

Agenda

Agenda

Attachment: 0.1 P&P Agenda - Oct 2026.pdf

Page 1

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of interest**
- 3. Deputations**

3.1 Bangor BID - Bangor Chamber of Commerce

Deputation by Frank Shivers and Alison Blaney on behalf of Bangor Chamber of Commerce

3.2 Bangor BID - Bangor BID Steering Group

Deputation by Mo Aswat and Noelle McAloon on behalf of Bangor BID Steering Group

Reports for Approval

4. Feasibility Study on the Tourism Development Potential of Heritage in Ards & North Down

Report attached

Attachment: 4. Feasibility Study on the Tourism Development Potential of Heritage in AND.pdf

Page 4

Attachment: 4.1 Executive Overview and Summary Tourism Dev Potential of Heritage in AND.pdf

Page 10

5. Notice of Motion 710 - Display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts

Report attached

Attachment: 5. Notice of Motion 710 Display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts.pdf

Page 23

6. UKREiF 2026 Attendance, Learning Outcomes and Proposed 2027 Participation

Report attached

Attachment: 6. UKREiF 2026 Attendance, Learning Outcomes and Proposed 2027 Participation.pdf

Page 25

7. Local Economic Partnership and Supporting Thriving High Streets

Report attached

*Attachment: 7. Local Economic Partnership and Supporting Thriving High
Streets.pdf*

Page 87

Reports for Noting

8. Newtownards Citizen Hub - Queen's Hall - Elected member Workshop - 19 August 2026

Report attached

*Attachment: 8. Newtownards Citizens' Hub - Queen's Hall, Elected Member
Workshop 19 August 2026.pdf*

Page 92

9. Annual Tourism Events Programme Evaluation - Mid-Season 2026

Report attached

*Attachment: 9. Annual Tourism Events Programme Evaluation - mid season
2026.pdf*

Page 94

Attachment: 9.1 Tourism Events Evaluation Summary - mid season 2026.pdf

Page 102

Attachment: 9.2 Bangor Vibes Business Feedback.pdf

Page 103

10. Green Economy - Update relating to Notice of Motion 649

Report attached

Attachment: 10. Green Economy Update relating to Notice of Motion 649.pdf

Page 106

11. Economic Growth Conference 2027

Report attached

Attachment: 11. Economic Growth Conference 2027.pdf

Page 109

12. Bangor Waterfront Update - October 2026

Report attached

Attachment: 12. Bangor Waterfront Update (October 2026).pdf

Page 120

13. Update report on Notice of Motion 705 - Strangford Bridge Update

Report attached

Attachment: 13. Update report on Notice of Motion 705 Strangford Bridge Update.pdf

Page 125

Attachment: 13.1 App 1 Ltr from Minister for Infrastructure of 6.7.26 re Strangford Bridge.pdf

Page 127

14. Supporting Thriving High Streets - Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award

Report attached

Attachment: 14. Supporting Thriving High Streets - Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award.pdf

Page 128

15. Notices of Motion

15.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman

In line with the Council's Corporate plan to support economic sustainability within the Borough, the recent business start-up and growth figures are extremely encouraging. However, in the context that Ards & North Down has the lowest GDP/head in Northern Ireland, the lowest GVA growth, has 9% of NI's population yet only 3% of its exports and less than 1% of R&D spend, yet historically has received the least Invest NI support of any council area, that Council requests a deputation from Invest NI to hear directly on how they are supporting the Council's ambitious business growth targets, including what resources and programmes they are dedicating to the Borough. Furthermore, Council that also writes to the Economy Minister to request a meeting to discuss how her Department can provide a fair share of resources to support business investment and employment growth in our Borough.

16. Any Other Notified Business

****In Confidence****

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

17. Extension of the Contract for the Academy for People with Disabilities

Report attached

*Attachment: 17. Extension of Contract for the Academy for People with Disabilities
Sept 2026.pdf*

Not included

18. Extension of the Contract for the Transport Academy

Report attached

*Attachment: 18. Extension of the Contract for the Transport Academy Sept
2026.dotx.pdf*

Not included

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

1 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Place and Prosperity Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on **Thursday 8 October 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
3. **Deputations**
 - 3.1 Bangor BID – Frank Shivers and Alison Blaney on behalf of Bangor Chamber of Commerce
 - 3.2 Bangor BID – Mo Aswat and Noelle McAloon on behalf of Bangor BID Steering Group

Reports for Approval

4. Feasibility Study on the Tourism Development Potential of Heritage in AND (report attached)
5. Notice of Motion 710 - Display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts (report attached)
6. UKREiiF 2026 Attendance, Learning Outcomes and Proposed 2027 Participation (report attached)
7. Local Economic Partnership and Supporting Thriving High Streets (report attached)

Reports for Noting

8. Newtownards Citizen Hub – Queen’s Hall, Elected Member Workshop 19 August 2026 (report attached)

9. Annual Tourism Events Programme Evaluation – Mid Season 2026 (report attached)
10. Green Economy – Update relating to Notice of Motion 649 – (report attached)
11. Economic Growth Conference 2027 (report attached)
12. Bangor Waterfront Update (October 26) (report attached)
13. Update report on Notice of Motion 705 – Strangford Bridge Update (report attached)
14. Supporting Thriving High Streets - Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award (report attached)
15. Notices of Motion

15.1 Notice of Motion 734 submitted by Alderman Smith and Councillor Newman:

In line with the Council's Corporate plan to support economic sustainability within the Borough, the recent business startup and growth figures are extremely encouraging. However, in the context that Ards & North Down has the lowest GDP/head in Northern Ireland, the lowest GVA growth, has 9% of NI's population yet only 3% of its exports and less than 1% of R&D spend, yet historically has received the least Invest NI support of any council area, that Council requests a deputation from Invest NI to hear directly on how they are supporting the Council's ambitious business growth targets, including what resources and programmes they are dedicating to the Borough. Furthermore, Council also writes to the Economy Minister to request a meeting to discuss how her Department can provide a fair share of resources to support business investment and employment growth in our Borough.

16. Any Other Notified Business

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

Reports for Approval (In Confidence)

17. Extension of the Contract for the Academy for People with Disabilities (report attached)
18. Extension of the Contract for the Transport Academy (report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF PLACE AND PROSPERITY COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman McDowell	Councillor McCollum
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Brady (Vice Chair)	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Newman
Councillor Gilmour	Councillor Smart (Chair)
Councillor Hennessy	Councillor Thompson

Unclassified

ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Report title	Feasibility Study on the Tourism Development Potential of Heritage in AND
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Executive Overview and Summary – Tourism Development Potential of Heritage in AND
File Reference (if applicable)	TO/TD70
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget Narrative: Additional budget/funds required to progress project outputs
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

During the Council restructure in 2025 a new service formed, whereby the services of Tourism, Events, Arts and Heritage were brought together. This has created further collaborative opportunities for the Council through the review of existing plans and team working. The benefits of the strength of the Borough's heritage as a tourism development opportunity and economic generator have not been fully explored. One of the key priorities of the Corporate Plan 2024-2028 is to increase economic growth and a key strategic action is to 'Develop the culture and heritage assets of the Borough'. The Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2018-2030 sets out a thematic priority to develop Visitor Experiences, and the Integrated Arts and Heritage Strategy 2018-2025 (currently under review) has a priority action of 'Investment in our arts and heritage infrastructure'. It was therefore deemed timely to assess the potential of this area of work within the service. It is important to note that a considerable number of heritage assets within the Borough are not within the Council's ownership, so partnerships and collaborative working is pertinent to further development opportunities.

Between March and August 2026, the Tourism Service unit appointed a consultant to complete a feasibility study on the 'Tourism Development Potential of Heritage Assets within Ards and North Down' using funds from the existing Tourism Development budget.

The study's purpose was to help inform, where practicable, future heritage product development, heritage site enhancement potential, investment opportunities, identify gaps in the heritage product offering and strategic positioning for the borough's offering within Northern Ireland's wider visitor landscape, subject to additional funding.

The key requirements were to:

- Audit and evaluate Ards and North Down's (AND's) heritage and cultural assets and their tourism performance, this included, but was not limited to, opening times, visitor footfall, experiences delivered, financial viability, sustainability, etc.
- Identify opportunities for development of new or enhanced heritage/culture-based visitor experiences and increased/improved access to visitor attractions/sites.
- Assess feasibility, sustainability, and economic viability of opportunities identified.
- Provide indicative cost recommendations for suggested improvement projects and a clear action plan, over the next ten years, where appropriate, for activity that is within the scope of potential Council delivery or in collaboration with State owned facilities.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation took place with a variety of stakeholders arranged by ANDBC and facilitated by the consultant.

Those consulted included:

- Tourism organisations: Tourism NI, Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland, National Trust, Historic Environment Division, National Museums NI, Castle Espie.

- ANDBC: Tourism (including Food and Drink Development.), Arts and Heritage, Capital Projects, Parks, Community Planning, Regeneration, Events, Assets and Property Services.
- Heritage organisations: Ards and North Down Heritage Cluster, North Belfast Heritage Cluster, Great Lighthouses of Ireland.
- Members of the Loughs and Legends Eastern Shores tourism group.

Key Issues

The report identified four strategic themes as a guide to future investment, partnership activity and destination development. The projects are dependent upon existing budget or additional funding being secured. Together, these four themes aim to create a more connected, immersive and sustainable heritage and cultural tourism offering to benefit visitors, businesses, communities and the Ards and North Down destination.

The themes are:

1. **A Connected Heritage and Cultural Destination**

To create a more connected and coherent heritage and cultural tourism offer that encourages visitors to explore more widely across the Borough and engage more deeply with its places, stories and communities.

2. **Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough**

This theme seeks to establish maritime heritage and Strangford Lough as defining elements of the Borough's heritage and cultural tourism proposition. Recognising the Lough as an internationally important landscape and waterscape where natural heritage, the historic environment, maritime culture and coastal communities combine to create one of the Borough's strongest and most distinctive visitor assets.

3. **Experience Development and Visitor Readiness**

To enhance the quality, accessibility and market readiness of heritage and cultural tourism experiences across the Borough, ensuring that visitors can engage with places, stories, landscapes and communities in meaningful, memorable and high-quality ways.

4. **Destination Stewardship and Sector Development**

To strengthen leadership, collaboration and organisational capacity across the heritage, cultural and tourism sectors, ensuring that the organisations, communities and businesses that shape the visitor experience are supported to work effectively.

See Appendix 1 for the Overview and Executive Summary.

Next steps

Throughout the study, Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough consistently emerged as the Borough's most distinctive heritage and cultural tourism assets. Few destinations possess such a concentration of coastal settlements, working harbours, maritime landscapes, historic sites and living maritime traditions within a single destination.

A total of eight potential projects under this 'Maritime' theme have been identified over the short to long term period for possible development (see Appendix 1 page 9 Programme 1 and Programme 2).

Officers suggest that by prioritising the delivery of three of the projects within these two programmes it would deliver opportunities to achieve best outcomes in relation to additional appeal and access to heritage in the development of experiences. These are:

Maritime Heritage Interpretation

Develop a Borough-wide interpretation framework for maritime heritage, providing a consistent approach to storytelling, interpretation, branding and visitor engagement. It would identify key themes, stories and locations and provide guidance for future interpretation projects, exhibitions, digital content and visitor experiences. Potential themes may include fishing heritage, maritime trade, harbour development, navigation, defence heritage, shipwrecks, island life and maritime folklore. The project is not intended to install interpretation at every site. Instead, it would establish an overarching interpretation framework identifying the Borough's principal maritime stories, themes and audiences, providing a consistent foundation for future signage, exhibitions, digital content, public art, visitor experiences and heritage projects delivered by the Council and partner organisations.

Associated budget £30,000 – Research and interpretation planning.

Maritime Digital Storytelling and Audio Guide Programme

Develop a suite of digital storytelling resources including audio guides, podcasts, QR-enabled interpretation, short films and digital heritage content that bring maritime stories to life across the Borough. The programme would allow visitors to access content before, during and after their visit while providing opportunities to share stories that may not be suitable for traditional interpretation. Digital storytelling allows the Borough to share richer and more personal stories than can be accommodated on traditional interpretation panels, including oral histories, archival recordings, local memories, folklore, interviews and contemporary community voices. Content can be updated over time and made available before, during and after a visit, extending visitor engagement beyond the physical site.

Associated budget £20,000 – Research, development of stories, production of digital content.

The two projects above would then provide the foundations for the delivery of element three:

Maritime Heritage Discovery Route (discovering a series of interconnected maritime places and stories). Develop a flagship visitor experience connecting Bangor Marina, Donaghadee Harbour, Grey Point Fort, Ballyhalbert, Portavogie, Portaferry and key locations around Strangford Lough through a shared maritime narrative. The project would interpret themes including fishing heritage, maritime trade, harbour development, lighthouse heritage, navigation, coastal defence, shipwrecks, wildlife and the Borough's enduring relationship with the sea. The trail would combine digital content, interpretation, visitor itineraries, guided experiences and links to existing

maritime attractions, helping establish maritime heritage as one of the Borough's defining tourism experiences. The project is envisaged primarily as a self-guided maritime discovery experience supported by digital interpretation, suggested itineraries and themed visitor journeys. Guided walks, boat trips, coach tours and community-led experiences could subsequently be developed by local operators and organisations under the shared Maritime Heritage Discovery Trail brand.

Associated budget: £20,000 for trail development, stakeholder engagement, interpretation planning and digital content. (Physical infrastructure and interpretation installations would be subject to separate costing).

Total associated budget to complete the three projects: £70,000

The strength of this Maritime theme is furthermore identified within the following five projects, specific to Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough. These are defined as within a longer-term delivery period. Each of these has their own indicative project costs and would be subject to additional funding secured at a later stage.

1. Strangford Lough Signature Visitor Experience Programme
2. Donaghadee Lighthouse and Harbour Heritage Experience
3. Harbour and Waterfront Activation Programme
4. Coastal Communities Maritime Experience Network
5. Maritime Festivals and Events Development Programme

The Tourism service will endeavour to identify and apply to external funders to secure budget to proceed with this work, however, drawing down funds cannot be guaranteed, nor any timescale attributed as to when it may be secured. An initial grant search has been undertaken, and officers will continue this on a regular basis.

Summary

The current Tourism Development budget is not sufficient to progress any of the identified three priority key projects. Therefore, the Options are

1. Phased funding across three years via the rates setting process for the three projects identified at £30k year one, £20k year two and £20k year three. A project will be commenced in 2027/28, subject to budget.
2. Seek external funding to deliver all the projects. No projects would be guaranteed to be delivered in year one or any year due to match fund requirement and undetermined funders or timeline.

The Tourism service plan to proceed this year with a couple of smaller projects identified in the study, at minimal budget, within existing Tourism budgets e.g. Pilot QR code based self-guided walking tour, in the short to medium term. Should these pilots prove successful then additional budget would be sought, through external funding, to extend delivery at suitable sites within the Borough, should that become available.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Approves** the outline plan in the next steps to progress the three key projects identified within the Study and the further approves phased funding of £30k in 2027/28, £20k in 2028/29 and £20k in 2029/30 subject to the rates setting process and/or receiving external funding.



Feasibility Study on the Tourism Development Potential of Heritage Assets within Ards and North Down

Overview & Executive Summary

August 2026

Report Overview

Ards and North Down is a place shaped by the sea and Strangford Lough, enriched by its landscapes and defined by the people who call it home. Its identity has been forged through centuries of maritime activity, faith, enterprise, creativity and community life, leaving a legacy reflected in its coastline, Bangor, the Borough's city, together with its historic towns and villages, country estates, gardens, museums, places of worship, cultural traditions and creative industries. Together, these elements create a distinctive destination where built and natural heritage, internationally important landscapes and waterscapes, a spectacular coastal setting and rich maritime history combine to offer visitors an authentic sense of place. Central to this identity is Strangford Lough and its surrounding rural landscapes and settlements, where an internationally important natural environment, historic landscapes, maritime heritage and vibrant coastal communities come together to shape one of the Borough's most distinctive visitor experiences.

For residents, these places contribute to everyday life and help define the character of the Borough. For visitors, they reveal its history, culture and rural landscapes through authentic places and local stories. Individually, many of these assets are already recognised for their quality. Collectively, they create a destination whose strength lies in the breadth and diversity of its heritage and cultural experiences.

Ards and North Down already possess the foundations of an outstanding heritage and cultural destination. The opportunity is not to create a new identity, but to reveal and celebrate the one that already exists. Few places of comparable size offer such a rich combination of maritime heritage, historic landscapes, gardens, culture, creativity, food, festivals and visitor experiences within such a compact and accessible area. This combination provides the Borough with a strong platform from which to grow its visitor economy while remaining true to its character.

Visitor expectations continue to evolve. Increasingly, people are seeking destinations that offer authentic experiences, distinctive local character and opportunities to connect with the history, culture and landscapes of a place. Rather than focusing on individual attractions, they are choosing destinations that tell a richer story. Ards and North Down is well placed to meet these expectations.

Capitalising on this opportunity does not require the Borough to create something new. The priority is to make its heritage and cultural offer including museums, arts and creative organisations, festivals and events, music, storytelling, living traditions and community-led cultural experiences easier to discover, understand and experience. This will encourage visitors to explore more widely, stay longer and discover the richness and diversity of the Borough as a whole.

This study was commissioned to establish a clear strategic direction for the future development of heritage and cultural tourism across the Borough. Drawing on detailed research, a comprehensive review of heritage and cultural assets, stakeholder workshops, extensive consultation and a review of good practice case studies, it provides an evidence-based assessment of the Borough's strengths, opportunities and future potential.

A significant finding was the consistency of the messages that emerged throughout the study. Council officers, heritage organisations, cultural providers, tourism businesses, public agencies, community groups, historical societies and volunteers all recognised the quality of the Borough's heritage and cultural assets. There was equally strong agreement that the

greatest opportunity lies in strengthening how these assets are connected, presented and experienced.

The conclusion was clear. The Borough does not need more heritage assets, more attractions or a single transformational project. Its greatest opportunity lies in making better use of what already exists by helping visitors discover the connections between its places, landscapes, stories and communities.

This direction is reflected in the priorities identified throughout the study: stronger storytelling, better interpretation, easier navigation, greater collaboration and increased confidence in presenting the Borough's unique identity. Together, these actions will create a visitor experience that is connected, coherent and unmistakably Ards and North Down.

Importantly, this vision extends beyond tourism. Heritage and culture enrich everyday life, strengthen communities, protect the Borough's distinctive character and provide opportunities for learning, participation and wellbeing. A successful visitor destination should enhance the lives of residents as much as the experience of visitors.

The places that leave the greatest impression are rarely those with the largest attractions. They are places with a strong identity, where landscapes, heritage, culture and community combine to create experiences that feel genuine and memorable. Ards and North Down has these qualities in abundance. Its coastline, maritime traditions, historic estates, gardens, historic towns and villages, museums, festivals, food and creative communities tell a story that is distinctive to the Borough and nowhere else.

The future success of heritage and cultural tourism will depend not upon one major investment, but upon the cumulative impact of many improvements working together. Better experiences, stronger connections between places, high-quality public spaces and sustained partnership will collectively transform how the Borough is experienced.

The opportunity is clear. Building on its existing strengths and maintaining a shared long-term direction, Ards and North Down can realise the full potential of its heritage and cultural assets, strengthening its reputation as a place where heritage, culture and community together create an exceptional visitor experience.

The evidence gathered throughout this study has informed the development of a Strategic Development Framework that provides a clear and long-term direction for heritage and cultural tourism across the Borough. Structured around four strategic themes and delivered through four complementary programmes of work, it provides a practical roadmap for strengthening the Borough's heritage and cultural offer over the coming years.

The Strategic Development Framework is built around four strategic themes that define the long-term direction for heritage and cultural tourism across the Borough. Together, they seek to create a Connected Heritage and Cultural Destination; celebrate Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough as defining assets; strengthen Experience Development and Visitor Readiness; and promote Destination Stewardship and Sector Development. In doing so, the Framework recognises Strangford Lough's internationally important natural environment, rural historic landscapes, waterscapes, maritime heritage and associated heritage sites as central to the Borough's identity and visitor offer. Collectively, these themes provide the strategic framework to guide future decision-making, investment and partnership working.

To translate this strategic vision into delivery, the Framework is organised around four complementary programmes of work. Rather than recommending a series of standalone projects, the programmes provide a coordinated approach to destination development by bringing together related projects and initiatives that reinforce one another and collectively

deliver greater impact. They focus on connecting heritage assets, places and stories into stronger visitor experiences; celebrating and enhancing the Borough's unique maritime heritage; improving the quality, accessibility and visitor readiness of heritage and cultural experiences; strengthening interpretation, storytelling and heritage conservation; supporting communities, heritage organisations and destination stewardship; building organisational capacity and partnerships; and developing a pipeline of strategic projects capable of attracting future investment. Together, the programmes provide a practical framework for prioritising investment, coordinating delivery and translating the strategic vision into sustainable destination development over the short, medium and longer term.

Successful delivery will depend upon continued collaboration across the public, private and community sectors. Throughout the study there was strong alignment around both the opportunities facing the Borough and the actions required to realise them. This shared ambition provides a solid foundation for future partnership working and recognises that no single organisation can deliver the Framework in isolation.

The Council has a pivotal role in enabling this ambition. Its role is not to deliver every project, but to provide strategic leadership, coordinate delivery, encourage partnership working and maintain a clear long-term direction. Aligning activity across tourism, heritage, regeneration, culture and community development, the Council can help ensure that individual initiatives contribute to a shared vision for the Borough and maximise the impact of future investment.

This vision is both ambitious and achievable. The Borough already possesses an exceptional heritage and cultural resource, active communities, committed organisations and a growing number of successful visitor experiences. Combined with a robust evidence base, strong stakeholder support, alignment with national and regional policy, and access to potential funding opportunities, these provide a realistic platform for phased implementation.

The benefits of this approach extend beyond tourism. Strengthening the Borough's heritage and cultural offer will support local businesses, enhance quality of life for residents, reinforce pride in place, encourage investment and help protect the landscapes, stories and traditions that define Ards and North Down for future generations.

Ards and North Down is well positioned to build on the considerable strengths it already possesses. The Strategic Development Framework provides a clear direction for unlocking the full potential of the Borough's heritage and cultural assets through coordinated investment and partnership working. Successful implementation will create opportunities to develop a more connected destination, enrich visitor experiences, strengthen local communities and ensure that the Borough's unique heritage continues to shape its future as well as celebrate its past.

Executive Summary

Ards and North Down Borough Council commissioned this feasibility study to assess the tourism development potential of the Borough's heritage and cultural assets and to identify opportunities to strengthen their contribution to the visitor economy. The study considered the strategic and policy context, tourism markets, the existing heritage and cultural product, visitor infrastructure and destination readiness, stakeholder views, examples of good practice and potential delivery and funding approaches.

The study does not seek to identify a single flagship attraction. Instead, it provides a strategic framework through which a range of complementary initiatives can be developed over time. Its central conclusion is that Ards and North Down already possesses a substantial and distinctive heritage and cultural tourism resource. The principal opportunity is not the creation of entirely new attractions, but the stronger connection, activation, interpretation and presentation of existing assets, places, stories and visitor experiences.

Key Evidence

The policy environment provides a supportive context for heritage and cultural tourism development. Regional and local strategies increasingly emphasise authentic visitor experiences, destination stewardship, sustainability, regional dispersal, community participation and the creation of distinctive place-based tourism offers. These priorities align closely with the Borough's maritime heritage, Strangford Lough's internationally recognised natural environment, coastal and rural landscapes, historic settlements and cultural assets.

Tourism already makes an important contribution to the Borough's economy. The most recent available local data records 296,534 overnight trips, 1,081,904 bed nights and approximately £57 million in overnight visitor expenditure (NISRA 2025). Although overnight trips decreased slightly compared with the previous year, both bed nights and visitor expenditure increased, indicating longer stays and higher visitor spend. The Borough also benefits from a strong day visitor market, an established portfolio of attractions and a diverse accommodation base. Its proximity to Belfast provides access to a significant visitor market while allowing it to offer a contrasting experience based on coastline, heritage, landscape, food, gardens, culture and slower-paced exploration.

The market evidence demonstrates strong alignment between the Borough's characteristics and evolving visitor demand. Domestic and international visitors are increasingly seeking authentic, immersive and experience-led travel centred on culture, heritage, landscape, food and local identity. The Borough is particularly well positioned to appeal to Culturally Curious visitors, Enrichment Explorers and Great Escapers, who value meaningful engagement with places and are generally associated with longer stays, wider exploration and higher-value tourism.

A Heritage and Cultural Asset Audit completed as part of the study identified 81 assets across the Borough, comprising:

- 32 built heritage assets;
- 22 rural heritage and landscape assets;
- 15 cultural heritage assets; and
- 12 maritime heritage assets.

The audit also identified 26 Anchor Assets, 30 Supporting Assets, nine Connector Assets and 20 visitor itineraries or curated experiences. The breadth of this resource demonstrates that the Borough's tourism offer extends well beyond conventional historic attractions and includes

landscapes, estates and gardens, coastal environments, festivals, creative activity, visitor experiences, routes and local storytelling.

