings, changes to the site layout, and introduction of bollards. This is subject to availability of budget.

Therefore, work up a business case for 2027/2028 for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at the two HRCs referred to, including an analysis of demand.

Next steps

Holywood HRC
Holywood Household Recycling Centre currently has a dedicated pedestrian access gate. To enhance site safety and improve traffic and pedestrian management, additional line marking works are required throughout the site, as illustrated in the proposed site layout (Appendix A). Additional, removable bollards will also be required.
The proposed works are estimated to cost £10,500 and will require the temporary closure of the site for approximately 1-2 days to allow the works to be completed safely and efficiently.

These improvements will help to clearly define vehicle and pedestrian routes, contributing to a safer and more effective site operation.

Millisle HRC
Millisle Household Recycling Centre currently does not have an existing dedicated pedestrian access gate. To improve pedestrian safety and site accessibility, a section of the existing boundary wall will need to be removed to facilitate the construction of a new pedestrian entrance and exit. Dropped kerbs at the entrance will need introduced and several removable bollards installed throughout the site.

The estimated costs of these works is £45,000.

In addition, new line markings will be required throughout the site, as illustrated in the proposed layout (Appendix B), at an estimated cost of £3,000. These marking will provide clear segregation between vehicle and pedestrian movements and improve overall site safety.

The site will also require a revised operational layout, including the relocation and reorganisation of waste streams, to accommodate the proposed pedestrian access and to optimise site flow.

It is anticipated that the site will need to be temporarily closed for a short period to allow the required works to be completed safely and efficiently.

The proposed improvements will enhance site accessibility, improve traffic and pedestrian management and support a safer operation of the site.

Signage
New signage will be required for both HRC sites. This is estimated to cost £2,000 for both sites.

Booking system
The booking system will require ‘new work’ to be carried out to introduce the pedestrian function for Millisle and Holywood bookings. Pedestrian bookings will follow the same terms and conditions as vehicle users and must provide booking reference and proof of address on entry. The ‘new work’ has been estimated to require two days, costing £1,400.

Table 1.0 Estimated cost breakdown

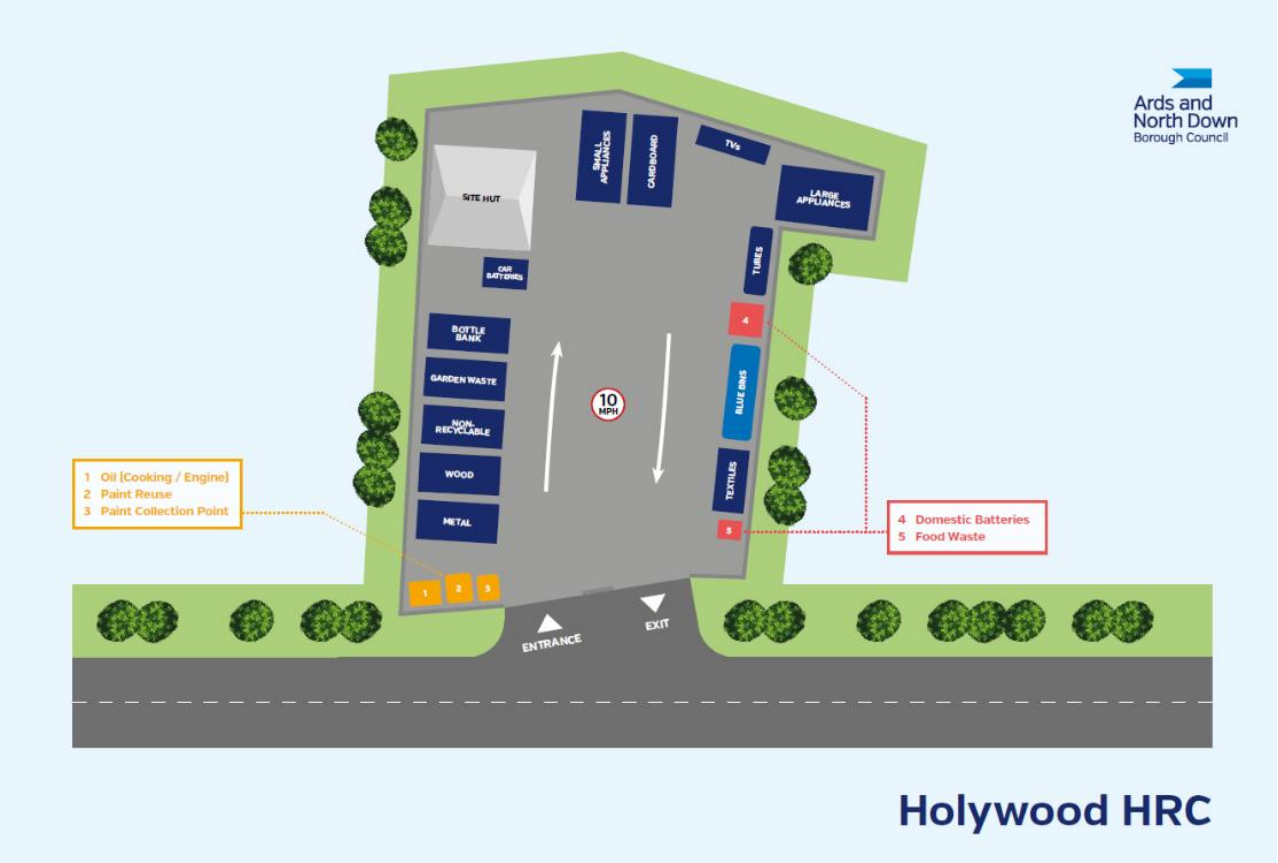
Millisle	£48,000
Holywood	£10,500
Signage	£2,000
Booking system	£1,400
Total Estimated costs	**£61,900**

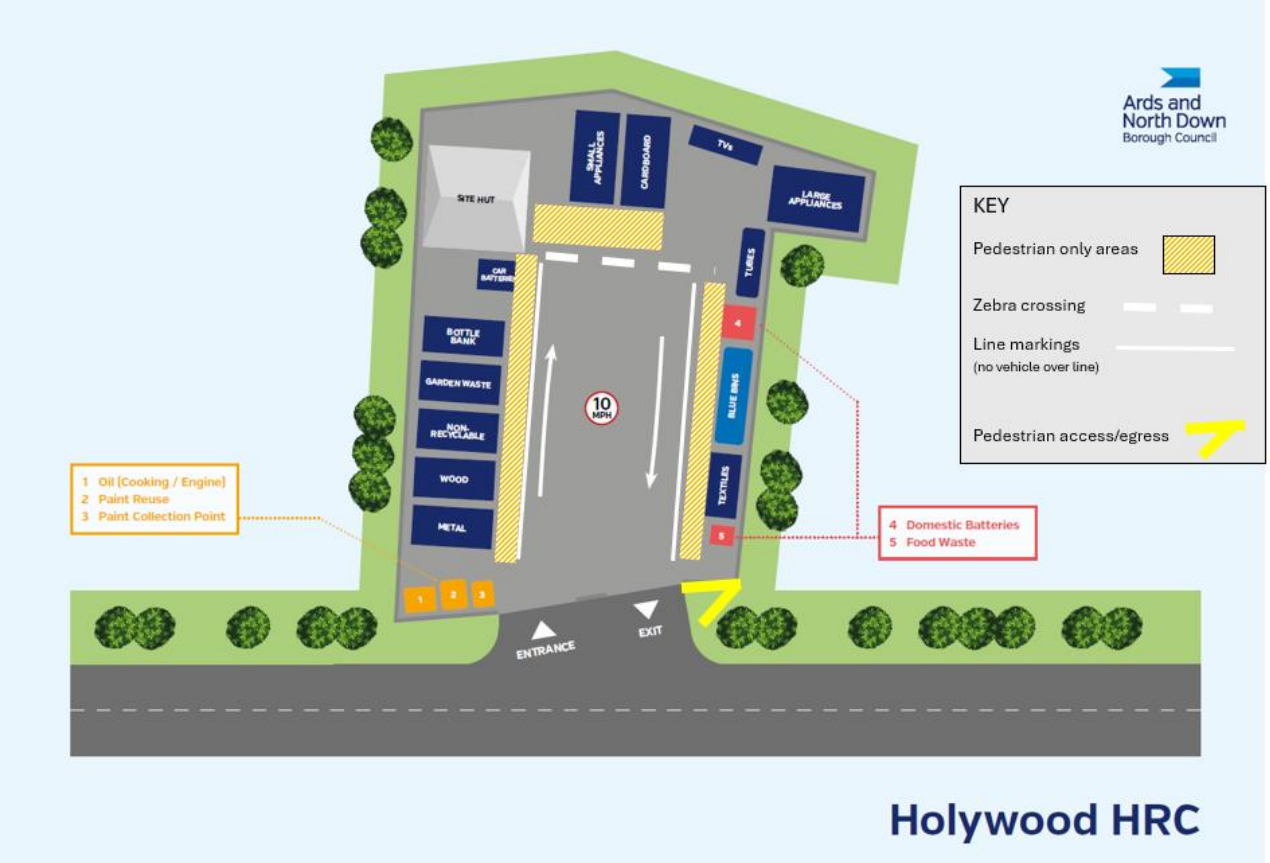
Summary
Subject to Member approval to proceed further, officers will develop a funding business case (in accordance with the established rates setting process) and detailed project plan for the implementation of the above site changes.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Considers the outlined tasks and if this proposal should be included for consideration within the 2027/2028 rates setting process.

Appendix A


Ards and North Down Borough Council
SITE HUT
SMALL APPLIANCES
CARDBOARD
TVs
LARGE APPLIANCES
TUBES
CAR BATTERIES
BOTTLE BANK
GARDEN WASTE
NON-RECYCLABLE
WOOD
METAL
10 MPH
BLUE BINS
TEXTILES
1 Oil (Cooking / Engine)
2 Paint Reuse
3 Paint Collection Point
4 Domestic Batteries
5 Food Waste
ENTRANCE
EXIT
Holywood HRC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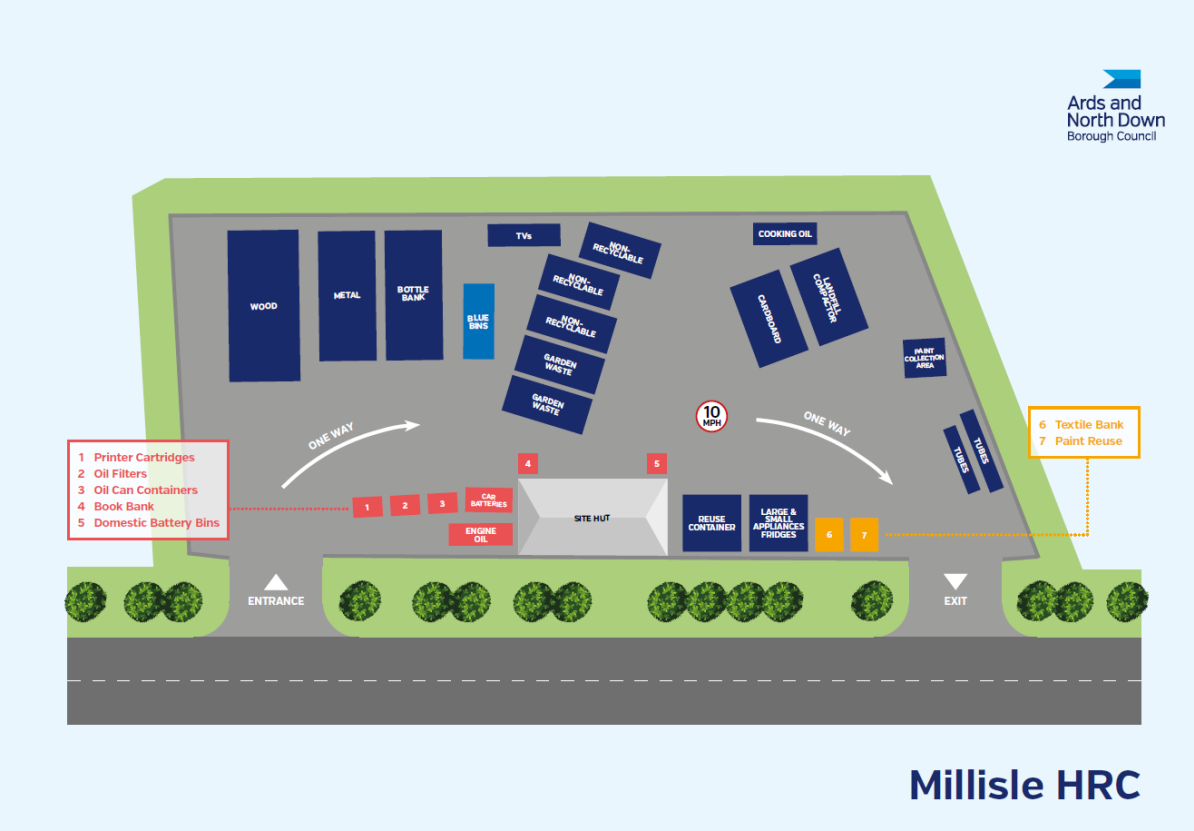
WOOD
METAL
10 MPH
BLUE BINS
TEXTILES
KEY
Pedestrian only areas
Zebra crossing
Line markings
(no vehicle over line)
Pedestrian access/egress
1 Oil (Cooking / Engine)
2 Paint Reuse
3 Paint Collection Point
4 Domestic Batteries
5 Food Waste
ENTRANCE
EXIT
Holywood HRC

Appendix B


Ards and North Down Borough Council
WOOD
METAL
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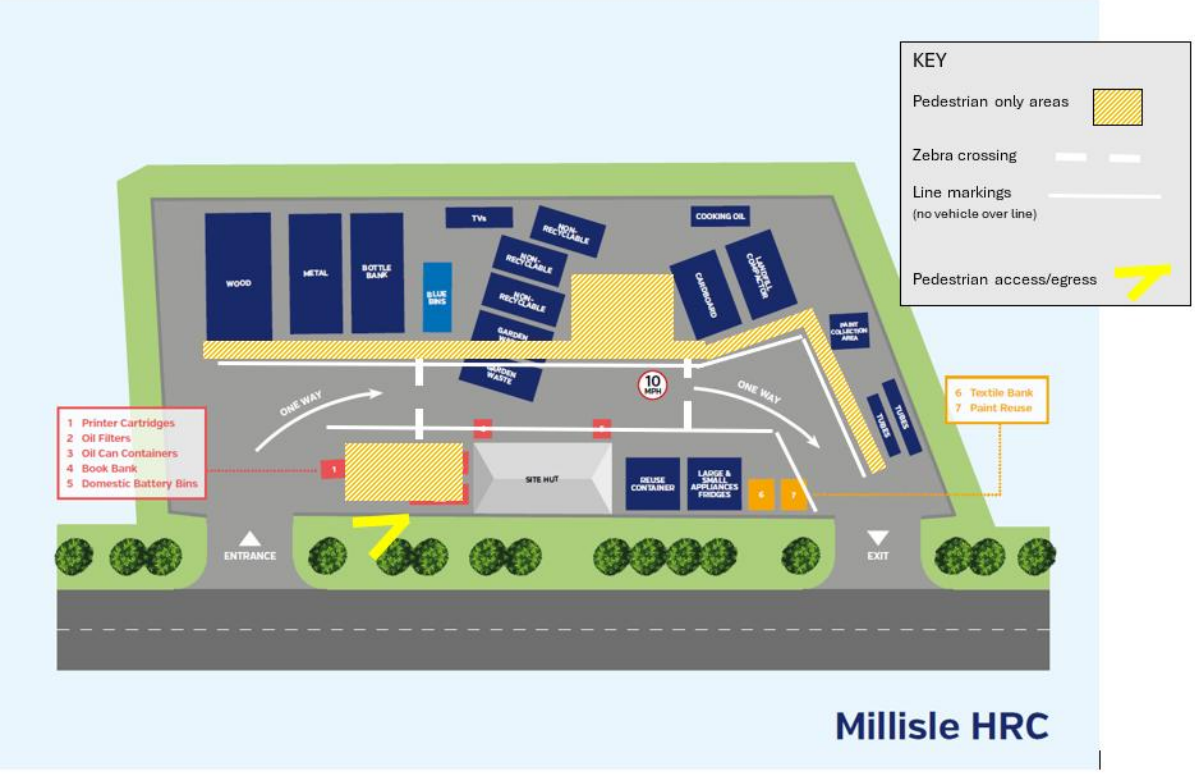
BLUE BINS
TVs
NON-RECYCLABLE
GARDEN WASTE
COOKING OIL
CARDBOARD
PAINT COLLECTION AREA
TUBES
10 MPH
ONE WAY
1 Printer Cartridges
2 Oil Filters
3 Oil Can Containers
4 Book Bank
5 Domestic Battery Bins
CAR BATTERIES
ENGINE OIL
SITE HUT
REUSE CONTAINER
LARGE & SMALL APPLIANCES FRIDGES
6 Textile Bank
7 Paint Reuse
ENTRANCE
EXIT
Millisle HRC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3 Oil Can Containers
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SITE HUT
REUSE CONTAINER
LARGE & SMALL APPLIANCES FRIDGES
6 Textile Bank
7 Paint Reuse
ENTRANCE
EXIT
Millisle HRC

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Response to Notice of Motion 700 - Linear Park Path Network
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 700
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 2: Environmental 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background
In February 2026 the following decision was agreed by Council as a result of a Notice of Motion: “That this Council notes the growing popularity of Linear Park in Bangor East as a hub for the local community. Further to this, Officers will bring back a report exploring options for providing path markings in both Upper and Lower Linear Park for runners, such as distance indicators e.g. 1 km, 2 km, along with appropriate signage to assist those who wish to keep fit in the Park. Officers will also examine options for upgrading the path and accompanying drainage system in Lower Linear Park between the bridge and the Ring Road, in light of persistent flooding and drainage issues.”

Key Issues
Linear Park is a popular and well-used urban park serving a large residential area, nearby schools and the wider Bangor East community. The park provides an important pedestrian link between residential areas and local shops, while also supporting informal recreation, dog walking, community use and active travel. The site includes valuable natural features, including tree canopy, a community orchard, informal hedgerows and areas which support biodiversity and community wellbeing.

In recent months, the formation of a community-led “Friends of” group has strengthened local engagement with the park. The group has provided a valuable route for community feedback and has identified a number of suggestions for future improvements.

Members of the group have expressed interest in walking and running route information, including a clear site map on the community noticeboard and distance markers along the route. This would support informal walking and running activity, rather than a formal Parkrun. For safety reasons, it is appropriate to limit route markings to the Ashbury shops side of Linear Park, thereby avoiding the need for users to cross Silverbirch Road unnecessarily.

Accessibility has been improved on the path in ‘lower’ Linear Park through the installation of a new path surface. The area in question is particularly low lying and in periods of high rainfall, the river tends to rise to levels above the normal flow. The area in question forms a natural floodplain and, for that reason, it would be difficult to provide a drainage solution that would fully alleviate future flooding.

As part of the investigation undertaken in response to this Notice of Motion, Officers were requested to assess the feasibility of introducing lighting within Linear Park. Members will be aware that Linear Park is secured and closed to the public during hours of darkness, with the park being locked each evening at a significant ongoing cost to Council. Given these existing operational arrangements, the installation of lighting is unlikely to represent a cost-effective investment or provide sufficient value for money.

Next Steps
At the time of writing a Walkability Audit is planned for end of August to provide a clear picture of pathway condition, accessibility, infrastructure and the level of works required to improve pathways around the park. This will ensure that any future works carried out meet the needs of all users. Following the Walkability Audit, route maps and distance markers will be progressed for a walking and running route in ‘upper’

Linear Park (Ashbury shops end), in collaboration with the Friends of Linear Park group. Officers will engage with the Rivers Agency to discuss the flooding issue and investigate appropriate potential solutions.

