October 29th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 4th November 2026** at **7:00 pm** in **Hybrid, Church Street, Newtownards via zoom.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

Attachment: EC 04.11.26 Agenda.pdf ***Page 1***

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. Notice of Motion 632 Pedestrian Access at Donaghadee HRC

Report attached

Attachment: 3 Notice of Motion 632 Pedestrian Access Donaghadee HRC.pdf ***Page 3***

4. Update on Crommelin Park, Donaghadee

Report attached

Attachment: 4 Update on Crommelin Park, Donaghadee.pdf ***Page 6***

5. Replacement and Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision

Report attached

Attachment: 5. Replacement and Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision.pdf ***Page 10***

Attachment: 5. Appendix 1 Replacement & Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision.pdf ***Page 14***

Attachment: 5 Appendix 2 Play Park and Older Children Play Provision Asset List.pdf ***Page 23***

Reports for Noting

6. Notice of Motion 721 UDR Memorial Bench

Report attached

Attachment: 6 Notice of Motion 721 UDR Memorial Bench.pdf ***Page 32***

7. On Street Parking Restrictions

Report attached

Attachment: 7 On Street Parking Restrictions.pdf ***Page 35***

Attachment: 7 Appendix 1 Correspondence to Minister for Infrastructure.pdf ***Page 37***

Attachment: 7 Appendix 2 Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure Copy.pdf ***Page 39***

8. NI Amenity Council ‘Best Kept’ Awards 2026

Report attached

Attachment: 8 NI Amenity Council 'Best Kept' Awards 2026.pdf ***Page 41***

9. Response to Notice of Motion 657 Greyabbey Playing Fields

Report attached

Attachment: 9. Notice of Motion 657 Greyabbey Football Pitch.pdf ***Page 44***

10. Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update 2026

Report attached

Attachment: 10 Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update 2026.pdf ***Page 48***

Attachment: 10.1 Appendix 1 Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update Report 2026.pdf ***Page 52***

11. Play and Recreation Annual Update

Report attached

Attachment: 11 Play and Recreation Annual Update.pdf ***Page 72***

Attachment: 11.1 Appendix 1 Calendar of Events 2025 2026.pdf ***Page 77***

12. North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes

Report attached

Attachment: 12 North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes.pdf ***Page 80***

Attachment: 12 Appendix 1 - NDCP 2026.06.29 Minutes.pdf ***Page 82***

13. Bi Monthly Update on Portavogie and Peninsula 3G Pitches

Report attached

Attachment: 13 Bi Monthly update on Portavogie and Penninsula 3G Pitches.pdf *Page 98*

Attachment: 13 Appendix 1 Portavogie Committee Update November 2026.pdf *Page 100*

Attachment: 13 Appendix 2 Penninsula Committee Update November 2026.pdf *Page 104*

14. Notices of Motion

14.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Chambers and Alderman Brooks

That this Council requests a report on the viability and cost of upgrading Groomsport splash pad, including potential external funding and consideration through a future budget process. The assessment should take account of local feedback and the forthcoming Village Masterplan, which is anticipated to highlight the facility negatively.

15. Any Other Notified Business

*** IN CONFIDENCE***

Reports for Approval Delegated to Committee (In Confidence)

16. Tenders

16.1 Tender for the Supply and Delivery of Compostable Caddy Liners

Report attached

Attachment: 16.1 Tender for the Supply and Delivery of Compostable Caddy Liners.pdf *Not included*

16.2 Extension of Tender for the Provision of Bitmacing Works

Report attached

Attachment: 16.2 Extension of Tender for the Provision of Bitmacing Works.pdf *Not included*

16.3 Extension of Tender for the Provision of Electrical Works

Report attached

Attachment: 16.3 Extension of Tender for the Provision of Electrical Works.pdf ***Not included***

16.4 Tender for the Supply and Delivery of Parks and Cemeteries Plant and Machinery 2026

Report attached

Attachment: 16.4 Tender for the Supply & Delivery of Parks and Cemeteries Plant and Machinery 2026.pdf ***Not included***

16.5 Tender for the Provision of Artificial Sports Surface Replacement

Report attached

Attachment: 16.5 Tender for the Provision of Artifical Sports Surface Replacement.pdf ***Not included***

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

28 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Environment Committee of Ards and North Down Borough Council in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards on **Wednesday, 4 November 2026** commencing at **7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

Reports for Approval

3. Notice of Motion 632 Pedestrian Access at Donaghadee HRC (Report attached)

4. Update on Crommelin Park, Donaghadee (Report attached)

5. Replacement and Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision (Report attached)

Reports for Noting

6. Notice of Motion 721 UDR Memorial Bench (Report attached)

7. On Street Parking Restrictions (Report attached)

8. NI Amenity Council ‘Best Kept’ Awards 2026 (Report attached)

9. Response to Notice of Motion 657 Greyabbey Playing Fields (Report attached)

10. Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update (Report attached)

11. Play and Recreation Annual Update (Report attached)

12. North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes (Report attached)

13. Bi monthly Update on Portavogie and Peninsula 3G Pitches (Report attached)

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That this Council requests a report on the viability and cost of upgrading Groomsport splash pad, including potential external funding and consideration through a future budget process. The assessment should take account of local feedback and the forthcoming Village Masterplan, which is anticipated to highlight the facility negatively.