The asset review also highlighted limitations in visitor readiness. Only a proportion of assets currently provide regular year-round access, while others are seasonal, accessible by arrangement, experienced externally or remain closed or under development. Digital presence, online booking, interpretation, visitor information and operational capacity are inconsistent. These issues constrain the extent to which some assets can contribute fully to the visitor economy.

Consultation with tourism agencies, heritage organisations, community groups, cultural providers, tourism businesses and Council departments broadly reinforced the findings of the audit. Stakeholders consistently identified the importance of maritime heritage and Strangford Lough, recognising its internationally important natural environment, historic landscapes, archaeological sites, maritime heritage, coastal communities and protected heritage as defining characteristics of the Borough. They also highlighted the need to move from individual assets towards connected visitor experiences, strengthen interpretation and storytelling, and support community organisations, volunteers and local partnerships.

Principal Findings

1. The Borough's competitive advantage lies in the diversity and distinctiveness of its heritage and cultural offer

Ards and North Down does not depend upon one or two major attractions. Its strength lies in the breadth of its asset base, including built and ecclesiastical heritage, maritime stories, rural landscapes, estates and gardens, Bangor, the Borough's city, together with its historic towns and villages, festivals, creative activity, food experiences and visitor attractions.

This diversity provides resilience, allows the Borough to appeal to a range of visitor interests and creates opportunities to combine several experiences within a single visit.

2. Sense of place is one of the Borough's strongest tourism assets

Many of the Borough's most important tourism experiences derive not only from individual sites, but from their relationship with landscape, coastline, local communities and identity.

This is particularly evident around Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula where internationally important landscapes and waterscapes, designated natural heritage, historic sites, maritime archaeology, coastal settlements and living traditions combine to create one of the Borough's most distinctive visitor experiences.

3. Community stewardship and local ownership are fundamental to the heritage offer

Community groups, volunteers, local trusts and heritage organisations play a major role in maintaining assets, providing access, delivering tours and events, preserving local knowledge and welcoming visitors.

This local commitment is a significant strength, but it is accompanied by challenges relating to capacity, governance, volunteer recruitment and succession planning. Future development must invest in organisations and people as well as physical heritage assets.

4. The strongest opportunities lie in geographic and thematic clusters

The audit identified concentrations of complementary assets and shared stories that lend themselves to destination-level development. These include maritime heritage and coastal communities, Strangford Lough, early Christian heritage, estates and gardens, historic towns and villages, food heritage and creative activity.

Developing these assets through trails, itineraries, shared interpretation and coordinated visitor journeys would encourage visitors to explore more widely and increase dwell time.

5. Access and visitor readiness constrain tourism potential

The heritage significance of an asset does not automatically translate into a strong visitor experience. Opening arrangements, interpretation, signage, digital visibility, visitor facilities, staffing and operational capacity all influence how easily visitors can access and understand a place.

In many cases, relatively modest improvements in information, interpretation, programming, digital content and visitor welcome could significantly strengthen the tourism contribution of existing assets.

6. The greatest opportunity lies in activating and connecting existing assets

The Borough already possesses many of the building blocks required for a strong heritage and cultural destination. The challenge is that these assets and experiences are not always understood or presented as part of a coherent destination.

The most significant opportunity is to strengthen connections between places, stories, communities and visitor experiences through trails, interpretation, digital content, events, cultural programming, guided experiences and stronger partnership working.

Strategic Development Framework

The study proposes four interconnected strategic themes.

Theme 1: A Connected Heritage and Cultural Destination

This theme seeks to create a more coherent destination in which visitors can move easily between heritage assets, attractions, landscapes, communities and visitor services.

Key areas of action include:

- Thematic trails and itineraries
- Visitor journey planning
- Destination wayfinding and orientation
- Digital discovery and navigation
- Cross-promotion and packaging
- Strengthening connections between towns, villages, attractions and surrounding assets

Theme 2: Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough

This theme seeks to establish maritime heritage and Strangford Lough as defining elements of the Borough's tourism proposition, recognising the Lough as an internationally significant landscape and waterscape where natural heritage, historic environment, maritime culture and coastal communities together create a unique sense of place.

Key areas of action include:

- Maritime storytelling and interpretation
- Harbour and waterfront activation
- Coastal and lough-based visitor experiences
- Strengthening links between coastal communities
- Maritime festivals and cultural programming
- Collaborative development around Strangford Lough

Theme 3: Experience Development and Visitor Readiness

This theme focuses on improving the quality, accessibility and market readiness of the Borough's heritage and cultural tourism offer.

Key areas of action include:

- Experience design and product development
- Interpretation and storytelling
- Visitor information and welcome
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Digital interpretation
- Guided and immersive experiences
- Activation of heritage buildings and places through events, performance and creative programming

Theme 4: Destination Stewardship and Sector Development

This theme recognises that long-term success will depend upon the strength of the organisations, businesses, volunteers and partnerships that support the visitor experience.

Key areas of action include:

- Network and partnership development
- Organisational capacity building
- Governance and sustainability support
- Volunteer recruitment and succession planning
- Ambassador programmes
- Knowledge sharing
- Collaborative marketing
- Shared destination stewardship

Strategic Programmes

The four themes are translated into four delivery programmes.

Programme 1: Ards and North Down Discovery Network

This programme would connect places, stories and experiences through a family of trails, themed journeys, visitor itineraries, digital platforms, wayfinding initiatives and regional partnerships.

Potential projects include:

- Maritime Heritage Discovery Route
- St Columbanus and Early Christian Heritage Journey
- Great Gardens and Estates Discovery Trail
- Taste of the Peninsula Food and Heritage Trail
- Heritage Villages and Coastal Communities Discovery Journey
- Creative Coast Network
- Destination Digital Discovery Platform
- Wayfinding and Visitor Orientation Strategy
- Maritime Heritage Discovery Route

Programme 2: Maritime Heritage and Strangford Lough Initiative

This programme would strengthen maritime heritage as a defining destination proposition and support the development of new and enhanced coastal visitor experiences.

Potential projects include:

- Strangford Lough Signature Visitor Experience Programme
- Borough-wide Maritime Interpretation Framework
- Donaghadee Lighthouse and Harbour Heritage Experience
- Harbour and Waterfront Activation Programme
- Maritime Digital Storytelling and Audio Guides
- Coastal Communities Maritime Experiences Network
- Maritime Festivals and Events Development

Programme 3: Heritage Experience Development Programme

This programme would help heritage organisations, communities, cultural providers and tourism businesses transform existing ideas and assets into visitor-ready experiences.

Support could include:

- Experience design
- Storytelling and interpretation
- Mentoring and business development
- Market testing
- Accessibility improvements
- Digital interpretation
- Pilot activities
- Small-scale seed support

The programme would complement existing Council grant schemes by focusing on the development and testing of experiences before they are ready for larger-scale investment or commercial delivery.

Programme 4: Destination Stewardship and Sector Development

This programme would strengthen the people and partnerships behind the visitor economy.

Potential projects include:

- Ards and North Down Heritage and Culture Network¹
- Heritage and Tourism Ambassador Programme
- Sector Capacity Building Programme
- Volunteer Development and Succession Programme
- Regional Partnerships and Advocacy Programme

Recommended Early Priorities

Recognising that there is currently no dedicated budget to deliver the full framework, three projects are recommended for early business-case development and potential consideration through the Council's future business-planning and budget-setting processes.

1. Maritime Heritage Discovery Route – Phase 1

This project would provide an early and visible destination-facing initiative based on one of the Borough's strongest and most distinctive themes.

Phase 1 would include:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Route and thematic development
- Creation of a shared maritime narrative
- Interpretation planning
- Digital mapping and content
- Suggested visitor itineraries

The indicative initial investment is £15,000–£20,000, excluding physical infrastructure.

2. Heritage Experience Development Programme – Pilot

This pilot would support a selected cohort of heritage organisations, communities and tourism businesses to develop market-ready visitor experiences.

Support would include mentoring, storytelling, experience design, market testing and, where appropriate, small-scale seed support.

The pilot would demonstrate what can be achieved through relatively modest investment while creating a pipeline of stronger, visitor-ready experiences for future investment and delivery.

The indicative initial investment is £10,000–£20,000, together with programme administration.

3. Ards and North Down Heritage and Culture Network

The Network would provide the coordination mechanism needed to maintain momentum following completion of the study. This Borough-wide Network would bring together heritage organisations, cultural providers, tourism businesses, community groups and public agencies.

It would support:

- Communication and knowledge sharing

¹ Establish a Heritage and Culture Network bringing together historic and heritage organisations, museums, community and voluntary groups, tourism businesses, cultural organisations, Council services and other key stakeholders to strengthen collaboration, knowledge sharing and the coordinated development of heritage and cultural tourism across the Borough.

- Thematic and geographic cluster development
- Collaborative project development
- Partnership building
- Annual action planning
- Funding applications
- Shared destination stewardship

The indicative cost is £10,000–£20,000 per annum, depending on whether coordination is delivered internally, through an external facilitator or via a dedicated part-time resource.

Together, these three projects provide a balanced starting point for implementation. The Maritime Heritage Discovery Route would establish a distinctive outward-facing visitor proposition, the Heritage Experience Development Programme would strengthen the quality of the Borough's tourism offer, and the Heritage and Culture Network would provide the capacity and coordination needed to support long-term delivery.

Implementation and Funding

The projects identified within the study represent a strategic pipeline rather than a fully funded implementation programme. There is currently no dedicated budget in place to deliver the Strategic Development Framework in its entirety.

Implementation will need to be:

- Phased
- Aligned with available Council resources
- Supported by partnerships
- Responsive to organisational capacity
- Progressed as appropriate funding opportunities arise

Some projects may be delivered through relatively modest investment, while others will require further feasibility work, business case development, detailed design, capital funding or multi-agency collaboration.

Potential funding sources include the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Tourism NI, PEACEPLUS, cultural and community development programmes, environmental and landscape-based funding, cross-border and all-island programmes, Council investment and partnership contributions.

The Strategic Development Framework provides the Council with a prioritised and evidence-based pipeline of opportunities that can be progressed as resources become available. This approach enables the Council to respond proactively to emerging funding opportunities, develop business cases for priority projects and build delivery partnerships over time.

The Framework is intended to strengthen the Borough's readiness to respond to future funding opportunities by providing a clear evidence base, a coherent strategic direction and a prioritised portfolio of projects.

Conclusion

Ards and North Down possesses a significant and distinctive heritage and cultural tourism resource. Its combination of maritime heritage, Strangford Lough and its heritage, coastal and rural landscapes, historic city, towns and villages, estates and gardens, cultural activity, community stewardship and visitor attractions provide a strong foundation for future tourism development.

The Borough's principal opportunity is not to create a single new flagship attraction, but to improve how existing assets are connected, interpreted, activated and experienced. Building stronger links between places, stories, communities and visitor experiences, the Borough can create a more coherent and compelling destination that encourages visitors to stay longer, explore more widely and engage more deeply with its heritage and culture.

The Strategic Development Framework provides a clear direction for achieving this ambition. It establishes a prioritised portfolio of opportunities that can be progressed over time through partnership working, phased investment and external funding as opportunities arise. While delivery will depend on future resources, the Framework provides the evidence base and strategic direction needed to guide future investment and strengthen Ards and North Down as a connected, immersive and sustainable heritage and cultural tourism destination.

Unclassified

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2025
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism Arts and Heritage
Report title	Notice of Motion 710 - Display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts
Attachments	N/A
File Reference (if applicable)	ART 08 10/26
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Staffing Narrative: Minimal Implications
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening will be required if agreed
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background

In April 2026, the Council agreed that:

“This Council commends the continued work and dedication of the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF). For many years, the organisation has provided invaluable support, advocacy, and practical assistance to victims and survivors across Northern Ireland ensuring that their voices are heard, and their needs are not forgotten.

We agree to display the SEFF memorial quilt at a suitable location in the borough to honour innocent victims, educate the public about the impact of the Troubles, and ensure the legacy and memory of those lost continues to be recognised.”

Key Issues

Officers have met with the Director of the SEFF (rebranded in 2025 to Supporting Empowering, Fair, Focussed) and agreed that an appropriate location for the siting of the quilts (all ten) is the Londonderry Room at Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Conway Square, Newtownards.

Several operational factors had to be considered in choosing the appropriate location including the staffing, security, accessibility and available opening hours. It was agreed that the Town Hall provided a prominent location with minimal additional resources required to facilitate the display of all ten of the SEFF Memorial Quilts. The quilts are large with the majority circa 3.2 metres wide by 2.2 metres in height (three are slightly smaller) and are displayed on freestanding metal cross bars.

The quilts display can be accommodated from 15-23 January 2027. It should be noted that the display is only possible at this time, as regular external room users do not resume until 25 January following their holiday break. One booking will be re-located to accommodate the quilts. They will be available for viewing during the Arts Centre Tuesday – Friday normal opening hours and will include evenings, along with extended Saturday opening on 16 and 23 January 2027.

Next Steps

The display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts will be subject to Screening, and the Screening Form has been submitted and is awaiting an outcome. Initial discussions have been undertaken with Good Relations colleagues, and these will continue to assist support the exhibition.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Approves** the display of the SEFF Memorial Quilts at Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Newtownards 15-23 January 2027, subject to screening.

Unclassified

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	UKREiiF 2026 Attendance, Learning Outcomes and Proposed 2027 Participation
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Belfast City & Region Investment Guide Appendix 2 – Belfast City & Region Place Partnership for the 2026-2027 Programme.
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: £15,000 budget provision required which is in the budget. Existing staff resources will be utilised.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple:

Background

On 9th October 2025, the Place and Prosperity Committee considered the *UKREiIF Update* report and approved officer attendance at UKREiIF 2026. Two officers subsequently attended UKREiIF 2026 through the Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme.

The Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme provides a regional platform to promote investment opportunities across the Belfast City Region. For Ards and North Down, it enables Council priorities such as Bangor Waterfront, Queens Parade, employment land and town centre regeneration to be promoted as part of a wider regional investment proposition, supported by the Belfast City and Region Deal Investment Prospectus (Appendix 1).

This report summarises the learning from UKREiIF 2026 and seeks approval for continued participation in UKREiIF 2027, including a £15,000 budget provision to support the Council's contribution to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance by three Council representatives.

UKREiIF 2026 Attendance and Sessions

In 2026, two Council officers attended UKREiIF as part of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership delegation. Attendance was focused on sessions and networking activity most closely aligned to the Council's regeneration, investment, waterfront development and placemaking priorities.

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
Belfast City & Region Showcase	This BCRPP showcase highlighted the Belfast City and Region's investment proposition, including housing, transport-led regeneration, waterfront development, tourism and hospitality, logistics, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.	The session reinforced the benefit of promoting Ards and North Down as part of a wider regional investment proposition. It also demonstrated the need for the Council to have clear, market-facing project messages ready for use in regional promotional material and investor conversations.
Devolved Nations / Northern Ireland and Scotland Investor and Developer Session	This private session brought together towns, cities and regions from Northern Ireland and Scotland with investors, developers and end users seeking new opportunities. It provided a focused example of how devolved nations and regional partners can present a collective investment proposition while still promoting individual place-based opportunities.	The key learning was that devolved nations and regional collaboration can strengthen investor engagement by giving individual council opportunities greater visibility within a wider, more coherent regional narrative. For future attendance, the Council should use these sessions to understand how other areas package investment propositions, identify relevant

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
		investors and developers in advance, and position Bangor Waterfront, Queens Parade, city/town centre regeneration and employment land opportunities within a clear regional growth story.
Beyond the Seafront: New Models for Sustainable Coastal Regeneration	This session considered how coastal regeneration can move beyond seafront improvement, tourism revival and heritage restoration to address wider economic, social and place-based challenges.	The learning is directly relevant to Bangor Waterfront and wider coastal regeneration work. It highlighted the importance of positioning waterfront regeneration as a wider economic and placemaking opportunity, rather than solely as a tourism or public realm intervention.
Coastal Communities – The Next Big Opportunities for Growth?	This session explored the future growth potential of coastal towns and the conditions required to create stronger coastal economies.	The specific learning from this session was that coastal towns should be positioned as growth locations in their own right, rather than viewed only through a tourism or seasonal visitor lens. For Ards and North Down, this supports the need to present the Borough's coastal assets as a connected economic opportunity, linking natural assets, enterprise, food and beverage, recreation, wellbeing, visitor economy and local community benefit. It also reinforced that stronger coastal places require a clear blueprint for growth, with investment propositions that explain what makes each coastal location distinctive and what practical interventions would help unlock further private sector interest.
Coastal Regeneration in Practice: A Masterclass for	This invite-only masterclass provided practical insight from coastal regeneration research and brought together local	The specific learning from this masterclass was that successful coastal regeneration depends on

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
Place-Led Delivery	authority leaders and specialists to consider the drivers of successful place-led delivery.	practical delivery steps, strong local leadership, partnership working and an evidence-led approach to investment. The session highlighted the value of testing demand, understanding the delivery conditions for coastal projects and translating strategic ambition into phased, deliverable actions. For Bangor Waterfront and wider coastal regeneration work, the learning is that the Council should use early engagement, pilot activity, market testing and clear governance to de-risk projects and build confidence before progressing to larger-scale investment or delivery partnerships.
Mansion House-style dinner / senior investor engagement	This private dinner brought together senior UK Government Ministers, international investors, regional leaders and C-suite representatives as part of the wider UKREiiF programme. It provided an opportunity for senior-level engagement outside the formal conference sessions and supported the wider Belfast City Region presence at the event.	These high-level evening engagements added value by creating direct relationship-building opportunities with senior decision-makers, investors and regional partners in a more focused setting. For future attendance, the Council should continue to prioritise these opportunities, ensuring that officers are prepared with clear messages on priority projects and that positive contacts are followed up promptly after the event.
Belfast City & Region networking activity / evening engagement	The programme included wider networking linked to BCRPP, Consello and regional partners, including an evening engagement attended by a Council officer with a Government Minister and Belfast City Region contacts.	The key outcome was relationship-building at senior stakeholder level, reinforcing the importance of informal networking alongside formal conference sessions. The learning for future attendance is that officer participation should be planned to

Session / Activity	Purpose and relevance	Key learning / outcome
		maximise access to ministerial, regional, investor and developer contacts, with follow-up actions captured after the event.

Overall, the 2026 attendance demonstrated that the greatest value from UKREiIF comes from combining the regional visibility provided through BCRPP with a more focused Council-level approach. For future attendance, officers should identify priority projects, prepare concise investor-facing messages, use the delegate platform to secure meetings in advance, prioritise sessions linked to regional investment delivery, and report back on contacts, learning and follow-up actions.

Key Considerations for Future Participation

The Council's participation should be considered in the context of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme, which provides a collective regional platform to promote investment opportunities and position the wider Belfast City Region to national and international audiences. Continued participation helps ensure that Ards and North Down is visible within that wider regional proposition and can maximise opportunities arising from shared marketing, profiling, networking and investor engagement.

Experience from UKREiIF 2026 demonstrated that future attendance should focus on sessions and engagement opportunities that provide structured access to investors and developers, showcase how comparable places present their investment propositions, and help position Ards and North Down opportunities within a wider Belfast City and Region growth narrative.

Correspondence in advance of UKREiIF 2026 identified the Coastal Regeneration in Practice masterclass as being strongly aligned to Bangor Waterfront and related strategic projects. This type of focused session provides practical insight into delivery models, market expectations, partnership working and the practical steps required to progress similar regeneration schemes.

Proposed Approach for UKREiIF 2027

It is proposed that Council continues to participate in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and supports attendance at UKREiIF 2027 for up to three Council representatives. Attendance should be planned around a clear set of objectives, including promotion of the Borough's strategic regeneration and investment opportunities, targeted engagement with investors and developers, participation in relevant regeneration and regional investment sessions, and follow-up engagement with potential partners.

To maximise value, officers will prepare a delegate activity plan in advance of the event, including agreed priority projects, a refined investment narrative for Ards and North Down, a target list of organisations and contacts, pre-arranged meetings and a structured post-event follow up process to capture outcomes and next steps.

Approval is sought for £15,000, which has been budgeted for, to support the Council's continued participation in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance by three Council representatives at UKREiIF 2027. Further details of the programme are provided in Appendix 2.

Participation through the Partnership provides access to a wider regional platform than the Council could achieve independently and enables the Borough's investment opportunities to be promoted as part of a broader Belfast City and Region investment proposition. This is important given the scale and competitiveness of UKREiIF and the need for public sector investment propositions to be clear, coordinated and market-facing.

Next Steps

Subject to approval, officers will confirm the Council's continued participation in the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme and progress arrangements for UKREiIF 2027. The approach will apply the learning from UKREiIF 2026 to ensure participation is more focused, proactive and outcome led. This will include confirming the £15,000 contribution, identifying priority projects and investment messages for promotion through the Partnership platform, using the UKREiIF delegate platform and Partnership contacts to arrange targeted engagement with investors, developers and delivery partners, and implementing a structured post-event follow up process to capture contacts, learning, outcomes and next steps. The specific Council representatives attending UKREiIF 2027 will be identified and agreed later.

Summary

UKREiIF provides a significant opportunity for the Council to promote its strategic development and regeneration ambitions to a concentrated audience of investors, developers, public sector partners and professional advisers. The Council's 2026 attendance demonstrated the value of participating through the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Programme, particularly where attendance is supported by clear objectives, targeted networking and relevant programme sessions.

Continued participation in 2027 would enable the Council to strengthen its investor engagement activity, promote key Borough opportunities within a regional investment platform, learn from comparable regeneration initiatives and build relationships that may support future project delivery. Approval is therefore sought for budget provision of £15,000 to support continued participation in the Partnership and attendance by three Council representatives at UKREiIF 2027, taking place in Leeds from 18 to 20 May 2027.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Approves** provision of £15,000 to support continued participation in the Belfast City Region Place Partnership Programme and attendance at UKREiIF 2027 by up to three representatives.



Belfast

City & **Region**

Investment Guide

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





Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

Why invest in the Belfast region?

Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

Real estate market insights

Game changers

Belfast opportunities

Regional opportunities

32

Contents

- 2 Welcome
- 3 Belfast region at a glance
- 4 Why invest in the Belfast region?
- 7 Belfast city region council profiles
- 8 Key sectors
- 11 Real estate market insights
- 16 Game changers
- 21 Belfast opportunities
- 29 Regional opportunities

Welcome

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME FOR THE BELFAST REGION.



John Walsh
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It makes sense to invest here.

Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

Why invest in the Belfast region?

Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

Real estate market insights

Game changers

Belfast opportunities

Regional opportunities



At a glance



348,005
Belfast population



1.13 million
Belfast region population



36%
Population under 30 years of age



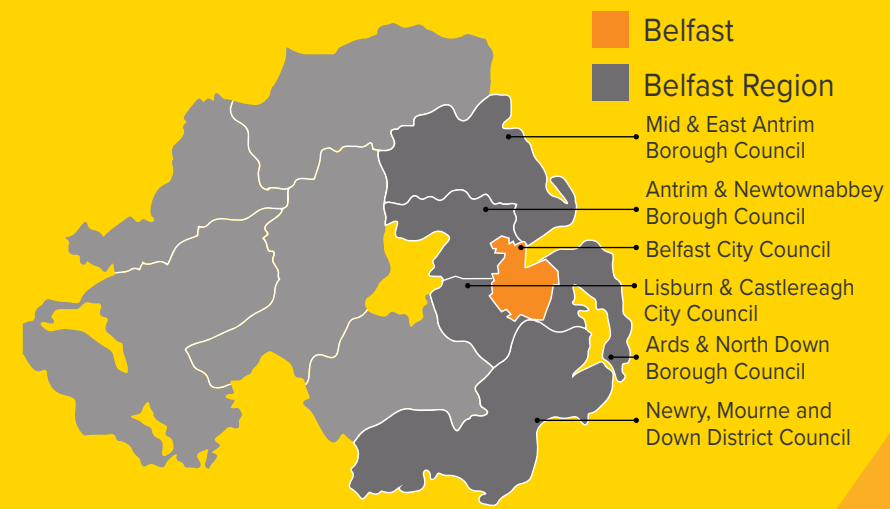
£5.5 billion
worth of investment and development opportunities available over the next decade



£36.5 billion
GDP*



67,515
full and part-time students are enrolled in higher education in Northern Ireland





Why invest in the Belfast region?

A great place to call home

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

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

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

Perfectly positioned

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

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

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

202 destinations
in
41 countries
and
3 major
ports.