Summary
Following a Notice of Motion in February 2026, Council officers have explored options for walking and running distance markers in Linear Park and reviewed ongoing flooding issues in 'lower' Linear Park. Community feedback supports the introduction of route maps and distance markers in 'upper' Linear Park (Ashbury Shops side), while a recent Walkability Audit will help guide future improvements.

Although accessibility has been enhanced through path upgrades, flooding remains a challenge due to the area's location within a natural floodplain. Officers will continue to work with the Rivers Agency to investigate potential solutions.

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	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Quarterly Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Update 2026-2027 Quarter 1
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Updated Sustainable Energy Management Strategy Action Plan
File Reference (if applicable)	QSEMSU/2627/Q1 / 50002
Legislation	Other Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland)
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 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."

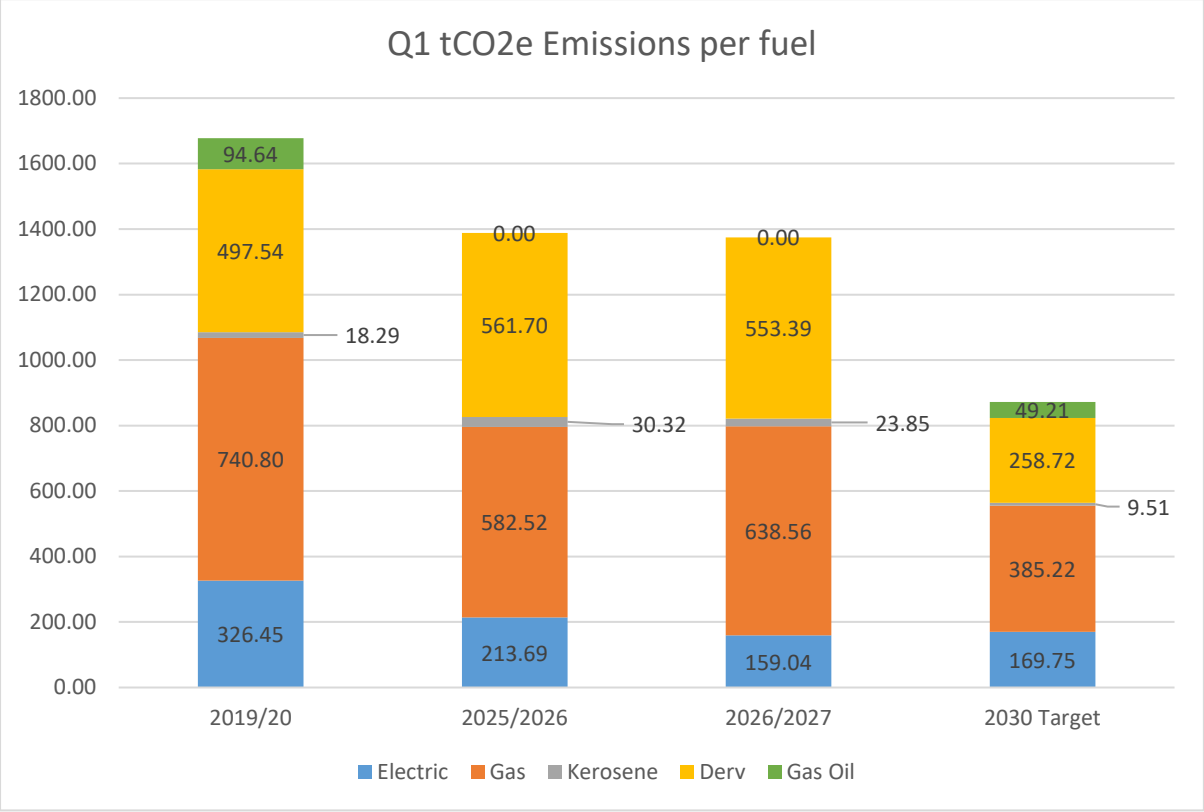
Improving oversight and accountability within the Council for energy management will ensure that consumption performance and the implementation of the Strategy and this action plan will be continuously monitored. Improved monitoring and governance will improve energy performance by ensuring actions are 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



Electricity

As shown in the graphs above, carbon emissions resulting from electricity consumption decreased in Q1 by 25.6% compared with the same period in the 2025/26 financial year.

When measured against our baseline year, Q1 also demonstrated a notable improvement, a reduction of 51.3% reduction in carbon emissions, equivalent to 167.41 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.

Top 4 sites with the most significant decrease in electricity consumption in Q1 2026-27

- Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre
- North Road Depot Waste Transfer Station
- Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station
- Bangor City Hall

Top 4 sites with the most significant increase in electricity consumption in Q1 2026-27

- Aurora Leisure Centre
- Londonderry Park
- Town Hall (Arts Centre/Market House) Newtownards
- Balloo Household Recycling Centre

The increase in electricity consumption across the leisure facilities appears primarily driven by higher occupancy and demand. The Aurora Leisure Centre has a defective CHP Gas Engine which results in importing more electricity from the Grid.

April 2025 was notably warmer overall in Newtownards than April 2026. April 2025 was the third-warmest April on record, with an average monthly mean temperature of 9.8°C and an average daily maximum of 14.6°C, compared with a cooler monthly mean of 8.6°C and average daily maximum of 13.1°C in April 2026.

The Newtownards Town Hall (Arts Centre) is heated using electricity. The cooler conditions experienced during April 2026 are therefore likely to have resulted in increased heating demand and may have contributed to the higher electricity consumption recorded during the period.

The function room facilities at Balloo Household Recycling Centre have experienced increased demand during the reporting period, with a higher number of bookings and meeting events. In addition, Service Unit Managers have reported that the exceptionally warm conditions experienced in June, which was the warmest June recorded in 50 years, resulted in increased use of air-conditioning equipment. These factors are considered likely contributors to the increase in electricity consumption recorded at the site.

Gas

Natural gas carbon emissions increased by 9.6% in Q1, compared to the same period in the 2025/26 financial year, resulting in an estimated 56 tCO_2 increase in emissions.

Relative to our baseline year, Q1 showed continued progress, with a 13.8% decrease in gas carbon emissions equivalent to a 102.2 tCO_2 reduction.

As noted above, April was notably colder than the corresponding period in the previous year, which is likely to have increased heating demand and associated gas consumption.

Top 4 sites with the most significant decrease in gas consumption in Q1 2026-27

- Redburn Community Centre
- Manor Court Community Centre
- Kilcooley Community Centre
- Westwinds Community Centre

Top 4 sites with the most significant increase in gas consumption in Q1 2026-27

- Queens Leisure Centre
- Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station
- Londonderry Park
- Queens Hall / Newtownards Library

The Environmental Resource Centre/Waste Transfer Station experienced a significant boiler failure during the winter period. To maintain continuity of service, a temporary replacement boiler was installed. However, the replacement unit has a slightly lower capacity than the original fixed installation, having been selected as the most suitable unit available at short notice.

As a result, the temporary boiler is required to operate under greater demand to maintain the required internal ambient temperatures, which may have contributed to increased energy consumption. Planned future works at the site will include the installation of a suitably sized and appropriately rated permanent boiler system, which is expected to improve heating efficiency and performance.

The Estates Team has also identified essential refurbishment works at Queens Leisure Centre and Londonderry Park. As part of these works, consideration is being given to replacing existing boilers with more modern, energy-efficient systems, alongside the potential integration of electric heating systems at sites where Solar PV installations are planned. This approach would provide an opportunity to maximise the use of on-site renewable electricity generation and further reduce reliance on fossil-fuel-based heating.

It should also be noted that not all gas meters are read on a monthly basis, and consumption data for some sites is therefore based on estimated meter readings. Caution should consequently be exercised when interpreting the reported figures and assessing overall consumption trends. Meter readings at some sites are obtained only

every six or twelve months, while larger-consuming sites are generally subject to automated daily meter readings.

As actual meter readings become available and replace estimated consumption data, some fluctuation or rebalancing of the reported consumption profile is expected. This may result in previously reported consumption figures increasing or decreasing accordingly. The position will continue to be monitored, with the expectation that any imbalance in the data will progressively reconcile during Q2 and subsequent reporting periods.

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:

- Deploying Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) and Monitoring & Targeting (M&T) systems, alongside Building Management Systems (BMS), to integrate heating controls and building metering infrastructure into a remotely accessible platform. This will enable more accurate and granular consumption profiles across multiple energy and utility sources, supporting improved monitoring, analysis and identification of consumption trends, anomalies, inefficiencies and opportunities for energy reduction.
- 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 2026/27 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 21.3% in Q1 compared to the same period in 2025/26 financial year, resulting in a 6.47 tCO_2 emissions reduction.

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.

When considering the combined reporting of diesel consumption, overall usage in Q1 was 6.5% lower than the corresponding period in the 2019/20 baseline year, resulting in an associated reduction of approximately 38.79 tCO_2e.

Diesel-related fleet emissions in Q1 were 1.5% lower than the corresponding period in 2025/26, representing a reduction of approximately 8.3 tCO_2e.

Total fleet mileage during the reporting period was 406,702 miles, representing an 8.5% reduction compared with the corresponding period in the previous financial year. Fleet diesel consumption also reduced, totalling 195,817 litres, a 2.8% reduction compared with the same period in 2025/26. This reduction has occurred despite there being no increase in the overall number of fleet vehicles compared with the previous financial year.

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 1 Utility/Fuel Type	2019/20 Costs £(NET)	2019/20 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)	2026/27 Costs £(NET)	2026/27 Unit Rate £/unit (NET)
Electric	£191,586.31	£0.15	£333,676.88	£0.27
Gas	£214,992.11	£0.05	£256,328.59	£0.07
Kerosene	£3,180.35	£0.44	£9,815.36	£1.05
Derv	£190,163.76	£1.03	£348,335.48	£1.38
Gasoil	£19,559.76	£0.57		
TOTAL	£619,482.30	-	£948,156.31	-

Highlights of Energy Saving Initiatives Delivered this Reporting Period

List below of recent energy saving initiatives in Q1:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO_2e reduction estimate	Annual cost saving estimate £(NET)
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

Donaghadee Parade – Public Toilets Refurb	2539 kWh	0.44	£660
Banks Lane – Public Toilet Refurb	1532 kWh	0.27	£398
TOTAL	**29,291 kWh**	**5.21**	**£7,615**

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 and KPI's for service unit managers to be agreed for 2026/2027.
- 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 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

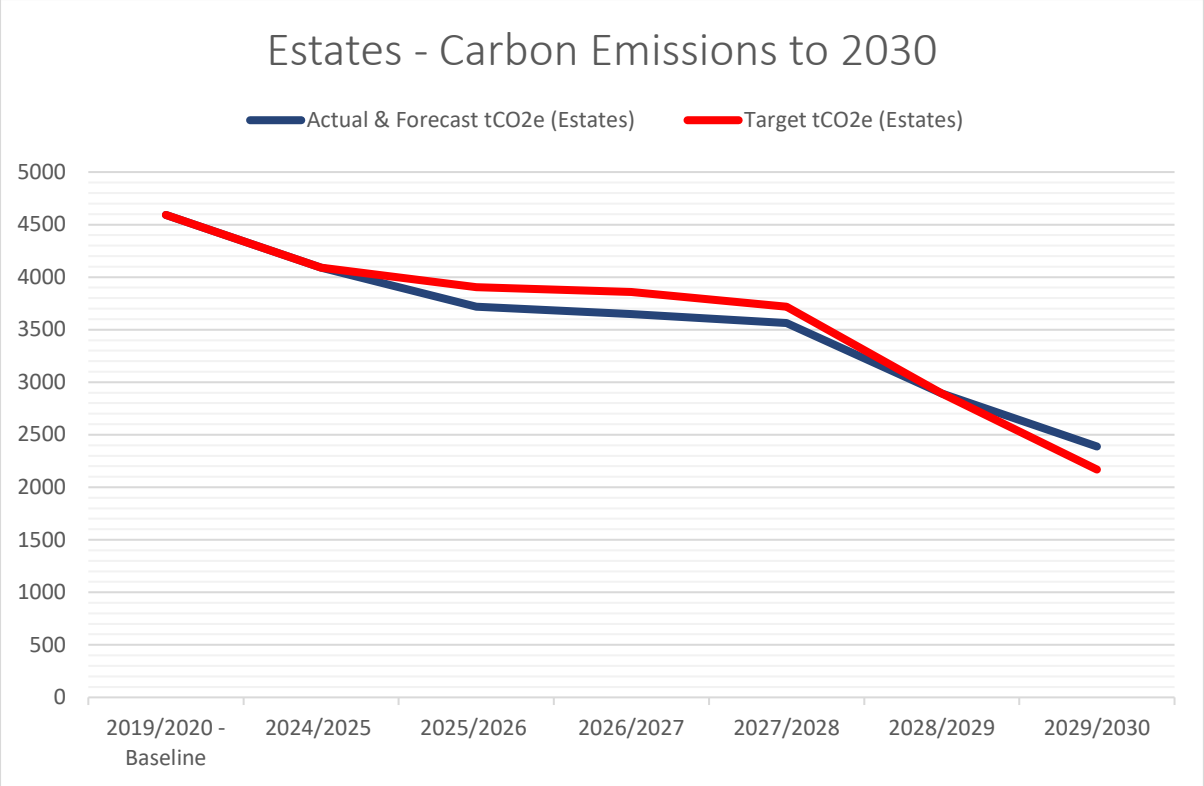
Ballygowan Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Green Road Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Skipperstone Road Community Centre – Battery Storage	~2,000 kWh (*design estimate only*)	0.35	£520
Ballyholme – Public Toilet Refurb	1442 kWh	0.26	£375
South Pier – Public Toilet Refurb	2539 kWh	0.44	£660
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 forecast variance and remain aligned with the target.



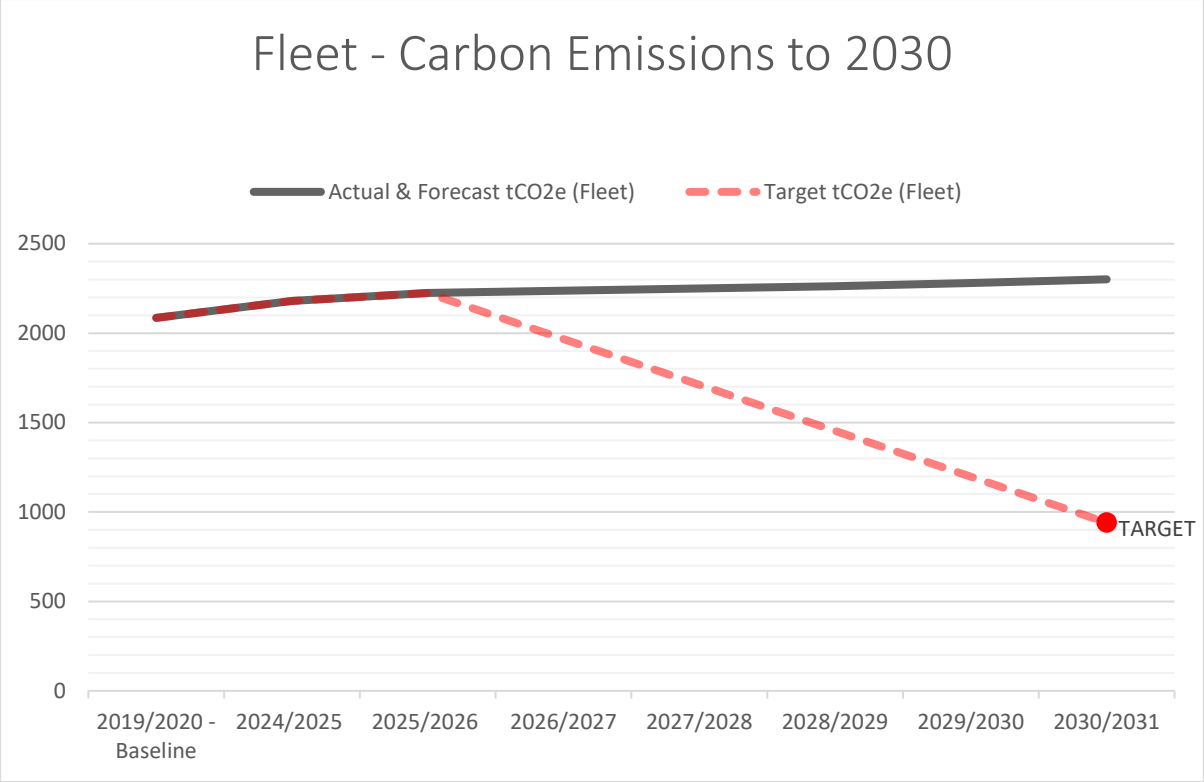
The graph below shows the overall change in fuel-related emissions across the Council's fleet since the 2019/20 baseline year.

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 would 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 Energy Officer has issued training material to sustainability team, who are now leading on this action. Energy consumption figures shared with Leisure and Community Centres to show big users. Estates to commission an audit of the leisure centre's operational efficiency in 2026/2027 to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

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

Council’s BMS supplier has been commissioned to develop an integration plan of the Building Management System with the Council’s energy management and Monitoring & Targeting (M&T) systems, enabling enhanced monitoring, analysis and reporting of building energy performance.</td></tr>
</table>

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.	Council's BMS supplier has been commissioned to develop an integration plan of the Building Management System with the Council's energy management and Monitoring & Targeting (M&T) systems, enabling enhanced monitoring, analysis and reporting of building energy performance. Further development required to tailor system to individual l buildings.
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	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

		○ Kilcooley Community Centre ○ 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.		temperatures in offices and public buildings to reflect energy savings in gas heating. To be aligned with BMS system integration.
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	133 kWp system currently being installed at the Environmental Resource Centre /Bangor Waste Transfer Station. Outline design completed for Londonderry Park with Battery Energy Storage. Concept to

		○ 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.		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 Community Centre to progress into outline design and planning permission applications in Q4 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	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.

		○ Ards Blair Mayne (replace existing hot water boilers with plater heat exchangers)			
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 ○ Skipperstone Community Centre	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. ○ 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.	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% higher than standard LPG. Carbon emissions associated with standard LPG are approximately 40% less carbon intensive than kerosene. BioLPG is effectively zero carbon rated.	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. 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 ○ 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)	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 when compared with older fittings.	Works progressing to install low energy LED lighting and lighting controls at the North Road Depot. Likely to commence in Q2 Currently working through zone by zone to replace light fittings and controls at Aurora Leisure Centre, and is ongoing. Works progressing in Queen's Leisure centre Detailed design completed at the Environmental Resource Centre/Bangor Waste Transfer Station. To

		○ 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 areas that currently do not have LED) ○ Aurora (LED replacements of fluorescent and microcell/PIR controls)			be developed into packaged of works with accompanying CDM documentation. Completed upgrade of lighting at Donaghadee Parade, Banks Lane and toilets to instantaneous heating systems to eliminate immersion heater systems. Works to commence in South Pier Toilets in Q2. Surveys completed at various public toilet buildings to assess feasibility of LED retrofit with PIR controls. Proposal being developed into detailed design along with package of works. Awaiting quotations from contractor for works costs.
Electric Storage Heaters	**Medium term** Director of Environment	Complete upgrades to more efficient alternatives to existing, aged storage heater units in the following locations:	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.

		○ Ards Arts Centre (partial replacement) ○ North Down Museum ○ Portaferry Market House			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 2026/27 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	02 September 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 27 April 2026
File Reference (if applicable)	CW30 / 88008
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 relating to connectivity, access and maintenance along the North Down Coastal Path, following the decision to withdraw the planning application for the proposed Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway Scheme. The Working Group is comprised of Elected Members and representatives from community and business organisations.