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16. Tenders

16.1. Tender for the Supply and Delivery of Compostable Caddy Liners (Report attached)
16.2. Extension of Tender for the Provision of Bitmacing Works (Report attached)
16.3. Extension of Tender for the Provision of Electrical Works (Report attached)
16.4. Tender for the Supply and Delivery of Parks and Cemeteries Plant and Machinery 2026 (Report attached)
16.5. Tender for the Provision of Artificial Sports Surface Replacement (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (16 Members)

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

ITEM 3

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Waste and Cleansing Services
Report title	Notice of Motion 632 Pedestrian Access at Donaghadee HRC
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	47045
Legislation	Other Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
Resource Implications	Budget Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of 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

From July 2025 to September 2025 the Council led a pedestrian access trial at two of the Council's household recycling centres, Holywood HRC and Donaghadee HRC. The pilot involved setting aside specific periods for pedestrian-only access in order to ascertain the possible demand for the service from people walking to sites with items for recycling. Evaluation of the trial found that these periods were not well used. A report summarising the results of the pedestrian access trial was presented to the Environment Committee in December 2025. The report recommended that Council should not continue with dedicated pedestrian access periods. However, members asked officers as a result to examine again if any of the Council's sites could be adapted to support combined pedestrian and vehicular access, and if so at what cost.

A further report was presented to the Environment Committee as a result in April 2026. This report provided an overview of published good practice relating to pedestrian access in HRC operations, health and safety regulations and guidance relating to HRC operations, good operational practice at HRCs in other Northern Ireland councils, and a site-by-site review of potential pedestrian access at all of Ards and North Down's HRCs. Following discussion, it was agreed that officers should prepare a business case for the investment that would be required to introduce pedestrian access at Holywood and Millisle HRCs. An update report on this decision was presented to the Environment Committee in September 2026.
As a result of this report, it was agreed that a business case for pedestrian access at Holywood HRC should be developed. In addition during the debate, officers were asked if a further examination of pedestrian access at Donaghadee HRC could be reconsidered.

Pedestrian access at Donaghadee HRC

As reported in April 2026, at Donaghadee Household Recycling Centre there is currently no separate pedestrian access. There is one entrance gate and one exit gate for vehicles. Site rules include a one-way system and a speed limit of 10mph. There are footpaths leading to the site entrance. This site is in a residential area.



Figure 1 Donaghadee HRC entrance and signage

Following the detailed review of the Council's HRC's to ascertain if mixed pedestrian and vehicular access was possible, Members supported the conclusion that

pedestrian access at Donaghadee was not possible simultaneously with vehicles, as has been concluded previously. The footprint of the facility remains insufficient to introduce measures to segregate pedestrians and vehicles safely. Given the location there is no practical opportunity for expansion. As advised in April, time bound access when vehicles are prohibited remains the only viable option. Based on a review of site booking numbers this could be introduced without significantly reducing vehicle booking slots.

Next Steps
Officers reviewed the usage patterns at Donaghadee Household Recycling Centre. The assessment found that overall site usage is generally low, with no distinct peak or quiet periods identified. The introduction of pedestrian only time periods at this site is possible without causing a significant reduction in the number of vehicle bookings. To facilitate safe pedestrian access whilst maintaining site operations, the following pedestrian only access periods could be introduced:

- Monday 13:00-14:00
- Wednesday 13:00-14:00
- Friday 13:00-14:00

During these designated periods, access to the site would be restricted to pedestrians only. No vehicles would be permitted to enter during these times. This recommendation is to ensure safety of all site users and staff while providing a practical means of accommodating pedestrian access.
The cost to implement pedestrian access into the booking system would cost approximately £700.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Considers this report.

ITEM 4

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Update on Crommelin Park, Donaghadee
Attachments	N/A
File Reference (if applicable)	88005 / CW55
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Choose an item.
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 4. A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors If multiple:

Background

An update report on potential sports facilities in Donaghadee was presented to June's Environment Committee. Following which Members agreed *that; 'Council notes the report and further agrees to bring back a follow-up report assessing the wider issues of sports provision in Donaghadee. While Council notes the development of an updated Outline Business Case (OBC) is a positive step, council acknowledges the deep sense of frustration in Donaghadee around how overdue these works are. Council officers should also bring back a follow-up report around indicative timings for the process surrounding potential upgrades to Crommelin Park's football facilities and creation of hockey facilities at this site, such as when will the OBC be completed and ultimately when would we see work on the ground. Further to this, officers should fully explore all external funding opportunities to assist with the development of these facilities.'*

Key Issues

As Members will be aware a Donaghadee Sports Project has been under development for some time. Following a Borough-wide review of sports facilities in 2017 funded by Sport NI, the Council completed an OBC in 2019 for a multi-sport hub to accommodate all four Donaghadee sports clubs (Rugby, Cricket, Football and Hockey) on one shared site, at a then estimated capital cost of £6.6m, (NPC cost of £9.2m) The proposal did not progress due to several factors as outlined in the June 2026 report.

Council undertook a further OBC, approved in March 2023, which reconscidered a multi sports hub against individual site development options and it recommended upgraded Rugby, Football, Hockey and Cricket facilities at their current locations, Donaldson Park, Crommelin Park and Northfield, with Hockey currently located at Bangor Grammer School moving back to the town, at a then estimated capital cost of £9.5m. (NPC cost of £12.5m). It was further agreed that a requirement for further engagement with the clubs was required in order to ascertain preferred options for operating models and configurations of site sharing, notably, would hockey co-locate with Football at Crommelin Park or with Rugby at Donaldson Park.

As a result of this engagement, Cricket and Rugby confirmed their preferred options to lease the sites they used and in the case of Rugby looking towards grants and other funding sources to upgrade facilities. Leases have been entered into and capital investment from Council to bring the facilities up to an acceptable standard is being reviewed. Thus the Rugby portion of the project is likely to follow a different delivery model, than the traditional Council design, build and operate model. This being a Lease and potential grant. Members will also be aware of a pilot grant project being progressed for a 3G pitch in Newtownards at a significant reduced cost to Council than our standard model.