Innovation is in our DNA

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

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

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

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

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

A region of talent

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

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

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

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



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

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

It's easy to network and do business here

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

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

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



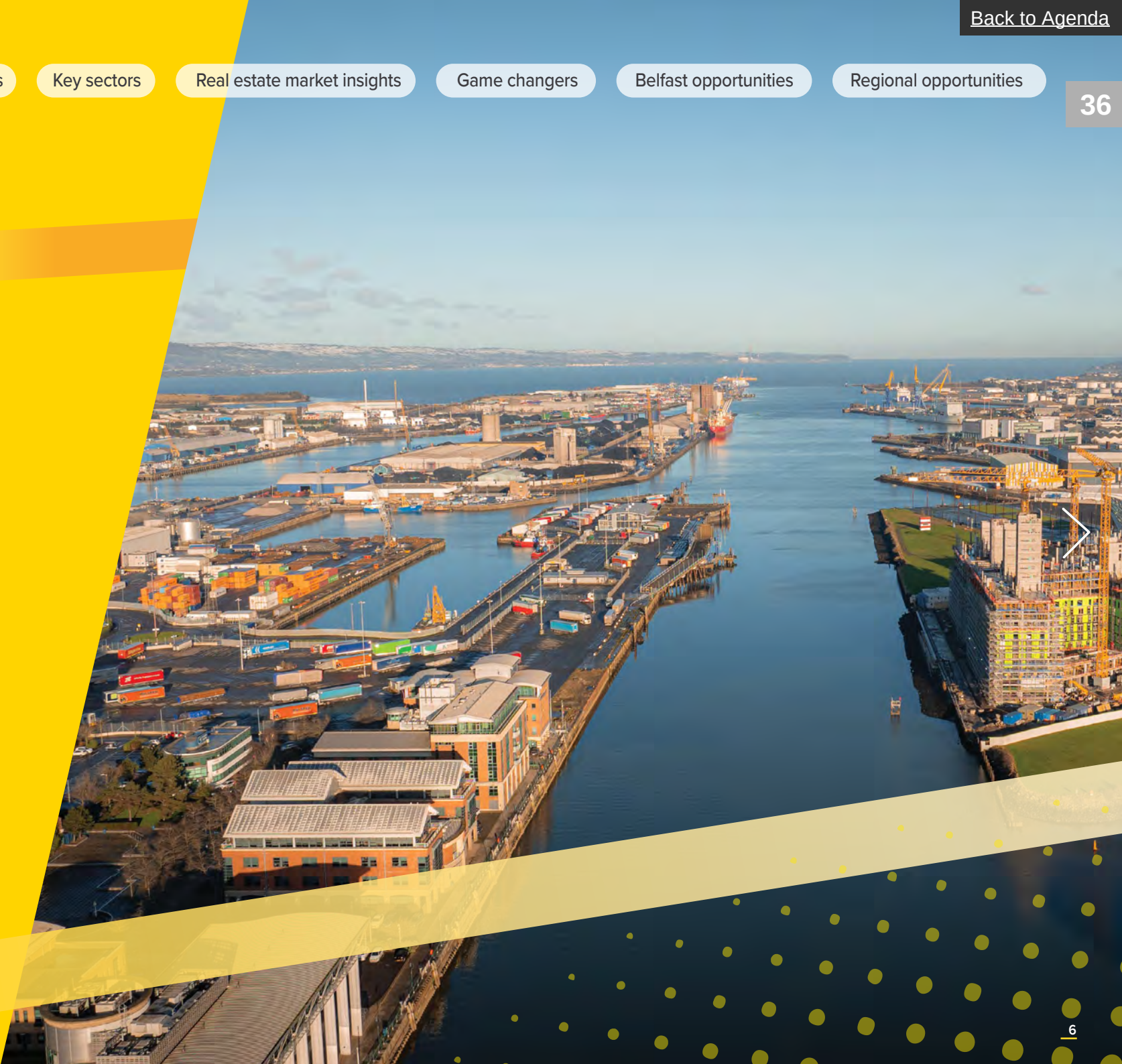
An enviable track record in attracting investment

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

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

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

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



Belfast region council profiles



Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

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

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

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

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

www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk



Ards and North Down Borough Council

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

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

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

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

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk



Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council

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

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

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

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

www.belfastcity.gov.uk



Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

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

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

www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

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

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

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

www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

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

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

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

www.newrymournedown.org

Key sectors

Advanced manufacturing and engineering

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

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

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

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

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

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

Digital, ICT and creative industries



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key sectors

FinTech and financial services



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

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

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

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

no.1

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

Life and Health sciences



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

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

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

1st

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

Key sectors

Tourism and hospitality

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Real Estate Market Insights

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

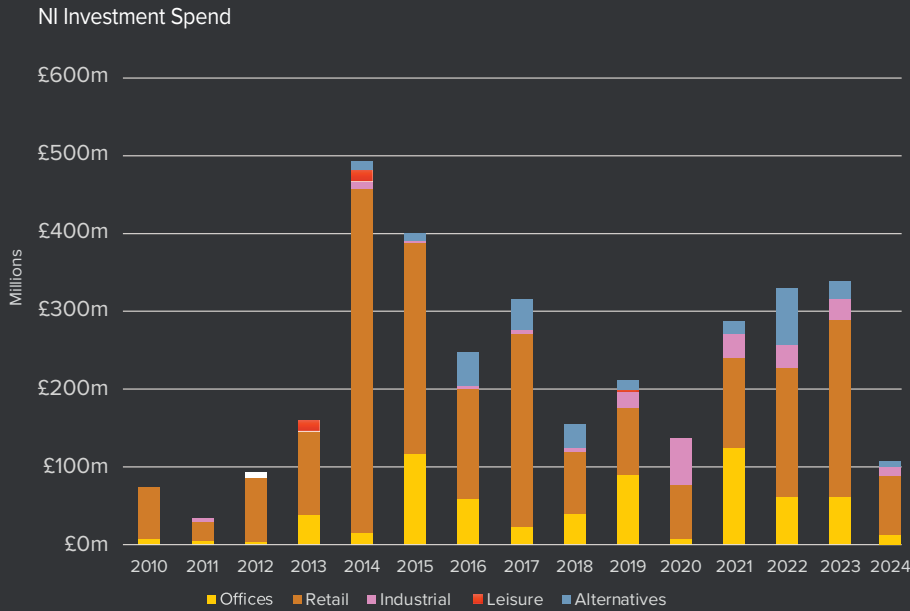
That is particularly true in key sectors such as residential and city centre living, specifically when it comes to student accommodation and the hotel market. Both latter sectors have performed strongly in recent years, with plenty of headroom for further growth.

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

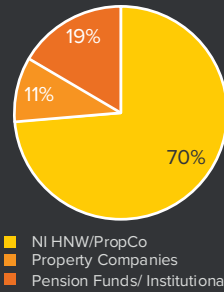
of landmark projects, including the Belfast Grand Central Station which enhances the region's connectivity to the rest of the island and to the world.

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

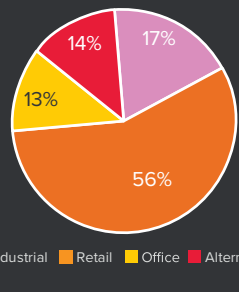
Collaboration will drive increased innovation, investment and growth right across Northern Ireland, underpinning our competitiveness and boosting our attractiveness, now and in the future.



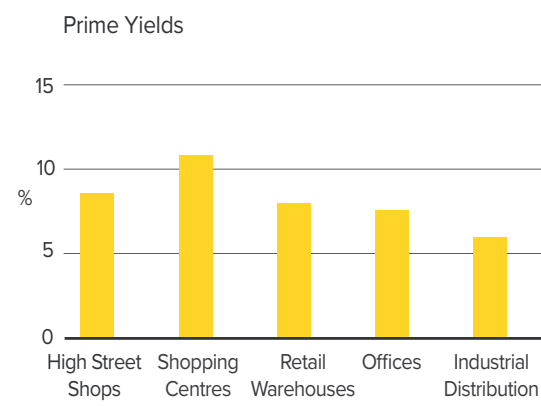
2024 Investment Type



2024 Investment Sectors



Data from CBRE NI



Capital markets

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

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

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

Office

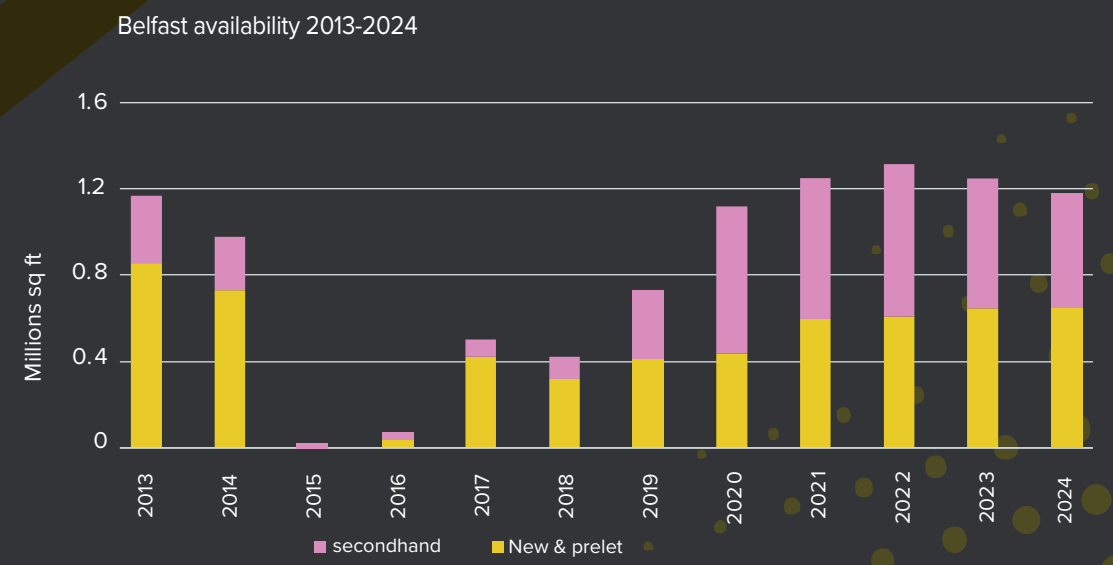
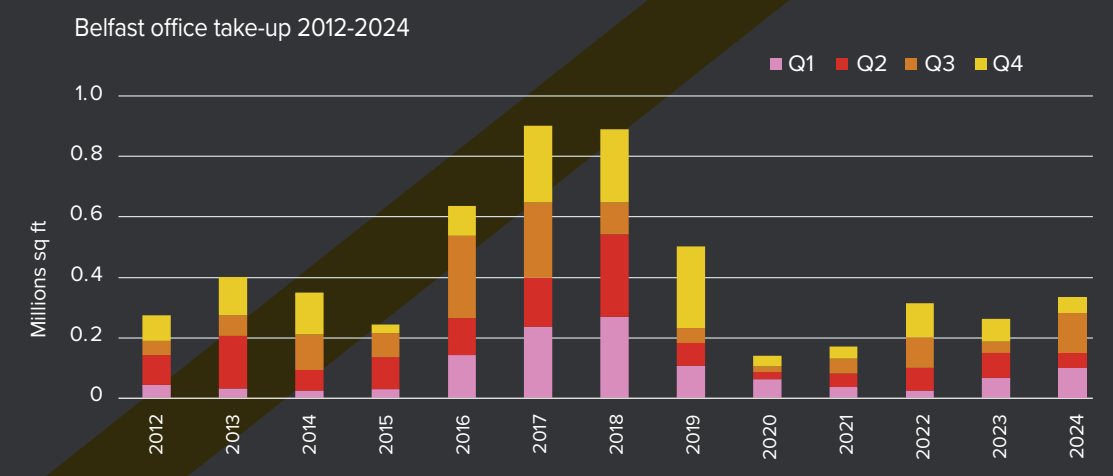
Take-up in the office market in Northern Ireland jumped by a third last year, with the market experiencing a flight to quality.

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

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

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

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



Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

Why invest in the Belfast region?

Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

Real estate market insights

Game changers

Belfast opportunities

Regional opportunities

Student accommodation

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

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



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

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

City centre living

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

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

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

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

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





Retail

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

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

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

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

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

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

Industrial and logistics

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

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

Hotels

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

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

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

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

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



Tourism

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

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

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

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

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

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



Game changers - Belfast city region

BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

belfastregioncitydeal.co.uk



- Welcome
- Belfast region at a glance
- Why invest in the Belfast region?
- Belfast city region council profiles
- Key sectors
- Real estate market insights
- Game changers
- Belfast opportunities
- Regional opportunities

Game changers - Belfast city region

Innovation & Digital
Tourism and Regeneration

Infrastructure
Employability and Skills

BELFAST REGIONCITY DEAL



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

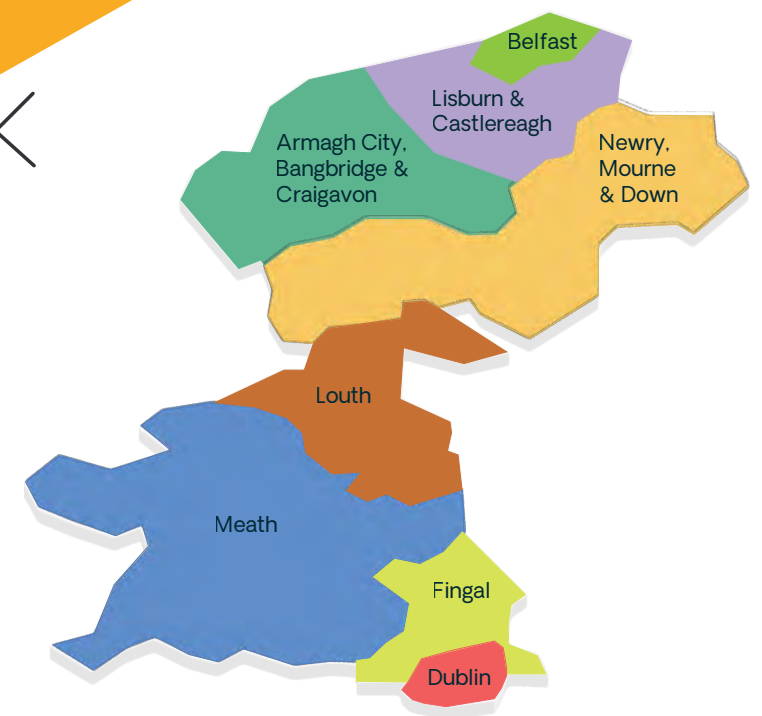


The Gobbins Phase 2
An iconic staircase structure will link existing cliff top and cliff face paths, significantly increasing visitor capacity.



100 miles. One Corridor. Unlimited Potential.

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



Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor

An established global investment destination

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

Perfectly positioned for investment

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

Key sector clusters for growth

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

Our current areas of focus

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

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

For more information:

www.dbec.info
[Email: dbec@nmandd.org](mailto:dbec@nmandd.org)

Welcome

Belfast region at a glance

Why invest in the Belfast region?

Belfast city region council profiles

Key sectors

Real estate market insights

Game changers

Belfast opportunities

Regional opportunities

49

Game changers - Belfast

Accelerating city centre living

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

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

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

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

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/citycentreliving



Home of urban innovation

INNOVATION
CITY
BELFAST

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

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

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

www.innovationcitybelfast.com

Belfast Net Zero and climate resilience



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

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

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

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

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

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/climate-change

Game changers - Belfast

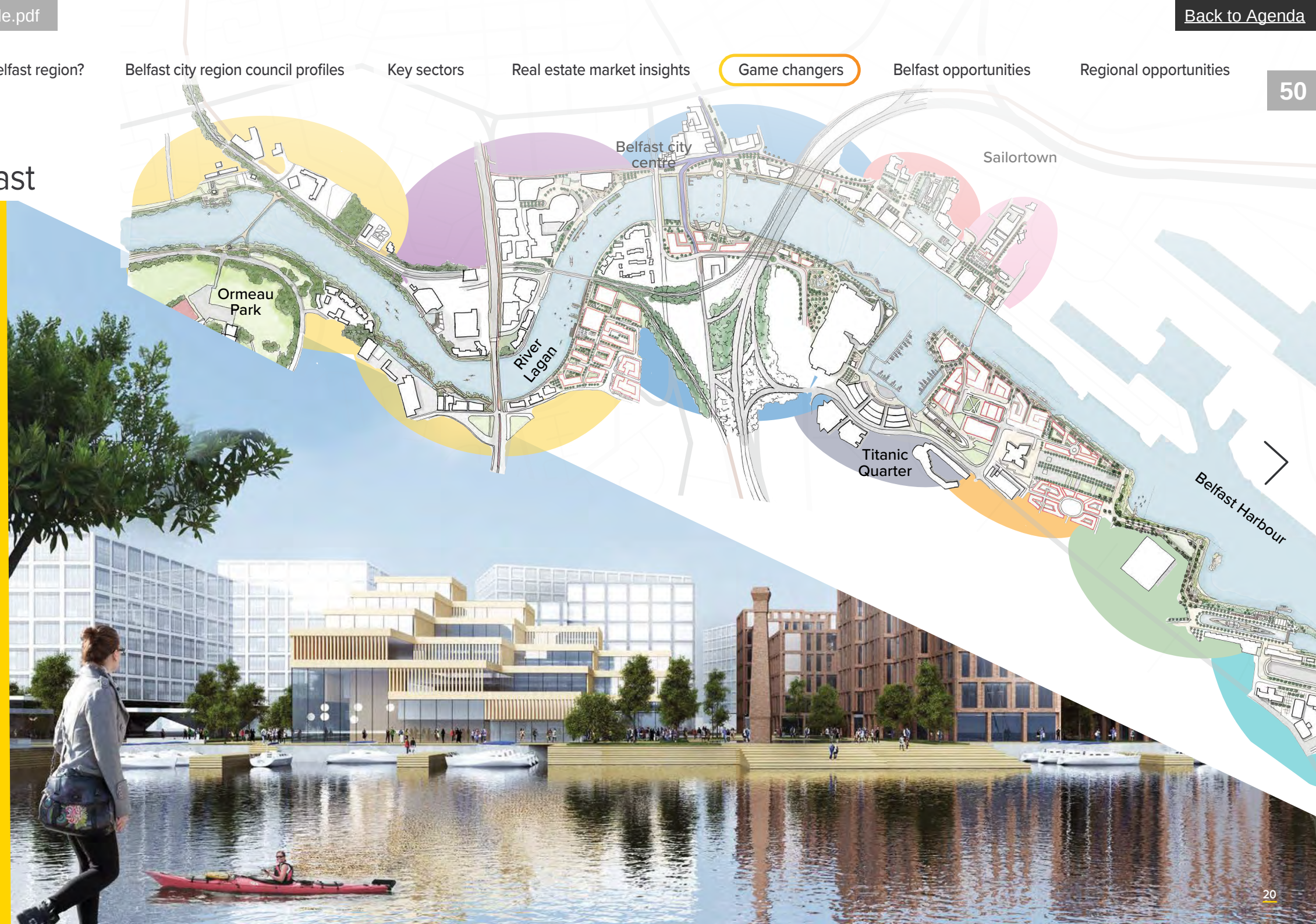
Embracing our waterfront

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

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

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

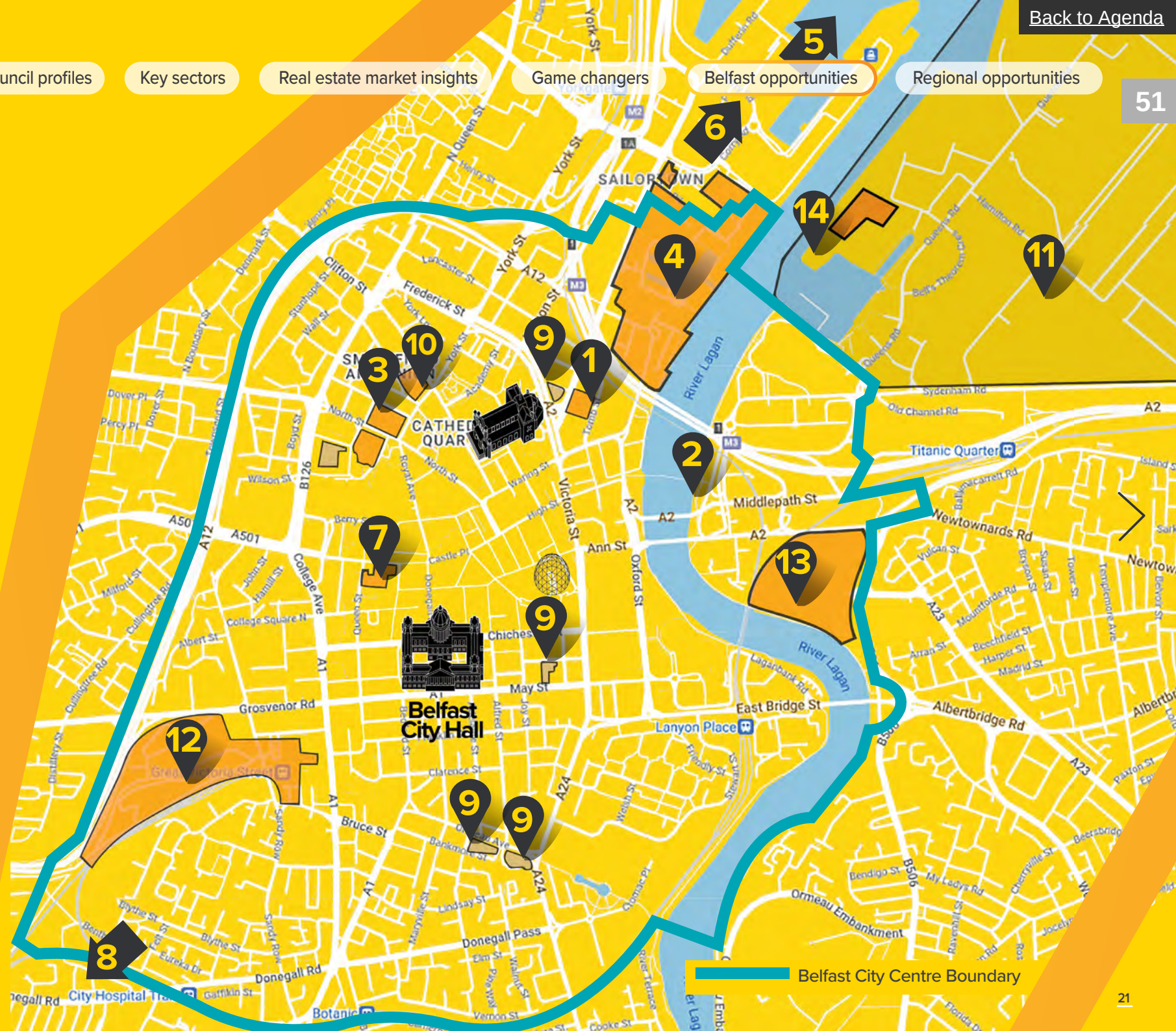
Belfast Harbour's strategy, Advance Regional Prosperity 2025-2029, sets out plans to invest £208 million in major port improvements and £105 million in the ongoing regeneration and development of the Harbour Estate and waterfront. As a Trust Port, Belfast Harbour is entirely self-financing, reinvesting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



Belfast opportunities



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



18CENTRAL, CORPORATION STREET



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



Sector(s)
Build-to-Rent, Residential



Location
Belfast city centre



Investment Type
Equity / Development Funding



Programme
Opportunities available now



Planning Status
Planning approved



Land Owner
MRP

mcaleer-rushe.co.uk/mrp_projects

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

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

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

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



QUEEN'S QUAY



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



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



Location
East of Belfast city centre



Planning Status
Outline Planning Permission expected early 2025

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

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



BELFAST STORIES



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



Sector(s)
Tourism, culture, leisure, amenity



Location
Belfast city centre



Programme
Construction estimated to commence in 2026. Opening 2030.