Key Issues
A meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group was held on 27 April 2026 and the minutes of the meeting were agreed by the Working Group at the 29 June 2026 meeting.

Next Steps
Request for Council to note the minutes and note the progress of the North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group.

Summary
The North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group, formed in September 2023 to address maintenance and connectivity, has finalised minutes from its 27 April 2026 meeting. The Council is asked to acknowledge the progress made by the group, which holds quarterly meetings to oversee improvements along the coastline.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the attached minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 27 April 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 27th 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)

Officers: Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Parks & 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 05/01/ 2026

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 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 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 the 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 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 providing directions into 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 29th June 2026 – 6 pm
Monday 28th September 2026 – 6 pm

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

The meeting ended at 6.41 pm.

ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Community Trails and Greenways
Attachments	Appendix 1: Calender of Events 2025/2026
File Reference (if applicable)	CW30 / 88003
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the progress of the Community Trails and Greenways Unit within the Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service. Members will be aware that in 2024 Council appointed a Development Officer (Community Trails and Greenways) with a clear role to:

- manage and support the development of active travel and recreation opportunities within the Borough;
- ensure a customer focused approach by engaging with key stakeholders to identify and implement environmental and commercial measures and sustainable project solutions;
- develop, identify, and promote the appreciation and enjoyment of Council owned Parks and other greenspace assets and resources across the Borough.

A suite of events listed in the attached appendix aligns closely with the overarching goals outlined in the Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Key Issues

The Community Trails and Greenways programme continues to make a significant contribution towards the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan, through a diverse range of walking, cycling, biodiversity, heritage and wellbeing initiatives delivered across the Borough. The programme is designed to encourage greater use of parks, greenways, community trails and open spaces whilst supporting health improvement, environmental awareness, community engagement and active travel objectives.

The activities delivered throughout 2025-2026 demonstrate strong alignment with a number of Corporate Plan objectives, particularly those relating to lifelong learning, cultural and heritage development, community partnership working, physical and mental wellbeing, sustainable travel and equitable access to services. Through a varied programme of events, residents and visitors have been provided with opportunities to learn new skills, engage with the natural environment, explore local heritage and participate in healthy outdoor recreation activities. These events have encouraged people of all ages and abilities to become more active and connected within their communities.

A key area of delivery has been the promotion of physical and mental wellbeing. Walking festivals, Bike Week activities, seasonal guided walks, biodiversity events and inclusive cycling programmes have encouraged participation in outdoor recreation and supported the Council's objective of improving health and wellbeing for residents. The availability of free and accessible activities has helped reduce barriers to participation and has ensured a broad range of opportunities are available to different sectors of the community.

The programme has also contributed significantly to environmental education and sustainability. Biodiversity walks, tree identification sessions, seabird walks and conservation-focused events have increased understanding of local wildlife, habitats and environmental stewardship. These activities support the Council's commitment to

developing a sustainable borough and help foster a greater appreciation of the Borough's natural assets.

Community engagement and partnership working remain central to the programme's success. Activities have been delivered in collaboration with Council departments, community organisations, specialist facilitators, local experts and external agencies. This collaborative approach has enabled the delivery of a varied and high-quality programme while strengthening community ownership, civic pride and social connectedness. Heritage walks delivered in partnership with the North Down Museum and inclusive cycling programmes delivered with community organisations demonstrate the value of cross-sector collaboration in achieving shared outcomes.

The programme has further supported the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan by encouraging greater use of Council parks, trails and natural spaces as safe, accessible and vibrant community assets. Activities such as Walking Week, Bike Week, inclusive cycling initiatives, biodiversity workshops and the development of the Cairnwood Tale Trail have enhanced visitor experiences, increased participation and promoted inclusive access to outdoor recreation opportunities**.**

An important aspect of programme delivery has been the embedding of the "Five Steps to Wellbeing" throughout activities and events. Participants have been encouraged to connect with others, keep active, continue learning, take notice of the natural environment and give back through volunteering, knowledge sharing and community participation. This approach has ensured that wellbeing outcomes remain central to all programme activity.

The strong attendance levels achieved at major events and festivals demonstrate a growing demand for outdoor recreation, active travel and environmental learning opportunities across the borough. The programme continues to provide an effective mechanism for engaging residents, supporting visitor experiences and promoting the borough's parks, trails, coastline and green infrastructure assets.

In 2026, the Council's infrastructure has taken a significant step towards supporting the delivery of these activities, with the completion of the new Greenway from Green Road, Bangor to Newtownards. While Officers continue to work through some minor issues, the significant usage is already clear to see.

Next Steps

Officers will continue to deliver a year-round programme of walking, cycling, biodiversity, heritage and wellbeing events across the borough. The programme will build upon the success of Walking Week, Bike Week and other established festivals through the introduction of new activities and partnership opportunities. Opportunities for inclusive participation will develop further, ensuring activities remain accessible to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Promotion of active travel and sustainable recreation through increased use of community trails, greenways and shared-use pathways will continue with a sustained focus on new facilities and attractions that encourage greater use of parks, open spaces and greenway infrastructure.

Officers will continue to strengthen partnerships with community organisations, statutory agencies and specialist providers to enhance programme delivery and maximise external funding opportunities where available.

Summary
The Community Trails and Greenways programme has made a significant contribution to the delivery of both the Council's Corporate Plan and the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan during 2025-26. Through a comprehensive programme of walking, cycling, biodiversity, heritage and wellbeing activities, the service has successfully promoted active lifestyles, environmental awareness, community participation and sustainable travel across the borough.

The breadth and diversity of activities delivered have enabled residents and visitors to engage with the borough's parks, trails, coastline and green spaces in meaningful ways while supporting physical health, mental wellbeing and lifelong learning. Strong attendance at festivals and events demonstrates continued public demand for these opportunities and highlights the value of investing in accessible outdoor recreation programmes.

The programme continues to demonstrate the Council's commitment to developing a sustainable, vibrant and inclusive borough. By building upon existing successes, strengthening partnerships and expanding opportunities for participation, Community Trails and Greenways will continue to play an important role in enhancing quality of life, supporting community resilience and encouraging greater use of the borough's natural and recreational assets.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this report.

Appendix 1: Calendar of Events 2025/2026

Date	Event	Location
Aug-25		
Friday 1 August	Inclusive Cycling	Bangor Sportsplex
Wed 13 August	Teens on wheels	Killinchy Skate Park
Wed 20 August	Teens on wheels	Comber Skate Park
Sat 30 August	Park Pedal	Londonderry Park
Sep-25		
Sat 27 September	Park Pedal	Comber Parkway
Oct-25		
Sat 25 October	Park Pedal	Ward Park
Thurs 30 October	Inclusive walk with Outdoor Partnership	Pickie Park
Nov-25		
Tues 5 November	Walking & Singing with Body Song Ireland	Portaferry
Sat 15 November	Tale Trails launch	Cairn Wood
Tues 27 November	To the Trees with Dylan Freeburn	Cairn Wood
Dec-25		
Thur 4 December	Inclusive walk - withThe Outdoor Partnership	Cairn Wood
Sat 13 Decemeber	Park Pedal	Castle Park Bangor
Jan-26		
Sat 24 January	Walk & Bird watching	Glenlyon Park
Wed 28 January	Mindful walks Coastal Path from Seapark	Seapark
Feb-26		
Wed 11 February	Mindful walks Coastal Path	Helens Bay
Wed 25 February	Mindful walks Coastal Path	Pickie Park
Mar-26		
Tues 3 March	EVAWG- Womes Aid Users only	North Down Coastal Path
Tues 10 March	EVAWG- Twilight walk - with PSNI	Donaghadee
Wed 11 March	Mindful walks Coastal Path	Groomsport

Thur 12 March	Cycle programme with youth at Green Rd	Conlig
Sat 21 March	Park Pedal	Ward Park
Tues 24 March	Awake the Garden - women & girls' event	Walled Garden
Mon 30 March	Bike checks staff	Church St and Balloo ERC
Apr-26		
Thur 2 April	Seabird sightings with Adam Ringland	Portaferry
Tues 14 April	Teens Girls BMX	Queens Hall Newtownards
Thur 16 April	Seabird sightings with Adam Ringland	Kircubbin
Thur 16 April	Cycle programme with youth at Green Rd	Conlig
Sat 18 April	Park Pedal	Londonderry Park
Mon 20 April	Bike checks staff	Balloo ERC and North Road
Thur 23 April	PILOT cycle programme-guides session 1	St Comgalls , Bangor
Thur 30 April	Seabird sightings with Adam Ringland	Pickie Park
Thur 30 April	PILOT cycle programme-guides session 1	St Comgalls , Bangor
May-26		
Sat 2 May	Walk & Talk - Wildlife and wisdom	Corrog Wood
Wed 13 May	My Ride Our Right - Glow ride - EVAWG	Bangor
Thurs 14 May	Seabird sightings with Adam Ringland	Groomsport
Sat 16 May	Park Pedal	Conlig
23-30 May	AND Walking Week daily walks	
Tues 26 May	Walking for All/The Columbanus Way	Somme Centre
Sat 30 May	Family guided walk	Cairn Wood
Jun-26		
Sat 6 June	Park Pedal	Comber Parkway
8-15June	Bike Week	Borough Wide
Mon 8 June	Bike Week Bike checks for staff and public	Church St, N'Ards & Walled Garden
Tues 9 June	Bike Week- Wheels and Thrills	Newtownards
Wed 10 June	Bike Week- Wheels and Thrills	Portavogie
Thur 11 June	Bike Week- Wheels and Thrills	Killinchy
Sat 13 June	Quietways peninsula route cycle	Bangor

24-26 June	For Everyone workshops	Bangor, Newtownards, Comber
Jul-26		
24 June to 1 July	Accessible / Inclusive cycle sessions	Bangor Sportsplex
Thur 30 July	Community Bike Ride on Greenway	Greenway
Thur 30 July	Orchardville cycle group - accessible bikes	Bangor Sportsplex

ITEM 15

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	N/A
Report title	Response to Notice of Motion 714 Request for Public Conveniences at Helen's Bay Train Station
Attachments	Response from Translink
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 714
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 2: Environmental 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background
Council agreed to the following as a result of a Notion of Motion in May 2026.

'Council notes the extension to the platform at Helen's Bay Station to enhance the safety of high numbers of visitors at peak times. To cope with such influxes of visitors, Council writes to Translink and requests that it provides toilet facilities at the railway station.'

A Letter was sent to Translink on 5 June 2026 and receipt was acknowledged on 8 June 2026. A response to the letter was received on 24 June 2026 from Ian Campbell, Director of Service Operations (attached at Appendix 1).

Key Issues
The response has indicated that Helen's Bay Station does not have a building nor is it staffed and as such there is no existing infrastructure to accommodate a toilet facility nor staff to control access. They do point out that all trains have on board toilet facilities.

Next Steps
Council are being asked to note the reply from Translink.

Summary
Translink have stated that they are unable to provide toilet facilities at Helen's Bay Station for the reasons stated in the attached letter.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this report.

Translink
Better. Connected

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
29 JUN 2026
OFFICE

3rd Floor
22 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7LX

24th June 2026

Susie McCullagh
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council
Town Hall
The Castle
Bangor
BT20 4BT

Dear Susie,

Correspondence re providing toilet facilities at Helen's Bay station

Thank you for your correspondence regarding facilities at Helen's Bay rail halt, and for your kind words highlighting the work we have recently completed to extend the platform.

Translink has carefully considered the Council's request in relation to the provision of public toilet facilities at this location. However, Helen's Bay is a railway halt that does not have a station building nor is it a staffed location. As such, there is no existing infrastructure to accommodate a toilet facility nor staff to manage and control access.

We would highlight that all NI Railways train services are equipped with onboard toilet facilities, which are available for customer use throughout their journey.

We appreciate the Council's interest in enhancing local amenities, however the physical and operational constraints of Helen's Bay station mean that it is not currently feasible to provide toilets at this halt.

We will continue to work with the Council and other key stakeholders regarding the arrangements at Helen's Bay rail halt and will continue to keep our station facilities under review as part of our wider investment and improvement programmes.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Campbell
Director of Service Operations

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Standard

Translink is a trading name used by any one or more of the companies under the ultimate ownership of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC). The Group comprises NITHC as parent company which owns Citybus Limited (which also trades as "Metro") (NI009039), Flexibus Limited (NI006724), Ulsterbus Limited (NI006725), Translink (NI) Limited (NI006673), NIR Networks Limited (NI017638), Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited (NI006929) - each of which is registered in Northern Ireland and has its registered office at 22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT2 7LX; and NIR Operations Limited (NI021091) - which is registered in Northern Ireland and has its registered office at Lanyon Place Station, 47 East Bridge Street, Belfast, BT1 3NR.

ITEM 16

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Notice of Motion 706 Fallen Trees over Enler River
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 706
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background
In March 2026, the following decision was agreed by Council as a result of a Notice of Motion:

"To task officers to investigate and engage with other statutory agencies to work together to safely remove the fallen trees over the Enler River, Comber, which has been there since Storm Eowyn"

Key Issues
In response to the Notice of Motion, Officers have engaged with relevant stakeholders, including statutory agencies, and undertaken investigations to establish ownership of the land on which the fallen tree is located. This work has also formed part of wider land ownership investigations associated with the proposed Greenway project. Despite extensive enquiries and a review of available mapping and property records, Officers have been unable to identify the landowner of the affected area.

As the tree is not located on Council-owned land, the Council has no direct responsibility for its removal or ongoing management. Whilst the wider Greenway investigations may assist in clarifying ownership in due course, those processes have not yet reached a conclusion and no authority has been identified which would permit or require the Council to undertake the works at this time.

Council's approach to asset management requires that its limited operational resources are prioritised towards the maintenance, improvement and management of land and assets for which it has ownership or statutory responsibility. Undertaking works on third-party land where ownership has not been established would be inconsistent with this approach.

Intervening in these circumstances may also establish a precedent for Council undertaking works on land that it neither owns nor controls. This could create expectations that similar requests elsewhere across the Borough would be accommodated, potentially resulting in ongoing financial and operational commitments beyond the Council's established responsibilities and available resources.

The estimated cost of removing the tree is £2,880 plus VAT. Whilst this cost is relatively modest, although no budget is currently available, the principal issue is not the cost of the works but the Council's legal ability to undertake works on land where ownership has not been established. In the absence of a confirmed landowner, there is also no mechanism available to recover these costs should the Council proceed.

Undertaking works on land where ownership has not been formally established presents a number of risks for the Council. Should a landowner subsequently come forward, the Council could face allegations of trespass, be required to cease works, restore the land to its previous condition, or potentially compensate the landowner for any losses incurred. Furthermore, the expenditure of public funds on land outside the Council's ownership or control may be subject to challenge and could be viewed as poor value for money.

By carrying out works on land outside its ownership or control, the Council may also assume responsibility for the ongoing safety and condition of the site and any associated infrastructure. Uncertainty regarding land ownership can create difficulties in relation to future maintenance obligations, liabilities and regulatory compliance. It is therefore considered prudent that ownership and any associated legal interests are fully established before Council resources are committed to undertaking works.

Officers have engaged with relevant stakeholders and will continue to monitor any opportunities that may arise through future Greenway investigations or other statutory processes that could help clarify ownership and inform any future course of action.

Officers have considered the current condition and position of the fallen trees. Based on visual assessment, the trees appear stable and is considered unlikely to move from its current position. Consequently, the risk to members of the public is considered to be low

Next Steps

Officers will continue efforts to establish ownership of the land through ongoing investigations associated with the proposed Greenway project and any available statutory records**.** Should land ownership be established, Officers will engage directly with the landowner to discuss the condition of the tree and any potential remedial actions. Officers will keep the situation under review and report back to Members should new information emerge regarding ownership, statutory responsibilities or potential delivery mechanisms.

Summary

In response to the Notice of Motion, officers have consulted with relevant stakeholders, including statutory bodies, and carried out investigations to determine ownership of the land where the fallen trees over the Enler River are located. As the trees are not situated on Council-owned land, the Council has no legal ability to enter the land and no statutory obligation has been identified that would enable intervention at this time.

Whilst the estimated removal cost is relatively modest, undertaking works on land of unknown ownership would expose the Council risks and could establish an operational expectation for intervention on land outside the Council's ownership or control in other places. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council continues to pursue clarification of ownership before considering any intervention on the site.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this report.

ITEM 17

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Portavogie and Portaferry 3G Pitch Projects – Bi-Monthly Update
Attachments	Appendix 1 Portavogie Committee Update Appendix 2 Penninsula Committee Update
File Reference (if applicable)	CW74 / 88005
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Recreation and Youth Services Order (1986)
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: 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 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
In February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

"That Council notes the closure of the training area at Portavogie Football Pitch due to health and safety concerns, recognises the negative impact this has on local provision and sports development and tasks Officers to bring forward a report on options to provide temporary training facilities in the village in the short term and repairs to the pitch in the long term. As a matter of urgency Council tasks Officers to bring forward a bimonthly progress report on the development of the Portavogie 3G Pitch, Portaferry Sports Centre and Portaferry 3G Pitch to this committee."

The previous report was submitted to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in September 2025. Since then, Members and key stakeholders have been updated on the two 3G pitch projects through alternative communication methods, including email and telephone correspondence. Following re-organisation, these bi-monthly 3G pitch reports will be reported to the Environment Committee, and the update on the Portaferry Sports Centre is now a matter for the Active and Healthy Communities Directorate. Formal reporting was temporarily paused to allow time to deal with some sensitive issues pertaining to land, access, property and confidential matters, which have now largely been resolved. The pattern of reporting using the RAG status will now recommence.

Key Issues
This report provides the bi-monthly updates requested by Council in relation to the two capital projects. The updates are presented in the RAG reporting format, as requested by Members in May 2024.

Next Steps
Officers will recommence bi-monthly reporting to the Environment Committee using the agreed RAG status format and will continue to update Members on project progress, risks and key milestones.

Summary
1. An update on the Portavogie 3G Pitch project is attached at Appendix 1.
2. An update on the Peninsula 3G Pitch project is attached at Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this update report

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 22.
Information up to date as of 18th August 2026

This report has been prepared for information purposes and is issued to interested parties to update them on the most pressing of work streams currently being undertaken.

Planning application:	LA06/2020/0844/F (submitted on 21 September 2020)
Proposal:	Upgrade to existing football ground to include the placement of the existing grass pitch with synthetic surface, fencing and floodlighting along with replacement changing pavilion, new access road and visibility splays, additional car parking spaces and associated siteworks
Location:	Football ground to the rear of no. 8 and 10 New Harbour Road, Portavogie

For Information – RAG status

Green	Amber	Red
Good progress is being made, with no significant issues.	Progress is being made with some issues needing to be worked through.	Issues exist that could put elements or the whole project at risk.

Background

A planning application was submitted in September 2020. All consultation responses were received one year later, in September 2021, with the exception of the NI Water (NIW) consultation response.

NIW issued reports and maps indicating that underinvestment and lack of capacity over significant areas of Northern Ireland, which is stifling, delaying, and preventing a large amount of capital development projects throughout Northern Ireland. Portavogie is one of the areas affected.

With regards to Portavogie, NIW responded to the planner in November 2021 objecting to the scheme and started a process that resulted in them requesting additional design works related to their infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. The design was to be carried out and developed to Stage 2 (as outlined in their solutions report) to allow NIW's sign off on the proposal and issue of their final consultation response to Planning.

In September 2023, the EU Commission adopted the EU REACH restriction on intentionally added microplastics. Once entered into force, the restriction will apply in the EU and Northern Ireland. A sales ban on granular infill materials will apply after eight years so that affected stakeholders have time to develop and switch to alternative materials.