Despite ongoing engagement with the other two clubs, preferred operating models and configuration preferences were not forthcoming. A lease was suggested to the Football club but not supported by it for further investigation.

In October 2025, responsibility for Council maintained outdoor leisure facilities transferred to Parks and Cemeteries. The support for Rugby development remains with the Active and Healthy Communities Committee and for Crommelin Park which

is managed by Council, now sits with Parks & Cemeteries and the Environment Committee. Around that same time, the hockey club confirmed that it could co-locate with Football at Crommelin Park. Parks refreshed the engagement with Football and Hockey also, which progressed over the 2025/26 winter period and clarity on the preferred operating model was established.

In April 2026 the Head of Parks and Cemeteries and the Head of Leisure met with Donaghadee Town Advisory Group and updated them on the plans for moving forward for both the Donaldson Park and Crommelin Park sites. The intention for an OBC for the 3G pitch at Crommelin was discussed, being subject to funding being made available to appoint a consultant to develop an updated business case to support that initiative. (For information Council has spent c£52,000 on the previous two OBCs.)

As previously outlined an update report was brought to June's Committee, indicating the hope to progress an OBC for the football and hockey at Crommelin Park. Officers sought to secure budget to do this work during the current financial year but unfortunately, this was not successful and thus the OBC cannot not be progressed at this time. A proposal for a wider feasibility study was discussed as an alternative approach.

Members will be aware of Council's ambitious capital plan, which currently includes over 20 major projects at a total estimated cost of £258m. In order to deliver the current programme, the Council would have to significantly increase its borrowings as well as requiring sustained district rate increases to cover capital repayments alone every year for the next 10 years. In light of this Council has agreed to undertaken a major review of its capital programme over the next twelve months.

Options to progress the project

There are a number of interconnecting workstreams being undertaken over the next number of months which will be integral to enabling the Council to progress with this project. These being:

- the review of Council's capital plan,
- a pilot capital grant scheme to support sporting/leisure projects with the aim of developing a Leisure Capital Support Grant Scheme as agreed within Council's Leisure Strategy, and
- the Council's borough-wide review of sports facilities, again an outworking of the already agreed leisure strategy.

Council may wish to consider including the budget to deliver an updated OBC within the 2027/28 rate setting programme, estimated at c£30,000. However, Members will be aware of the challenges within the current capital portfolio plan, and the funding of same and thus the potential for any OBC to lead to further needs in the future.

If funding was secured next year the OBC could be developed by Autumn 2027. Subject to OBC approval and if Council agrees to secure the required capital to deliver the project, it is likely to take a minimum of 3-5 years for the project to be delivered on site, allowing for planning, detailed design, tendering and construction.

Alternatively in order to undertake a more comprehensive view of the Crommelin Park site, a feasibility study leading to the development of a plan for the whole park could be undertaken. This would also take into account the Council's new borough-wide leisure facilities strategy which is under development, as well as any relevant information in the town masterplan. Officers are in the process of identifying possible funding sources for this feasibility study and if that is not possible in-year, a bid for that as a part of next year's rate setting process could be made. It is estimated that a feasibility study would cost less than an OBC, c£20,000 and would provide a significant amount of the information required to complete an OBC in the future, should this be required. This has already been agreed as the way forward for Parkway and Muckers in Comber, regarding integration with the greenway, a dog exercise area, the football clubs expression of interest partnering in order to develop the pitch and the use of the open space beside the skate park, allowing all of these to be considered collectively.

As previously outlined due to the interlinkages and in particularly the review of the Council's Capital Plan, the draft timeframe for this approach is similar to the OBC timeframe outlined above.

Next Steps and Summary
Council to give consideration to either including the OBC development costs, or feasibility study/development plan costs within the 2027/28 budget, subject to the rate setting process.

Once either option is completed and if funding for the project is confirmed, officers would then be in a position to give a detailed indicative timeline in response to that part of the Council decision made in June.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Considers** the way forward.

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks & Cemeteries
Report title	Replacement & Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision
Attachments	Appendix 1: Replacement & Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision Appendix 2: Play Park and Older Children Play Provision Asset List
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA 139
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 The Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: resources requested with report
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening carried out – Screened out

If multiple:

Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

1. Background

Ards and North Down Borough Council is responsible for the maintenance and replacement of over 90 play facilities across the Borough, including play parks, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), outdoor gyms, skate parks, pump tracks and splash pads. These facilities vary considerably in age, condition and usage.

The importance of providing accessible, high-quality play opportunities has never been greater. Play facilities contribute significantly to children's physical and mental health, social development, community cohesion and overall wellbeing. The Council therefore requires a structured approach to managing these assets and planning for their replacement.

This proposed Replacement & Utilisation Strategy which compliments the Councils Play Strategy, formalises the established framework for the planned replacement of play facilities, enabling improved financial forecasting, prioritisation of investment, and long-term asset management. The Strategy aligns with the Council's wider objectives relating to public health, accessibility, sustainability and community wellbeing.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Asset Condition and Replacement Requirements

Many play facilities are approaching or have exceeded their expected lifecycle. Failure to invest appropriately in their replacement may result in:

- Deterioration of facilities and increasing maintenance costs.
- Increased health and safety risks.
- Reduced opportunities for children's play and recreation.
- Negative impacts on community cohesion and wellbeing.
- Greater inequalities in access to quality play provision, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
- Potential reputational and liability risks for the Council.
- Prioritisation and Delivery

The Strategy proposes that replacement priorities will be informed primarily by the Annual Independent Inspector's Report, while also considering factors such as:

- Condition assessments.
- Usage levels.
- Accessibility requirements.
- Strategic priorities.
- Wider capital projects.
- Environmental and climate impacts.