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

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfaststories

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

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

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



CITY QUAYS



Scale of development
£275 million



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



Location
Waterfront location. Belfast city centre



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

belfast-harbour.co.uk



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

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

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

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

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

GIANT’S PARK - CLEANTECH PARK



Belfast
City Council



Scale of Development
C. 30 acres



Sector(s)
Cleantech



Location
3km from Belfast city centre



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

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

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

GIANT’S PARK - LEISURE / COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY



Scale of Development
250 acres



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



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

This 250 acre site will comprise four key zones:

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

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



ONE FOUNTAIN STREET

MRP



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



Sector(s)
Office, Commercial, Retail



Location
Belfast city centre



Investment Type
Equity / Development Funding



Programme
Opportunities available now



Planning Status
Planning approved

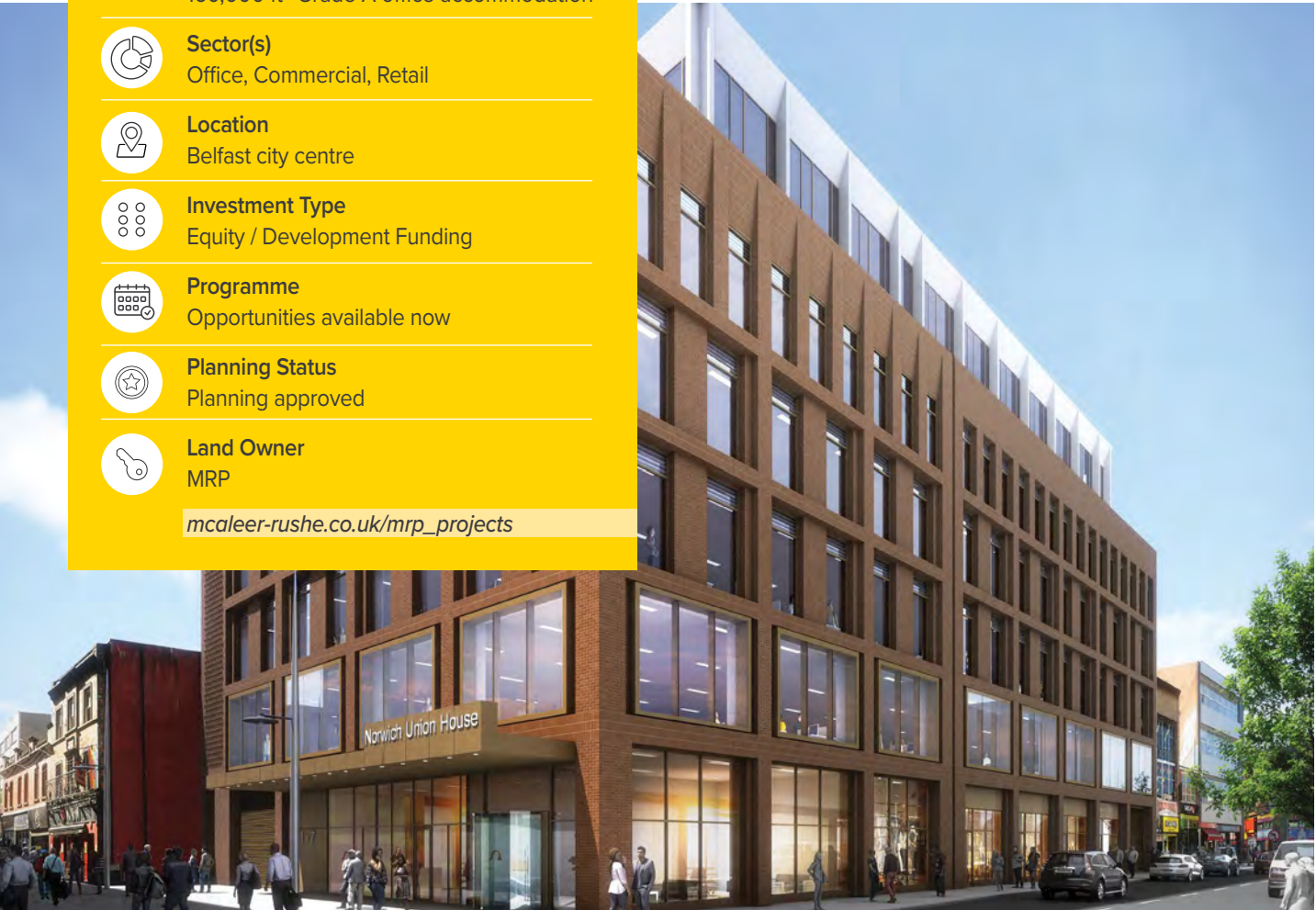


Land Owner
MRP

mcaleer-rushe.co.uk/mrp_projects

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

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



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST



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

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

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

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

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



RESIDENTIAL-LED DEVELOPMENTS



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

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

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



THE SIXTH



Belfast City Council



Scale of Development
£100million GDV with 233,000ft² total floor area



Sector(s)
Offices, Mixed Commercial, Hotel, Residential, Life Sciences.



Location
Belfast city centre



Investment Type
Equity / Development Funding



Programme
Opportunities available now



Planning Status
Planning approved



Land Owner
Bel Tel LLP

www.thesixthbelfast.com

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

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

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

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

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

TITANIC QUARTER, BELFAST



Scale of Development
Potential development phases over the next 10 years, totalling £1.4 billion



Sector(s)
Mixed commercial, retail, offices, residential, cultural, leisure and tourism



Location
Titanic Quarter, Belfast



Investment Type
Project Promoter, project equity, project debt and occupancy



Programme
Ongoing opportunities



Planning Status
A Planning Development Framework has been approved for the regeneration of Titanic Quarter, which provides multiple investment opportunities.



Land Owner
Titanic Quarter Limited and Belfast Harbour
titanicquarter.com

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

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

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

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

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

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



WEAVERS CROSS



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



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



Location
Belfast city centre



Investment Type
Equity investor/ funder, end users



Programme
Opportunities available from Q3 2025



Planning Status
Outline Permission Granted



Land Owner
Translink

www.weaverscross.co.uk

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

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

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

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



THE WATERSIDE BELFAST



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



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



Location
Belfast city centre - River Lagan



Investment Type
Equity / Development funding



Programme
Opportunities available now

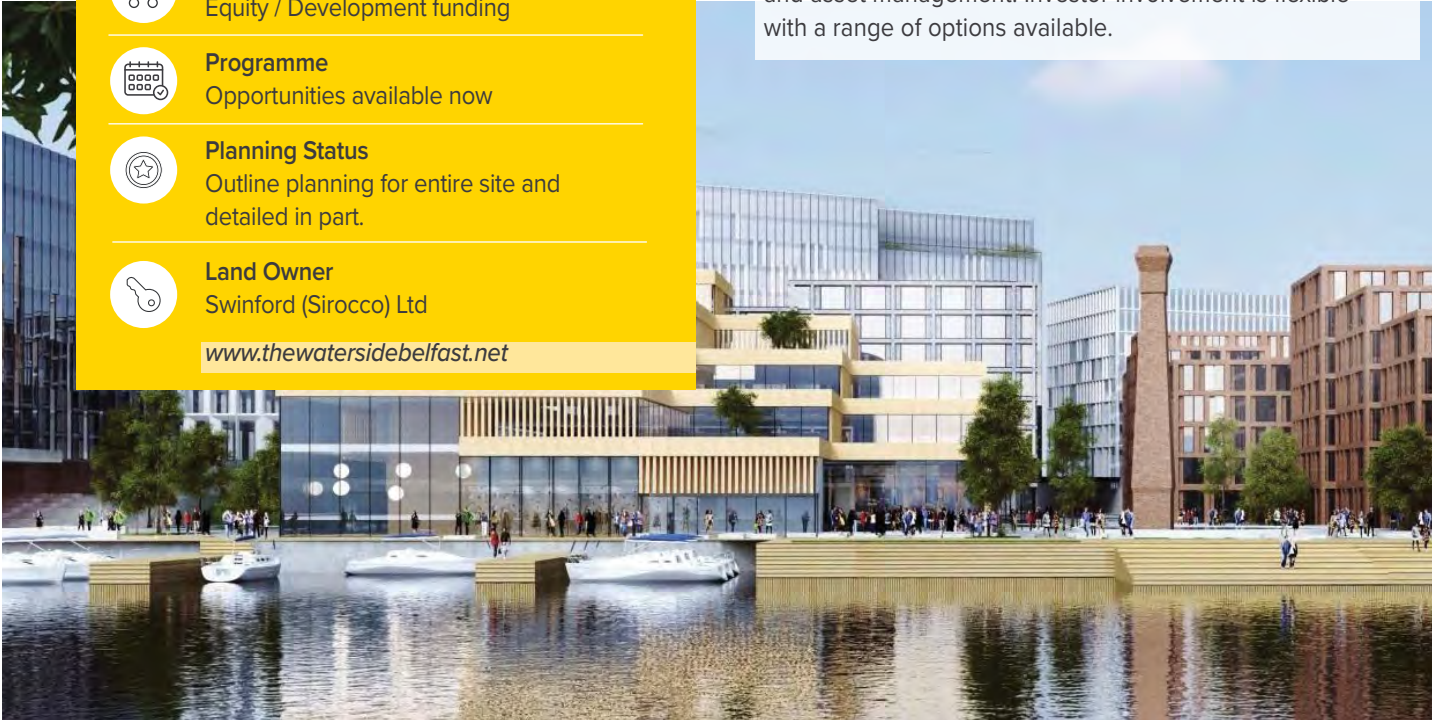


Planning Status
Outline planning for entire site and detailed in part.



Land Owner
Swinford (Sirocco) Ltd

www.thewatersidebelfast.net



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

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

TQ PBMSA STUDENT VILLAGE



Scale of Development

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



Sector(s)

Residential - PBMSA



Location

Belfast



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

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

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

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

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



Belfast Region opportunities



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

BELFAST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



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

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

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

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



GLOBAL POINT BUSINESS PARK



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

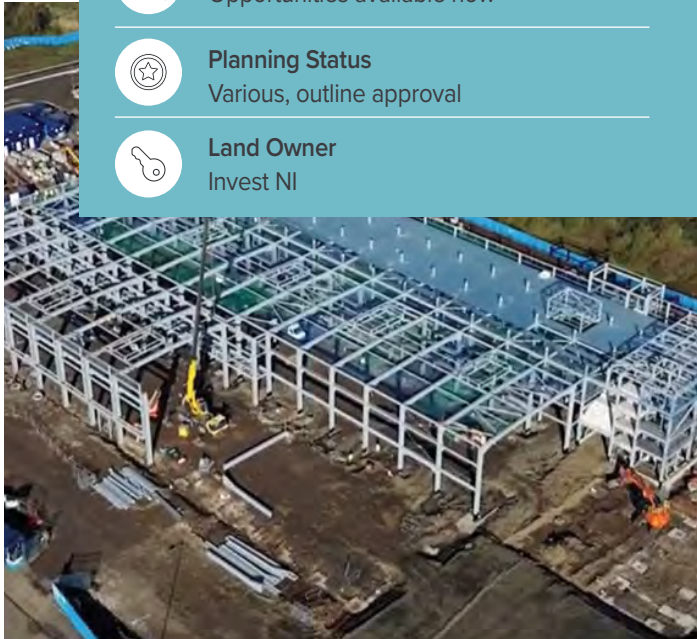
Global Point Business Park is the premier location for manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland. Owned by Invest Northern Ireland, it is a fully serviced site which extends to 59.39 hectares. The site is zoned employment land, suitable for a variety of uses and is emerging as a leading UK destination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

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

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

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

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



MALLUSK NORTH AND SOUTH



- Scale of Development**
99.5 acres
- Sector(s)**
Industrial, logistics, warehousing
- Location**
Mallusk
- Investment Type**
Greenfield development site sale
- Planning Status**
Various

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

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

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



NUTT'S CORNER COMMERCIAL PARK



- Scale of Development**
14.5 acres
- Sector(s)**
Industrial, logistics, warehousing
- Location**
Nutt's Corner
- Investment Type**
Greenfield development site sale
- Planning Status**
Various

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

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

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



BANGOR WATERFRONT



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



Sector(s)
Hospitality and Hotels, Leisure, Retail



Location
Bangor, Co Down



Investment Type
Various



Programme
Opportunities available from 2024



Planning Status
Pre-Planning Stage; contract for funding received



Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council



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

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

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

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



QUEEN’S PARADE, BANGOR PARK



Project Sponsor
Bangor Marine Ltd.



Scale of Development
Approx. £65m



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



Site Development
c.350,000ft²



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



Location
Bangor, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield, other



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Formal Planning Approval Received September 2022



Landowner
Department for Communities

www.queensparadebangor.com



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

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

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

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



WHITESPOTS, NEWTOWNARDS



Scale of Development
c.80.55 acres c. 32.6 hectares

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

Location
Newtownards, Co Down

Investment Type
Development Site

Programme
Opportunities available

Planning Status
Pre-Planning Phase

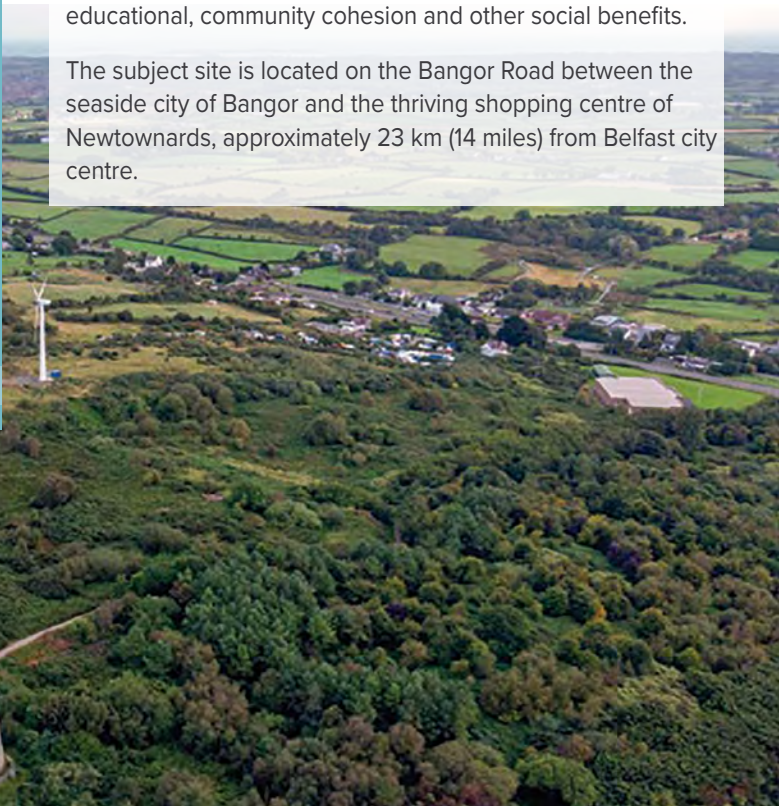
Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council

ANDbusiness.co.uk

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

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

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



BALLOO ROAD, BANGOR



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

Sector(s)
Commercial, Industrial

Location
Bangor, Co Down

Investment Type
Other

Programme
Opportunities available

Planning Status
Designated as existing Employment Land

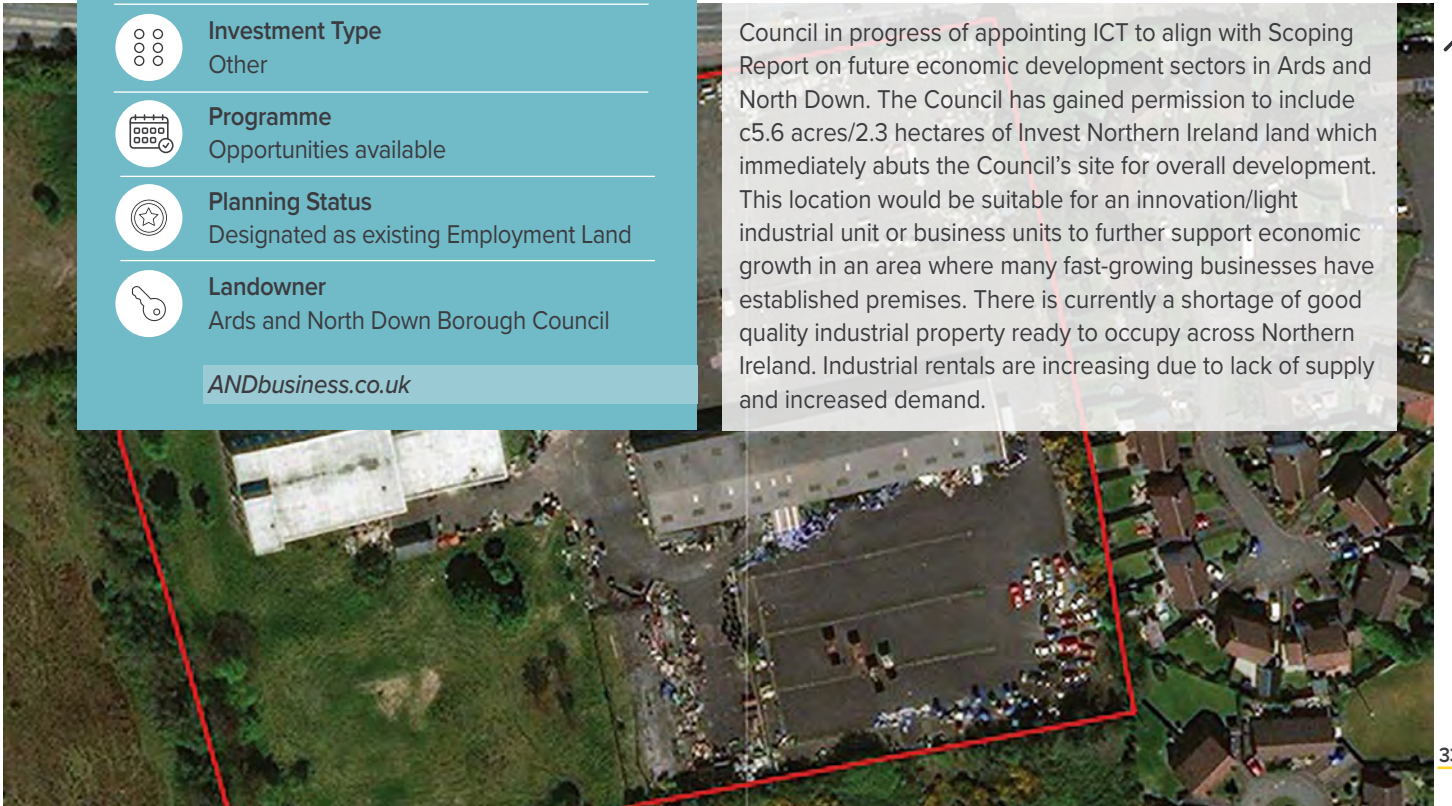
Landowner
Ards and North Down Borough Council

ANDbusiness.co.uk

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

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

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



CASTLEBAWN, NEWTOWNARDS



Project Sponsor
Castlebawn Newtownards Ltd.



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



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



Location
Newtownards, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield/ Greenfield Site



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Various



Landowner
Castlebawn Newtownards Ltd.

www.killultagh.com

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

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

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

FORMER CREPE WEAVERS, COMBER ROAD, NEWTOWNARDS



Project Sponsor
Clonrose Developments



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



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



Location
Newtownards, Co Down



Investment Type
Brownfield site – for mixed use development



Programme
Opportunities available



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



Landowner
Clonrose Developments

Clonrose.com

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

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

A Revised Outline Application is currently under consideration for the following mixed use scheme:

Demolition of existing buildings and proposed mixed use development scheme comprising:

- circa 95 no. dwellings
- nursing and care village comprising circa 96 beds
- 78-bed hotel
- Petrol filling station
- 1no. drive-thru (Sui Generis);
- Leisure unit (Sui Generis);
- Neighbourhood retail centre to include a convenience store and hot food outlets
- Light industrial/storage and distribution units
- Business units
- Provision of a new roundabout (at Cambourne Housing Estate entrance), road improvements at Comber Road access and new access on Comber Road/Castlebawn Link Road.

LAGANBANK CAR PARK



Scale of Development
Site extends to c.2.10 acres (c.0.85 hectares)



Sector(s)
All



Location
Laganbank Road/ Linenhall Street, Lisburn BT28 1LU



Investment Type
Sale for development



Programme
Opportunities available



Landowner
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Laganbank Car Park has been earmarked by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council as a regeneration development opportunity. The subject site forms part of the Laganbank Quarter in the south-east sector of the city centre area, as designated in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP).

The site extends to c.2.10 acres (c.0.85 hectares) and is currently a ‘pay and display’ 238-space car park. It is strategically positioned with prominent frontage directly onto both the A1 Laganbank Road (a main arterial route through the city) and Linenhall Street.

The city’s primary retail core is only a few minutes’ walk away. The site is located in an area of mixed use with nearby occupiers including but not limited to, Royal Mail Group, Lisburn City Library, Irish Linen Centre and Museum and Lisburn Health Centre. Laganbank Retail Park located opposite comprises around 50,000 ft² and is fully let with occupiers including TK Maxx, Pure Gym, Upstairs Downstairs Furniture and Ground Coffee.

The council’s prime objective in offering this development opportunity is to contribute to the revitalisation of Lisburn city centre through a high quality, comprehensive, mixed-use regeneration development of a viable and sustainable economic use, which acts as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the surrounding Laganbank / Linenhall Street area.

LCCC is registered owner of the freehold title of the site. A title pack containing copies of title to the site is available on request. A copy of the development brief is also available on request.

CASTLE STREET CAR PARK, LISBURN



Scale of Development
The site extends to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54)



Sector(s)
Residential



Location
Castle Street Lisburn, BT27



Investment Type
Sale for Development



Programme
Opportunities available



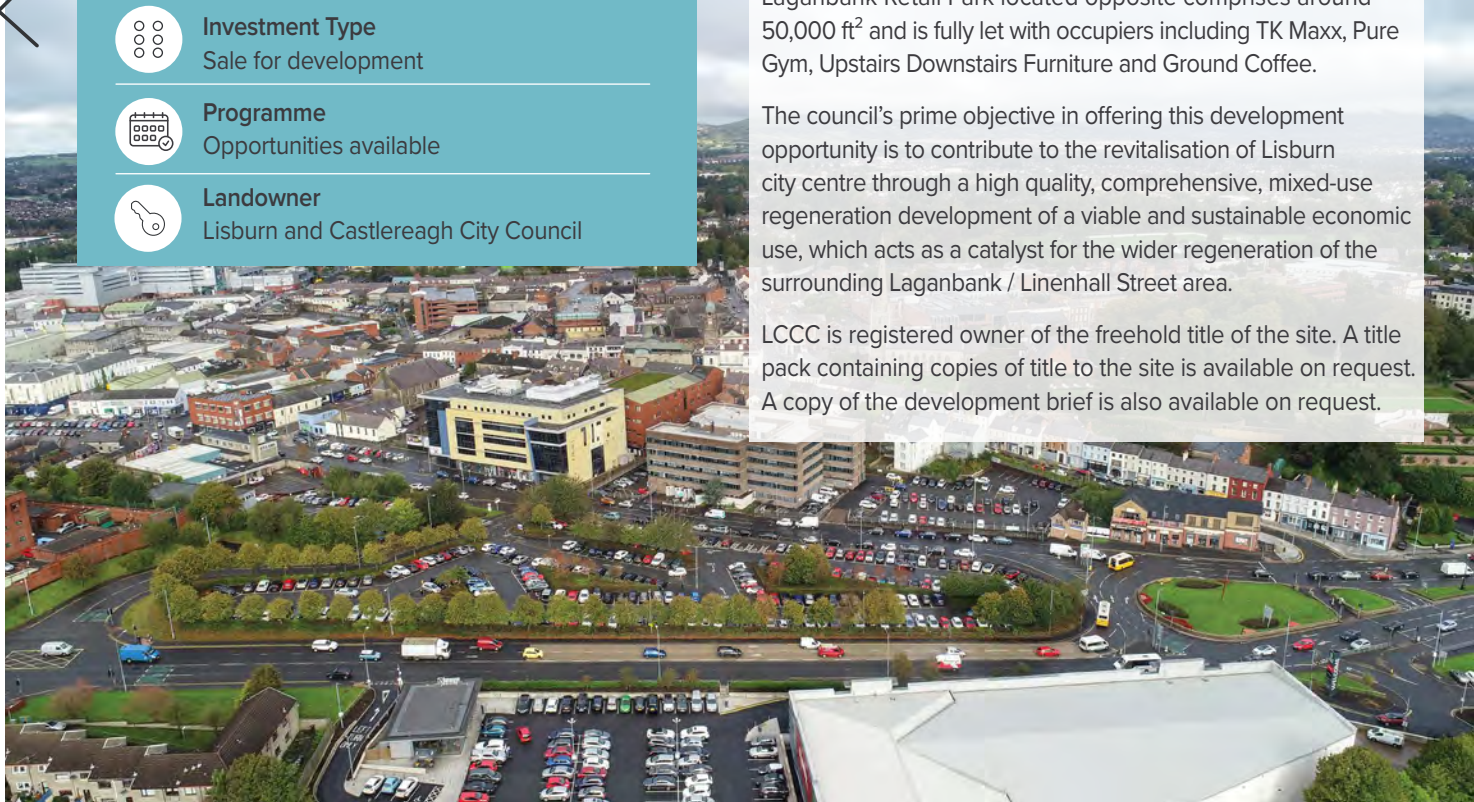
Landowner
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Located on Castle Street, within the Lisburn Conservation Area and overlooking the historic Castle Gardens listed in the Department for Communities register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, this site is conveniently situated within walking distance of the main retail core, railway station and bus station. It is also connected to the main city bus route, the M1 motorway junction and is approximately nine miles south of Belfast.

The site was previously used as a council-run surface car park, extending to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54 hectares) with prominent frontage onto Castle Street of approximately 85m (approximately 279 ft), which provides easy access to Lisburn’s city centre and to the pedestrian precinct to the west, with a mix of retail, residential and employment uses located within walking distance.

Given the setting of this 1.39-acre city centre site, coupled with the surrounding conservation area and adjacent Castle Gardens, the site represents a real opportunity to build upon and complement the surrounding land uses and setting already in place.

LCCC has high expectations for the future development of this site and is keen to ensure that development will create a positive impact on the area from an economic development perspective. A copy of the development brief is available on request.



DESTINATION ROYAL HILLSBOROUGH



Scale of Development
The estimated cost of the landmark ‘Destination Royal Hillsborough’ project is £26million



Sector(s)
All - A number of development opportunities coming forward to include Public Realm works and a social enterprise opportunity



Location
Royal Hillsborough Village, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council



Investment Type
Development



Programme
Opportunities available



Planning Status
Various



Landowner
DfI under licence to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The heritage village of Royal Hillsborough is unlike any other village in Northern Ireland. It is home to the Royal Family when visiting Northern Ireland and was significant to negotiations during Northern Ireland’s Peace Process. Named after the Hill family, who played a significant part in its development, it has retained much of the historic character and the family’s influence can still be seen in many of the elegant buildings dating from the 18th and 19th century.