In the interim and in light of the science underpinning the restriction, SES requested robust evidence of appropriate mitigation for artificial surfaces with linkages to designated sites, stating that the most effective control is avoidance of infill materials entering the aquatic environment. ANDBC were re-consulted through the planning

process in May 2024 and asked to demonstrate that effective mitigation is in place for the Portavogie 3G Pitch.

In October 2024, DfI Roads withdrew their original consultation response to the proposed redevelopment and reconsulted with PlanningNI, advising that they now consider the proposal unacceptable, as submitted.

1. Programme

Green	Amber	Red
	The programme for the delivery of the project is being updated as part of the Business Case development process	

Further to receipt of planning approval on the 31st March 2026,a realistic timeframe for project delivery is being considered as part of the Business Case development process. The programme is dependent on Council approval of the updated Business Case.

2. NI Water: Offsetting

Green	Amber	Red
A solution has been agreed with NIW who have confirmed their conditional approval to the proposed scheme.		

Following re-consultation through the formal planning process, NIW responded in July 2024 to confirm their conditional approval of the submitted drainage offsetting proposal. The proposed solution will free up capacity within the existing, adjacent combined sewer by redirecting drainage from Portavogie Primary School, to facilitate a foul drainage connection from the development site into the adjacent combined public sewer.

It should be noted that legal permission from the Education Authority (EA), is required to carry out the drainage works within the grounds of Portavogie Primary School (PPS) and work is ongoing to secure this. EA approval is conditional to planning approval, and is required to proceed with the development.

The EA had repeatedly advised that they have a number of priority projects which currently require input from their appointed solicitor and are taking precedence over their consideration of Council's request. . Council still await the EA's timescale for securing legal permission and the matter has been escalated within the Department of Education.

3. NI Water: Requisition

Green	Amber	Red
NIW has provided a conditional response to the resubmitted requisition application (received on 11.06.24) and detailed design development by NIW is underway.		

Further to the payment of a £10K deposit. NIW appointed consultants to prepare a detailed design for a requisition sewer. The proposed requisition sewer is required to drain surface run off from the proposed site and facilitate a connection for the re-routed PPS storm drainage (subject to receipt of the EA's legal permission). This aspect of the drainage proposal has received NIW's conditional approval through the formal planning process., NIW's consultants have been liaising directly with Council's appointed Civil Engineers to finalise the design with some co-ordination required recently to finalise drainage levels. We understand that the issue of the detailed design is imminent.

4. Planning: Statutory Consultation – Shared Environmental Services

Green	Amber	Red
Planning consulted with NIEA Water Management Unit, Marine & Fisheries and SES, following our submission of an updated HRA		

In response to the EU future ban of use of microplastics in artificial pitches, SES reconsulted on all live planning applications affected by this decision, including this proposal in Portavogie. SES requested an updated HRA, to either i) confirm that natural infill will be used and evidence that it is not harmful to the environment or ii) or provide appropriate measures in the design to infiltrate rubber infill crumb before it is discharged out to the storm sewer.

Planning consulted with NIEA Water Management Unit, Marine & Fisheries and SES, following our submission of an updated HRA confirming that ANDBC will use natural infill in the 3G pitch, in accordance with mitigation option i), listed above.

SES - A positive consultation response was received from SES who confirmed they have no reason to disagree with the findings of the HRA published on 10/10/2024. SES considers that the Council has fulfilled its obligations under the assessment

requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

DEARA Marine & Fisheries – a positive consultation response was received from NIEA Marine & Fisheries division on 14/11/2024 advising that they welcome the mitigation measures outlined in the updated HRA.

DEARA Water Management Unit (WMU) – a positive response was received further to the issue of information requested by WMU. WMU has responded to confirm they have considered the impacts of the proposal on the surface water environment and, on the basis of the information provided, are content with the proposal, subject to Conditions.

5. Planning: Statutory Consultation – DfI Roads

Green	Amber	Red
DfI approved a proposed solution for a new access road, footpaths and associated visibility splays.		

In October 2024, DfI Roads withdrew their original consultation response to the proposed redevelopment and reconsulted with PlanningNI, advising that they now consider the proposal unacceptable, as submitted because of access to the site.

Council can confirm that DfI Roads requested an updated site access design with visibility splays. Further internal meetings were held to agree a strategy on how to deal with the requirements that DFI Roads have asked for.

A meeting took place at the site on 7th February 2025 when several options were discussed regarding potential solutions.

Solution proposed and included in an updated planning submission which was approved on the 31st March 2026.

Please see below under Section 6 for further detail on recent progress.

6. Planning Update: General

Green	Amber	Red
All requests from consultees have been addressed		

The planning consultation process has concluded, following further engagement with DfI Roads. Planning approval was secured on the 31st March 2026

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 22.
Information up to date as of 18th August 2026

The information below, outlines the key steps taken to secure the necessary DfI approval.

By 3rd March draft drawings had been prepared for the planning service to have a discussion with DFI on their latest objection. The adjacent landowners at nos. 6 and 8 New Harbour Road, have been approached regarding the need for a wider access to the site and both have agreed, in principle, to sell sufficient land to Council to facilitate the requirement. Initial discussions have also taken place with the agent acting for the landowners.

DFI have approved the suggested design in principle, and the Council's appointed valuers will be asked to finalise negotiations in respect of the required lands when all other matters are resolved and the Council approves the scheme. The project architect was asked to develop detailed drawings, to inform the valuation and for formal submission to DFI through the planning process, requesting a formal response.

In accordance with the agreement with the landowners of the additional lands, a formal response, addressing DfI Roads requirements, will be sent to the Department through the planning process in the hope that this will allow planning permission to be granted and the proposal will be detailed to the landowner in writing.

The landowners involved was written to with this update on the access road development on 4th March.

By the beginning of April, the meeting between DFI and Planning had taken place and additional lands have been identified as being required by DFI to allow a site access design that will comply with their requirements to be delivered. A request was made on 1st April for contact details of the owners of these additional 3rd party lands.

A further update was provided to the initial and main 3rd party landowner on 3rd April 2025.

Over the Easter break, the other landowners mentioned above (3) were written to, asking if they would be willing to enter into discussions with the Council concerning the potential use of land owned by them to help deliver on the access solution. To date two out of the three have responded to the letter, however all three would need to be in agreement to assist in order to move forward.

Design development took longer than anticipated, however a meeting was held with the project consultancy team on 5th June who confirmed that a final design submission for the new entrance would be completed and submitted to planning before the end of June, following further engagement with the 4 private landowners whose agreement is required for this solution to be ultimately taken to Council for approval.

In July in an email message, we advised that we were still trying to secure engagement with the private landowners around the proposed entrance to the pitch site and DFIs requirements, at the existing laneway. Unfortunately, we have been unable to secure

agreement as required and are therefore currently considering an alternative entrance option at a nearby location. 3rd party discussions began in relation to this just after the July holidays. As stakeholders will appreciate we are unable to clarify the location of this alternative entrance while initial engagement is taking place.

In the meantime, in accordance with the Council decision at the end of May, we engaged the services of a roads engineer with a view to query the response from DFI on the specification proposed for the entrance. This investigation has been completed by a suitable expert and a draft report has been forwarded to the Project Team for consideration and onward reporting to Council members as soon as the final report is agreed.

Finally, the team are also still awaiting final sign off from the Education Authority for the "in principle agreed" scheme concerning NIWs required wastewater and run off infrastructure improvements.

The roads service engineer has returned his specialist report, and this has been reported to the Community and Wellbeing Committee. The engineer concludes that the improvements required by DFI for an improved access to the site are compliant and required under the relevant technical standards in force at this time and therefore it would be unwise for Council to consider a challenge to DFI over this.

The alternative lands required to develop a related compliant access arrangement are now due to come to open market, and the Council's Lands Officer has been in regular contact with the landowners solicitor and their appointed estate agent and will engage in that process when the opportunity arises in order that Council may be able to consider the if it is able to consider acquisition.

In the meantime, the project team are considering an alternative strategy that may result in the planning department being able to process the approval while we await confirmation of the availability of these lands.

Education Authority sign off is still awaited in connection with the drainage infrastructure proposal that involves the nearby primary school, required to satisfy NIWs requirements however engagement with the EA has improved slightly and we are responding to a number of queries they have been raising.

Update, July 2026.

Further to confirmation that an updated Business Case is required to secure Council approval for the revised estimated cost of project delivery, work is ongoing with the project Integrated Consultancy Team, to update the Stage 4 Technical Design drawings, to ensure same align with the approved planning drawings. During the planning consultation process, a number of statutory consultees requested design development to secure their approval e.g. Dfl request for new access road and NIEA request for new 3G pitch specification to accommodate the use of natural infill, in lieu of microplastics. The appointed Quantity Surveyor's costing of the updated technical

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 22.
Information up to date as of 18th August 2026

design will inform the updated project cost estimate, within the updated Business Case.

A consultant has now been appointed to update the Business Case with initiation meetings taking place in early August. It is anticipated this process will be completed by November 2026.

Peninsula (Portaferry) 3G Project
Information up to date as of 18 August 2026

This report has been prepared for information purposes and is issued to interested parties to update them on the most pressing of work streams currently being undertaken.

Planning Application: Submitted on 13 March 2026.
Proposal: A full-size GAA 3G pitch incorporating 2 full-size soccer pitches and a range of multi-use design to assist a range of GAA clubs and Soccer clubs in the area, for competitive GAA matches and multi sports training. Set close to St Columba's College with the intention that the school will make full use of the pitch during school hours, evenings and weekends as required.
Location: Cloughey Road Portaferry, behind the sports centre

For Information – RAG status

Green	Amber	Red
Good progress is being made, with no significant issues.	Progress is being made with some issues needing to be worked through.	Issues exist that could put elements or the whole project at risk.

Background

1. Design consultants appointed
2. Establishment of and site surveys in progress and nearing completion with pre-application discussions with planning in the next few weeks.
3. Preferred layout established and further discussion with the clubs is required.
4. Updated Capital Costs by consultant exceed the current Project Budget, Council instructed capital team to continue with the full scheme through to the planning process while the cost shortfall will be addressed via an update report to committee.

1. Programme

Amber
The programme for the delivery of the project cannot be determined until planning is granted as there are too many variables to accurately predict a date as to when the planning application will be determined at this stage. Full planning approval is currently expected in March 2027. RIBA Stage 2 is completed with the Consultant's report submitted. Elements of RIBA Stage 3 underway to enable consultation with planning. RIBA Stage 4 (Technical Design and Procurement) is scheduled to run from July 2027 to January 2029. The procurement strategy will be delivered in two phases: • Phase 1 PQQ – works associated with the relocation of the priority habitat area.

- Phase 2 PQQ – main construction works, which will commence following completion of Phase 1.
- PQQ processes for both phases will be run concurrently in August 2027.

2. Key Risks

Amber

There have been several risks identified with particularly relevance to the stage, the top five are:

1. Funding allocated £2.2m within the current project prioritisation. Current estimated cost more than £6.5m, this is currently not included in council rate setting budget yearly profile. It was agreed at a resent committee meeting a report to include a current cost estimate for members consideration will need to be presented at the appropriate time.
2. Water based habitat system over a large element of the site, cost of mitigation currently being established in the region of £1m.
3. NI Water mitigation measures are verbally agreed but this will stay a risk until these are agreed through the planning process and it appears that there is capacity within the current infrastructure to cater for this facility. There are not significant at this stage.
4. Entrance off the public road required widening, this will add cost and whilst positive discussions have taken place with DfI Roads they will only sign off proposals through the planning processes.
5. Close out of statutory consultees including NIEA through PAD process

3. Costs

Red

The estimated cost has risen since the OBC from c£2.2m in 2017 to more than c£6.5m 2025. This is due to:

- The original OBC was produced 2016/17 and at this stage the costs were established at 2017 rates. We have now predicted the cost at the potential midpoint of construction, that is more likely to be 2027. Therefore 10 years increase of costs.
- Construction inflation has risen significantly in recent years and although has settled it has not reduced.

In the original OBC these of elements have also affected the cost:

- The pavilion was smaller
- New electrical supply to the site was not taken for
- Preliminaries were a far lower percentage, a more realistic percentage based on recent experience has now been used

- A smaller car park was proposed
- No optimism bias allowance
- No allowance for earth works
- No allowance for fencing
- No allowance for drainage
- No allowance for new organic infill

The site investigation surveys carried out as part of the RIBA stages 1&2 have indicated that the following through consultation with statutory authorities will add costs.

- Major relocation of a wet land habituate
- Widened entrance off the main road
- Upgrade works external to the site
- Disposal of potentially hazardous materials from old landfill (this amount has reduced significantly since the last update)

The Outline Business Case (OBC) will be refreshed in 2027.

4. Environmental Issues

Amber

- A full set of surveys instructed are reaching completion and engagement with relevant statutory consultees have taken place.
- A water-based habitat system that NIEA will require relocating. The proposed new location is between the new 3G pitch and the council's soccer grass pitch; this will require some re-routing of the water course that exists in the area to ensure a wet area is maintained. The earth works and cost of these works has now been established with some assumptions at this stage i.e. the level of hazardous and inert waste requiring disposal and the depth below the ground water level.
- A Newt surveys have been completed as part of the environmental assessment work. In addition, a bat activity surveys have also been commenced. EA confirmed that the findings from both surveys will be incorporated into the final environmental report and submitted as part of the project's environmental response to NIEA.

5. Lands

Green

Discussions with the Education Authority and Diocese regarding a lease are going well with good dialogue established. The Education Authority and Diocese confirmed that the rent of the land required for the project will be at peppercorn rate. Approval from the Department of Education is still awaited due to issues pertaining to the Management Agreement for the Sports Building, even though the two matters are separate.

Peninsula (Portaferry) 3G Project
Information up to date as of 18 August 2026

ITEM 18

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 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, January to March 2026
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Social Media Posts Appendix 2 - LACMW Q4 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 fourth quarter of 2025/2026 (January to March 2026) 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 continued reliance of higher performing HRC diversion, with lower relative tonnages 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]

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%	52.9%	
CHANGE	+3.3%	+2.9%	+2.4%	+1.4%	

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%	52.7%	
CHANGE	+3.0%	+2.9%	+1.9%	+1.3%	

NI Household Recycling Rate Ranking (KPI(a2))

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	3rd
2025 - 2026	1st	2nd	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%	25.0%	

CHANGE	-1.5%	-0.8%	-0.6%	-0.7%	

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%	27.5%	
CHANGE	+4.8%	+3.8%	+2.9%	+2.1%	

The headlines for household waste recycling are:

- **Household waste recycling rate (KPI(a2))** rose by 1.4% compared to the same quarter last year, from 51.5% to 52.9%. This is 5.7 percentage points higher than the NI average of 47.2%. We were ranked second out of the eleven NI councils for our household waste recycling rate, consistent with the ranking for same quarter last year.
- **Waste from Households recycling rate** rose 1.3% to 52.7% compared to the same quarter last year.
- **Household waste composting rate** fell by 0.7% compared to the same quarter last year - from 25.7% to 25.0%. Our household waste composting rate was 4.6 percentage points higher than the NI average of 20.4%. Ards and North Down was ranked second in the council performance table for this stream, along with Mid Ulster District Council.
- **Household waste dry recycling rate** rose by 2.1% compared to the same quarter last year - from 25.4% to 27.5%. Our household waste dry recycling rate (i.e. recycling of items other than organic food and garden waste) was one percentage point higher than the N.I. average of 26.5%. Ards and North Down was ranked fourth in the council performance table for this stream.
- **Kerbside compostables capture rate** was 68.4% compared to a NI council average of 60.8%.

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	5,451	
CHANGE	+1%	+5.1%	+22.3%	+16.9%	

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	1,555	
CHANGE	down 7.5%	down 11%	up 20.6%	102.2%	

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	3,896	
CHANGE	up 3.8%	up 10.3%	up 22.9%	+0.05%	
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%	71.4%	
CHANGE	up 2.6%	up 3.8%	up 0.3%	down 11.6%	

The headlines for HRC performance are:

- **Total HRC waste per capita** averaged 32.9kg, compared to an average 38.6kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC residual waste per capita** was 9.4kg, compared to an average of 17.8kg per capita for all other NI councils.
- **HRC recycling per capita** was 23.6kg, similar to the average 23.8kg per capita for the other 10 councils.
- **HRC recycling percentage** was 71.4% in this quarter, compared to an average rate of 56% for other councils. During the same quarter the previous year, our HRC recycling rate was 83%. The significant change is due to an anomalously low residual waste tonnage received in Q4 2024-25.

Table 3: Kerbside performance 2025/26 vs 2024/25

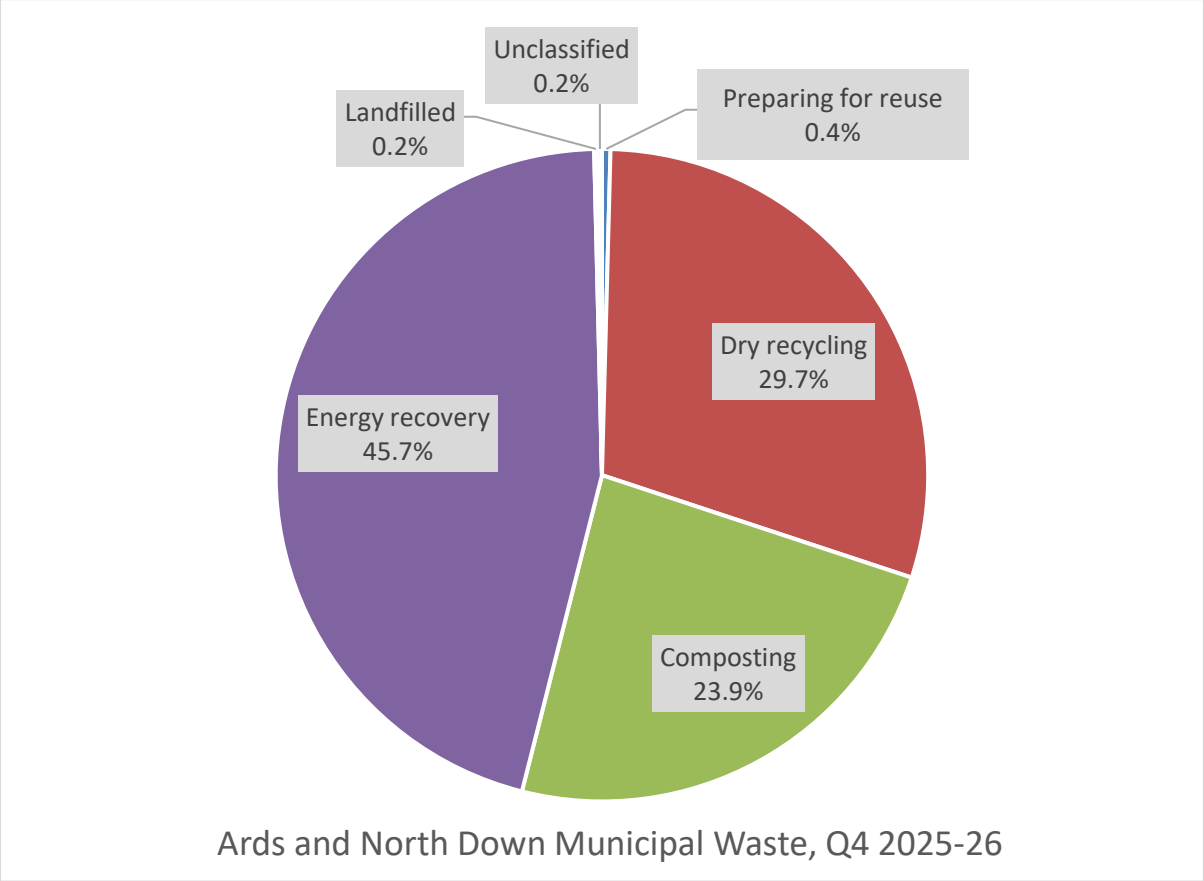
Total kerbside waste collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	16,109	16,038	13,919	14,446	60,512
2025 - 2026	15,610	15,874	13,850	13,763	
CHANGE	down 3.1%	down 3.0%	down 0.5%	down 4.7%	
Kerbside residual collected (tonnes)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual
2024 - 2025	6,029	6,543	6,143	7,205	25,920
2025 - 2026	5,992	6,744	6,428	6,655	
CHANGE	down 0.6%	up 3.0%	up 4.6%	down 7.6%	
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	7,108	
CHANGE	down 4.6%	down 3.0%	down 4.6%	down 1.4%	
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%**	**51.6%**	
CHANGE	**down 1%**	**down 2.0%**	**down 2.2%**	**up 1.5%**	

The headlines for kerbside collection performance are:

- **Kerbside collected waste per capita** averaged 83.2kg during this quarter. The average for all other Northern Ireland councils was 80.4kg per capita.
- **Kerbside collected residual waste per capita** averaged 40.2kg per capita, compared to an average of 47.6kg per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside collected recycling per capita** averaged 43kg per capita, compared to an average of 32.8kg per capita for the other Northern Ireland councils.
- **Kerbside recycling percentage** (the proportion of waste collected for recycling through our kerbside service) was 51.6%. This is slightly higher than for the same quarter in the previous year and is higher than the 40.8% average for other Northern Ireland councils.