The replacement programme will remain flexible and will be reviewed annually to reflect changing asset conditions and inspection findings. The indicative delivery schedule is intended for financial planning purposes and does not represent a fixed programme of works.

2.2 Financial Implications

Based on current replacement costs and forecast asset renewal requirements, it is estimated that annual investment of approximately £1.3 million (current budget) to £1.6 million (current budget plus compound inflation) will be required over the next ten years to bring facilities into line with the proposed replacement schedule.

The Strategy seeks to minimise pressure on the District Rate through long-term planning, phased investment and the pursuit of external funding opportunities where available.

2.3 Sustainability and Inclusion

The Strategy promotes a sustainable and inclusive approach to future play provision through:

- Use of recycled and recyclable materials.
- Modular and low-maintenance designs.
- Accessible and inclusive play opportunities.
- Biodiversity enhancements and natural play features.
- Community engagement in play facility design and development.

3. Next Steps

The Replacement & Utilisation Strategy would be adopted as the framework for future play facility replacement planning.

Annual condition assessments and Independent Inspector reports will be used to determine replacement priorities and update the indicative delivery programme.

Funding requirements will be considered through the annual estimates and capital planning processes.

Opportunities to secure external funding contributions will continue to be explored.

All replacement projects will be developed and approved in accordance with Council procurement, governance and capital expenditure procedures.

4. Summary

The Council manages a substantial portfolio of play and recreational facilities which require ongoing investment to ensure they remain safe, accessible and fit for purpose. The proposed formalisation of a Replacement & Utilisation Strategy provides a structured framework for managing replacement requirements, prioritising investment and supporting long-term financial planning. The Strategy supports the delivery of modern, inclusive and sustainable play facilities while helping to manage risk, control costs and maintain equitable access to quality play opportunities across the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Approves** the attached Replacement & Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Document Control

Policy Title	Replacement and Utilisation Strategy for Play Parks and Older Children Play Provision
Document Reference	
Policy Summary	The strategy details the principles and processes by which the Council will effectively manage the replacement of Play Parks and Older Children play provision within the financial procedures set out by Council.
Review Requirements	November 2029
Document Owner/Job title	Parks & Cemeteries Development Manager
Document Owner is responsible for ensuring that it is reviewed in line with the requirements of the Council's Policy Review Procedure and is kept up to date.	
Council Approval Date	

Version Control Record

Version Number	Version Date	Author(s)	Comments
1.0	October 2026	Parks Development Manager	Policy Established

Consultation

	CLT	HOST	SCC	Unions
Date completed	28 October 2026	6 October 2026	n/a	n/a

Screening

Reference No	436
EQIA Required?	No

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

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1.0 Introduction

The Parks & Cemeteries Service, which sits within the Environmental Services Directorate, has responsibility for the maintenance and development of over 300 hectares of open space, including all outdoor sports facilities, play parks, greenways, amenity beaches and associated promenades along Council leased foreshore.

The service also contributes to enhancing the appearance and raising the profile of the Borough, through the creation of floral displays and planting schemes throughout the city, towns and villages. Its success in this area has been demonstrated by recent achievements in Best Kept, Ulster in Bloom and Britain in Bloom competitions and receiving accreditation for Green Flag awards on seven sites.

The functions of the service are wide-ranging and include taking forward the Council's Biodiversity duty, provision of Bereavement Services and cemetery management, the provision of allotments and outdoor recreation.

All grounds maintenance operations, including the cleaning of play parks and paddling pools and provision of community play activities are currently undertaken by specifically trained and skilled in-house staff with only selected specialist work being undertaken by the private sector.

The importance of providing high-quality, accessible play parks has never been greater. Children need the social and play opportunities purpose-built play areas can offer and the benefits they provide in physical and mental health, social cohesion and overall wellbeing.

The Parks & Cemeteries Service and Estates Service manage the maintenance and replacement of 90 play facilities, including play parks, multi-use games areas (MUGAs), outdoor gyms, skate parks, pump tracks and splash pads that differ in age and condition.

This replacement Strategy which compliments the Councils play strategy formalises the procedure in place for replacing these facilities and allows for financial forecasting and control. Failure to appropriately forecast and schedule the replacement of the play facilities could result in several issues:

- **Negative impact on physical and mental health:** Play areas encourage physical activity, reducing childhood obesity and related health issues. Outdoor play supports stress relief and emotional development for children and families.
- **Reduced community cohesion:** Play parks act as social hubs, fostering interaction among families and neighbours. Play supports cognitive, social and motor skills development.
- **Economic impact:** Lack of investment can lead to higher healthcare costs and social service demands. Areas with good play facilities often have higher property values and attract families.
- **Deterioration:** Old or poorly maintained equipment can become hazardous and costly to maintain. Old or neglected spaces can attract vandalism and crime.
- **Disadvantaged communities:** Children in low-income areas may rely heavily on public play spaces. Lack of investment widens inequality.

2.0 Aims & Objectives

The aims of this Strategy are to:

- Maintain safe, high-quality play spaces by replacing aging or unsafe equipment.
- Extend the lifecycle of assets through planned, phased investment rather than reactive repairs.
- Spread costs over multiple years to avoid large one-off expenditures.
- Align funding with council budgets, grants, and external funding opportunities.
- Ensure all communities have fair access to modern, inclusive play facilities.
- Reduce inequalities in play opportunities by identifying and addressing barriers experienced by Section 75 groups, particularly disabled children and young people, those living in rural areas and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Prioritisation will be based on the annual independent inspector's report, the only exception is when it is part of a wider scheme and has to be postponed.
- Reduce liability from deteriorating equipment and non-compliance with safety standards.
- Avoid reputational damage from unsafe or neglected parks.