The village of Hillsborough in County Down gained ‘Royal Hillsborough’ status in 2021. Home to Hillsborough Castle, the residence of His Majesty the King and other members of the Royal family when visiting Northern Ireland, it is the first village or town in Northern Ireland to receive Royal status.

Through funding secured from Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has designed and developed the prestigious ‘Destination Royal Hillsborough’ project. The proposed BRCD investment will build on £20 million of investment by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens as a visitor attraction and the designation of Hillsborough village as ‘Royal Hillsborough’ in 2021.

Hillsborough is one of only four towns and villages across the UK with the Royal prefix and the first in Northern Ireland. In addition, the proposed investment builds on over £1m of recent investment in Hillsborough Forest by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

The overall vision of the proposed investment is: “To create a high quality, distinctive, leading visitor destination and experience, targeting the ‘culturally curious’ market segment alongside regenerating the village via an enhanced sustainable culture and heritage offering.”

- The proposed capital investment components include:
- integrating and improving the access to and connections between key attractions such as the Castle, Forest, including the Fort and wider village via a major public realm scheme
 - developing the Fort as a venue for events such as authentic re-enactments
 - restoration of the Courthouse as a venue for conveying the history and heritage of the Courthouse and wider village through audio visual interpretation
 - development of a social enterprise offering in the Forest to provide an amenity for visitors to the Forest, as well as a source of training and employment for vulnerable adults or young people working with third sector partners.
 - through partnership with a private sector operator license, offer additional opportunities for recreation such as a high ropes course in the forest
 - provision of additional parking infrastructure to offer appropriate infrastructure for increased visitors to the village, encouraging parking outside the village and less vehicular traffic through the village

The aim is to create a ‘whole village heritage tourism experience’ and help drive forward Tourism NI’s goal of encouraging more ‘out of state’ visitors to Northern Ireland. Work began early 2024, with a planned completion date of September 2027.



DUNDONALD INTERNATIONAL ICE BOWL (DIIB)



- Scale of Development**
2.06 acres or 0.83 hectares
- Sector(s)**
All
- Location**
111 Old Dundonald Road, Castlereagh, Belfast BT16 1XT
- Investment Type**
Development
- Programme**
Opportunities available
- Landowner**
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The redevelopment of Dundonald International Ice Bowl is part of a wider regeneration plan for the whole area. Once completed, the new venue will bring a range of benefits to the Castlereagh area and beyond.

The council's investment in the new Dundonald International Ice Bowl will bring to life a wide range of facilities, including a 24-lane bowling alley, a 100-station gym, community rooms, a restaurant and a coffee shop. The new, modern venue will house the only Olympic-sized ice rink on this island and will continue to be the training base for the Belfast Giants ice hockey team.

Alongside the landmark Ice bowl regeneration initiative, the council is releasing an opportunity site for development which sits adjacent to the new Ice Bowl site.

The site, which is located directly in front of David Lloyd Gym, is 2.06 acres or 0.83 hectares and offers the right developer a unique opportunity to bring forward a mixed-use development project which stands to benefit from the council's £52m investment in the Ice Bowl. The site was previously master-planned for a leisure offering, with a specific view for a hotel development, but subject to planning the council would consider mixed-use development.

The site is located adjacent to the Omni Park which comprises of an 11-screen cinema complex, eight thriving restaurants and a children's soft play offering. It is located close to a greenway for walking and cycling, linking to Comber in one direction and the CS Lewis Square in the other. The site also benefits from being close to the main Glider route into Belfast city centre.



DERRIAGHY PRIMARY SCHOOL DERRIAGHY



- Scale of Development**
The site extends to c.1.39 acres (c.0.54)
- Sector(s)**
This site is 1.6 hectares
- Location**
14 Milltown Park, Lisburn BT28 3TU
- Investment Type**
Development
- Programme**
Opportunities available
- Landowner**
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

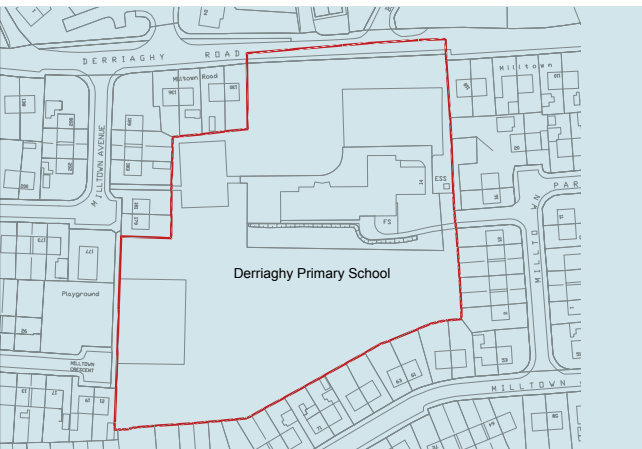
The council is proposing the development of a former primary school based at 14 Milltown Park, Lisburn BT28 3TU, offering suitable developers the opportunity to develop the derelict site into an attractive, resilient and environmentally friendly space which will enhance the services, opportunities and lives of the residents of the local area. The facility will provide the space to host a range of educational, creative and health benefits for the local community.

Derriaghy is the wider townland in which the settlement of Milltown is situated. Milltown is a village located three kilometres to the north of Lisburn city centre. The site of the former Derriaghy Primary School sits centrally within the

Milltown Estate. The current facilities in this rural area include private housing, social housing (NIHE), Play Park, community garden, MUGA, several churches and a small area of retail units consisting of a shop and fast-food outlets.

This site is 1.6 hectares in size with direct road frontage onto the Milltown Road through the north boundary of the site. The east and south boundaries are adjacent to the housing development. To the west, a border is shared with the current community garden and playpark. Within the red line boundary is a Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) (located 'g' in figure 1.1). Any proposed development must allow for the MUGA to remain or to be located elsewhere within the development site. Within the site, the structure of the former primary school remains standing, surrounded by a hard surfaced area. There are large green spaces throughout the site boundaries.

The design of the site development should take into consideration the requirement for high quality open spaces, in line with relevant planning policies. It is recommended that a minimum of 10% open space is achieved throughout the overall site. Development needs to have regard for PPS8 and enhancement of public amenity for the wider community as a minimum standard. The council would welcome approaches in relation to this opportunity site. We are open to imaginative and creative solutions based on the former development brief, with a specific focus on meeting community need.



ST PATRICK’S BARRACKS, BALLYMENA



Scale of Development
37 acres / 15 hectares



Location
The subject lands are located 0.5 miles from Ballymena town centre, the site has easy access to Belfast via the M2 Motorway approximately 1.4 miles from the site. The subject site is well serviced with public transport with Ballymena train station being approximately 0.8 miles away.

The St Patrick’s site is a strategically important location of approx. 15 hectares, close to the centre of Ballymena. The former military barracks was closed by the Ministry of Defence in 2007 and declared surplus, then transferred to the Northern Ireland Executive.

The development of the site will transform this part of Ballymena and act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of neighbouring public stakeholder sites. It will stimulate job creation and sustain employment through the economic, social and physical regeneration of the area. The site has been approved planning for the development of a number of social houses, along with a new Northern Regional College campus. The subject land is also suitable for uses to include an innovation and clean technology centre for technology businesses.



LARNE INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



Scale of Development
c52 acres / 21 hectare



Sectors
Logistics / Manufacturing.



Location
The subject lands at Port of Larne / Redlands are in close proximity to Larne town and main arterial routes. Larne is located approximately 21 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 21 miles from Belfast International Airport, approximately 21 miles from Belfast City Airport and Approximately 22 miles from the Port of Belfast. The subject area is well serviced with public transport with buses and trains going to and from Belfast city centre.



Larne has excellent connectivity to the rest of NI and beyond, thanks to the A8 dual carriageway which runs to the Port of Larne’s main entrance, with access to NI’s motorway network in 20 minutes. In addition to the main ferry berth, the port has four other berths, capable of handling cargo: Curran Quay, Continental Quay, Olderfleet Quay, and Chainé Quay.

Existing accommodation at Port of Larne / Redlands includes a mixture of uses, including warehouse, industrial and retail operations. There are significant opportunities for new industrial developments as the subject site is zoned for industry under the Area Plan.

The existing Industrial zoning at Larne Port and Redlands, as defined by the Larne Area Plan 2010, is located between the Harbour Highway and Olderfleet Road. The zoning comprises of several parcels of land - the ‘Redlands’ site (and the adjacent lagoon), the site east of Coastguard Road, and the site on Curran Point north of East Antrim Boat Club. The Redlands site is the main part of the zoning and comprises of approx. 33ha, developed for a mix of uses including storage or distribution, general industry); sui generis uses such as Council recycling depot, NI Water Wastewater Treatment Works, a filling station, trade counters and builders’ merchants.

The area of zoning (approx. 3ha) to the east, closer to Larne Port, has a range of uses including Residential, Guest Houses, Larne Port Offices, and Sui Generis Uses, including the Coastguard building. The area at Curran Point (approx. 3.5ha) has been developed for harbour related industry – predominantly lorry trailer parking and customs related infrastructure. There remains approximately 8.5ha of land undeveloped within the zoning. The subject site falls within the NI Gas Supply Network and are also serviced by Northern Ireland Electricity Networks and Northern Ireland Water.

BALLYMENA INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



Scale of Development
86.5 acres / 35 hectares



Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing



Location
The subject lands are located within three miles of Ballymena town centre and benefit from ease of access to the M2 motorway via Junction 11. Belfast is approximately 28 miles away, Belfast International Airport approximately 17 miles and Belfast City Airport approximately 30 miles. Both Belfast and Larne Ports are within a 30-minute drive of this location.

The subject site is comprised of a mix of greenfield land together with office, warehouse, industrial and manufacturing space.

The area includes land, office and industrial space at the former Michelin site on Raceview Road, which is approximately 100 acres and includes 830,000 sq. ft. of existing warehouse and office accommodation. There is outstanding internal road infrastructure, which enables HGV access around the 2km internal road network. Services include a mains electricity supply of 2 no. 20/24 MVA transformers, 1 no. 2.3 MW wind turbines and natural gas – 250mm /2.5 bar supply.

Also included are development opportunities on Woodside Road, which include Invest NI-owned lands, and an industrial estate made up of over 86 acres, providing a range of industrial and development opportunities in an area zoned for industrial use. The estate is made up of a multi-tenanted commercial park with office, industrial and manufacturing accommodation, with the surrounding greenfield lands presenting a wide range of development opportunities. The site falls within the gas supply network and is serviced by NI Electricity and NI Water.



CARRICKFERGUS INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITIES



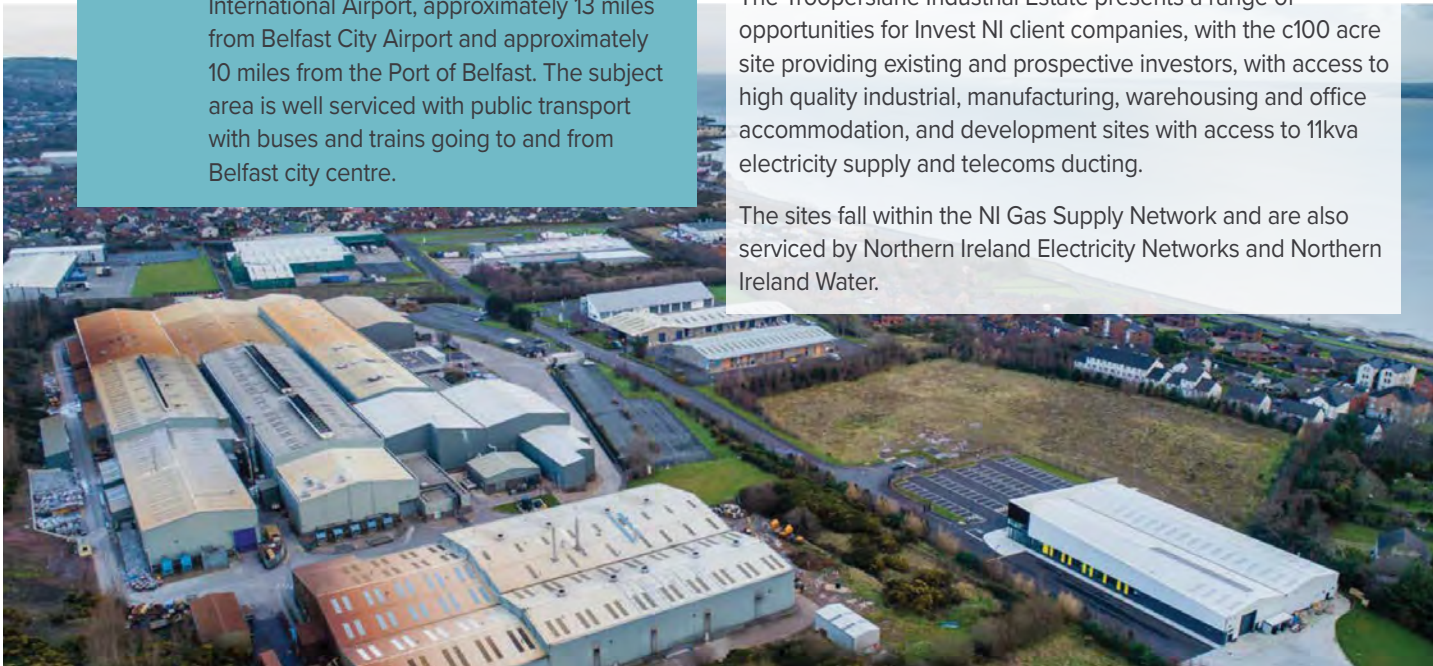
Scale of Development
South West - 223 acres / 90.2 hectares
Kilroot - 60 acres / 24.3 hectares



Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing



Location
The subject lands are both within approximately two miles of Carrickfergus town centre. Carrickfergus is located approximately 12 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 21 miles from Belfast International Airport, approximately 13 miles from Belfast City Airport and approximately 10 miles from the Port of Belfast. The subject area is well serviced with public transport with buses and trains going to and from Belfast city centre.



Kilroot Business Park is 60 acres in total and includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and office accommodation, as well as a gym and a café. Units range from 100sq ft to 90,000 sq ft.

There are significant opportunities for new industrial developments as the site includes areas zoned for employment within the Area Plan. New design and build opportunities are available for up to 130,000 sq ft. An additional 107-acre greenfield site is located adjacent to the business park and is zoned as industrial lands.

The south-west Carrickfergus area presents a range of commercial, logistics and manufacturing opportunities across two key areas: Shore Commercial Park and Trooperslane Industrial Estate.

Shore Commercial Park is c118 acres in total and includes a mix of warehouse, industrial and office accommodation, as well as opportunities for new build industrial units. The site also includes greenfield land zoned for employment within the Local Area Plan.

The Trooperslane Industrial Estate presents a range of opportunities for Invest NI client companies, with the c100 acre site providing existing and prospective investors, with access to high quality industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and office accommodation, and development sites with access to 11kva electricity supply and telecoms ducting.

The sites fall within the NI Gas Supply Network and are also serviced by Northern Ireland Electricity Networks and Northern Ireland Water.

MOURNE PARK ESTATE



Scale of Development
160 acres / 64.7 hectares



Sector(s)
Tourism / Leisure / Residential



Location
The subject premises are located close to the village of Kilkeel, approximately 15 miles from Newry. The subject land is situated approximately 39 miles from Belfast city centre, approximately 46 miles from Belfast International Airport and approximately 42 miles from Belfast City Airport.

The subject lands include parklands, woods, fields and paddocks.

The property is ringfenced by the Coast Road to the south and Kilkeel Golf Club to the east, which was originally part of the estate. Potential uses for this site include tourism related, leisure and residential.



MOUNT CAULFIELD SITE, BESSBROOK



Scale of Development
3.76 acres / 1.52 hectares



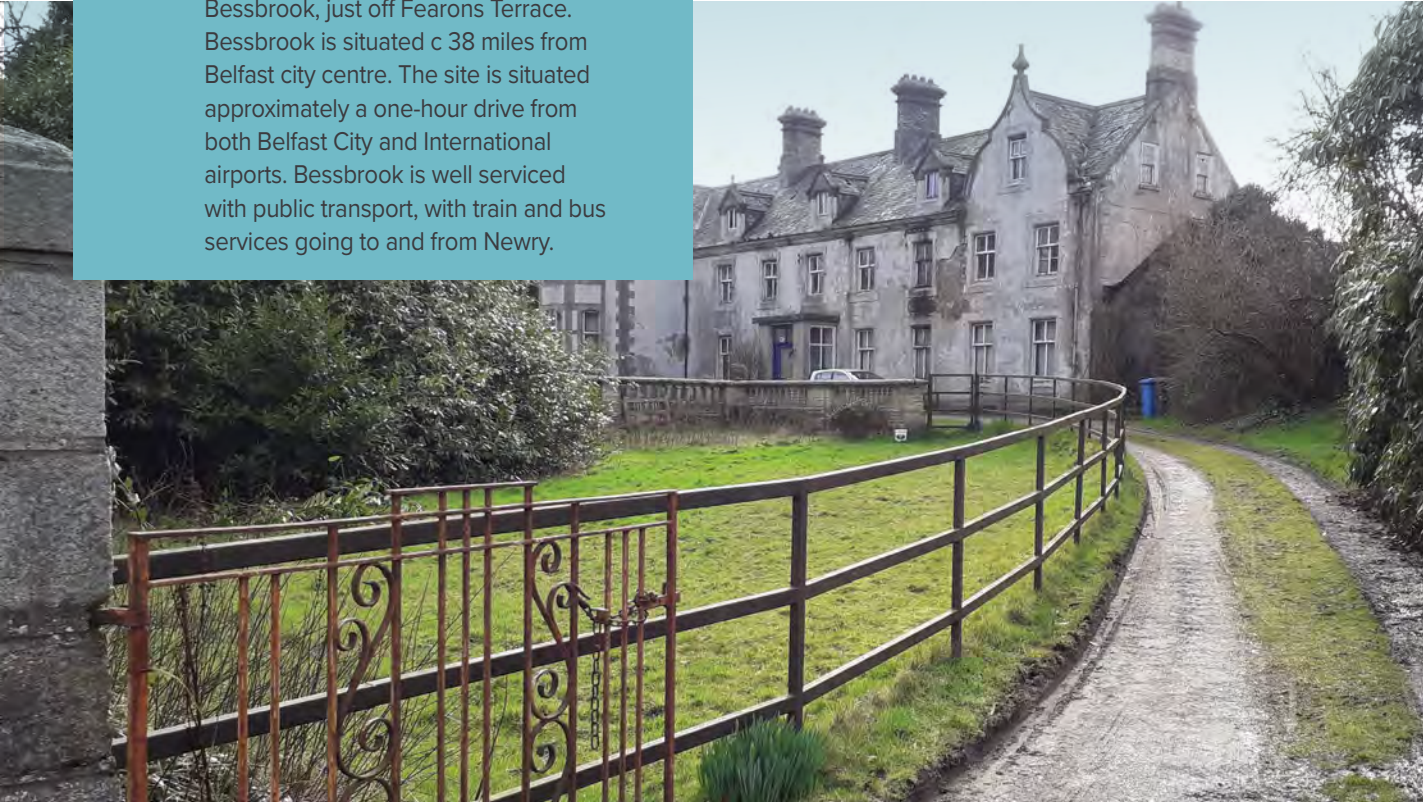
Sector(s)
Tourism / Leisure / Residential



Location
The Mount Caulfield House is situated in the south-east of the village of Bessbrook, just off Fearons Terrace. Bessbrook is situated c 38 miles from Belfast city centre. The site is situated approximately a one-hour drive from both Belfast City and International airports. Bessbrook is well serviced with public transport, with train and bus services going to and from Newry.

The site consists of 3.76 acres / 1.52 hectares of land, of which the historical Mount Caulfield House sits on.

The subject site would be suitable for a mixed development opportunity for tourism, in the form of a guest house or hotel, with possible rental holiday cottages or housing development.



DOWNPATRICK POLICE STATION



Scale of Development
1.93 acres / 0.78 hectares

Sector(s)
Regeneration

Location
The subject lands are located just off Irish Street. The site has ease of access to road networks with Belfast (22 miles), Newry (30 miles) and Dublin (100 miles). The site is well serviced by public transport with buses running from Belfast and Newry.

The subject lands consist of an existing council owned car park and former Police Station site, as owned by the Department for Communities (DfC).

The subject lands would be suitable for a variety of uses given its town centre location.



CARNMEEN LANDS



Scale of Development
40 acres / 16 hectares

Sector(s)
Logistics / Manufacturing

Location
The lands are located immediately adjacent to the Invest Northern Ireland lands at Newry, which offers opportunities for collaboration, creating synergies and the sharing service provision. The lands have direct access to the M1/A1 Euroroute.

The subject lands offer a unique opportunity to develop a dynamic, employment generating business and education campus on a large greenfield site. The land is in a strategic location, with profile and direct access onto the Dublin Belfast M1 corridor at Newry.

The connectivity to the cities of Dublin and Belfast and their airports and ports, as well as access to potential employees from both locations, is a very significant advantage of this location for potential occupiers and investors.

Potential uses for this site include industrial logistics, manufacturing and offices. The current planning application is for B1 office and B2 Light Industrial.



PROJECT LUNA



Project Luna at Merchant’s Quay, Newry, is a major city centre, mixed-use development scheme, with plans for the development of a 82-bedroom hotel and 45,000 sq ft of offices, along with 160 parking spaces.

Brought forward by Glena Developments, an established property development and investment company, with a head office in Newry city centre, the project will focus on the redevelopment of three acres of derelict site. The project will further strengthen Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s exciting plans for the continued regeneration of the city.

 **Scale of Development**
1 Hectar

 **Sector(s)**
Hospitality & Service Sector

 **Location**
Merchant’s Quay, Newry

 **Investment Type**
Development of derelict site

 **Programme**
Opportunity currently available

 **Planning Status**
Planning to be obtained

 **Owner**
Glena Developments



PEARCE’S GATE



Pearce’s Gate at Merchant’s Quay, Newry is a major city centre, mixed-use development scheme, comprising of 73 no. apartments, three retail units and a coffee bar, 864square metres of office space, landscaped areas, communal courtyard and car parking.

Owned by Keltbray Developments, a specialist engineering and construction solutions group based in London, and as part of their ongoing commitment to redefining the way sustainable development is delivered, the planning-approved scheme offers 11 car parking spaces, with the aim of encouraging the reduction on the use of private cars and increasing the use of public transport. Pearce’s Gate will also offer Newry’s first Car Club giving residents of the apartments the opportunity to hire a car by the hour for those infrequent journeys, rather than the need to own their own vehicle. The scheme firmly respects the site’s heritage and historic location adjacent to Newry Canal and will see the regeneration of a vacant and under-utilised area to create a high quality, sustainable urban development. It will also further strengthen Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s exciting plans for the continued regeneration of the city. Construction of the approved scheme is expected to commence in June 2025.