Municipal waste overview



In Quarter 4 of 2025/26, 53.6% (10,605 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% (83 tonnes) was sent for re-use or repair.

For residual waste, 45.7% (9,048 tonnes) was sent for energy recovery during the quarter, and 0.2% (36 tonnes) was rejected as non-target material by our reprocessors and sent to landfill.

Operational Performance Improvement Measures

MC1 - Marketing and Communications Indicators
38 social media posts were issued across Facebook and Instagram. These represented a mix of educational and operational messages including:

- Winter Coat Project – promotion of donation points and 2 x pop-up shop events
- Seasonal - Valentines – Glass/Perfume bottle recycling (WRAP Assets)
- Food Waste Action Week – “Make the most of your food” (WRAP assets)
- Bin collections in winter weather including significant collection disruption and storm response (Storm Chandra in January)
- Temporary facility closures (maintenance, vandalism of WC facilities)
- Bank Holiday Bin Collections (St Patrick’s Day and Easter)

One press release was issued, 11 March 2026. This highlighted the HRC’s paint reuse scheme via launch of new mural. Read on ANDBC website at New Mural Unveiled at Balloo Recycling Centre - Ards and North Down Borough Council
More detail on social media posts during the quarter is included in Appendix 1.

MC2 Bin-Ovation

- 5 Bin-Ovation ‘News and Info’ articles were published including collection/HRC arrangements for Easter and March Bank holiday, Food Waste Action Week 2026, Storm update and Winter Coat Project: Pop-up Shop Dates
- 6 Bin-Ovation push notifications issued.
- 1513 Bin-Ovation downloads recorded.

MC3 – Officers delivered 14 community and engagement events, reaching 900 people.

- 2 x Information events
- 6 x schools
- 5 x adult groups
- 1 x Youth groups

Household Recycling Centre Indicators

HRC2 Number of visitors turned away from site: 364

HRC2a Number of HRC bookings: 71,487

HRC2b – Average number of HRC visits per household: 0.99 (averaged across the 71,976 households in the Borough)

Kerbside Household Waste Collections Indicators

KSI – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (yellow): 2339
KS2 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (amber): 145
KS3 – Number of recycling alert stickers applied to grey bins (red): 28

Summary and Trend Analysis of Indicators

Indicator Reference	Monitoring Period 11 (Jul to Sept 2025)	Monitoring Period 12 (Oct to Dec 2025)	Monitoring Period 13 (Jan to Mar 2026)
MC1 Social media posts	50	64	
MC2 Print press and online articles	1	1	5
MC3 Engagement events/sessions	16	18	14
HRC2 Visitors denied entry	697	436	
HRC2a No. of bookings	85,160	77,429	71,487
HRC2b Average no. of HRC visits per household	1.18	1.08	0.99
KS1 Yellow warning stickers on grey bins	1913	1612	2339
KS2 Amber warning stickers on grey bins	133	133	145
KS3 Red warning stickers on grey bins	53	63	28

Summary Analysis

Our overall recycling performance demonstrates an increase of 1.4 percentage points over the same quarter in 2024/25 with the Council maintaining its second place ranking in the NI council recycling performance table. This quarter's performance is in due to good diversion for reuse and recycling through kerbside, HRC, and bring services.

During the quarter January to March 2026, AND BC:

- Recorded household waste recycling rate of 52.9%; the second highest household recycling rate of the 11 NI councils. This is an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the same quarter in 2024/25.
- Collected 683 fewer tonnes of waste at the kerbside compared with the same quarter last year. Despite this reduction, the kerbside recycling rate increased slightly to 56.1%, as the decrease in residual waste was greater than the decrease in recyclable material collected.

Year on year data for HRC residual waste indicates a significant increase in tonnage received from 769 tonnes in Q4 2024/25 to 1,555 tonnes in Q4 2025/26. Analysis of waste data for the most recent seven years indicates that HRC residual waste tonnage for Q4 2024/25 was atypical for this period in the year.

Table 4 Comparison of HRC residual and recycling tonnages for Q4 since 2021/22

Q4 HRC waste and recycling (tonnes, %)							
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Residual	2,095	3,631	2,569	1,942	1,416	769	1,555
Recycling	3,375	4,972	3,750	3,463	3,337	3,894	3,896
% recycled	61.7%	57.8%	59.3%	64.1%	70.2%	83.5%	71.4%

Additionally, changes to tonnage trends are observed following the introduction of HRC access and use rules in 2021/22, and the HRC booking system in 2022/23.

Kerbside recycling performance has held steady for the last three quarters, but the kerbside recycling rate has generally remained below the rate recorded in the corresponding quarters of the previous year. Council officers are developing a multi-channel, borough-wide communications campaign which will aim to increase awareness of what happens to kerbside collected recycling, and in turn increase residents' confidence in their recycling efforts and increase capture of materials at the kerbside.

The Q4 composting performance remained broadly stable at 25.0%, compared with 25.7% in the previous year. The slight reduction reflects normal fluctuations in organic waste generation, particularly garden waste volumes which are highly dependent on seasonal and weather-related factors. Continued waste prevention activity and changing household behaviours may also have contributed to lower organic waste arisings.

The Council is awaiting the publication of DAERA's response to the 2024 Rethinking Our Resources consultation. This is expected to provide direction on collection

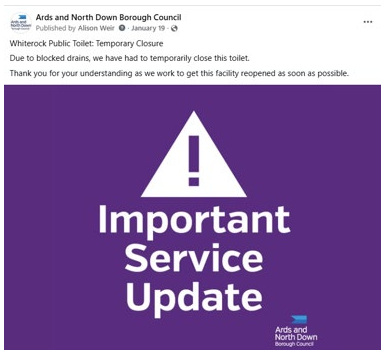
consistency and workplace recycling initiatives, helping to guide future service planning.

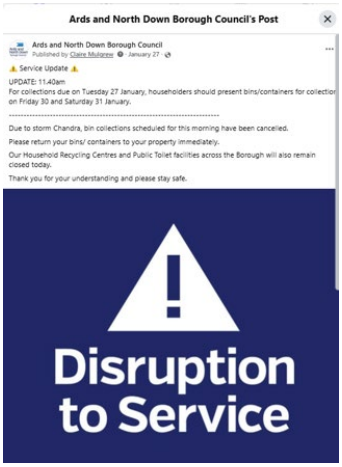
RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report.

Appendix 1

Title and Insights	Image / Screengrab
1 January 2026 New Year Bin Collections Schedule Facebook Views 14,550 Viewers 11,126	
2 January 2026 Winter Coat Project Facebook Views 19,766 Viewers 10,912	
5 January 2026 Information about bin collections during snow / icy conditions Facebook Views 51,538 Viewers 29,219 Instagram Views 2,700 Reach 1,600	
8 January 2026 Winter coat donation Facebook Views 13,430 Viewers 7,548	

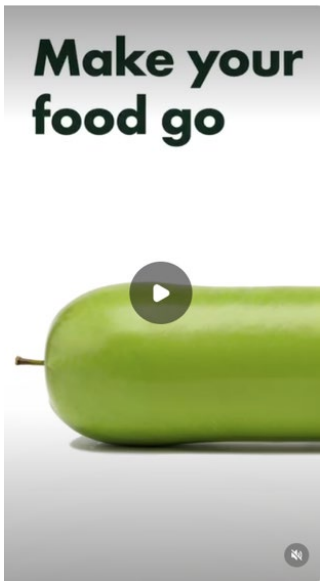
13 January 2026 Facebook Winter coat donation Views 7,170 Viewers 4,185	
19 January 2026 Winter coat donation Facebook Views 12,049 Viewers 7,356 19 January 2026 Instagram Views 1,100 Reach 695	
19 January 2026 Operational message: temporary closure of WC facilities Facebook Views 6,111 Viewers 3,996	
24 January 2026 Winter coat donation Facebook Views 8,618 Viewers 5,076	

27 January 2026 Winter coat donation Facebook [Day before event – City Church, Bangor] Views 15,261 Viewers 8,477	
27 January 2026 Operational message - cancellation of collections during Storm Chandra Facebook Views 116,618 Viewers 53,823 Instagram Views 4,900 Reach 2,600	
28 January 2026 Operational message – update on collections following Storm Chandra Facebook Views 70,020 Viewers 42,732 Instagram Views 1,600 Reach 937	
29 January 2026 Winter coat donation [Day before event – Queen's Hall, Newtownards] Views 3,471 Viewers 2,211	

30 January 2026 Winter coat donation [Day of event – Queen's Hall, Newtownards] Facebook Views 4,504 Viewers 2,968	
12 February 2026 Temporary closure, Abbey Street Gents Toilets (vandalism) Facebook - Views 21,034 Viewers 13,292	
14 February 2026 Valentine's recycling message Facebook Views 3,205 Viewers 2,044 Instagram Views 398 Reach 280	
16 February 2026 Temporary closure – Banks Lane toilets Facebook Views 7,068 Viewers 4,786	

2 March 2026 Temporary closure – Cairn Wood toilets Facebook Views 10,932 Viewers 6,807	
9 March 2026 Food Waste Action Week Facebook Views 2,100 Viewers 1,500 Instagram Views 244 Reach 209	

9 March 2026 Food Waste Action Week Facebook Views 3,158 Viewers 2,048	
10 March 2026 Food Waste Action Week - Make your food go further – reels Facebook Views 1.5k Viewers 1.2k Instagram Views 452 Reach 369	

11 March 2026 Food Waste Action Week - Make your food go further – reels Facebook Views 1.4k Viewers 1.1k Instagram Views 323 Reach 279	 
Food Waste Action Week – Make your food go further – reels Facebook (12 March 2026) Views 1.1k Viewers 823 Instagram (13 March 2026) Views 262 Reach 206	

14 March 2026 Food Waste Action Week – Make your food go further - reels Facebook **Views:** 1.7kl **Viewers:** 1.3k	
15 March 2026 Bank Holiday Bin Collections Facebook Views 15,933 Viewers 10,871	
15 March 2026 Community Clothing Banks Facebook Views 11,064 Viewers 7,068 Instagram Views 720 Viewers 457	

30 March 2026 Aluminium drinks cans recycling Facebook Views 3,727 Viewers 2,798 Instagram Views 527 Reach 320	
30 March 2026 Bank Holiday Collections Facebook Views 45, 254 Viewers 28,165	

NISRA
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

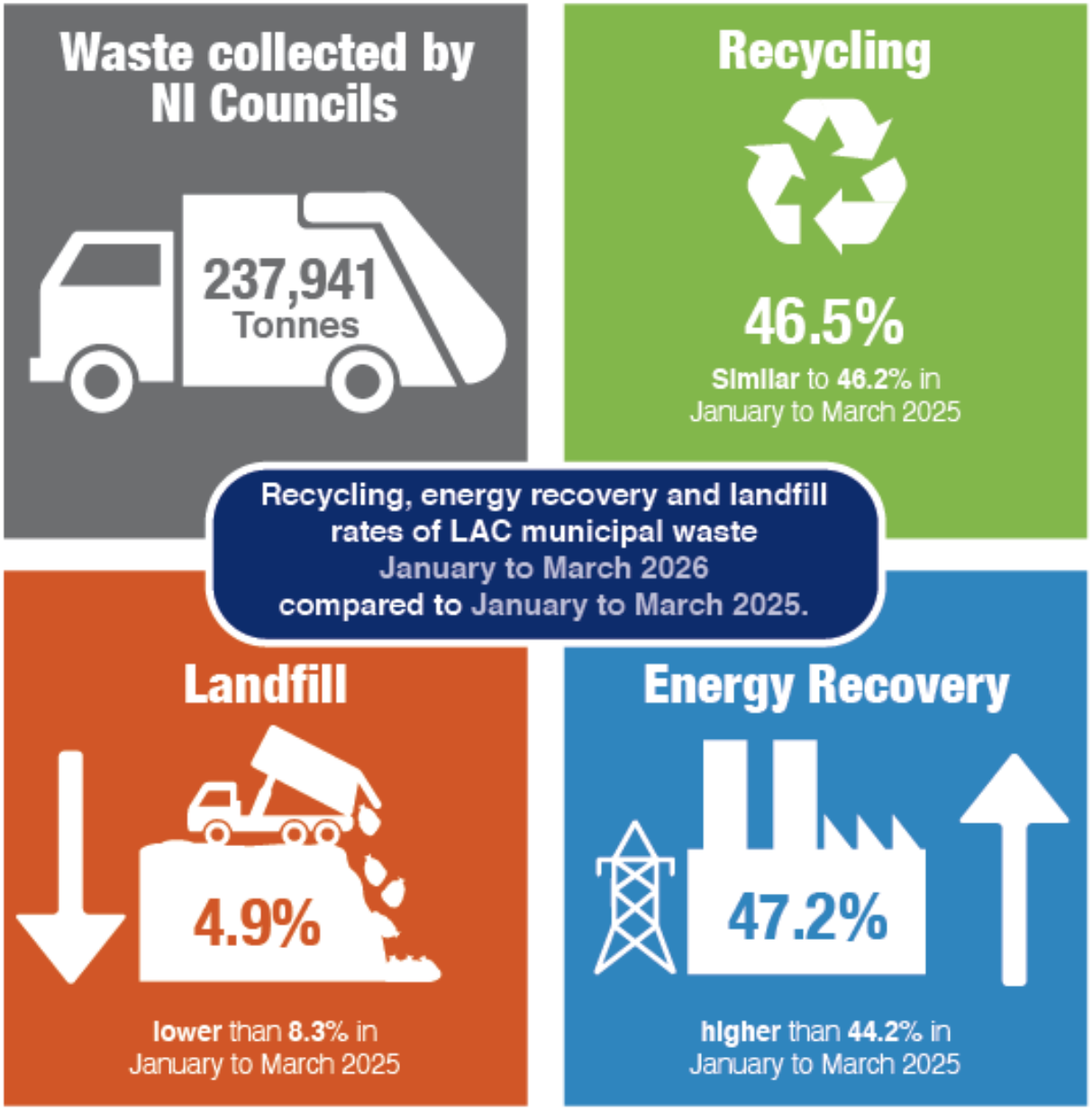
Accredited Official Statistics

Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics

Quarterly provisional estimates for January to March 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

Northern Ireland waste management statistics – January to March 2026



Key Points

- Northern Ireland's councils collected 237,941 tonnes of waste during January to March 2026, similar to the 237,447 tonnes collected during January to March 2025.
- During January to March 2026, 46.5 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for recycling which was similar to the 46.2 per cent recycling rate recorded in the same quarter in 2025.
- The landfill rate for waste collected by councils was 4.9 per cent in January to March 2026 which was a fall from the rate recorded during January to March 2025 (8.3 per cent). In the longer term, landfill rates decreased from 76.5 per cent recorded in January to March 2007.
- During January to March 2026, 47.2 per cent of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery which was higher than the 44.2 per cent reported in January to March 2025. In the longer term, energy recovery rates have increased from 1.2 per cent recorded during January to March 2010.
- Household waste accounted for 86.6 per cent of all Local Authority collected (LAC) waste during this period.
- The recycling rate for household waste was 47.2 per cent during January to March 2026, which was an increase from the 46.5 per cent recorded during January to March 2025. The landfill rate for household waste was 4.7 per cent which was lower than the rate recorded in January to March 2025 (8.2 per cent).

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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 April to June 2026 are scheduled for publication in October 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

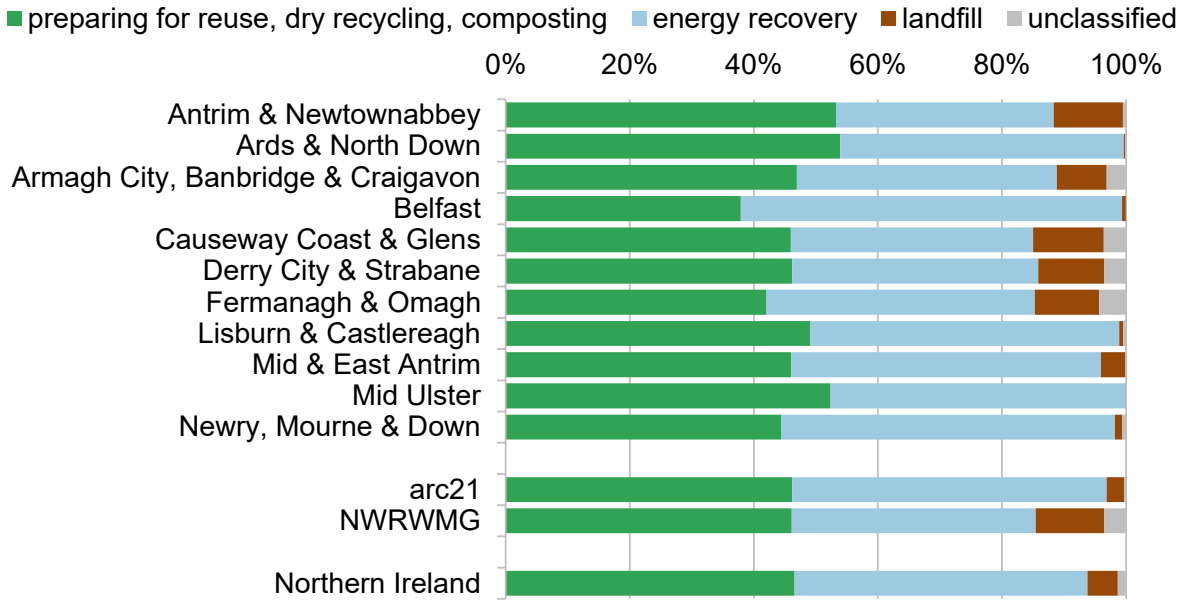
Overview

This report presents information on the quantities of Local Authority Collected (LAC) municipal waste managed in Northern Ireland between January and March 2026. 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, January to March 2026



At the Northern Ireland level, 46.5 per cent of waste collected by councils was sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting between January and March 2026. Energy recovery accounted for 47.2 per cent and 4.9 per cent was landfilled. The remaining 1.3 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 is similar compared to the rate reported in January to March 2025 (46.2 per cent). The landfill rate decreased by 3.4 percentage points whilst the energy recovery rate increased by 3.0 percentage points from January to March 2025. Household waste accounted for 86.6 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.