- Support health, wellbeing, and social cohesion by providing attractive, functional spaces.
- Enhance local environments and property values.
- Link to council objectives such as public health, child development, and green infrastructure.
- Incorporate sustainability goals (e.g., recycled materials, low-maintenance designs).

3.0 Relevant Legislative and Council Documents

- The Big Plan (Community Plan for Ards and North Down)
- Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Ards and North Down Play Strategy
- Ards and North Down Property Maintenance Strategy 2026 - 2036
- Getting Active, Staying Active Leisure Strategy 2025-2034
- ISO 14001 Environmental Management System
- Council Procurement Strategy
- Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
- Occupiers' Liability Act (1957) revised 1984
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 31
- BS EN 1176 & BS EN 1177 (European Standards)
- RoSPA Guidance

4.0 Sustainability

The Council will apply a whole-life approach to asset management, considering repair, refurbishment and life extension opportunities before full replacement where this can be achieved safely and cost-effectively. The Service Management will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that play facilities are designed, procured, installed and maintained in a sustainable manner. This includes:

- The use of recycled and recyclable materials: choosing equipment made from recycled plastics, sustainably sourced timber, or metals that can be recycled at end-of-life.
- Low-Toxicity Finishes: avoiding paints and coatings with harmful chemicals.
- Modular Systems: allowing parts to be replaced without changing the entire structure.

- Inclusive Design: ensuring accessibility for all children, reducing the need for future retrofits.
- Local Sourcing: reducing transport emissions by sourcing materials and contractors locally.
- Low-Carbon Materials: prioritising timber from certified sustainable forests and recycled metals
- Incorporate Natural Play: reducing reliance on manufactured equipment.
- Use Native Planting: enhance biodiversity and create shade.
- Involve Residents: collaborating on design decisions to ensure the park meets real needs, reducing wasteful features.
- Encourage Volunteering: involving residents in activity programmes to increase longevity and usage.

5.0 Methodology

There are many different techniques that can be used to calculate replacement cycles, with advantages and disadvantages associated with each. There can also be non-economic factors involved that may influence or even dictate replacement cycles, for example meeting equality legislation standards to meet disability access requirements or weathering and climate, where coastal or high-rainfall areas accelerate material degradation. The Council aims to ensure that communities have fair and equitable access to inclusive, accessible and high-quality play opportunities regardless of age, disability, location or socio-economic circumstances.

While replacement priorities will primarily be informed by the Annual Independent Inspector's Report, other factors may also be considered, including usage levels, accessibility requirements, strategic priorities and wider capital projects:

- Reference to the Standard Replacement Cycle
- Condition Assessment
- Standards Updates
- Maintenance Costs
- End of Design Life
- Usage Levels
- Council Play Strategy

- Environmental and Climate Impact

It should be noted that the delivery schedule (Appendix 2) is indicative only for financing, to provide a basis for estimating the level of investment required over the 10-year period of the strategy and does not represent a fixed programme of works. The replacement schedule will be developed using the scores from the Annual Inspectors Report. The programme will be reviewed and updated annually as new inspection reports are received and facility scores and priorities change.

Any changes to design standards, accessibility requirements, or safety specifications must be incorporated into the replacement cycle to ensure that new play parks meet the latest technical, inclusive, and safety features.

This Strategy complements the Council's Property Maintenance Strategy 2026–2036 by supporting a planned approach to the maintenance and replacement of play facilities. Together, the strategies ensure that maintenance, repair and refurbishment are considered alongside replacement, helping the Council manage its play assets safely, sustainably and cost-effectively. Replacement cycles will vary depending on facility type, the estimated life cycle is set out below:

Play Facility Category	**Replacement Cycle**
Play Park Tier 0	8 years
Play Park Tier 1	8 years
Play Park Tier 2	10 years
Play Park Tier 3	12 years
Outdoor Gym	10 years
Multi-Use Games Area	15 years
Feature Units	15 years
Skate Parks	15 years
Pump Tracks	15 years
Splash Pads	15 years

The above table is only for financing purposes in order to provide a basis for estimating the level of investment required over the 10-year period of the strategy and does not represent a fixed programme of works.

6.0 Financing of Replacement Play Areas

Unless otherwise noted, all play facility replacements will be funded from within the Council's Capital Investment Programme. Parks and Cemeteries Management will proactively seek opportunities to attract funding for play facility replacements.

To assist with financial planning and minimise pressure on the District Rate, an annual investment requirement based on play facility replacement schedules has been established and will be revised as necessary on an annual basis. In 2026 the approximate cost of replacing each play facility is detailed below. Costs are subject to annual inflationary impacts.

Play Facility Category	**Replacement Cost**
Play Park Tier 0	£450,000
Play Park Tier 1	£250,000
Play Park Tier 2	£170,000
Play Park Tier 3	£85,000
Outdoor Gym	£50,000
Multi-Use Games Area	£200,000
Feature Units	£190,000
Skate Parks	£200,000
Pump Tracks	£200,000
Splash Pads	£150,000

The current rate of investment into play facilities falls below the level required to ensure play facilities are replaced in line with the replacement cycle and inspection reports. It is accepted that the amount of investment required is not realistically available in a short period of time, nor would the replacement works be deliverable. To bring play facilities in line with the replacement schedule within ten years, an annual investment ranging from £1.3 million to £1.6 million (taking account of inflation over 10 years) would be required.