 **Scale of Development**
0.4 Hectares

 **Sector(s)**
Retail / Service sector / Private & social housing

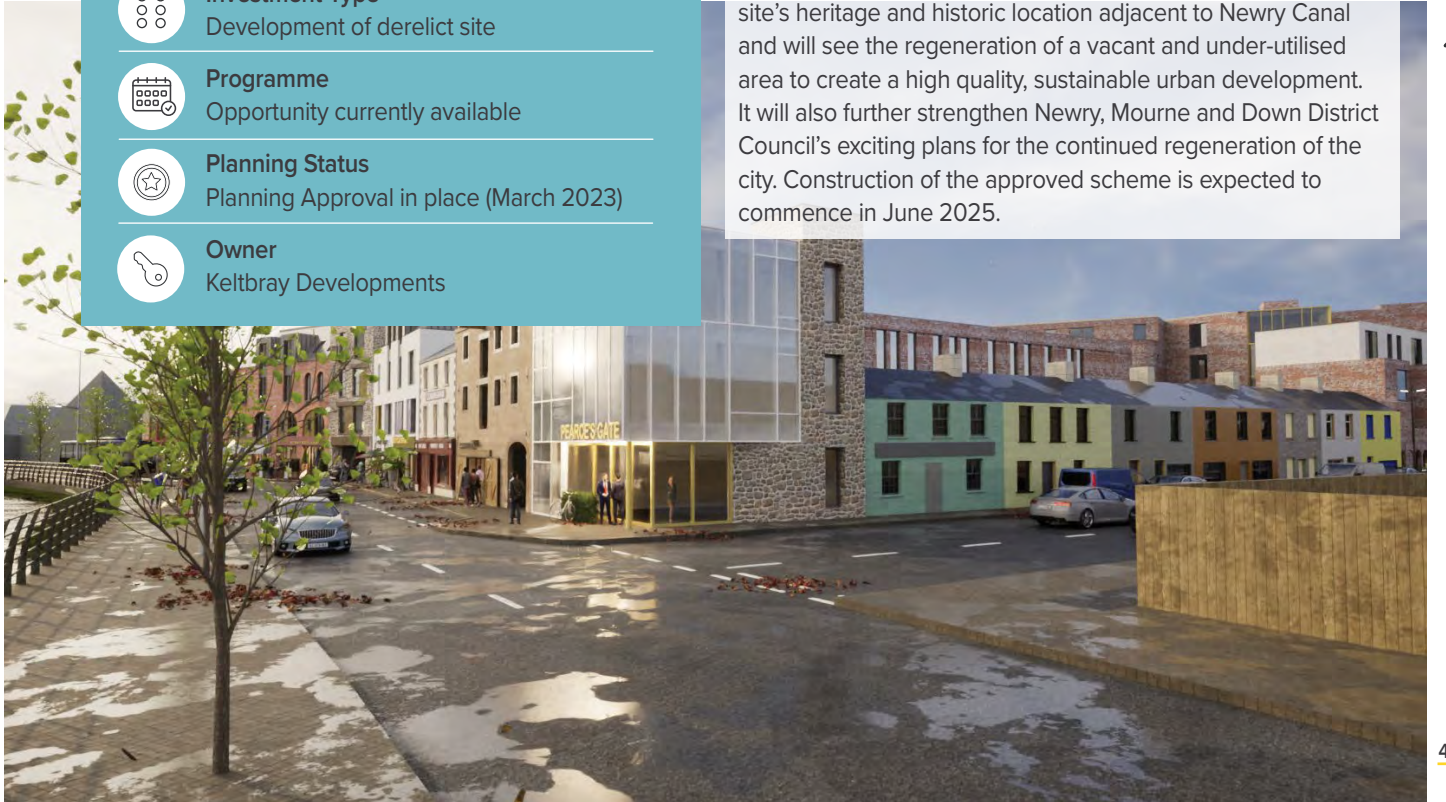
 **Location**
Merchant’s Quay, Newry

 **Investment Type**
Development of derelict site

 **Programme**
Opportunity currently available

 **Planning Status**
Planning Approval in place (March 2023)

 **Owner**
Keltbray Developments





INVESTINBELFAST.COM

Belfast City & Region Place Partnership

2026 - 2027
PROGRAMME



Antrim & Newtownabbey

Mid & East Antrim

Newry, Mourne & Down

Belfast

Lisburn & Castlereagh City

Ards & North Down



Partnering for Prosperity and Purpose

The Belfast City Region is entering an unprecedented era of investment, regeneration and sustainable growth.

As Northern Ireland's economic powerhouse, Belfast is not only transforming its skyline but redefining what it means to be a connected, competitive city region - one that attracts global business, nurtures innovation and delivers inclusive prosperity.

At the heart of this transformation is the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership - a powerful collaboration between senior public and private sector leaders working together to shape the City Region's future.

Through our programme of national and international promotion, investor engagement, strategic advocacy, communications and community engagement, we are driving visibility, building confidence and creating opportunity for the businesses, developers, investors and institutions shaping the City Region's next chapter.

For leading firms within the built environment landscape, this is an opportunity to align your brand with a story of transformation and play an active role in delivering it.

As a partner, you are not simply supporting promotion. Rather, you are investing in your own growth, in the market conditions that enable you and your clients to prosper and in a collective vision that strengthens your reputation as a leader in shaping a successful, sustainable Belfast City Region.



The value of this approach has been clearly demonstrated. The Partnership has evolved, created a more coordinated investment proposition, supported engagement with government and investors, provided a platform at major real estate events and helped partners present a united, confident and investable City Region story.

Through the Partnership, we provide a powerful platform for businesses to:



Strengthen market visibility and reputation among investors, occupiers, developers and policy makers;



Demonstrate leadership in development, regeneration, sustainability, innovation and inclusive growth;



Shape the investment agenda by contributing insight and expertise to advocacy, communications and engagement activity;



Collaborate with peers across the public, private and anchor-institution sectors to advance shared projects and opportunities;



Champion a competitive, connected Belfast City Region that attracts people, talent, capital and enterprise.

By aligning with the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership, your organisation becomes part of a network committed to driving forward the pipeline of development and regeneration projects transforming the City Region's economy and built environment.

Together, we are creating a resilient, world-class Belfast City Region, where businesses lead, communities thrive and investment continues to flow.



The Partnership in Action

The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership is demonstrating the value of a coordinated public-private approach to place promotion, investment engagement and regional advocacy. It brings together the developers, professional advisers, local authorities, anchor institutions and civic leaders who are closest to the investment pipeline and gives them a shared platform to present the City Region with confidence at home and internationally.

This matters because investment decisions are shaped by visibility, confidence, relationships and delivery credibility. By presenting a joined-up proposition, strengthening market understanding and ensuring that partners can speak with one voice about the opportunities, projects and ambitions that define the next decade of growth.

The latest programme delivered activity across investor-focused events, advocacy and engagement, media and communication, as well as community engagement. The result is a stronger platform for 2026-2027: a more visible city region, a more connected partner network and a clearer case for investment-led, inclusive growth.



- SUCCESS PILLAR #1
- SUCCESS PILLAR #2
- SUCCESS PILLAR #3
- SUCCESS PILLAR #4

Partnership Approach

By bringing councils from across the Belfast City Region, developers, advisers, anchor institutions, and civic leaders together, the Partnership helped the Belfast City Region present a more coordinated, confident, and investable story.

- 

United senior public and private sector voices around a shared investment narrative.
- 

Provided partners with a clearer route to collaborate on opportunities, advocacy and market positioning.
- 

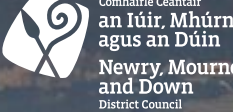
Captured strong partner endorsement, with partners citing improved investor engagement and stronger collaboration.











SUCCESS PILLAR #1

SUCCESS PILLAR #2

SUCCESS PILLAR #3

SUCCESS PILLAR #4

Investor-Focused Events

The Partnership gave the Belfast City Region a coordinated presence at major investor-facing platforms, helping the region share stages with other UK, Irish and European cities and take its opportunities directly to real estate, infrastructure and regeneration audiences.



Represented Belfast City Region at MIPIM 2026 and UKREiF 2026.



Showcased priority themes including housing-led regeneration, transport-led regeneration, tourism, the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, advanced manufacturing and GreenTech.



SUCCESS PILLAR #1

SUCCESS PILLAR #2

SUCCESS PILLAR #3

SUCCESS PILLAR #4

Advocacy & Engagement

The Partnership has supported structured engagement with senior stakeholders across government and the wider public sector, helping position Belfast City Region as a coordinated place proposition with clear development, regeneration and investment priorities.



Engagement with NI, UK and Irish Government stakeholders.



Connected UKREiIF activity with Ministerial and elected-member engagement.



Supported key meetings and engagement points including Joint Ministerial engagement, meeting with the First Minister and deputy First Minister, meeting with the NI Civil Service and Strategic Investment Board, as well as developing wider Ministerial activity.



Supported the approach to a place-based growth proposition for Belfast and the wider region.



SUCCESS PILLAR #1

SUCCESS PILLAR #2

SUCCESS PILLAR #3

SUCCESS PILLAR #4

Strategic Communications & Community Engagement

The Partnership has strengthened the way Belfast City Region tells its investment story and connects investment activity to wider social, environmental and economic value. This creates a clearer proposition for investors and a stronger foundation for constructive engagement with communities.



Developed a bespoke digital Belfast Region investment guide to make the city-region proposition easier to access and promote.



Established a Belfast City Region Place Partnership Community Forum to support engagement between community representatives and BCRPP partners.



Delivered national and international media activity, targeted newsletter content and targeted digital marketing.



Helped connect future investment and development activity with the social, environmental and economic benefits it can create locally.

As featured in:



[Click here to explore the guide](#) 

Structured Year-Round Programme of Activity

The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership will continue to deliver an annual place-based promotional programme to help ensure that Belfast and the wider city region are positioned to attract investment and deliver sustainable, inclusive growth.

A year-round approach ensures partners benefit from established working relationships, a coordinated programme of engagement and the ability to help shape wider conversations around investment, regeneration and growth.

Investor-Focused Activity

A coordinated presence at UKREiF 2027, MIPIM 2027 and targeted investment showcase activities in Belfast will ensure the Belfast City Region is represented on major national and international platforms. These events create direct access to decision-makers, investors, developers, occupiers and partners shaping the UK and European investment landscape.



Advocacy & Engagement

The Partnership will continue working with relevant officials to identify practical interventions to address barriers to development. Through joint advocacy and policy engagement, the Partnership will help shape the conversation around development, infrastructure delivery, regeneration and economic resilience.

In 2026-2027, this work will include the development of a BCRPP Manifesto, setting out a clear, partner-led view of the priorities, opportunities and asks required to support sustainable growth across the Belfast City Region. The Manifesto will provide a shared platform for businesses, institutions and civic partners to demonstrate leadership, influence policy and champion the conditions needed to make the region more competitive, connected and investment-ready.

Ahead of the 2027 local and Assembly elections, BCRPP will also deliver a programme of engagement with elected representatives, candidates and key stakeholders. This will ensure that the Partnership's priorities are clearly understood across the political landscape, helping to build support for the infrastructure, regeneration, planning, skills and investment interventions needed to unlock long-term prosperity.

By bringing together public and private sector voices, BCRPP will continue to support a unified, evidence-led message that the Belfast City Region is open for business, ambitious for growth and ready to deliver.

Strategic Communications

A proactive communications programme will deliver consistent exposure for the Belfast City Region and its partners across local, national, international and digital channels. This will include targeted digital activity, partner-led content, investment-proposition materials and communications that reinforce the City Region's reputation as a world-class place to live, work, visit and invest.

As featured in:



Community Engagement

Through the BCRPP Community Forum and related engagement, the Partnership will support constructive dialogue between community representatives and partners, helping maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits associated with forthcoming investment and development activity.



Programme Objectives



Regional Collaboration

Strengthen collaboration and partnership working across the Belfast City Region;



Regional Promotion

Promote and market the Belfast City Region nationally and internationally;



Stakeholder Engagement

Enhance engagement and advocacy with key stakeholders to advance regional investment and development priorities;



Strategic Delivery

Support delivery of Belfast Region City Deal projects and strategic initiatives;



Inclusive Growth

Drive inclusive, sustainable and innovative growth that strengthens communities and delivers long-term prosperity.

Partnership Packages

The Partnership will continue to deliver a collaborative programme of activity across the key pillars of investor-focused activity, advocacy and engagement, strategic communications and community engagement.

The programme includes a presence at major real estate and infrastructure investment conferences, including UKREiIF 2027 and MIPIM 2027, as well as targeted investment showcase activity to highlight the City Region's proposition to a national and international audience.



MIPIM 2027

MIPIM, the world's leading real estate market event, brings together influential players from across the international real estate industry and provides access to development projects, capital, cities, investors and decision-makers.

15-19 March 2027

Palais des Festivals, Cannes,
France
mipim.com

BCRPP's presence at MIPIM 2027 will provide a platform to showcase Belfast City Region's investment proposition, connect partners with global real estate decision-makers and position the region alongside other leading UK, Irish and European cities.



UKREiIF 2027

The UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum is a three-day real estate and infrastructure event bringing together national and local government, investors, developers, occupiers and the wider built-environment industry.

18-20 May 2027

Royal Armouries Museum and Leeds Dock,
Leeds City Centre
ukreiif.com

UKREiIF has become a must-attend event for the real estate, property and infrastructure sectors. It is where investment conversations start, relationships are built and cities and regions showcase the development and regeneration opportunities that will shape the future economy.



Belfast City Region Showcases

BCRPP will deliver two focused, one-day, on-the-ground investment showcases designed to bring the Belfast City Region's proposition to life for targeted investor, developer and partner audiences, helping BCRPP connect with established sector networks and build momentum from wider investment, advocacy and market engagement activity.

The format, audiences and programme for each showcase will be developed with partners as the 2026-2027 activity plan progresses.

Packages

BRCD Partner Councils

£15,000

- 3 x delegate passes to UKREiiF 2027
- Access to reduced rate UKREiiF delegate passes*
- Invitation to join BCRPP Taskforce
- Bi-monthly programme update meetings
- Invitation to flagship showcase activity, including 2 x Belfast City Region Showcases
- Commentary pieces, with author details and suitable photograph as a standalone post on BCRPP LinkedIn**
- Inclusion of same in monthly BCRPP email newsletter
- 1 x session to capture a cross-platform profile opportunity, including video and written content, to deliver key messages
- Logo and listing on branding, as appropriate

*prior to price increase | **right of editorial control reserved.



**For further
information,
contact:**

david.elliott@consello.com
gavin.williamson@consello.com

Unclassified

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	Local Economic Partnership and Supporting Thriving High Streets
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Staffing Narrative: Delivery will be managed within existing staff resources.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

The Local Economic Partnership

The Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Action Plan provides a strategic framework to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth across Ards and North Down. Approved by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in February 2026, the Action Plan allocated £4.15 million to the Council to deliver a package of targeted interventions aimed at increasing productivity, supporting business growth and improving access to suitable business accommodation.

Two strands within the LEP Action Plan relate directly to land and property: Business Space Revival and Space to Grow. Business Space Revival is intended to support the reuse and improvement of vacant or underused premises and sites. Space to Grow remains under development and is expected to support larger-scale activity to improve the supply and quality of business accommodation. A further paper will be brought back to Council once this strand has been fully developed.

Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme

Separate to the LEP programme of work, the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme was launched in 2025 as a coordinated package of support aimed at revitalising and regenerating the Borough's high streets. The programme has delivered practical, visible and place-based interventions which have supported existing businesses, stimulated private sector investment, addressed vacancy and dereliction, improved the appearance of commercial premises, and strengthened the overall competitiveness and appeal of city and town centres.

Members will be aware that, in addition to the grant schemes delivered under Supporting Thriving High Streets, officers have secured two further strands of funding: £900,000 through the Clean City and Tidy Towns Programme to deliver public realm enhancements across the five urban areas; and £300,000 through the Department for Communities Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding to provide additional support to address vacancy and dereliction.

The successful delivery of the Glow Up, Empty to Energised Pilot Grant and Freshen Up Grant schemes has demonstrated strong demand from businesses and property owners, clear private sector leverage, and the ability of targeted grant intervention to deliver visible regeneration outcomes. This provides a strong basis to expand the Empty to Energised approach beyond individual settlements and roll it out as a borough-wide vacancy and dereliction scheme.

Enhanced Empty to Energised (Borough-Wide Delivery)

It is proposed that £500,000 allocated through DfE's LEP Space to Grow strand, £300,000 of DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the remaining Council budget of approximately £185,000 available under the Empty to Energised Pilot are combined to deliver an enhanced Empty to Energised scheme on a Borough-wide basis.

The enhanced scheme would offer grants of up to £50,000 to help bring vacant, derelict or underused properties back into productive economic use. A trader or property owner contribution of 20% would be required.

This consolidated approach will build on the learning from the Empty to Energised Pilot and Supporting Thriving High Streets, while aligning delivery with the economic objectives of the LEP. It will create a stronger, more consistent and easier-to-understand grant offer, supporting a coordinated borough-wide approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction.

Benefits of this proposal

The consolidation of these funding strands will provide a more strategic, efficient and impactful approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction across the Borough. Rather than operating separate schemes with differing criteria, timescales and application processes, the enhanced Empty to Energised scheme will provide a single, coherent route for applicants while allowing officers to direct projects to the most appropriate funding source.

This approach will help maximise the use of available funding, reduce duplication, improve the applicant experience and support more consistent decision-making. It will also enable the Council to prioritise projects that deliver the strongest economic and regeneration benefits, including the creation of new commercial space, support for business start-ups and expansions, increased footfall, improved townscape quality and stronger investor confidence.

Funding Strands Under the Enhanced Empty to Energised Scheme

- **DfE LEP Business Space Revival funding:** available for eligible projects on a Borough-wide basis.
- **DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding:** available for eligible projects within urban centre boundaries.
- **Council Empty to Energised funding:** available for eligible projects on a Borough-wide basis.
- **Grant intervention:** up to £50,000 per eligible property, subject to available budget and scheme criteria.
- **Applicant contribution:** 20% match contribution from the trader, property owner or applicant.

Expected Outcomes

The LEP Business Space Revival funding stream is expected to support a minimum of 10 grants of up to £50,000 within the first phase of delivery, with approximately £500,000 allocated to this stage and delivery to be completed no later than 31 March 2028.

The DfC funding is expected to support a minimum of 6 grants of up to £50,000, with delivery to be completed no later than 31 March 2027. This funding will apply within urban centre boundaries only.

The Council Empty to Energised funding stream is expected to support a minimum of 3 grants of up to £50,000, with approximately £185,000 available for allocation. This funding will be available on a Borough-wide basis.

Overall, the enhanced Empty to Energised scheme is expected to transform a minimum of 19 properties, based on the confirmed DfE (£500,000), DfC (£300,000)

and Council (£185,000) allocations and assuming the maximum grant of £50,000 is awarded in each case. This figure may increase where applications are approved below the maximum grant level.

In addition to the physical improvement of vacant, derelict or underused properties, the scheme is expected to support a wider range of economic outputs. These include enabling new businesses to occupy previously unused premises, supporting existing businesses to expand or diversify, creating and safeguarding employment opportunities, increasing commercial activity within city, town and village centres, and contributing to growth in the Borough's non-domestic rate base.

The anticipated outputs will be monitored through the application and grant claim process, including the number of properties brought back into use, new or expanded businesses supported, the level of private sector match investment secured, employment opportunities created or safeguarded, and any increase in productive commercial floorspace. These measures will help demonstrate the contribution of the enhanced scheme to local economic growth, place-based regeneration and the long-term sustainability of the Borough's economy.

Delivery Approach

Applicants will apply through a single application process. Officers will assess each project and determine the appropriate funding strand based on location, eligibility and required completion date. This will provide a more streamlined process for applicants, reduce confusion, and support effective programme management across the different funding sources.

The enhanced scheme will be delivered through the consolidation of the DfE LEP Business Space Revival allocation, the DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the Council's remaining Empty to Energised budget. Grant awards will be subject to available funding, scheme eligibility criteria and the required applicant contribution.

The scheme will be delivered by officers from across the Economic Growth Service and managed within existing staff resources. Monitoring arrangements will be put in place to ensure expenditure complies with funding conditions and delivery deadlines.

Key Considerations

Key considerations include ensuring that project approvals align with funding eligibility requirements, delivery timescales and, where applicable, state aid or subsidy control requirements. These matters will be managed through the application, assessment, grant agreement and monitoring processes.

Next Steps

The enhanced Empty to Energised scheme will be delivered by a dedicated team of officers from across the Economic Growth Service and is expected to open for applications in Quarter 3 of the 2026/27 financial year.

The separate LEP Space to Grow strand remains under development. A further report will be brought to Council once the proposed approach, eligibility criteria and delivery arrangements have been finalised.

Summary

The proposed enhanced Borough-wide Empty to Energised scheme will provide a coordinated approach to tackling vacancy and dereliction by aligning DfE, DfC and Council funding through a single grant programme. Members are asked to approve the establishment of the scheme and the consolidation of the identified funding streams to support its delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Approves** the establishment of an enhanced Borough-wide Empty to Energised scheme through the consolidation of the DfE LEP Business Space Revival strand, the DfC Vacancy and Dereliction Grant funding and the remaining Council Empty to Energised budget.

Unclassified

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Report title	Newtownards Citizen Hub – Queen's Hall, Elected Member Workshop 19 August 2026
Attachments	none
File Reference (if applicable)	PCU21
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Contractual Narrative: Budget and Staffing – operating model to be determined and to be discussed and negotiated with Libraries NI.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening carried out at Project inception, further screening, as required, in line with Council process. Choose an item.
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 1 Multiple If multiple: 2,3 and 5

Background

In June 2026, the Council received an update report on the progress of the Newtownards Citizen Hub project. This was accompanied by a presentation on the RIBA Stage 2 designs. Elected members requested that to fully understand the design to date, an Elected Member Workshop was to be convened. This was held at 4.00 pm on 19 August 2026, Londonderry Room, Ards Arts Centre, Town Hall, Newtownards. An invitation was extended to all members. The lead Architect and Project Manager (Samuel Stevenson and Sons), the Head of Service (South and East) and Branch Manager (Newtownards) Libraries NI (LNI) were in attendance along with the Chief Executive, Director of Place and Prosperity, Tourism, Arts and Heritage, Capital Projects and Community team members.

The Architect delivered a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation on the emerging design proposals, providing an opportunity for Elected Members to provide feedback and ask questions on key considerations. A range of topics were covered including but not limited to access, capacity, pricing, safeguarding, sustainability and staffing.

Key Issues

Elected members welcomed the overall concept, greeting the RIBA Stage 2 designs favourably with no substantial issues raised.

Next Steps

Operating arrangements of the project for the Council, and in partnership with LNI, requires considerable work. It is acknowledged that the current resource aligned to this is from the existing operational Council and LNI staffing structures. Once this work is complete it will inform an Addendum to the Outline Business Case (OBC) and will be brought back to the Council for approval at the appropriate juncture.

Further consultation will take place with Council and LNI staff, the community and neighbouring buildings alongside the planning consultation to help inform the planning submission.

Summary

Officers and LNI colleagues will continue to work on the next steps with the ICT team and a further report outlining an Addendum to the OBC will be brought back to Council at the appropriate juncture.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Notes** the above report and next steps.

Unclassified

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Tourism, Arts and Heritage
Report title	Annual Tourism Events Programme Evaluation - Mid Season 2026
Attachments	Appendix 1 Tourism Events Evaluation Summary - Mid Season 2026
	Appendix 2 - Bangor Vibes Business Feedback
File Reference (if applicable)	TO/EV121
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None
	Narrative: Evaluation Report
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i>
	Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic
	4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

1. Background

This report represents the mid-point of the 2026 programme and evaluates the five events that have been successfully delivered to date with four planned for the rest of the year. The events that have been delivered are:

Event	Date	Budget
May Day, Holywood	Monday 04.05.26	£21,300
Sea Bangor	Saturday 23.05.26 Sunday 24.05.26	£108,500
Summer Food Festival incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival	Saturday 20.06.26	£86,500
Ulster Pipe Band Championships	Saturday 01.08.26	£36,700
Bangor Beats and Rhythms	Saturday 01.08.26	£40,000

The programme to date has attracted 67,500 attendees, above the target of 61,000. This figure only includes events directly delivered by the Tourism Events team, excluding shoulder events and other related events within the Taste Summer Festival and Bangor Vibes events.

Market research was undertaken at each of the events. One event had market research undertaken by the in-house team - May Day. All other research was undertaken by an independent market research agency. The market research for Bangor Beats and Rhythms formed part of the tender to deliver the event. The contractors reported back difficulties with the technology which was not evident until after the event, therefore its sample size is significantly smaller than the target set. Sample sizes ranged widely and therefore results should be interpreted by the reader accordingly. A summary is included in Appendix 1.

2. Holywood May Day — Monday 4 May 2026

The Holywood May Day celebrations were delivered in partnership with Holywood and District Community Council (HDCC). The event attracted an estimated c.10,000 attendees.

The event layout, (which had been revised last year) remained for the 2026 event and continued to contribute positively to crowd flow, accessibility, and the overall visitor experience. Set-up and de-rig operations were completed effectively, helped by the extended road closure times and traffic management assistance during the derig stage, which were implemented following recommendations made at the 2025 debrief.

The event programme retained its traditional elements, including community-led activities, musical performances, children's entertainment, and a dedicated food and seating area.

2.1 Key Successes

- Partnership working between Council, HDCC, statutory agencies, contractors and local businesses.

- Positive feedback was received from local hospitality businesses, which reported strong trading throughout the day.
- The Chamber of Commerce expressed its satisfaction with the event and its impact on the town.
- The tea dance, event trail and fancy-dress competition organised by HDCC were all well attended and positively received.

2.2 Challenges and Observations

- The children's area is very popular throughout the day. Queue management around the 'play bus' attraction proved challenging and further to a review it has been agreed that this attraction should not return in future years. Alternative children's attractions will be explored.

2.3 Market Research

51% of attendees were from the town of Holywood and an additional 32% of attendees were from the Borough leaving 16% of attendees from the rest of NI.

Commentary received highlighted the family-friendly atmosphere, community spirit, entertainment programme and overall organisation as key strengths. Areas identified for consideration in future years included queue management in food areas, accessibility, mobility access and additional seating and toilet provision.

3. Sea Bangor — Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May 2026

Sea Bangor 2026 attracted approximately c.31,000 attendees across the event weekend. A new element added to this year's event included a road closure which incorporated Quay Street, Seacliff Road and Crosby Street. The closure increased the footprint of the event site and allowed existing businesses such as The Nines, The Guillemot and The Rabbit Rooms to be included within the event site. This also freed up space on the Eisenhower Pier and enabled a much more 'relaxed' atmosphere for viewing the Tall Ships and the on water activities including the Rowing Race.

Also, new this year, was the arrival of two traditionally rigged tall ships – Pellew and Spirit of Falmouth that stopped at Bangor as part of Full Circle sailing expedition carrying the Invictus flag. Their arrival enabled the addition of programming to welcome the ships and a flag raising ceremony which was open to the public on the Friday afternoon.