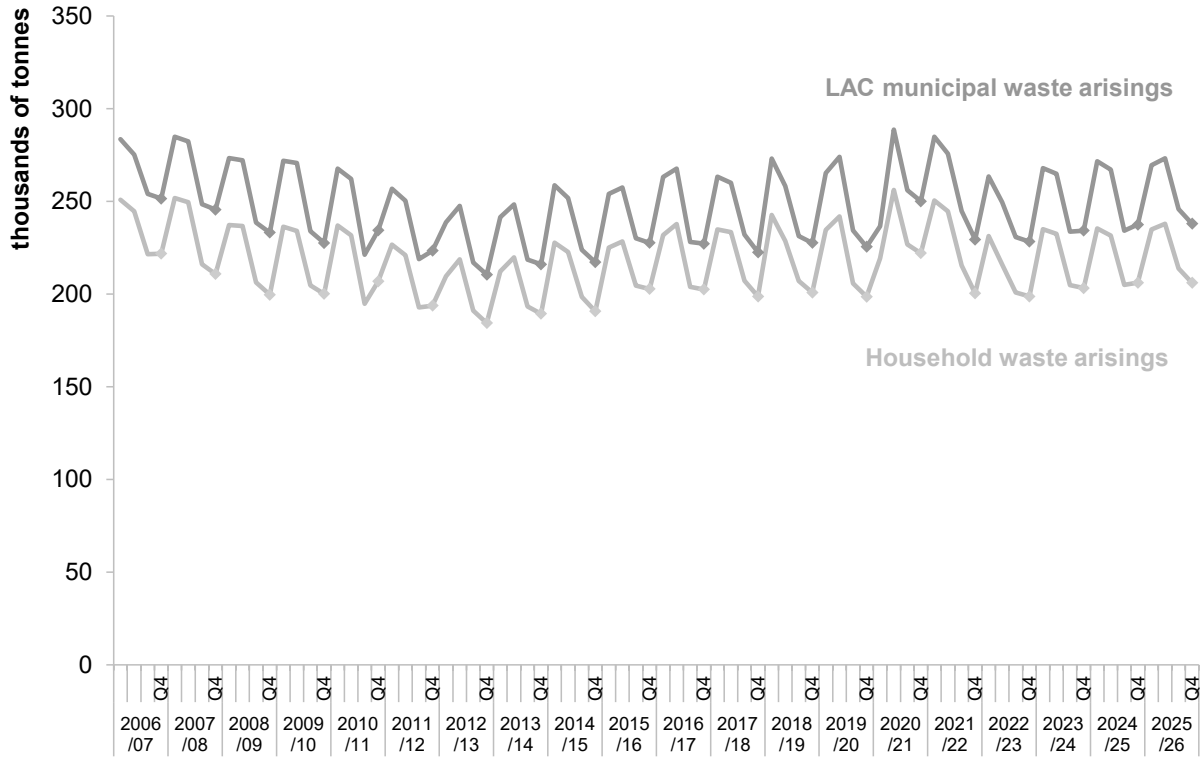
Waste arisings

Northern Ireland's councils collected 237,941 tonnes of waste between January and March 2026. This was similar to the 237,447 tonnes collected during January to March 2025. 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.

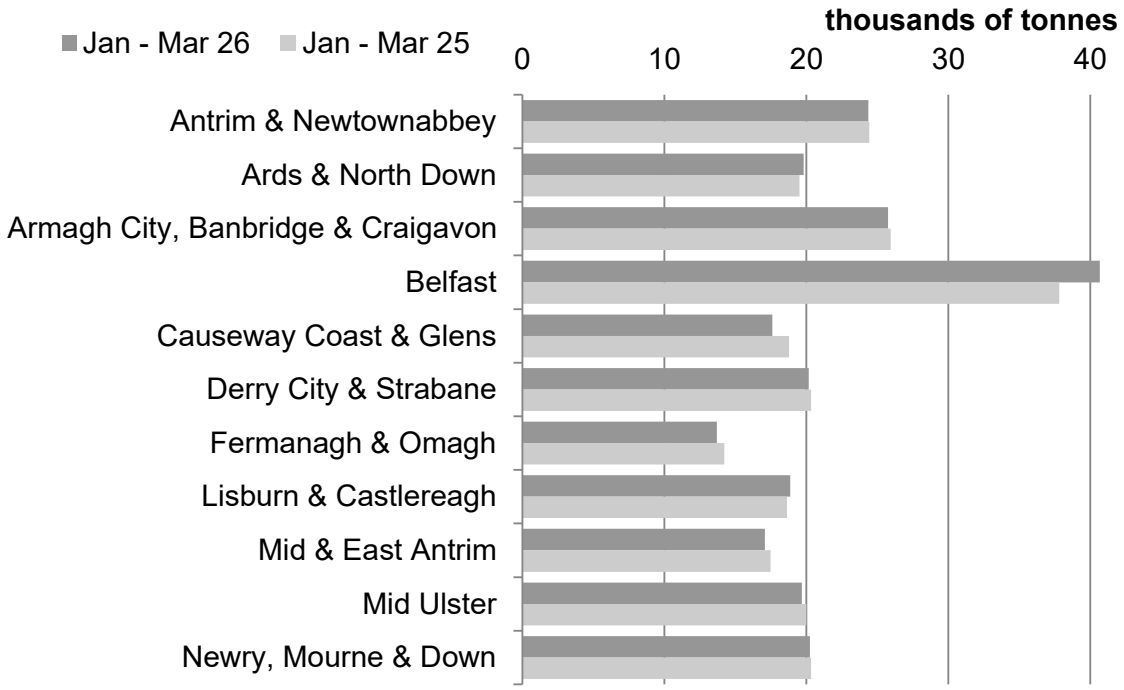
Since 2006/07 household waste has usually accounted for 86-90 per cent of total waste collected by councils each quarter, apart from April to June 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions resulted in a larger than normal proportion of household waste being collected. During January to March 2026 household waste accounted for 86.6 per cent. The remaining 13.4 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 January to March saw a gradual reduction in LAC municipal waste arisings of 16.3 per cent across six years, from 251,488 tonnes between January to March 2007 to a low of 210,459 tonnes between the same three months of 2013. From January to March 2013 until a peak for the January to March quarter of 250,030 tonnes in 2021, arisings showed a generally increasing trend. From the January to March peak, arisings fell to 229,387 tonnes in January to March 2022 with 237,941 tonnes collected in the latest quarter.

Figure 3: Waste arisings by council
Northern Ireland, January to March 2025 and January to March 2026, KPI (j)



The proportion of waste collected by each council broadly reflects the population within the councils. Belfast collected the most waste at 40,677 tonnes, whilst Fermanagh & Omagh collected the least at 13,686 tonnes.

Seven councils reported a decrease in total arisings while three councils reported an increase in total arisings in January to March 2026 compared to the same period in 2025[2].

Belfast reported the largest increase from January to March 2025 and January to March 2026 of 7.6 per cent followed by Ards & North Down and Lisburn & Castlereagh with increases of 1.5 and 1.3 per cent respectively.

The total quantity of waste collected at kerbside was 0.6 per cent lower than the amount collected in January to March 2025 while the quantity of waste collected at civic amenity sites increased by 2.2 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.

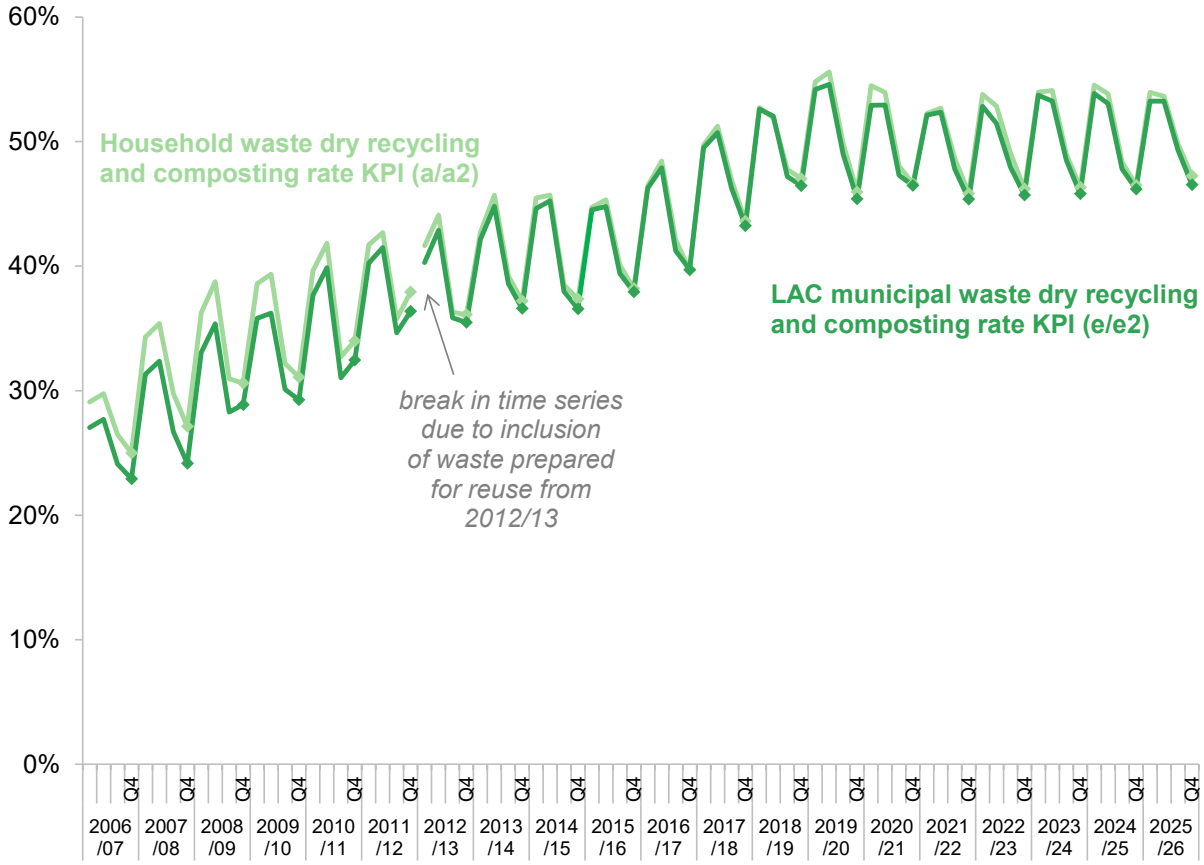
[2] Very small increases or decreases in figures (<0.5 per cent or <0.5 percentage points) are not highlighted in the commentary.

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 110,746 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 January to March 2026. The waste recycling rate was 46.5 per cent, similar compared to the 46.2 per cent recorded in January to March 2025.

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)

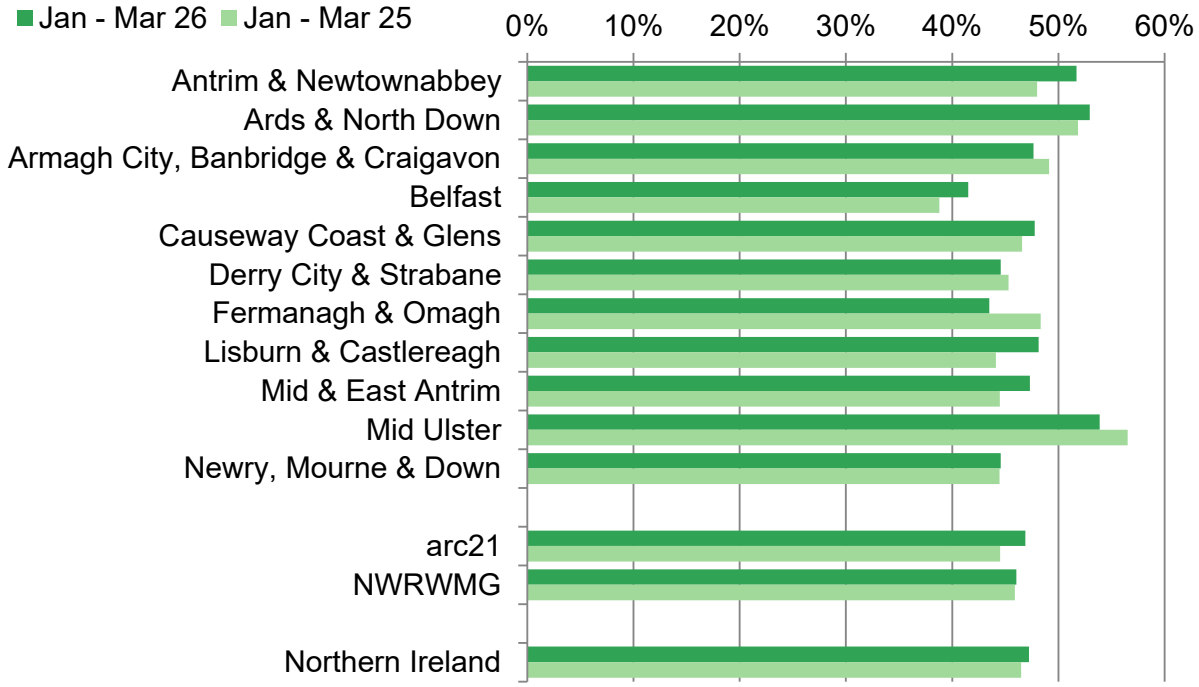


These statistics show seasonal variation which is driven by the quantities of garden waste sent for composting. Greater quantities of garden waste are collected and sent for composting during the spring and summer quarters, April to June and July to September.

The longer term trend for Local Authority Collected municipal waste recycling for the January to March quarter has been a general increase from 22.9 per cent in January to March 2007 to 46.5 per cent in January to March 2019. Since then, the local authority collected municipal waste recycling rate remained relatively similar with a recycling rate of 46.5 per cent recorded in January to March 2026. Waste sent for preparing for reuse (718 tonnes this quarter) has been included since 2012/13 and adds 0.3 percentage points to the overall LAC recycling rate in January to March 2026.

The recycling rate for household waste was 47.2 per cent during January to March 2026, an increase compared to January to March 2025 when 46.5 was recorded. The proportion of household waste sent for dry recycling made up 26.5 per cent, composting 20.4 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, January to March 2025 and January to March 2026, KPI (a2)



Lisburn & Castlereagh reported the largest increase in their household recycling rate compared to January to March 2025 at 4.0 percentage points followed by Antrim & Newtownabbey with an increase of 3.7 percentage points. Four other councils recorded an increase in their household recycling rates in January to March 2026 compared to January to March 2025. The household recycling rate decreased in four councils with the largest decrease of 4.9 percentage points recorded in Fermanagh & Omagh.

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 46.9 per cent while NWRWMG (Causeway Coast & Glens and Derry City & Strabane) had a recycling rate for household waste of 46.1 per cent during January to March 2026.

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’.

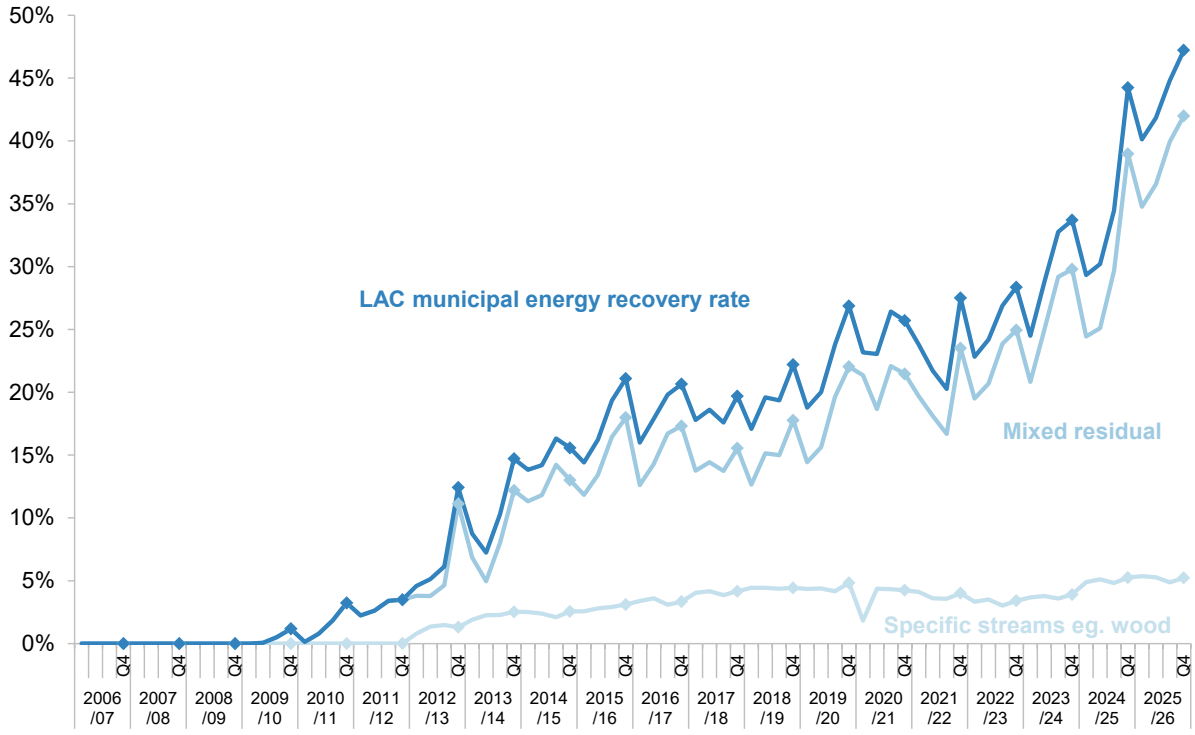
These statistics can be found in Tables 4 and 12 of the accompanying data tables spreadsheet and in the time series dataset.

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 January to March 2026, 112,344 tonnes of waste arisings were sent for energy recovery. This produced a waste energy recovery rate of 47.2 per cent, the highest quarterly energy recovery rate ever recorded for Northern Ireland and the first time that the energy recovery rate has been higher than the LAC municipal waste recycling rate. The majority of energy recovery comes from mixed residual waste, with a smaller proportion from specific streams, e.g. wood.

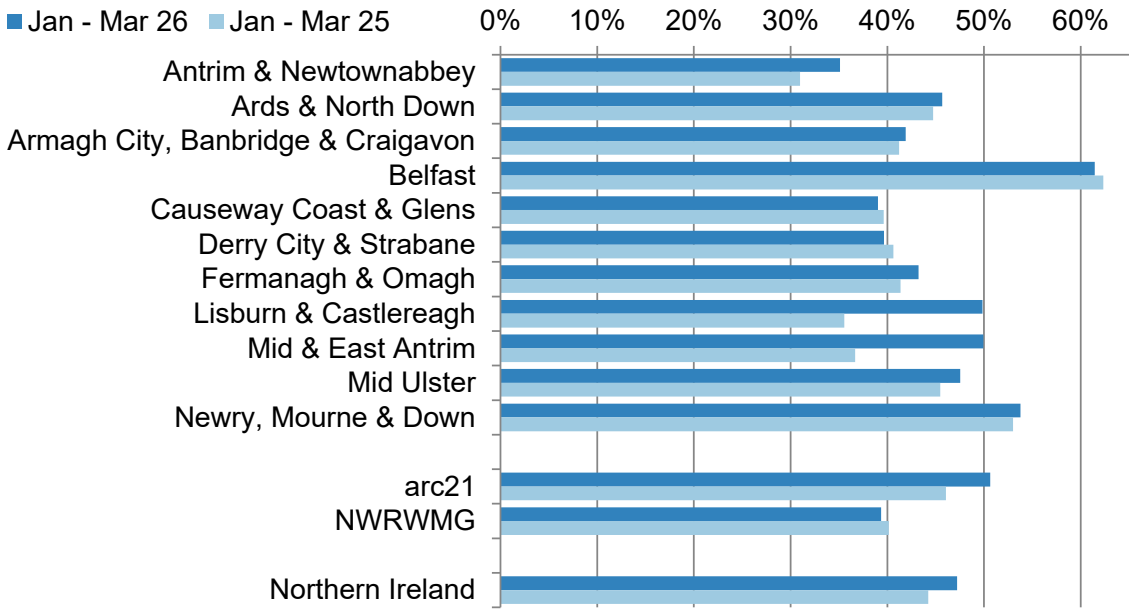
Figure 6: Waste sent for energy recovery via incineration
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26



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 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to 47.2 per cent for the same three months of 2026. Most of the growth since 2009/10 has been driven by mixed residual waste sent for energy recovery (from 1.2 per cent during January to March 2010 to 42.0 per cent in January to March 2026). The specific stream proportion was 5.2 per cent in January to March 2026.