This level of investment is necessary to maintain the replacement programme. It is also noted that inclusive design, technology integration, nature-inspired and sensory-rich play are rapidly shaping the provision of play facilities. It is imperative that facilities are considered for replacement not solely on the basis of safety standards but also to ensure these facilities meet current community requirements.

During the Estimates process each year the Parks and Cemeteries Manager will also liaise with relevant staff to identify play facilities for replacement or if any additional facilities are required under the play strategy.

No expenditure will be incurred on replacements until an assessment has been completed and approved in line with existing Council policies and procedures. Any new or additional (not replacement) requirements for play facilities will be subject to the Council's processes for new expenditure e.g. business case.

As with all facility delivery, officers will continual review and take all available opportunities for the use of external funding towards these facilities.

As part of the procurement process, service management will work with relevant internal staff to produce a quotation or tender specification for the play facility that will form part of any compliance with existing Council policies and procedures.

Type	Address	Town	Tier
Play Park	Marine Gardens	Bangor	0
Play Park	ABM&W Leisure Centre	Newtownards	0
Play Park	Ballywalter Road	Millisle	1
Play Park	High Street	Ballyhalbert	1
Play Park	Castle Park	Portaferry	1
Play Park	Johnny The Jig	Holywood	1
Play Park	Lemons Wharf	Donaghadee	1
Play Park	Londonderry Park	Newtownards	1
Play Park	Lower Crescent	Comber	1
~~Play Park~~	~~Pickie~~	~~Bangor~~	~~1~~
Play Park	Seapark	Holywood	1
Play Park	The Commons	Donaghadee	1
Play Park	Ward Park	Bangor	1
Play Park	Cootehall Road	Crawfordsburn	1
Play Park	The Green	Kircubbin	1
Play Park	Main Street	Cloughey	1
Play Park	Abbot Gardens	Newtownards	2
Play Park	Anchor Park	Portavogie	2
Play Park	Aurora	Bangor	2
Play Park	Ballymenoch	Holywood	2
Play Park	Sportsplex	Bangor	2
Play Park	Beechfield	Donaghadee	2
Play Park	Belfast Road	Ballygowan	2
Play Park	Bloomfield	Bangor	2
Play Park	Brice Park	Bangor	2
Play Park	Main Street	Carrowdore	2
Play Park	Clandeboye	Bangor	2
Play Park	Cloughey Road	Portaferry	2
Play Park	Tower Park	Conlig	2
Play Park	Glenford Park	Newtownards	2
Play Park	Breezemount Grove	Conlig	2
Play Park	Harbour Road	Portavogie	2
Play Park	Helens Bay	Helens Bay	2
Play Park	Islandview	Greyabbey	2
Play Park	Kilcooley Community Centre	Bangor	2
Play Park	Kilcooley Square	Bangor	2
Play Park	Killinchy	Killinchy	2
Play Park	Kingsland	Bangor	2
Play Park	Lisbarnett	Lisbane	2
Play Park	Northfield	Donaghadee	2
Play Park	North Street	Greyabbey	2
Play Park	Parsonage Road	Kircubbin	2
Play Park	Rathgill Park	Bangor	2
Play Park	Redburn	Holywood	2
Play Park	Seafront	Groomsport	2
Play Park	Skipperstone	Bangor	2

Play Park	Springwell	Groomsport	2
Play Park	Sunderland Av, West Winds	Newtownards	2
Play Park	The Glen	Newtownards	2
Play Park	Upper Crescent	Comber	2
Play Park	Windy Ridge	Ballywalter	2
Play Park	Scrabo, The Green	Newtownards	2
Play Park	Dickson Park	Ballygowan	2
Play Park	Fort Park	Bangor	2
Play Park	Ballycranbeg	Kircubbin	3
Play Park	Ballydrain	Lisbane	3
Play Park	Ballyholme	Bangor	3
Play Park	Banks Lane	Bangor	3
Play Park	Craigantlet	Craigantlet	3
Play Park	Hunts Park	Donaghadee	3
Play Park	Lawson Park	Portavogie	3
Play Park	Pinks Green	Donaghadee	3
Play Park	Rubane	Rubane	3
Play Park	Springvale Road	Ballywalter	3
Play Park	Steele Dickson Park	Portaferry	3
Play Park	The Cotton	Donaghadee	3
Play Park	Tullymally Road	Portaferry	3
Outdoor Gym	Ballyhalbert Road-Anchor Park	Portavogie	N/A
Outdoor Gym	Ballywalter Road	Millisle	N/A
Outdoor Gym	Killinchy Outdoor Gym	Killinchy	N/A
Outdoor Gym	Skipperstone Trim Trail	Bangor	N/A
Outdoor Gym	The Commons	Donaghadee	N/A
MUGA	Londonderry Park	Newtownards	N/A
MUGA	Ballywalter Road	Millisle	N/A
MUGA	New Harbour Road	Portavogie	N/A
MUGA	The Green	Kircubbin	N/A
MUGA	Parsonage Road	Kircubbin	N/A
MUGA	Sunderland Av, West Winds	Newtownards	N/A
MUGA	Abbots	Newtownards	N/A
MUGA	Clandeboye Rd	Bangor	N/A
MUGA	Hunts Park	Donaghadee	N/A
MUGA	Moss Road	Ballygowan	N/A
MUGA	Seapark	Holywood	N/A
MUGA	Portaferry	Portaferry	N/A
MUGA	Bangor Ward Park- Mini MUGA	Bangor	N/A
MUGA	Teens	Portaferry	N/A
Feature Units	Millisle Ship	Millisle	N/A
Feature Units	Ballywalter Ship	Ballywalter	N/A
Splash Pads	Groomsport Splash Pads	Groomsport	N/A
Skate Parks	ABMWLC Skate Park, N'Ards	Newtownards	N/A
Skate Parks	Muckers Field	Comber	N/A
Skate Parks	Harbour Road	Portavogie	N/A
Pump Tracks	ABMWLC Pump Track	Newtownards	N/A
Pump Tracks	Killinchy Pump Track	Killinchy	N/A