A Quiet Hour was introduced to the event this year. This was introduced as a result of feedback from the North Down Disability Action Forum during an Accessibility Audit which was carried out. It was reported that the large crowds, particularly on the Pier could be intimidating for wheelchair users and other visitors who needed a more quiet environment.

3.1 Key Successes

- Visiting ships and associated heritage storytelling were highlighted as a key attraction.
- Introduction of a Quiet Hour with positive feedback.

- New event layout worked well, benefiting local hospitality businesses and creating additional space in the main event site, particularly the Pier.
- Partnership working between contractors, statutory agencies and Council services supported the successful delivery of the event.
- Successful implementation of the City Passport initiative, with all 1,000 passports distributed and good engagement reported by local businesses.
- Traffic management arrangements operated effectively throughout the event.

3.2 Challenges and Observations

Operational considerations have been identified to improve future delivery, however it is anticipated the new Waterfront site will host the event and this alongside programming will determine operational planning.

- Additional food provision should be considered at the end of the Eisenhower pier to improve the visitor offer across the full event footprint.
- Accessibility provision should be further enhanced, including improved drop-off facilities, clearer promotion of accessibility services and increased visibility of Quiet Hour arrangements.
- Lessons arising from isolated incidents involving drone use, accessibility needs and temporary infrastructure management will be incorporated into future planning.

3.3 Market Research

The event was strongly family-orientated with 74% attending as part of a family group. Attendees were almost entirely local with less than 1% reporting that they travelled from outside of NI. 85% of visitors to the event were from within the Borough. This is equal to last year and is not performing for Out of Borough attendance. A revision to the event will be key at the new Waterfront site. It is noted 73% of attendees said they came to Bangor specifically for the event. The expansion of the site for the event with the food and bar area on the closed road was well received with 79% reporting improvement to their experience.

Comments in general mentioned more activities for adults, not just children, as well as a wider range of food options, particularly for people with allergies or dietary requirements.

4. Taste Ards and North Down Summer Food Festival incorporating Comber Earlies Food Festival – Saturday 20 June 2026

The Comber Earlies Food Festival is the headline event in the Taste Summer in Ards and North Down programme which showcases the Borough's food and drink offering. Programming at the event included artisan stalls featuring local producers, a demo kitchen featuring celebrity chef, local producer interviews, music stage and bar along with family themed arts, crafts and activities.

Attendance was recorded at c.12,000 visitors. The Passport initiative was well received with 15 businesses taking part and all of the 1,000 printed documents given out. 20 ANDBC businesses traded within the artisan market, many representatives from the Taste AND Network. They all reported a strong day of trade with four businesses selling out completely.

4.1 Key Successes

- Celebrity Chef Nathan Anthony was a successful presenter at the demo kitchen.
- Quiet Hour inclusion and accessible and additional parking.
- Closing the Leisure Centre car park from Thursday to facilitate the event set-up.

4.2 Challenges and Observations

- Challenges remain regarding the proximity of the Comber Care Home and the event site. Officers will continue to review operational aspects regarding the site.
- Due to the ongoing popularity of this event, the capacity of the site is continually reviewed. It should be noted that weather has been particularly favourable for the last two years.
- In March 2026, further to a Council decision on the Comber Earlies Food Festival site location, it was determined that the 2026 event would continue at the Comber Leisure Centre (other option Parkway). The site will be kept under review and re-engagement with the Local Action Group will be the first stage of consultation should that be a requirement.

4.3 Market Research

64% of visitors reported attending the event as part of a family group with 23% of attendees coming from Out of the Borough. 2% of these came from outside of NI. 63% of visitors came to Comber specifically for the event and 96% of visitors spent money while they were at the event, 74% within the event site at the stalls and 20% spending within the town. Overall, the event met or exceeded expectations of the attendees.

5. Bangor Vibes

Bangor Beats and Rhythms, Ulster Pipe Band Championships, Picnic in the Park along with Bangor Amplified (delivered by the Chamber) was promoted by the Council as 'Bangor Vibes' – 1– 2 August 2026, a weekend of music, culture and celebration. The following outlines the event activity delivered by Council.

5.1 Ulster Pipe Band Championships – Saturday 1 August 2026

The 73rd Ulster Pipe Band Championships were held at Ward Park (Arras). 36 bands participated in this event, managed and run by The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association NI (RSPBANI). Attendance at the event was recorded at c.6,500.

Operationally this was reported as a good site with ample parking for participants and coaches. Weather was particularly favourable on the event day. A number of trade stands, along with a bar facility, were well used alongside the musical programme, creating a pleasant atmosphere.

5.1.1 Key successes

- Access, traffic management and parking were well managed.
- Adjacent car parks promoted on the day were well used.
- The 'Mayoral led' short parade at the conclusion of the event from Ward Park along the Gransha Road finishing at the Hamilton Road junction was a

popular element of the day, with a good turnout of spectators both from those at the event itself and those who were in the city, as part of the overall programme.

5.1.2 Challenges and Observations

- The Park and Ride facilities were not as well used as anticipated and will be reviewed.
- Some feedback in the market research asked for additional family entertainment, however, this has been added by Council in previous years and was not well used.
- Signage to be reviewed relevant to this location.

5.1.3 Market Research findings

44% of attendees to the Ulster Pipe Band Championships were from Out of the Borough and 8% of these came from out of Northern Ireland. 59% of visitors were attending as part of a family group. 67% of visitors came to Bangor specifically for the event and 18% of respondents attended Bangor Beats and Rhythms as well as the Ulster Pipe Band Championships. 96% of respondents said the event had met or exceeded their expectations with comments including more directional signage from the event into Bangor and the addition of seats and benches at the event. The added events within Bangor were mentioned as positive.

5.2 Bangor Beats and Rhythms - Saturday 1 August 2026

In February 2026, Council approved the delivery of an additional event in 2026 to maximise the opportunity to gain visitors travelling to the Belfast Fleadh, scheduled to take place on 2 - 9 August 2026. Further to Council approval, and following a procurement exercise, Bangor Beats and Rhythms was programmed, managed and delivered by Peter Corry Productions. The entertainment programme contained a variety of suitably themed performances including two sessions by Ards CCÉ.

The event was held in Holborn Square, using this venue as an events space for the first time. The programme ran from 1.00 pm to 9.00 pm and attracted c.8,000 attendees over the course of the day. The area was licensed and visitors were able to purchase drinks from an event bar. Engagement with local businesses generated additional benefit for neighbouring food operators. QR code technology facilitated click-and-collect purchasing, while participating businesses increased both stock availability and staffing resources to accommodate heightened demand. Dedicated seating areas within the venue enabled visitors to enjoy food and drink purchases in a comfortable environment.

Bangor Chamber worked in close collaboration with the Council to deliver a weekend of events, with the addition of 'Bangor Amplified'. This entailed a series of musical performances in a selection of pubs and outdoor locations with bands programmed by the Chamber. The Chamber worked with The Rabbit Rooms and Wolseys to secure road closures which enabled them to extend outside seating. Both establishments had live music at these outdoor venues.

5.2.1 Key Successes

- Holborn Square was a successful events space, noting a few challenges in terms of delivery of large items of equipment.
- Support from local businesses and residents alike for the event delivery.
- Collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and partners.
- Support and programming from Ards CCÉ.

5.2.2 Challenges and Observations

- Co-ordination of all activity into a clear message for visitors.
- New/unknown event and event site requiring a high level of communication with businesses and residents.
- New event site with lessons on operational delivery for future use.

5.2.3 Market Research

19% of attendees were from Out of the Borough and 6% of these came from out of Northern Ireland. The majority, 53%, were within the 35-44 age bracket. 43% indicated they had either spent time visiting another arts/cultural space or spent time in the local area (e.g., shopping, visiting other attractions). This figure was reflected in the estimated average spend per attendee, being an extremely positive £40.60 per person.

Bangor Vibes Weekend Market Research

Officers engaged with the contracted market research company to undertake an online visitor survey to gauge visitor interaction with all elements of the weekend activity, alongside satisfaction. A brief overview of the outcomes of the report is below (103 sample). Data from the report has **not** been included within the summary document as there may have been visitors who attended multiple events, therefore may be open to double counting which will skew the figures.

80% of visitors came from the Borough (68% coming from Bangor). 20% came from Out of the Borough with 1% of those out of Northern Ireland. 71% of respondents attended Bangor Beats and Rhythms while 50% attended the Pipe Band Championships. 26% attended “other” which included the activity delivered by Bangor Chamber.

93% of visitors spent money while in Bangor, 74% being spent at stalls at the Pipe Bands or Bangor Beats and Rhythms, and 60% spent money within Bangor at shops and restaurants/bars. 65% of visitors would not have come to Bangor if the event had not been on.

89% of respondents to the Bangor Vibes survey stated the event/s that they attended met or exceeded their expectations with 55% specifically stating the event/s exceeded expectations.

Visitor Information Centres were based at Holborn Square, Ward Park (Pipe Band event) and Bangor Train Station. These outreach centres provided orientation and event information to people arriving in the city centre with a total of 1634 enquiries registered. Origin of visitors logged beyond NI included ROI, European, USA, South African and New Zealand. Anecdotally team members on the day noted there was movement and flow of people within the city both from Ward Park to the Pipe Band event at Ward Park Arras and from this event to Bangor, Beats and Rhythms and

Bangor Amplified events and vice versa. The day was also particularly favourable weather wise throughout making a nice summer atmosphere for those attending.

Feedback from the Chamber of Commerce, its representatives and other participating partners during the Bangor Vibes weekend outlined significant additional footfall and business sales, particularly within hospitality businesses, as outlined in Appendix 2.

Accommodation in AND

49% of accommodation providers on the AND database provided feedback or were able to be assessed on their 'online booking status' during the period 1-9 August 2026. Of these 57 properties, 75% were fully booked during the entire period (1-9 August) and the remaining 25% were booked for a portion of that time (mostly earlier in the week). It should be noted that this is an overview of booking status only.

6. Key Issues and Next Steps for 2027 Events

Work in previous years has consolidated efforts in terms of adverse weather mitigation with no events this year to date being impacted. This has been reflected in the restricted use of gazebos and careful programming. Recycling activities have continued to be well used with zero contamination recorded, however the model in place does require specific budget.

Due to the positive feedback through market research, the Quiet Hours at Sea Bangor and Comber Earlies Food Festival will continue, where operationally possible across the programme, subject to budget. Feedback in some of the market research carried out this year has asked for the inclusion of Baby Changing Facilities at events. This will be explored for the 2027 planning.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025 (Martyn's Law). The Act aims to improve organisational preparedness and protective security across the UK. It requires certain premises and events to take reasonably practicable steps to prepare for potential terrorist attacks and to help keep people safe in the event of an attack. The Government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months from the date of Royal Assent before the Act comes into force. Officers will continue to consider the implications of this Act and impacts on budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Notes** the contents of the report and the attached appendices.

9.1 - Appendix 1 - Tourism Events 2026 Evaluation Summary – mid season

102

Event	Date	Sample Size	Budget	ⁱ Actual Net cost	Target Attendees	Actual Attendees	ⁱⁱ Cost per Attendee	Total Estimated Attendee Spend	Estimated Average Spend per Attendee	Total OoB % of attendees	Outside NI % of attendees	% Customer Satisfaction
May Day	4 May	80	£21,300		10,000	10,000		£307,600	£30.76	16	0	81.25
Sea Bangor	23-24 May	450	£108,500		30,000	31,000		£414,713	£13.38	15	<1	82.8
Comber Earlies Food Festival	20 June	172	£86,500		11,000	12,000		£148,218	£12.35	23	2	88.6
Ulster Pipe Band Championships	1 Aug	102	£36,700		5,000	6,500		£108,184	£16.34	44	8	87.8
ⁱⁱⁱ Bangor Beats and Rhythms	1 Aug	32	£40,000	£40,000	5,000	8,000	£5	£327,200	£40.90	19	6	69 (different methodology used not comparable to other event data)
TOTAL			£293,000	£TBC	61,000	67,500	£TBC	£1,305,915	£19.35			

ⁱ As this report has been prepared earlier in the year, not all invoices have yet been received. The Actual Net Cost for the events has therefore not been finalised and will be included in the final report covering the remaining events.

ⁱⁱ As this calculation needs the Actual Net Cost of the event, this cannot be calculated and will be covered within the final report as Footnote i.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bangor Beats and Rhythms market research formed part of the contract to deliver the event. Whilst questions we similar to those asked by Council contracted company, the Customer Satisfaction question rated less aspects of the event, hence the lower number

Bangor Vibes Business Feedback

Bangor Chamber of Commerce

“Over the three days, live music took place in more than 25 venues across Bangor. These included pubs, coffee shops, retail stores, Seacourt Print Workshop, the Old Market House and Bangor Train Station. This spread activity throughout the city and encouraged visitors to explore and support a wide range of local venues and businesses.

Although the Chamber did not conduct a formal economic-impact survey, the feedback we received strongly indicates increased footfall and a significant positive impact on local hospitality businesses:

- Fusco Group said Saturday made “a significant impact at a group level” for its hospitality businesses, particularly during what can otherwise be a difficult trading period in July.
- Donegans Bar reported its “busiest day ever”.
- Kings Quay described the event as a great success and has expressed an interest in becoming more involved next year.
- Councillor Gillian McCollum praised the weekend as an example of “community and business working in perfect partnership”.

The feedback has been extremely positive and demonstrates the value of events such as Bangor Vibes in attracting people into the city, increasing footfall, supporting local businesses and strengthening cooperation across the community.”

Fusco Group

“Wolsey's had an uplift of 183% compared to a regular Saturday, albeit there were a few costs associated.”

Rabbit Rooms Mi Casa Events

“I wanted to drop you a note to say how well Bangor Beats and Rhythms went for us. We did roughly double what we would take on a normal weekend, and the queues barely stopped all afternoon.

That was down to the way it was put together. The site worked, the programme pulled the crowds in, and everything we needed in the lead-up came back quickly and clearly - it made our end of it easy.

You and the team should be very proud of it. The city centre had a real buzz about it and it was a great day for Bangor.

If it runs again next year we would love to be involved. Just let us know when planning starts and we will be there.”

Seacourt Print Workshop

“Seacourt was open for the day to support the event and to engage visitors and residents in creative activities to add to the day.

- Our Artist in Residence Imogen Donegan (supported by AND Borough Council and Arts Council of NI) designed a limited-edition artwork showing the cultural significance of all the music traditions represented in Bangor that weekend. This will be gifted to Ards CCE.
- We offered a screen-printed bandanas and print your own postcards based on this artwork and Ceangal Bangor held a pop-up Gaeltacht using games and stories to teach people a few words of Irish.
- We had approx. 600 visitors aged 2 to 70+ and printed 200 bandanas with the public.
- The Chamber provided a pop-up trad band who played live for an hour which was amazing.
- The atmosphere was warm and friendly, people enjoyed our space and were very positive about there being a great buzz in the city.
- Lots of people expressing that they ‘wish it could be like this all the time’.
- There was plenty of footfall in and around Main Street and we observed lots of friends greeting each other as they came and went.
- We had both new visitors and people we already know from Late Night Art and other actives we offer. Everyone we spoke to was local except a few international visitors (we ask for evals).”

Lessons from feedback:

- Messaging about the event in general was later than is ideal.
- Renaming the event to remove the Fleadh element was counterproductive. The negative press in advance overtook official marketing.
- Event recognition/association with the ‘main event’ was lost and multiplier effect of the fleadh were not achieved.

We totally supported Council’s investment in Bangor Vibes and encourage a similar event next year perhaps with earlier messaging.

Our feeling from the day is that the wider public were not in opposition to the event as suggested in the media, in fact they welcomed it . People want to enjoy the place they live with their friends and families and the events delivered that with an unmistakable feel-good vibe.”

Open House

“The Picnic in the Park event on Sunday 2nd August that was included in the Bangor Vibes publicity was attended by approx 5,000 people. We were able to analyse drone footage, so we are fairly confident of the numbers.

Appendix 2**105**

Our usual numbers for Picnic in the Park would be around 3,000, so the Bangor Vibes publicity probably helped increase the numbers. However, the Queen Tribute band playing that day (Queen Magic) would also have had more mainstream appeal than some of the other bands programmed for the park, and the weather was also fantastic. We feel that the additional publicity may have brought an extra 1,000 - 1,500 people to the event.

On Saturday 1st August we held a full day of Irish Traditional Music in the Court House as part of the Fleadh Fringe and charged £1 entry. 45 musicians played, 758 people paid in, plus approx 60 children free of charge. We promoted the event heavily through our Festival and Court House mailing lists and social media (facebook and Instagram).

The event was not part of the Bangor Vibes publicity so we can't tell if there was any spin off from that."

Unclassified

ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	Green Economy – Update relating to Notice of Motion 649
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: No budget currently attributed to this work. Work is being delivered using current staff resource.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report 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

At the Council meeting held on 18 December 2024, Notice of Motion 649 was submitted by Alderman McDowell and Councillor McCracken. The Notice of Motion stated:

“That this Council, recognising the opportunities of the Green Economy to bring substantial funding to this Council, make significant savings and create new local jobs, sets up a working group comprised of Councillors and Officers to bring forward detailed proposals to achieve these benefits and, in the process, help reduce carbon emissions in the Ards and North Down area.”

The Notice of Motion was referred to the Place and Prosperity Committee. A Green Economy Working Group was subsequently established to consider how the Council could respond to the motion. Initial discussions recognised that the Green Economy encompasses a broad range of activities and cuts across a number of Council functions, including economic development, regeneration, development projects, estates, energy efficiency, tourism, climate adaptation and sustainability. It was also recognised that a single agreed definition or coordinated Green Economy programme had not yet been established within Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The Working Group discussions highlighted the need to better understand existing activity across Council services and to identify potential opportunities that may contribute to Green Economy objectives within the Borough.

Key Issues

Green Economy-related activity has the potential to support a number of Council priorities, including economic growth, sustainability, carbon reduction, regeneration, investment and job creation. However, given the wide range of opportunities that could fall within the Green Economy, it is important to avoid creating an extensive list of potential projects without first establishing a clear and realistic framework for action.

A key issue identified through officer discussions is the need to define what the Green Economy means in the context of Ards and North Down Borough Council. This includes consideration of the following areas:

- supporting businesses to operate more sustainably;
- developing green jobs and economic opportunities;
- reducing Council energy consumption and emissions;
- generating renewable energy from Council assets;
- embedding sustainability requirements within development briefs and future land opportunities;
- identifying external funding opportunities that could support delivery; and
- aligning future activity with existing sustainability, climate, circular economy and economic development programmes.

Since the original working group discussion in March 2025, officers have continued to explore a range of opportunities that could support the development of a local green economy and contribute to wider sustainability objectives. Discussions have focused on understanding activity already underway across Council services, identifying areas where sustainability and renewable energy considerations can be further embedded into Council projects and programmes, and considering how existing initiatives can be better aligned to support green growth. Emerging opportunities have included support

for businesses to improve sustainability practices, exploration of renewable energy potential across Council assets and landholdings, consideration of sustainability requirements within future development projects, and engagement with planning and economic development colleagues on how green economy objectives can be reflected in future policy and investment activity. Officers are currently reviewing progress across these areas to establish a clearer baseline of activity, identify priorities for future action, and inform the next phase of work with Members.

Next Steps

Discussions highlighted the benefit of developing a clearer understanding of existing Council activity relating to sustainability, energy management and carbon reduction, alongside identifying potential opportunities that may warrant further consideration. Reference was also made to examples of good practice from elsewhere, opportunities associated with Council assets and landholdings, and how Green Economy objectives may align with existing Council strategies and programmes. It was agreed that relevant information and background material would be collated and shared to support future discussions.

Summary

This report provides an update on the Council's response to Notice of Motion 649 regarding the Green Economy. Following the establishment of the Green Economy Working Group, discussions have taken place on a range of issues relating to sustainability, energy management, renewable energy and wider economic opportunities. These discussions have highlighted both existing activity and potential opportunities that may contribute to the Council's economic and environmental objectives. The report outlines the discussions to date and notes the intention to continue gathering information to inform future consideration by the Working Group.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the contents of this report and the update provided in relation to Notice of Motion 649 regarding the Green Economy;

Also that it **Notes** the work undertaken to date by officers to review existing activity and opportunities relating to sustainability, energy management, renewable energy and wider green economy initiatives; and that further information will continue to be gathered and reviewed to inform future discussions of the Green Economy Working Group and any potential proposals that may emerge.

Unclassified

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	Economic Growth Conference 2027
Attachments	Appendix - Economic Growth Conference 2027 - Proposed Itinerary
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Delivery will be met from existing budget provision and staff resources.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

The purpose of this report is to present Members with an updated proposal for a Borough-wide Economic Growth Conference in 2027, including the proposed conference title, date, location, strategic rationale, anticipated benefits and draft itinerary.

A report was presented to the Place and Prosperity Committee in September outlining the ambition to deliver a Borough-wide Economic Growth Conference. At that meeting, it was agreed that officers would bring forward a proposed itinerary for members' information.

Conference Purpose

The proposed conference is intended to build confidence in the future of Ards and North Down by bringing together investors, developers, businesses, funders, civic leaders, community representatives and place-based partners. It will set out the Borough's growth proposition, showcase local and external examples of success, and highlight emerging opportunities for investment, enterprise, regeneration, tourism, community benefit and placemaking.

The programme will emphasise that sustainable economic growth is not only about attracting investment, but also about creating vibrant town and village centres, supporting local businesses, strengthening communities and developing attractive places to live, work, visit and invest.

The intended outcome is that delegates leave with greater confidence in Ards and North Down as a place where businesses can start, stay, scale and succeed, and where investment can deliver lasting economic, social and place-based value.

Strategic Alignment

The conference would provide a timely platform to position Ards and North Down as a Borough of opportunity at a point when a number of important regeneration, investment, tourism and enterprise priorities are moving forward. It would bring together the audiences whose confidence, collaboration and decision-making are essential to turning ambition into delivery, including investors, developers, businesses, government partners, support agencies, town centre and village stakeholders, community representatives and civic leaders.

Hosting the conference would also allow the Council to move beyond individual projects and present a joined-up growth narrative for the Borough. It would demonstrate how investment, business support, high street regeneration, tourism development, skills, innovation and placemaking can work together to create stronger local economies and more resilient communities.

The event would serve as both a promotional platform and a catalyst for action, helping to promote the Borough externally, strengthen relationships with the local business community, support investor engagement, showcase local success stories and create opportunities for collaboration and project development.

It should be noted that this would be the first conference of its kind for Ards and North Down. As such, the 2027 event would provide an important opportunity to establish the concept, test the format and deliver the conference at a practical and achievable

level in its first year. While the initial event should be focused, deliverable and proportionate, it is intended that the conference would provide a foundation for future years, with the potential to grow in scale, profile, sponsorship, partner involvement and impact as the model develops over time.

Proposed name: Invest | Grow | Thrive: People, Place and Prosperity

Subtitle: Ards and North Down Economic Growth Conference 2027

The proposed title, **Invest | Grow | Thrive: People, Place and Prosperity**, reflects the ambition to position Ards and North Down as a confident, connected and investable Borough. It is deliberately broad in appeal: **Invest** speaks to investors, developers and funders; **Grow** speaks to businesses, entrepreneurs and support organisations; and **Thrive** reflects the wider outcome sought for local communities, town and village centres, and the Borough as a whole. The reference to people, place and prosperity reinforces that economic growth must also support community wellbeing, local identity and high-quality placemaking.

Proposed date: Thursday 11 and Friday 12 March 2027

It is proposed that the main conference takes place on Friday 12 March 2027, with a pre-conference reception held on Thursday 11 March 2027. These dates have been reviewed against the Council committee calendar, public holidays and the pre-election period, and would provide sufficient lead-in time to secure speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and partner participation.

Proposed location: Bangor

It is proposed that the borough-wide Economic Growth Conference is hosted in Bangor, recognising the city's role as a key focus for regeneration, investment, tourism and business growth within the Borough. Hosting the conference in Bangor would provide an opportunity to showcase the city's ongoing transformation and demonstrate confidence in its future as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

Officers are currently exploring a number of potential venue options capable of accommodating the conference and supporting the proposed programme. These include locations within Bangor that can provide an appropriate setting for delegates, exhibitors, speakers and stakeholder engagement. The preferred venue will be confirmed as part of the next stage of planning and brought back to Members as part of a future report.

Regardless of the final venue selected, the conference will seek to showcase the Borough's investment, regeneration, enterprise and placemaking ambitions, while providing opportunities to highlight current and emerging projects across Ards and North Down.

Proposed Programme

Thursday 11 March 2027 – Pre-conference Reception

It is proposed that a Pre-conference reception is held on the evening before the main event to provide an informal opportunity for speakers, sponsors, investors, businesses, elected members, community representatives and key stakeholders to connect in advance of the conference programme.

There is an opportunity to invite the local Chambers of Commerce and/or the Ards and North Down Business Forum to host or co-host the reception. This would strengthen business ownership of the event, demonstrate partnership working with the local business community and help position the conference as a shared borough-wide initiative rather than a Council-led event alone.