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, January to March 2025 and January to March 2026



The highest waste energy recovery rate was recorded in Belfast at 61.4 per cent followed by Newry, Mourne & Down with 53.8 per cent.

Eight councils recorded an increase in the waste energy recovery rate in January to March 2026 compared to the same quarter in 2025 with the largest increase of 14.3 percentage points recorded in Lisburn & Castlereagh. Mid & East Antrim and Antrim & Newtownabbey reported an increase of 13.3 and 4.1 percentage points respectively. Three councils recorded a decrease in the waste energy recovery rate in January to March 2026 compared to the same quarter in 2025 with the largest decrease of 1.0 per cent in Derry City & Strabane.

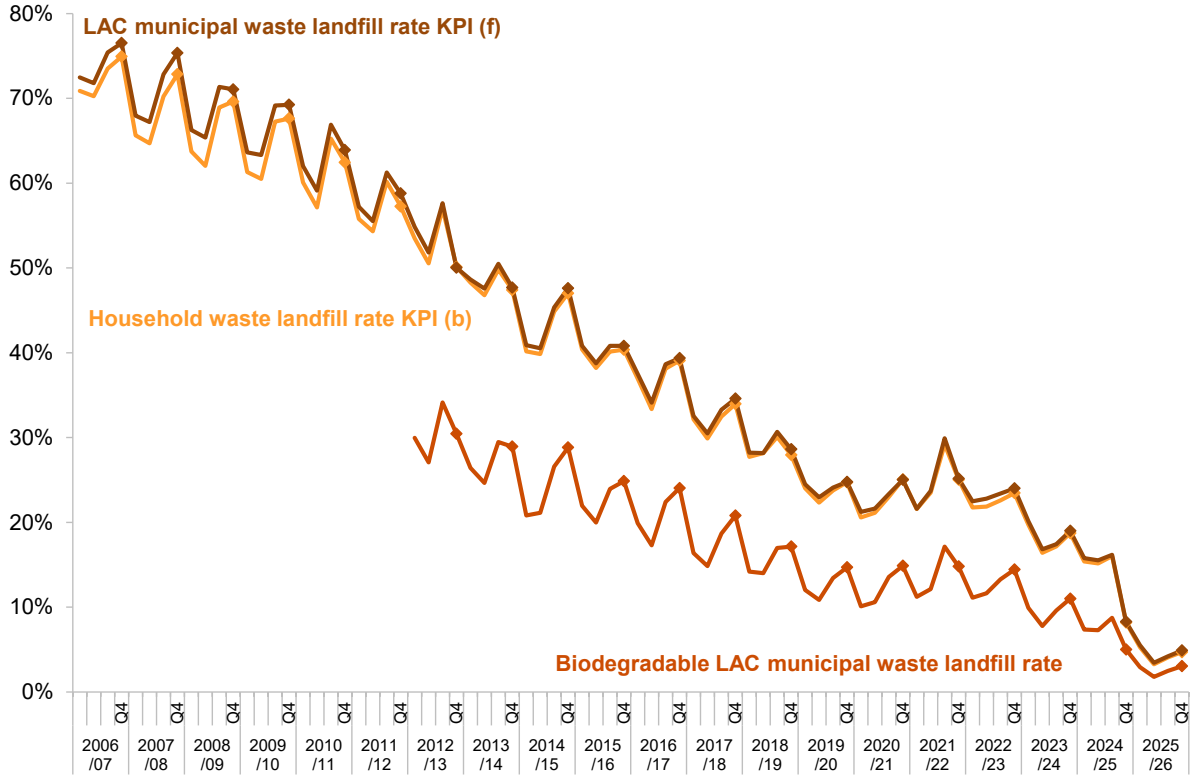
The arc21 waste energy recovery rate was 50.6 per cent while NWRWMG had a waste recovery rate of 39.4 per cent during January to March 2026. The energy recovery rate for arc21 increased by 4.6 percentage points in January to March 2026 compared to the same quarter in 2025.

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 40.7 per cent, from 19,664 tonnes during January to March 2025 to 11,653 tonnes during January to March 2026. The quarterly landfill rate for January to March 2026 is 4.9 per cent, lower than the 8.3 per cent recorded during the same quarter of 2025 and the lowest landfill rate recorded for Northern Ireland in the January to March quarter.

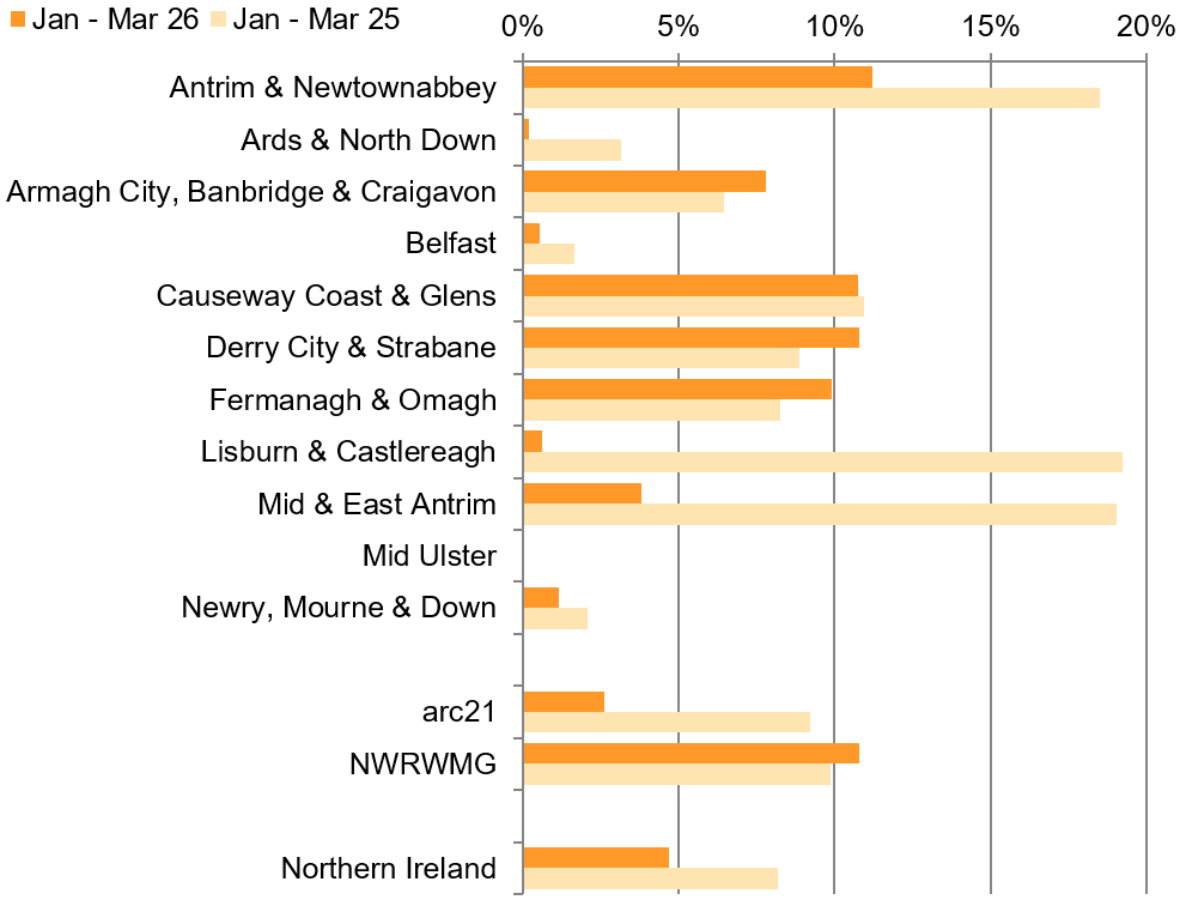
Figure 8: Waste sent to landfill
Northern Ireland, quarterly from 2006/07 to 2025/26, KPIs (b) and (f)



The longer term trend has seen the January to March LAC municipal waste landfill rate fall from 76.5 per cent in 2007 to 4.9 per cent in 2026. 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 4.7 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, January to March 2025 and January to March 2026, KPI (b)



The highest household waste landfill rates in January to March 2026 were recorded in Antrim & Newtownabbey, Derry City & Strabane, Causeway Coast & Glens and Fermanagh & Omagh at 11.2, 10.8, 10.7 and 9.9 per cent respectively. Ards & North Down, Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Mid Ulster each recorded a landfill rate of less than one per cent in January to March 2026.

The household waste landfill rate decreased in six district councils in January to March 2026 compared to the same three months in 2025, with the largest decrease recorded in Lisburn & Castlereagh at 18.6 percentage points followed by Mid & East Antrim and Antrim & Newtownabbey with 15.3 and 7.3 percentage points reduction respectively. Three district councils recorded an increase in the waste landfill rate in January to March 2026 compared to the same quarter in 2025 with an increase of 1.9, 1.7 and 1.3 percentage points recorded in Derry City & Strabane, Fermanagh & Omagh and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon respectively.

The arc21 household waste landfill rate was 2.6 per cent while NWRWMG had a household waste landfill rate of 10.8 per cent during January to March 2026. The household waste landfill rate for arc21 decreased by 6.6 percentage points in January to March 2026 compared to the same quarter in 2025.

The large reductions in landfill recorded can be linked to the increase in waste sent for energy recovery over the same period.

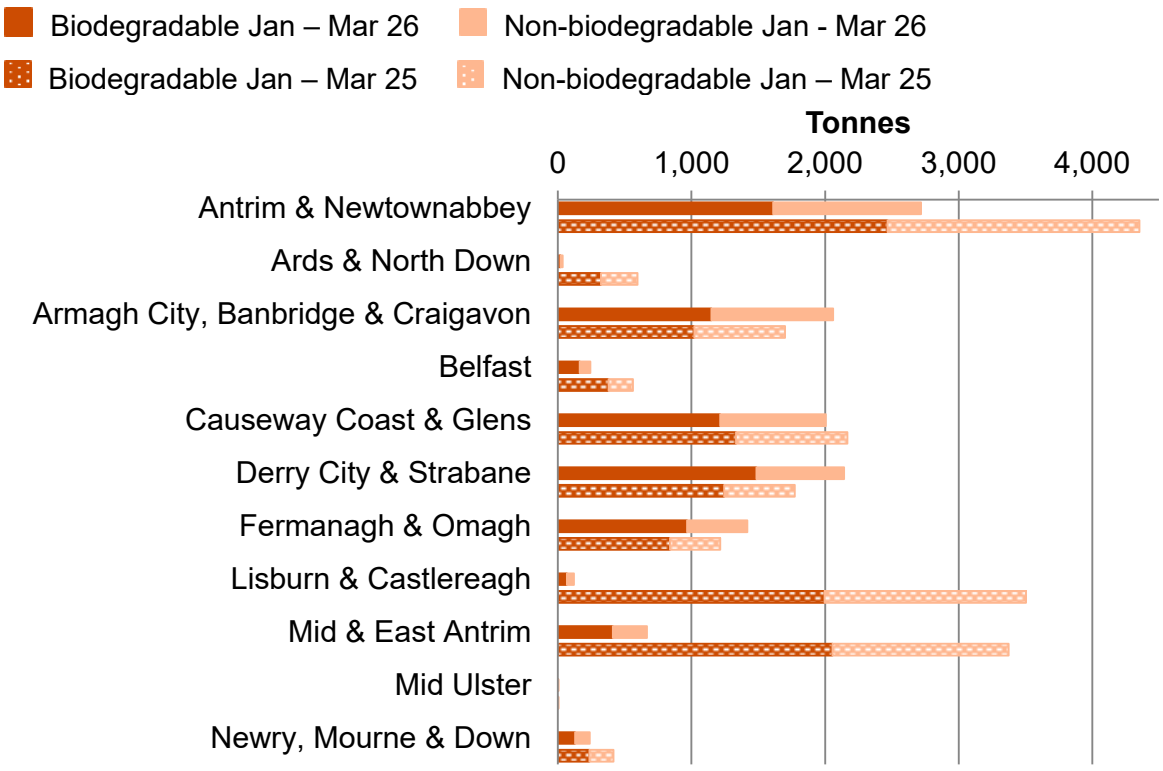
Biodegradable waste to landfill

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 7,233 tonnes of biodegradable waste to landfill during January to March 2026, which was 62.0 per cent of all LAC municipal waste sent to landfill. During the same quarter last year, 11,901 tonnes of biodegradable waste was sent to landfill which was 60.5 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, January to March 2025 and January to March 2026



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, 69.4 per cent (1,487 tonnes) followed by Fermanagh & Omagh, 68.2 per cent (966 tonnes) and Belfast, 66.8 per cent (162 tonnes). Ards & North Down recorded the lowest proportion of biodegradable waste in landfill at 53.0 per cent (19 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.

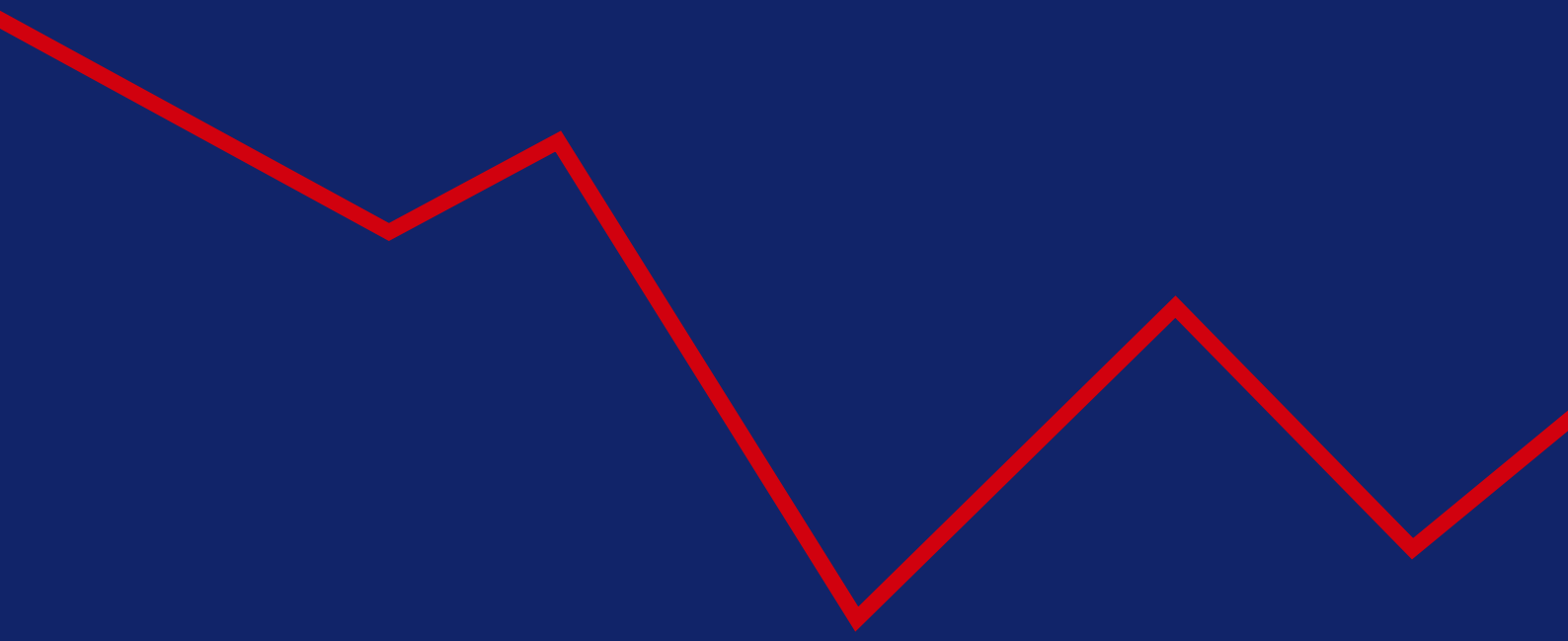
Our statistical practice is regulated by OSR. They set the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

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

Policy, Economics and Statistics Division
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Sydenham Intake
Belfast
BT3 9ED



Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
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ITEM 19.1

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Estates: H2 Performace Report
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	43600
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 2: Environmental Choose an item. If multiple:

If multiple:

Background

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

The Council's 16 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The report for H2 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to 15 outcomes as follows:

Outcome 1
An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment

Key achievements:

- Harbours berth holder survey completed
- Harbours stakeholder engagement meeting held

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

If multiple:

- Numerous energy saving projects completed- as reported in the Sustainable energy management strategy update report.
- Update on roadmap to green fleet reported to Council

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Alderman George Green Community Centre - refurbishment
- Kilcooley Community Centre - refurbishment
- Portaferry Market House - refurbishment
- Carrowdore Community Centre - refurbishment
- Queens Leisure Centre – refurbishment of shower area
- Balloo ERC - roofing / cladding and additional ramp
- Hibernia Street and Holborn Street car parks – redesign and resurfacing
- Exploris seawater storage tanks - refurbishment
- North Road Depot, Skipperstone CC, Green Road CC, Manor Court CC, Ballygowan CC - solar panels
- North Road Depot - double glazing
- Ward Park Depot – works associated with development of Community HUB

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Play Area inspections
- Legionella awareness training
- Tracked excavator training
- Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group approved training

Key issues

As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed and no new issues have been identified.

Next Steps

2 KPIs have failed to meet the target set. Reasons and action to be taken is outlined below.

If multiple:

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	It has proven difficult to encourage staff to engage in this process. The system in place was “clunky” and time consuming.	New system has been implemented	Peter Caldwell	H1 2026/27
Implement the schedule for planned maintenance of public areas. Public areas will be safer and more attractive. Planned maintenance of public areas carried out according to schedule	Implementation of planned maintenance strategy under review by Senior Maintenance Officer	Develop and review planned maintenance schedule	Geoff Allen	H1 2026/27

Summary

Overall, the Estates Service delivered strong performance during H2 2025/26, meeting or exceeding most of its targets. Key achievements included completing scheduled refurbishment and energy-management actions, reporting the Roadmap to a Green Fleet, maintaining full completion of monthly car park inspections, delivering service transformation measures and securing a satisfactory annual audit of harbour safety systems. Two indicators remained below target: employee appraisals were 72% complete against a 100% target, and planned maintenance of public areas achieved 90% against a 100% target. These areas will remain under review, with corrective actions progressed to support improved performance.

If multiple:

Estates - Performance Indicator Summary

Generated on: 06 August 2026

Last Update H2 2025/26

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
✓	To provide update to Council on our Roadmap to Green fleet	Yes	Yes
✓	% completion of monthly Car park inspections to identify key issues requiring cross departmental remediation	100%	100%
✓	% spend against budget	100.42%	100%
✓	% staff attendance	94.47%	95%
●	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	72%	100%
✓	To gain satisfactory outcome of Designated Persons annual audit of safety systems at our Harbours	Yes	Yes
✓	To Implement the Service transformation outlined in section 4	Yes	Yes
✓	Set milestones for energy reduction in order to meet our 2030 target	100%	100%
✓	Implementation of the action plan arising from the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy	100%	100%
✓	Carry out regular refurbishment projects across the estate. We will ensure our facilities are maintained to an acceptable standard. Refurbishments carried out according to the schedule	100%	100%
●	Implement the schedule for planned maintenance of public areas. Public areas will be safer and more attractive. Planned maintenance of public areas carried out according to schedule	90%	100%

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the report.