Cycling Centre	Bangor Sportsplex Cycle Park	Bangor	N/A
Pump Track	The Commons Pump Track	Donaghadee	N/A
Future Teen Areas- NEW FACILITY		Ballywalter	N/A
Future Teen Areas- NEW FACILITY		Cloughey	N/A
Future Teen Areas- NEW FACILITY		Groomsport	N/A
Future Teen Areas- NEW FACILITY		Greyabbey	N/A
Future Teen Areas- NEW FACILITY		Ballyhalbert	N/A

Installation Year	Estimated Life	Review/Replacement Financial Year	Estimated Replacement Cost
New (2027)	8	2033	£1,200,000.00
2018	8	2026	£450,000.00
2026	8	2034	£250,000.00
2026	10	2036	£250,000.00
2023	8	2031	£250,000.00
2023	8	2031	£250,000.00
2022	8	2030	£250,000.00
2025	8	2035	£250,000.00
2018	8	2026	£250,000.00
~~over 15 years~~	~~8~~	~~2025~~	£250,000.00
2025	8	2033	£250,000.00
over 15 years	8	2025	£250,000.00
2025	8	2035	£250,000.00
2020	8	2028	£250,000.00
2024	8	2034	£250,000.00
2023	8	2033	£250,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2024	10	2034	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2020	10	2030	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2022	10	2032	£170,000.00
2027	10	2027	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2024	10	2034	£170,000.00
2024	10	2034	£170,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2023	10	2033	£170,000.00
2020	10	2030	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00
2026	10	2036	£170,000.00

over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
over 10 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2024	10	2034	£170,000.00
2023	10	2033	£170,000.00
over 15 years	10	2025	£170,000.00
2019	10	2029	£170,000.00
2023	10	2033	£170,000.00
2024	10	2034	£170,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
over 15 years	12	2025	£85,000.00
2026	12	2025	£85,000.00
2022	15	2037	£50,000.00
2025	10	2035	£50,000.00
2020	10	2030	£50,000.00
over 15 years	15	2025	£50,000.00
2025	10	2035	£50,000.00
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
2024	15	2039	£200,000.00
over 15 years	15	2025	N/A
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
over 10 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
over 15 years	15	2025	£200,000.00
2025	15	2040	£200,000.00
2026	15	2041	£200,000.00
2026	15	2041	£200,000.00
2026/28	15	2041	£100,000.00
2026/28	15	2041	£200,000.00
unknown	15	2025	£190,000
unknown	15	2025	£190,000
2020	10	2030	£150,000.00
2018	15	2032	£200,000.00
2023	15	2037	£200,000.00
2023	15	2037	£200,000.00
2018	15	2032	£200,000.00
2020	15	2035	£200,000.00

2026/27	15	2041	£200,000.00
2026/27	15	2041	£200,000.00
tbc	15	tbc	£200,000.00
tbc	15	tbc	£200,000.00
tbc	15	tbc	£200,000.00
tbc	15	tbc	£200,000.00
tbc	15	tbc	£200,000.00
		TOTAL	£18,395,000.00

Notes
due by March 2027
due by March 2027
removed for Marine Gardens
due by March 2027
completed
completed

under construction
resurface 2026
resurface 2026
under construction
due by March 2027
due by March 2027
due by March 2027

Peaceplus under construction
Peaceplus under construction

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Notice of Motion 721 UDR Memorial Bench
Attachments	None
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 721 / PCA155
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
In May 2026, Council agreed to the following from a Notice of Motion:

"This Council recognises the service and sacrifice of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), including those from the Borough and surrounding areas who served with dedication during a difficult period in Northern Ireland's history. Accordingly, tasks officers to bring back a report this Council on providing a memorial bench within Clandeboye Cemetery, Bangor, dedicated to the memory and service of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. The proposed bench should provide a dignified place for remembrance and reflection for families, veterans, and members of the wider community."

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

Under the current policy, applications are accepted annually from 1 April. Where applications exceed the number of available locations, applicants are considered through the established assessment process. A maximum of twenty memorial benches are approved each year to ensure consistency, fairness, and the sustainable management of Council assets and open spaces. The existing policy is currently under review, and a revised policy will be presented to a future meeting of the Environment Committee.

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

As a result, officers do not have authority to approve an individual memorial bench outside the provisions of the current policy.

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

Officers are currently reviewing the Memorial Bench Policy, and an updated policy will be presented to the Environment Committee in the New Year for consideration.

Next Steps
The current request for a memorial bench would be considered and processed in accordance with the Council's Memorial Bench Policy in place at the time an application is made, should an application be received. However, an updated Memorial Bench Policy will be presented to the Environment Committee in the New Year for consideration.

Summary
A report was requested on the provision of a memorial bench within Clandeboye Cemetery in recognition of the service and sacrifice of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Officers have considered the request in the context of the Council's approved Memorial Bench Policy.

The current policy does not permit the allocation of memorial benches outside the established application process, and the policy does not provide for exceptions. Approving a bench outside the policy framework would create a precedent and could undermine the consistent and equitable application of the policy.

The Memorial Bench Policy is currently under review, and a revised policy will be presented to the Environment Committee in the New Year. Any request for a memorial bench would be considered and processed in accordance with the Council's Memorial Bench Policy in place at the time an application is made.