The reception would create early momentum, encourage meaningful networking and allow the Council and its partners to set a positive tone for the conference. It would also provide an opportunity to showcase Bangor and the wider Borough in a more relaxed setting, including through local food, drink and produce which highlight the quality, creativity and distinctiveness of the local business base. This would reinforce the conference themes of investment confidence, business growth, community benefit and placemaking.

Friday 12 March 2027 – Main Conference

The main conference would be designed as a high-impact, Borough-wide event that moves beyond a traditional business conference format. It would combine inspiring keynote contributions, local success stories, community and place-based perspectives, practical growth labs, investor engagement and clear follow-up commitments.

The programme would tell a joined-up story about Ards and North Down as a place of opportunity: a Borough with investable town and city centres, distinctive coastal and rural assets, strong local businesses, active communities and significant regeneration potential. Community engagement would be woven throughout the day, ensuring that investment and business growth are clearly connected to local ownership, inclusive placemaking and benefits for residents, town centres and villages.

An indicative conference itinerary is provided in Appendix 1.

Delivery Considerations

It is proposed that a range of sponsorship, exhibition and partnership opportunities are made available to support delivery of the conference and encourage wider engagement from businesses, partners and place-based organisations. Potential opportunities may include headline sponsorship, session sponsorship, exhibitor stands, business support partner booths, investment showcases, community displays and delegate materials.

This approach would help offset delivery costs, strengthen private-sector and partner ownership of the event, and provide local businesses and organisations with a platform to promote their products, services, projects and opportunities to investors, funders, civic leaders and wider stakeholders.

Sponsorship and exhibitor packages could also be structured to provide accessible opportunities for smaller businesses, social enterprises, community organisations and local producers, helping the conference to reflect the breadth and diversity of the Borough's economy, communities and places.

It is also proposed that a modest delegate fee is applied, with discounted rates available for key stakeholders. The purpose of the fee is to encourage confirmed attendance and reduce non-attendance on the day.

Delegate Experience and Borough Showcase

It is proposed that screens are positioned at key points throughout the venue to enhance the delegate experience and maintain momentum throughout the conference programme.

Short video segments would be played at appropriate points during the event, featuring local businesses, key stakeholders, community representatives, funders and delivery partners. These would showcase local success stories, highlight current and emerging opportunities across Ards and North Down, and ensure that community, business and place-based perspectives are reflected throughout the programme.

The video content could also be repurposed following the event to support post-conference promotion, stakeholder engagement and wider communication of the Borough's investment, business growth and placemaking ambitions.

Next Steps

Officers will progress the conference concept into a more detailed development and planning phase. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with relevant Council services, including Tourism, Corporate Communications, Events, and other departments as required, to ensure the conference aligns with wider corporate priorities, place-promotion objectives and available resources.

Key next steps will include:

- Confirming the conference objectives, target audience and desired outcomes, and refining the programme content, speakers and delivery format.
- Engaging with relevant Council services, including Tourism and events and Corporate Communications to coordinate event planning, marketing, stakeholder engagement and delivery arrangements.
- Developing sponsorship, exhibition and partnership opportunities, while exploring appropriate local business and community participation to maximise economic, placemaking and community benefits.
- Confirming a preferred venue and finalising event management, communications and operational requirements to support successful delivery of the conference.
- Establish a clear legacy and follow-up framework, including investor engagement, partnership development, opportunity tracking and a post-conference action plan to ensure the event generates tangible outcomes beyond the conference itself.

A further report will be presented setting out the proposed programme, delivery arrangements, partnership activity, resource implications and anticipated outcomes prior to the conference proceeding.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the proposed approach to the development of the Ards and North Down Economic Growth Conference 2027.

11.1 - Appendix 1 - Economic Growth Conference 2027 | Proposed Itinerary

Thursday 11 March 2027 – Pre-Conference Reception

Time	Element	Purpose and Content	Suggested Contributors / Lead
6.00pm – 6.30pm	Arrival, Welcome Drinks and Informal Networking	Guests arrive for a relaxed networking reception, with welcome drinks and light refreshments showcasing local food, drink and hospitality businesses. This provides an informal opportunity for speakers, sponsors, investors, businesses, elected members, community representatives and key stakeholders to connect before the main conference.	Council tourism teams, local hospitality providers, and Chambers of Commerce
6.30pm – 6.40pm	Official Welcome	A short welcome to set the tone for the conference, acknowledge partners and sponsors, and introduce the ambition behind Invest Grow Thrive: People, Place and Prosperity.	Mayor of Ards and North Down
6.40pm – 6.50pm	Partner Address: Business Confidence and Collaboration	A contribution from a business partner to reinforce the importance of partnership working, local business ownership and collaboration in supporting economic growth across the Borough.	Local Chambers of Commerce.
6.50pm – 8.00pm	Networking Reception	Dedicated networking time to support introductions between investors, developers, funders, businesses, civic leaders and community representatives. This session would help build relationships and encourage follow-up conversations during the main conference.	All invited guests, speakers, sponsors and partners.
8.00pm	Close	Informal close, with guests encouraged to attend the main conference the following day and continue conversations through the wider programme.	Conference Host

Friday 12 March 2027 – Main Conference

Time	Session	Purpose and Content	Suggested Contributors / Community Link
8.45am – 9.30am	Arrival, Registration and Borough Breakfast Showcase	Delegates arrive to a curated showcase of local food, drink, produce, tourism experiences, business support partners and community/place-based projects. This creates an immediate sense of place and demonstrates the quality and distinctiveness of the Borough.	Local producers, hospitality businesses, tourism providers, Chambers of Commerce, and business support partners.
9.30am – 9.40am	Welcome: Setting the Ambition	Formal welcome and introduction to the conference theme, highlighting Ards and North Down as a place to invest, grow and thrive.	Mayor of Ards and North Down
9.40am – 9.55am	Opening Remarks: Why Ards and North Down, Why Now?	Sets out the Borough's opportunity, growth proposition and strategic priorities, linking economic development, regeneration, tourism, innovation, community confidence and placemaking.	Conference Host
9.55am – 10.20am	Keynote 1: What Good Looks Like – Confident Places and Successful High Streets	A national or regional keynote exploring how successful places build confidence, attract investment, strengthen high streets, support independent businesses and involve communities in shaping change.	TBC
10.20am – 10.45am	Keynote 2: Confidence to Invest – Turning Places into Opportunities	Explores what investors, developers and funders need to see in a place, including leadership, clarity, infrastructure, sites, community support, delivery confidence and partnership working.	Suggested: NI Best Practice example

Time	Session	Purpose and Content	Suggested Contributors / Community Link
10.45am – 11.10am	Keynote 3: Community Confidence and Inclusive Placemaking	Focuses on how communities, businesses and civic partners can shape places together, ensuring regeneration is locally supported, distinctive and capable of delivering long-term social, economic and place-based benefits.	Suggested: UK Best Practice: example demonstrating strategic investment
11.10am – 11.30am	Comfort Break and Exhibition Viewing	Delegates visit exhibition stands and engage with local businesses, support agencies and place based partners.	Exhibitors, local businesses, support agencies and community/place partners.
11.30am – 11.50am	The Ards and North Down Growth Story	A local anchor business or scale-up story demonstrating ambition, investment, export potential, employment, skills and the benefits of being based in the Borough.	TBC
11.50am – 12.10pm	Born and Grown in the Borough	A dynamic local enterprise story showing how an idea, skill or passion has developed into a successful business, supported by local customers, networks, mentoring and community connection.	TBC
12.10pm – 12.30pm	Opportunity on the High Street	A practical case study on bringing vacant, derelict or under-used property back into productive commercial or community use, supporting business growth, footfall, streetscape quality and town centre confidence.	Suggested: Empty to Energised applicant who has successfully completed the process.
12.30pm – 12.55pm	Panel Q&A: Why Invest, Why Start, Why Grow Here?	A lively discussion bringing investors, business voices, community representatives and public-sector partners together to explore what will unlock confidence, delivery and inclusive growth across the Borough.	Suggested: Investors, Departments, Economic Development Agencies i.e. Invest NI, Trade NI, Local Action Group and Chambers of Commerce, education.

Time	Session	Purpose and Content	Suggested Contributors / Community Link
12.55pm – 1.45pm	Lunch, Local Produce Showcase and Networking	Lunch designed as a borough showcase, using local produce where possible and encouraging informal conversations between investors, businesses, community representatives, support partners and civic leaders.	Local food and drink producers, hospitality businesses, tourism providers, sponsors and exhibitors.
1.45pm – 3.05pm	Breakout Labs: Confidence into Action	Delegates choose one practical growth lab. Each lab includes expert input, a case study, facilitated discussion and agreed outputs such as priority actions, partnership leads, community engagement opportunities, support referrals or investor follow-up. Option 1 – People and Place Lab: regeneration, tourism, high streets and community confidence. Option 2 – Investment and Collaboration Lab: investor and developer round table focused on key sites, barriers and next steps. Option 3 – Start, Grow, Scale and Innovate Lab: practical support for local businesses to start, strengthen, innovate, trade and scale.	Suggested: Tourism NI, ATCM, Local Action Groups, Chambers, BID, Invest NI, SERC, Departmental partners, private investors and local businesses.
3.05pm – 3.15pm	Comfort Break	Short reset before the final plenary, enabling delegates to return from breakout sessions and identify key messages for follow-up.	Conference team and facilitators.

Time	Session	Purpose and Content	Suggested Contributors / Community Link
3.15pm – 3.40pm	Strategic Leaders Panel: Confidence to Grow – Turning Ambition into Delivery	Brings the day together through a strategic discussion on visible delivery, investment readiness, community benefit, business growth, civic leadership and how momentum can be sustained after the conference.	Suggested: Chief Executive, Invest NI, Departments, Local Action Group/community representative, Tourism NI and private-sector investor or anchor business.
3.40pm – 3.55pm	Commitments from the Day	Captures immediate outputs, next steps, commitments and routes for continued collaboration routes.	Mayor, Chief Executive, conference host and breakout facilitators.
3.55pm – 4.15pm	Closing Keynote: Building a ‘Yes’ Culture	A final keynote focused on ambition, collaboration, problem-solving and the shared mindset required to turn opportunities into delivery while ensuring growth is shaped with communities and delivers lasting local value.	Options include ATCM, senior business leader, place leadership expert or community-led regeneration speaker.
4.15pm – 4.30pm	Close and Informal Networking	Formal close followed by a short informal networking period to encourage follow-up conversations, exchange of contact details and confirmation of next steps.	All delegates, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and partners.

Unclassified

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Strategic Capital Development
Report title	Bangor Waterfront Update (September 2026)
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	PCU43
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Contractual Narrative: Scheme previously agreed
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple: Priority 2: Environmental - 2. An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets Priority 3: Social - 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy

Purpose of Report

This report:

- Provides an update on progress across the wider Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme;
- Informs of progress on the planning applications for both Pickie and Ballyholme Yacht Club.
- Updates on the ITT for Bangor Marina
- Updates on the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm

Background

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is a significant investment programme designed to drive inclusive economic growth across the Belfast City Region through investment in tourism, regeneration, innovation and infrastructure.

The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme is the Council's flagship project within the Tourism and Regeneration pillar of the BRCD. The programme provides for the coordinated regeneration of approximately two miles of Bangor's seafront, with the aim of enhancing its attractiveness as a high-quality visitor destination, supporting local economic activity, and improving the overall experience for residents and visitors.

Programme Overview

Overall Programme Status

The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme is progressing across all constituent projects under established governance and assurance arrangements. Delivery is aligned to the objectives set out in the Belfast Region City Deal focusing on quality design, value for money and long-term Borough wide economic/social benefits.

All workstreams have progressed since the last report in June 2026 with projects advancing through key stages of design development, planning preparation and procurement. Programme dependencies, risks and emerging issues are managed via the established programme controls and reporting structures.

Programme and Milestones

The overall programme remains on track in terms of strategic direction, with constituent projects progressing in line with their respective delivery pathways.

As projects have advanced, interim milestone variances have arisen, primarily linked to procurement sequencing and the scale of design, survey and statutory processes required to support robust planning submissions. These variances are being actively managed. We are working through the stakeholder analysis with consultants with a view to updating the programme to reflect the delay in their appointment.

Financial Overview

The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Programme continues to operate within the approved funding envelope. Funding is by way of Belfast Region City Deal investment, Council contribution and private sector investment.

At programme level, there is currently no forecast increase in the overall budget. Cost pressures identified at project level, as designs have developed, are being actively managed through ongoing design review, value engineering and programme controls to ensure affordability is maintained.

Inflationary pressures relating to wages and materials remain challenging at the current time in the construction sector.

Workstream Progress Updates

Urban Waterfront & Public Realm (UWPR)

Current Stage: The Integrated Consultancy Team (Aecom) is now fully appointed and mobilised.

Progress:

- Indicative design concept proposals were developed as part of the procurement process and these are being reviewed/further developed with Aecom prior to wider presentation to Members and stakeholders.

Next Steps:

- Review of information and work packages to inform design, programme and cost
- Commencement of initial surveys and site investigations.
- Review and further development of design concepts to inform scope, programme and planning strategy.
- Progression of early design development and associated planning approach.
- Initiation of the Gateway Review process aligned to the appointed team and updated project information.

Pickie Fun Park

Current Stage: Working towards RIBA Stage 4 – development of technical design

Progress:

- Planning submission submitted and validated.
- Design development is progressing alongside technical assessments and site investigations.

Next Steps:

- Progress the project through RIBA Stage 4 design development.
- Prepare and submit a building control application subject to approval of the revised proposals
- Continue engagement with key stakeholders and statutory consultees

BYC Watersports Centre

Current Stage: Working towards RIBA Stage 4; development of technical design.

Progress:

- RIBA Stage 3 design development completed, with a coordinated and fully developed design proposal.
- Planning application and Marine Licence submission progressed, supported by a comprehensive suite of surveys and technical information.
- Strong overall support for the redevelopment, with feedback informing refinements to design and accessibility proposals.
- Continued collaboration with BYC Development Committee to ensure operational requirements are aligned with the design.

Next Steps:

- Progress planning process through to determination
- Advance Stage 4 technical design
- Consider project elements suitable for contractor design
- Prepare for main contractor procurement process

Marina Wetside Facilities and Infrastructure (Connie)

Current Stage: ICT Procurement – Tender list set. Working through RFI stage

Progress:

- Procurement documentation for the appointment of the Integrated Consultancy Team has been developed in line with Council procurement procedures and governance requirements.
- The Pre-Selection Questionnaire (PSQ) stage has completed, with the panel having evaluated tender submissions on 25th June 2026.
- The Invitation to Tender (ItT) stage is now underway, with successful Suppliers at PSQ stage being invited to submit a tender response by the closing date of 8th October 2026.
- Clarifications from Suppliers are being received and responded to by the Project Team.
- Ongoing engagement with funding partners is in place to support the procurement process.

Next Steps:

- Respond to all clarifications.
- Individual and panel evaluation of ItT submissions.
- Continued engagement with funding partners and key stakeholders.
- Following approval processes, progress the appointment of the successful ICT.
- Progression of design development following appointment of the ICT.

Communications and Engagement

Considerable engagement across the Bangor Waterfront programme has to date been undertaken through statutory consultation with additional stakeholder input

including public events, online consultation and targeted engagement. This process has ensured a broad and inclusive engagement process across both Pickie Fun Park and the BYC Watersports Centre and these sections of the programme are now awaiting planning decisions. Our expectation is that the engagement process for the UWPR will, bearing in mind the scale of the project, be challenging. Currently, in conjunction with our consultants, we are working up the stakeholder engagement principles and will revert back for Committee input.

Next Steps

The programme will continue to progress across all workstreams, with the focus on the following:

- Progressing the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm project via the Aecom led ICT. The external consultants are now mobilised and working closely with the ANDBC Capital Team
- Developing the stakeholder plan with particular focus on the UWPR project
- Moving forward with the detailed design on both Pickie Fun Park and the BYC Watersports Centre while awaiting outcome of the planning applications.
- The Marina ITT is now progressing and the Capital Team are responding to the clarification queries.
- Ongoing engagement with funding partners to maintain programme alignment and capital reporting.
- Development of the private sector investment strategy

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Notes** that Aecom is now appointed and mobilised as lead on the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm commission. Also, **Notes** that planning applications for both Pickie Fun Park and Ballyholme YC have been submitted and validated. Detailed design for these both these projects is proceeding to permit prompt tendering and procurement process once statutory consents are in place.

Unclassified

ITEM 13

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	Update report on Notice of Motion 705 – Strangford Bridge Update
Attachments	Letter of response dated 6.7.26 from Minister for Infrastructure
File Reference (if applicable)	RDP95/RDP14
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None
	Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 5. Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing If multiple:

Background

At the meeting of the Place and Prosperity Committee on 5 March 2026 it was recommended that the Council would write to the Minister of the Department for Infrastructure to request that she prioritises funding for a feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

A letter was issued by the Chief Executive in April, and the response from the Minister dated 7 July 2026 is attached at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council **Notes** the response from the Minister for Infrastructure in relation to the feasibility study into a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford village.

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA

Susie McCullough
 Chief Executive
 Ards and North Down Borough Council

lorna.watson@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Private Office, 3rd Floor,
 James House, Gasworks Site,
 2 - 4 Cromac Avenue,
 Belfast, BT7 2JA
 Telephone: (028) 9054 0540
 Email: Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference:
 Our reference: COR-0360-2026
 6 July 2026

Susie, a chara,

Funding to undertake a feasibility study into the provision of a bridge across Strangford Lough from Portaferry to Strangford Village

Thank you for your letter of 15 April 2026, on behalf of Ards and North Down Borough Council requesting that the Department prioritise funding to undertake a feasibility study into the provision of a fixed bridge crossing between Portaferry and Strangford.

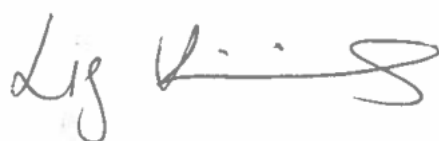
I recognise the Council's view that a fixed crossing could bring benefits in terms of connectivity, support for local businesses, tourism, and wider economic opportunities for the Ards Peninsula, and I note the level of support expressed by elected members. The Department welcomes continued engagement with councils on matters of local and regional importance.

My Department's transport plans are the primary mechanism through which future transport needs and investment priorities are identified. The connection between Strangford and Portaferry does not form part of the Regional Strategic Transport Network and would instead be considered within the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP), covering Ards and North Down.

However, I recently visited the area and met with elected representatives to hear about the case for a bridge crossing. I am now giving consideration to this issue.

Thank you again for setting out the Council's position on this matter.

Is mise le meas,



LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

Unclassified

ITEM 14

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Place and Prosperity Committee
Date of Meeting	08 October 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Economic Growth
Report title	Supporting Thriving High Streets - Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Delivery, including the required Council contribution, will be managed within existing budgets and staff resources.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

The Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme was launched in 2025 as a co-ordinated package of support aimed at revitalising and regenerating the Borough's urban high streets. The programme has provided practical, visible and place-based interventions to support local businesses, address vacancy and dereliction, improve the appearance of commercial premises and strengthen the overall attractiveness, competitiveness and resilience of the Borough's city and town centres.

Previous reports to the Committee have provided updates on the programme, including the Glow Up Grant Scheme, the Empty to Energised Pilot Grant Scheme, the Freshen Up Grant Scheme and the Clean City and Tidy Towns funding application.

Members were previously advised that an application had been submitted to the Department for Communities (DfC) to secure funding for public realm improvements across Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee.

Clean City and Tidy Towns Funding Award

Officers can now confirm that DfC has awarded £900,000 through the Clean City and Tidy Towns programme, subject to the normal funding agreement requirements. Together with a Council contribution of £90,000, this will provide a total programme value of £990,000 to support targeted improvements across the Borough's five urban centres.

The funding will be profiled across two financial years:

- **Year 1 (2026/27):** £600,000 from DfC and a £60,000 Council contribution.
- **Year 2 (2027/28):** £300,000 from DfC and a £30,000 Council contribution.

Securing this funding represents a significant further investment in the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme and will enable the Council to build on the momentum already achieved through business-facing grants by ensuring that improvements to individual premises are complimented by improvements to the wider public realm.

Scheme Overview

The Clean City and Tidy Towns scheme will protect previous investment, improve the appearance and functionality of high streets, support economic vitality and ensure that the Borough's city and town centres remain welcoming, accessible and attractive places for residents, businesses and visitors.

The proposed programme of works will focus on targeted public realm enhancements across Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards, outlined below:

- Paving related works in identified areas across each of the five towns.
- Street furniture improvements will include the purchase of litter bins in Year 1, with installation programmed for Year 2.
- Cycle infrastructure will include new installations in Newtownards in Year 1 and, in Year 2, the upgrade of the Abbey Street East Car Park cycle rack in Bangor to a lockable unit, together with new installations in Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood. The allocation of further cycle infrastructure works in Year 2 will

follow publication of the Cycle Masterplan and associated consultation with the public and elected members.

- Seating works will include replacement of timber elements on seats in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards.
- Feature lighting-related works will include the removal of ground-mounted lights in Bangor, with units to be disconnected and removed and openings made good using a grout finish to match the surrounding surface; replacement seat lighting and column lighting where required; lighting at Donaghadee Harbour and Community Centre; and festoon lighting for Hibernia Street in Holywood, subject to required consents.
- Planting works will include hard and soft landscaping improvements at Abbey Street, Bangor in Year 2 and works at Court Square War Memorial in Newtownards, including replacing the concrete planters, replanting and replacement benches in Year 1.
- Town Centre CCTV infrastructure works will include replacement infrastructure for existing camera locations and infrastructure for new camera locations in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, and Newtownards.
- Parklet works will include repairs, refresh works and vinyl wraps to three parklets in Bangor, one in Comber and three in Newtownards.
- The programme will also include wider placemaking and town centre dressing initiatives where appropriate, with all works prioritised on the basis of need, deliverability, visibility of impact, safety, accessibility, procurement requirements and alignment with existing and planned regeneration activity.

The budget will be allocated across Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee to ensure visible benefit across all urban areas. This approach will support consistency in the quality of the public realm, strengthen local pride, improve visitor perception and support wider economic activity across multiple high streets.

Programme Delivery

Officers will now progress immediately with the arrangements required to finalise the funding agreement, establish the delivery programme and commence procurement and implementation activity. Delivery will be led by the various council services with support from DfC and in partnership with the Local Action Groups.

A Project Board will be established to oversee the delivery of the scheme. The Project Board will track progress, budget, risk management, procurement, quality assurance and compliance with funding conditions. Regular monitoring and progress reports will be provided to DfC, and further updates will be brought to the Committee as the programme progresses.

Local Action Groups will be engaged as part of the programme delivery arrangements. The Local Action Groups have been briefed on the proposed improvements for their respective areas, with a presentation delivered at the most recent meetings to outline the proposed works, indicative allocations and delivery approach. The minutes of these meetings will be available to Committee in November.

Financial Implications

Proposed Workstream	Indicative Total Cost	Year 1: 2026/27		Year 2: 2027/28	
		DfC	Council	DfC	Council
Paving reinstatements	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	£0
Paving sealant	£150,000	£50,000	£0	£100,000	£0
Litter bins	£120,000	£100,000	£0	£20,000	£0
Cycle infrastructure	£30,000	£3,000	£0	£27,000	£0
Seating	£35,000	£0	£0	£35,000	£0
Feature Lighting	£65,000	£65,000	£0	£0	£0
Planting	£120,000	£20,000	£0	£100,000	£0
CCTV infrastructure	£270,000	£270,000	£0	£0	£0
Parklets refresh	£30,000	£0	£30,000	£0	£0
Placemaking and town centre dressing initiatives.	£130,000	£52,000	£30,000	£18,000	£30,000
Total	£990,000	£600,000	£60,000	£300,000	£30,000

Note: The Council contribution is shown against two project areas within the indicative funding profile; however, the overall Council contribution will be met collectively by all service units involved in programme delivery.

The table above provides an indicative breakdown of the proposed allocation across the main programme items and financial years. These figures are intended to support programme planning and budget monitoring and may be subject to change. Any required variances between budget headings or financial years can be submitted to DfC during programme delivery, subject to funding agreement requirements and Departmental approval.

Next Steps

Officers will progress the following next steps immediately:

- submit any required budget variances to DfC
- throughout the programme delivery period, in accordance with the funding agreement and approval process;
- establish the internal project board and confirm service unit representation;
- progress procurement, permissions and delivery arrangements in line with Council procedures and funding conditions;
- continue to engage with Local Action Groups
- commence delivery of priority works as soon as practicable; and
- provide regular progress updates to DfC and future Committee meetings.

Summary

The confirmation of funding for the Clean City and Tidy Towns scheme is a significant and positive development for the Supporting Thriving High Streets Programme. The funding will enable the Council to deliver a co-ordinated package of public realm

improvements that will protect previous investment, improve the appearance and functionality of high streets, support local businesses, enhance visitor experience and reinforce civic pride across the Borough's city and town centres.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the successful award of Clean City and Tidy Towns funding and that officers will now progress the funding agreement, governance, procurement and delivery arrangements required to commence the programme of works.