ITEM 19.2

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Parks and Cemeteries Service Performance Report (H2) 2025-26
Attachments	N/A
File Reference (if applicable)	CW22 / 43600
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: N/A
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	Multiple Multiple If multiple: Report demonstrates activity across all seven Corporate Plan outcomes

Background

If multiple:

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

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The Council's 16 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	December
Half Year (H2)	October – March	June

The H2 (Quarters 3 and 4) report for Parks & Cemeteries is below.

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to all seven outcomes:

Outcome 1: An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment.

Key Achievements:

- Ards & North Down in Bloom Community Competitions Community Awards event delivered in November.
- Construction of the Greenway between Newtownards and Bangor is substantially complete, with snagging works underway ahead of planned completion in Summer 2026.
- Play Strategy review underway with children engaged and consulted.
- New Play Parks installed at Island View in Greyabbey, Shorefront in Groomsport and Northfield in Donaghadee completed.
- New Multi Use Games Area at Moss Road Ballygowan completed.
- Multiple 'Friends of' events and activities were undertaken, assisting in the recruitment of new volunteers and strengthening local engagement and support.
- Bike safety checks completed during March.
- A Halloween-themed Park Pedal in October at Ward Park and a Christmas-themed Park Pedal in December at Castle Park.

If multiple:

- 31 community groups received In Bloom grants totalling £36,052, supporting local environmental enhancement projects and increased community participation.
- The annual 'Awake the Garden' was celebrated in March 2026 at the Walled Garden in Bangor.
- Delivery of a local sand dune conference in Portavogie. 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.

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

Key Achievements:

- Vigorous removal of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.
- Successful tender completion for new, more efficient machinery that emphasises modern technology with environmental efficiencies achieved.
- Tree planting event at Kerrs Wood in Bangor. This saw forty standard trees being planted with the help of the local community.
- Tree and hedgerow planting event at Smelt Mill Bay, Bangor. This saw standard trees and hedges 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.
- Tree planting event at Hunts Park, Donaghadee. In association with the local community of Donaghadee, parks team helped organise a tree-planting event which saw 500 tree whips being planted.
- Events held as part of international environmental awareness days including World Hedgehog Day, International Bat Night, RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch & Dawn Chorus.
- Rewilding: continue to develop existing rewilding sites. Seapark has been further enhanced in partnership with Buglife, initial site works to scarify the site followed by seeding of yellow rattle. The Bowtown rewilding site continues to thrive. The local community group continues to use and monitor the site whilst the local school has regular activities on the site.
- Continued work with North Down Swift group. Hosting an event and agreed the location of four new boxes and callers in Community Halls across Bangor.
- New bat and bird boxes installed at Kiltonga Nature Reserve and Crawfordsburn Glen.
- Education programmes – continue to deliver education programme with local schools.

If multiple:

Outcome 3: A thriving and sustainable economy.

Key Achievements:

- Jingle Bell Trail (6th to 21st December 2025) in Bangor Walled Garden attracting approximately 5,000 people through the festive trail.
- Trail Tales launch Cairn Wood in November 2025
- The Chilli Festival took place in September in the Walled Garden. This event is part of the 'Taste AND' at Bangor Castle, a Speciality Food and Drink Showcase happening over the same weekend.
- Halloween Trail (24th Oct to 2nd Nov) in Bangor Walled Garden attracting approximately 5,000 people through the spooky trail.
- Trail of the Easter Bunny was delivered during April across locations throughout the Borough, attracting thousands of participants who followed clues to receive an Easter-themed reward.

Outcome 4: A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key Achievements:

- Floodgates Park progressing towards planning application.
- Whitespots County Park project continues to be progressed.
- Construction of the Greenway between Newtownards and Bangor is substantially complete, with snagging works underway ahead of planned completion in Summer 2026.
- Tree planting event at Killare Wood in Bangor. In association with Choice Housing, council supplied and helped plant 300 tree whips in their new housing development.
- Ministerial pre-launch of the Greenway project took place in March ahead of final snagging works and completion.
- Contractor appointed to the Ward Park Environmental Improvement Scheme.

Outcome 5: Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing

Key Achievements:

- World Book Day in March was celebrated with a local nursery school in Ward Park.
- 'Friends of' groups – Linear has continued to thrive with five community events undertaken this year. A new purpose made community noticeboard was placed on site in March 2026.
- Meeting was held for potential Friends of Ballymenoch Park, Holywood. This is to be followed by a site walk and family summer events.
- Schools Growing Club – another five schools due to be completed for the 2025/26 cohort including, for the first time, a secondary school.
- PeacePLUS Your Place Re-imaging our Space is underway with recruitment completed in April and launch event planned for June.

If multiple:

- Awake the Garden was celebrated in March 2026 with a series of activities throughout the week including a Safety for Women and Girls event, Grow Your Own film showing, Bangor Horticulture Daffodil Competition and finishing with the traditional Awake the Garden flagship Day with plant sales, music, performers and stall holders.

Outcome 6: Opportunities for people to be active and healthy.

Key Achievements:

- Various cycling (Park Pedal), BMX, skateboard and scooter (Teens on Wheels) sessions to target families, increase cycling skills and awareness and engage with more teenagers and young people.
- The 'SparkHer' series was started with a series of free outdoor activities, workshops, and fitness sessions for women and girls across Ards and North Down. This was funded by the Northern Ireland Executive Office as part of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls initiative.
- Island View, Northfield and Shorefront play parks all complete. Launch events held at each location May/June 2026.
- Ballygowan MUGA and youth shelter were completed with a launch event planned for the summer.
- Park Pedal events were held as well as 'Teens on Wheels' events.

Outcome 7: Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation.

Key Achievements:

- Staff Business Planning Day was held in November, with all Parks & Cemeteries staff attending to help shape the Service Plan for 2026/7 and ensure we continue to meet and exceed our KPIs.
- Green Flag Awards are retained for Castle Park, Londonderry Park, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Linear Park and Ballymenoch Park, Clandeboye Cemetery and Cairn Wood. The retention of seven Green Flag Awards demonstrates continued excellence in the management and presentation of the Borough's parks, nature reserves and cemeteries.
- Plotbox cemetery software continues to expand its services with portals for memorial sculptors online applications and other streamlining processes.
- Success at the NI Amenity Council 'Best Kept Awards' with the Borough receiving awards for: Groomsport (Best Kept Large Village) and Donaghadee (Best Kept Small Town); plus Runner-Up awards for Bangor (City Category), Holywood (Medium Town) & Finalist for Newtownards in Large Town Category.
- At the Ulster in Bloom Awards Donaghadee was awarded 1st place in the Town Category and Crawfordsburn achieved a 2nd place in the Village Category.
- At the (RHS) Britain in Bloom Awards Donaghadee was awarded a 'Gold Award' in the Town Category.
- Donaghadee won the Town Category in the IPB Pride of Place Awards in partnership with Council.

Key issues

If multiple:

- **Recruitment and retention**: The Service continues to experience recruitment and retention challenges within a competitive labour market. Apprenticeship opportunities, succession planning and ongoing workforce planning measures are being progressed to support future staffing requirements and service resilience.
- **Cemetery capacity and future provision**: Future cemetery capacity remains under review. Work continues to identify and assess suitable land opportunities for future burial provision, with engagement ongoing with relevant stakeholders to ensure long-term burial provision across the Borough.
- **Budget pressures and financial sustainability**: Ongoing budget pressures continue to require careful financial management. The Service is actively identifying efficiencies, reviewing expenditure and seeking innovative approaches to maintain service standards while delivering value for money.
- **Climate change and extreme weather**: Increased incidents of flooding, drainage issues and storm damage continue to impact operational activity and maintenance costs. The Service is implementing mitigation measures, prioritising resilience improvements and adapting maintenance programmes to respond to the effects of changing weather patterns.

Next Steps

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Review Date
% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	Practical difficulties with the CoRE system impacted the completion of reviews.	Appraisal process now on new and improved platform, will make process easier to navigate.	Head of Parks & Cemeteries	October 2026
Amount of herbicide used (litres)	Increased usage of herbicides on pitches and control of invasive species.	Improved training, alternative products continue to be identified including use of stem injection for invasive species. Progressing the centralisation of chemical management.	Head of Parks & Cemeteries	October 2026
% staff attendance	Although staff absence rates have improved, it	The Service Management Team continues to meet regularly with HR and	Head of Parks & Cemeteries	October 2026

If multiple:

	remains challenging.	rigorously implement attendance management procedures. Changes to sickness reporting arrangements and proactive case management have contributed to improved attendance levels.		
% spend against budget	Income levels exceeded projections during the period, resulting in a variance against the approved budget profile.	Team to continue to monitor monthly the budget.	Head of Parks & Cemeteries	October 2026

Summary

The effective performance of a large, varied, and multi-site workforce achieved positive frontline, operational, and strategic outcomes for the Parks & Cemeteries Service in H2 (October 2025–March 2026).

Parks and Cemeteries - Performance Indicator Summary

Generated on: 12 August 2026

Last Update H2 2025/26

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% Spend Against Budget	97.04%	100%
	% staff attendance	91.32%	95%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	84%	100%
	Implement and embed the new Parks and Cemeteries Structures	100%	100%
	Monthly Staff Performance Improvement Meetings organised	100%	100%
	Annual Business Planning Day organised	100%	100%
	Continue to develop new revenue initiatives including rolling out mobile sauna business placements	100%	100%
	Seven Green Flag awards obtained	7	7
	Maintain 130,000m2 of rewilded council land	132,000	130,000
	Plant 15,000 trees as part of the STAND4TREES Initiative	15,747	15,000
	Amount of herbicide used (litres)	149.55	130
	Report annually on progress towards building on our Service being Climate Change Ready with actions and policies in place to assit wider Corporate Strategies	100%	100%
	Create a trail Social Value initiative and report to Council Committee	100%	100%

If multiple:

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
✓	Investment of £26,000 in funding for In Bloom Projects	£36,052.00	£26,000.00
✓	Achieve four in Bloom/ Best Kept awards	8	4
✓	Establish five 'Friends of' Groups	5	5
✓	70 Community Projects Organised	104	70
✓	Providing annual report of progressing corporate action of 1,250sqm (0.125ha) of community growing space per 10,000 households by 2028	100%	100%
✓	% of available allotments utilised	100%	100%
✓	Embed 5 Steps to Wellbeing into all aspects of our Service with 5 internal and 15 externally focussed information sessions, activities and programmes delivered	21	20

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the contents of the Parks and Cemeteries Performance H2 Report for 2025/26.

ITEM 19.3

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	Waste and Cleansing Services Performance Report (H2) 2025-26
Attachments	Waste and Cleansing Performance Indicator Summary
File Reference (if applicable)	43600
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 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:

If multiple:

Background

Members will be aware that Council is required, under the Local Government Act 2014, to have in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. To fulfil this requirement Council has in place a Performance Management Policy and Handbook. The Performance Management Handbook outlines the approach to the Performance Planning and Management process as:

- Community Plan – published every 10-15 years
- Corporate Plan – published every 4 years (Corporate Plan 2024-2028)
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) – published annually in September
- Service Plan – developed annually (approved annually in March)

The Council's 16 Service Plans outline how each respective Service will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate objectives including, but not limited to, any relevant actions identified in the PIP.

Reporting Approach

The Service Plans will be reported to relevant Committees on a half-yearly basis as undernoted:

Reference	Period	Reporting Month
Half Year (H1)	April – September	January
Half Year (H2)	October – March	September

The report for October to March 2026 is attached.

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

In line with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028, our service has contributed to 3 key corporate outcomes as follows:

Outcome 2
An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets

Key achievements:

- Increased household recycling rate to 58.03%
- Increased HRC reuse and recycling to 75.3%
- No waste sent directly to landfill during the first half of this financial year.
- From the beginning of 2025, Ards and North Down sends its residual waste for further processing and treatment. During the year 2025/26, we produced 31,661 tonnes of household residual waste. A two-stage process first recovered 3,055 tonnes (9.6%) of recyclable material before sending 28,606 tonnes (90.4%) for energy recovery in the form the Refuse-Derived Fuel

If multiple:

- A small quantity of non-target material collected for recycling is rejected by our contractors. During the year 2025/26, 16 tonnes of rejected material were sent to landfill by our contractors.

Nb. These waste data are drawn from NIEA's quarterly waste data reports and information from the Council's contractors. These data are considered provisional and subject to change until final and validated waste data is published by NIEA in November 2026.

Outcome 4
A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors

Key achievements:

- Achieved success in the Loo of the Year Awards (2025), receiving four platinum awards and one diamond award.
- Success in the Best Kept Awards 2025:
    - Best Kept Small Town – Donaghadee
    - Best Kept Large Village – Groomsport
    - Runner up, City – Bangor
    - Runner up, Medium Town – Holywood
    - Finalist, Large Town – Newtownards.

Outcome 7
Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

Key achievements:

- Services delivered within agreed budgets

Key issues:
As part of the commitment to continuous improvement the annual Service Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis. The Service Risk register has also been reviewed to identify emerging issues and agree any actions required detailed below:

- Achieve or exceed NI average Cleanliness Index Score of 75%
- Work with arc21 Councils to agree a timeline for the addition of plastic tubes to the kerbside dry recycling service.

Action to be taken:

- Identify and implement regular and independent surveys of Borough cleanliness as a measure of performance against the NI average Cleanliness Index Score.
- arc21 Councils have agreed that it is contractually possible that plastic tubes can be accepted in the kerbside dry recycling bin. Officers will work with arc21, Bryson Recycling, and partner councils to agree a coordinated timeline for their acceptance and communication of this change.

If multiple:

Identified KPI at Risk	Reasons as to why KPI has not been met	Action to be taken	Designated Officer	Date for Review
Cleanliness Index	Independent survey not able to be completed by service provider	Engage with potential providers of independent cleanliness surveys to reintroduce measurement against the KPI for the 2026/27 Service Plan	Head of Service	A service provider has been engaged and has completed the first of four quarterly independent Borough Cleanliness Surveys for 2026/27.

Summary

Waste and Cleansing Performance Indicator Summary

Generated on: 13 August 2026

Last Update H2 2025/26

Performance Data Traffic Light Icon	PI Short Name	Performance Data Current Value	Performance Data Current Target
	% spend against budget	98.21%	100%
	% staff attendance	93.62%	95%
	% of completed Employee Appraisals in the period April 2025 to March 2026	91%	100%
	Reported biodegradable waste sent to landfill (tonnes)	0	10,000
	Annual household waste collected per household (tonnes)	1.11	1.1
	Annual Waste Arisings (tonnes)	79,719	83,895
	Annual household waste collected per capita (kgs)	487	475
	% of household waste sent for recycling (including composting and preparing for reuse)	58.03%	60%
	% of household waste sent to landfill	0%	10%
	Improve recycling rate (%) at Council HRCs	75.3%	70%
	Achieve 100% success in Loo of the Year Awards (Gold or Platinum Award)	4	5

If multiple:

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes this report.**

ITEM 20

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	Depot Rationalisation Project Update
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	PCU 60.04 / 47077
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget 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:* Choose an item.
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 provide Members with a concise overview of the depot rationalisation project background, progress to date, current position, key risks and next steps.

Key Issues

Project Purpose
The Depot Rationalisation Project is reviewing the Council's operational depot arrangements to identify the most appropriate long-term solution for service delivery, future depot infrastructure, staff facilities, operational requirements and fleet decarbonisation. The project is also considering opportunities to rationalize existing arrangements and ensure any future depot provision is aligned with wider Council priorities and future service needs.

Project Timeline at a Glance

Period	Key Activity	Position
Apr 2025 to Jan 2026	Initial information gathering, procurement and consultant appointment.	Arcadis appointed and Project Initiation Document agreed.
Mar to Jun 2026	Feasibility work completed covering green and renewable infrastructure, depot layout and site requirements.	Final feasibility reports issued for review and approval.
May to Aug 2026	Strategic Outline Case development, stakeholder workshops and Council-wide information gathering.	Draft SOC submitted on 10 August 2026 for stakeholder review.
Aug to Nov 2026	Additional Site Selection Assessment approved.	GIS-based assessment to identify and score potential depot locations.
Sep 2026 to Apr 2027	Governance review and progression towards Outline Business Case stage.	CPPB and Committee consideration planned before OBC development.

Progress to Date

Feasibility stage completed: Arcadis completed Feasibility Study 1 on Green and Renewable Energy Infrastructure and Feasibility Study 2 on Depot Layout and Site Requirements. These reports were circulated to relevant stakeholders for review, comments and follow-up discussions.

Fleet and energy considerations assessed: The feasibility work supports planning towards a predominantly electric fleet future, while retaining flexibility to accommodate hydrogen or other emerging technologies if market conditions, supply chains or policy direction change.

Stakeholder engagement undertaken: Council services have contributed operational, financial and commercial information to inform the business case. Discussions have also taken place with Translink to share learning and consider potential future opportunities, although co-location decisions are not being progressed until potential sites are better understood.

Strategic Outline Case developed: Workshops have been completed to establish the case for change, spending objectives, service requirements, options appraisal and key risks. Arcadis submitted the draft Strategic Outline Case on 10 August 2026, with stakeholder review underway.

Site Selection Assessment approved: The Project Board considered and approved an additional site selection workstream. This will use GIS-based analysis and relevant datasets, including environmental, transport, planning and land ownership information, to identify and score potential depot locations across the Borough.

Current Position

The project has moved from feasibility into formal business case development. The draft Strategic Outline Case is now being reviewed by stakeholders and is expected to proceed through the Council's governance arrangements, including Corporate Project Programme Board consideration and Environment Committee consideration. The programme has been revised to allow the Site Selection Assessment to be completed before the Outline Business Case is developed. Arcadis has forecast overall completion in April 2027.

Key Risks and Considerations

- Affordability remains a key consideration, particularly given the potential level of expenditure associated with depot rationalisation options.
- The project requires robust operational and financial data to ensure future options are based on reliable evidence and service requirements.
- There is a risk of programme slippage if additional investigative work, stakeholder availability or internal priorities delay key deliverables.
- Other Council projects and service plans, including Parks and Cemeteries, Civic Office accommodation and Household Recycling Centre considerations, may create dependencies that need to be managed collectively.
- Further decisions will be required on the preferred direction, site selection requirements, option shortlisting and progression to the Outline Business Case stage.

Finance and Governance

The approved project budget to date for the feasibility and business case stage is £110,000 and is proceeding within budget. Governance remains in place through the Project Board, regular Arcadis meetings, CPPB and Committee reporting.

Next Steps

1. Complete stakeholder review and approval of the Strategic Outline Case.
2. Consider the SOC through CPPB and Environment Committee/Council governance routes.

3. Complete the Site Selection Assessment and agree search zones, assessment requirements and weightings.
4. Use the SOC and site assessment outputs to inform the Outline Business Case, including more detailed consideration of options, affordability, delivery arrangements and implementation requirements.

Summary
The Depot Rationalisation Project has made steady progress from initial feasibility through to Strategic Outline Case development. The project has established a stronger evidence base for future depot, service and fleet infrastructure requirements and is now moving towards key governance decisions on whether to progress to the next stage. The immediate focus is on completing the SOC review, progressing Committee consideration and undertaking a structured site selection assessment to support future decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** this report