RECOMMENDATION

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

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Estates
Report title	On Street Parking Restrictions
Attachments	Appendix 1 - Correspondence to Minister for Infrastructure Appendix 2 - Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure
File Reference (if applicable)	65369
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of report not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 3. A thriving and sustainable economy If multiple:

Background
At its meeting in June 2026, following consultation with the Local Action Groups in Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards, Council agreed to lobby the Department for Infrastructure to make changes to on-street parking restrictions.

Key Issues
The correspondence attached at Appendix 1 was sent to the Minister for Infrastructure in line with the Council decision made in June 2026, reflecting the requests of the five Local Action Groups.

The correspondence attached at Appendix 2 was received by Council and provides a comprehensive response from the Minister for Infrastructure. The response sets out why the Department does not intend to review on-street waiting restrictions, requests a list of streets where the enforcement anomaly applies, provides information on Residents Parking Schemes and outlines the Department's plans regarding pavement obstructions.

Next Steps
The response has been circulated to the five Local Action Groups. Officers will work with the groups to prepare a list of streets where the enforcement anomaly exists and forward this to the Department as soon as possible.

Summary
The Minister's response outlines the Department's position on waiting restrictions, enforcement anomalies, Residents Parking Schemes and pavement obstructions. Officers will now work with the Local Action Groups to identify streets affected by enforcement anomalies and forward this information to the Department.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding on-street parking restrictions.

Ards and North Down Borough Council

20 July 2026

Ms Liz Kimmins
Minister for Infrastructure
Department for Infrastructure Headquarters
3rd Floor, James House Gasworks site
2-4 Cromac Street
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Sent via email only: private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister Kimmins,

On-Street Parking Restrictions Ards and North Down

The Council at its meeting in June agreed that I write to you. As part of the Council's preparation for the implementation of the new Off-Street Car Parking Order, consultation was undertaken with Local Action Groups comprising Elected Members, business representatives and community stakeholders in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee. The following concerns were raised.

1. **On Street Waiting Restrictions Review**

Following engagement, Council agreed to formally lobby the Department for Infrastructure to undertake a review of on-street waiting restrictions across Ards and North Down in some specific areas.

The current one-hour waiting restriction is widely regarded as too restrictive for many town and city centre users and may discourage visits to local businesses. As part of its Car Park Strategy, Council identified that a two-hour stay may be more beneficial and such an on-street waiting restriction would better support shoppers, visitors and businesses while continuing to promote turnover of spaces.

Council as a result of its engagement with the local stakeholders, therefore requests that the Department *considers extending* the on-street waiting restriction to two hours in Bangor, Newtownards and Donaghadee. Council also requests that the existing parking restriction in Donaghadee be extended to include part of Shore Street and The Parade, where demand and turnover issues have been specifically identified.

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Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Furthermore, Council recognises that each town and city within the Borough has distinct parking pressures and therefore, in Holywood and Comber (except for parking on Castle Street and Mill Street in Comber), Council requests that the Department *considers a trial* of a two-hour on street waiting restriction in these two towns. This is again as a result of consultation with local stakeholders.

2. **Enforcement Anomaly**

There is a clear and consistent concern across the Borough that the current "no return within one hour" provision permits an unintended enforcement anomaly. It has been reported that vehicles appear to remain in high-demand spaces for extended periods by making minor movements, such as turning wheels, rather than genuinely vacating the space. This undermines the effective turnover of prime city and town centre parking spaces and has a detrimental impact on the ability of local businesses to attract passing trade. Council therefore requests that the Department take the necessary steps to address this anomaly and ensure that on-street parking restrictions operate as intended.

3. **Residents Parking Schemes**

Holywood representatives are supportive of a residents' parking scheme for appropriate streets within the town. However, concerns have been raised regarding the complexity of the application process, and Council would welcome departmental guidance and practical support to help residents and stakeholders understand the process and progress viable proposals.

4. **Pavement Obstructions**

Finally, wider discussion took place with the groups on pavement obstruction, including inconsiderate parking and the placement of shop goods outside premises where this falls beyond the scope of pavement café legislation. Council would support intervention from the Department on these wider issues.

Many thanks for your attention to this matter and I look forward to receiving a response so that I may report back to the Council at the appropriate time.

Yours sincerely,

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

Ards and North Down Borough Council
City Hall, The Castle
Bangor, BT20 4BT

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Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn Bonneagair
Depairtment fur Infrastructure
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA

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

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards & North Down Borough Council

Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference: COR-0657-2026
21 August 2026

Susie, a chara,

ON STREET PARKING RESTRICTIONS, ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

Thank you for your email dated 20 July 2026, regarding a number of concerns in relation to on street parking following the council's new Off-Street Car Parking Order and consultation with local action groups in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee.

I will respond to each of the issues in the order they have been raised.

On Street Waiting Restrictions Review

In urban streets where on-street parking demand is greatest, shorter time limits are necessary to create the optimum turnover of spaces for the benefit of the local businesses. A 1-hour limit (short term parking) is generally applied to the busiest commercial areas where demand for on street parking is greatest. For that reason, and to assist those needing to park for a longer period, a 2-hour limit (medium term parking) is applied in areas that are further away from the main commercial area, or in less busy commercial areas. This limit is primarily intended to deter longer stay/commuter parking in the peripheral areas of cities and towns.

With a high demand for parking in the centre of Bangor, Newtownards and Donaghadee, the current 1 hour waiting restrictions are appropriate at this time. There are also many Council off-street car parks to facilitate those wishing to stay longer than 1 hour so there are options for parking that should suit both the needs of both local businesses and their customers.

In accordance with our policy guidelines and for the reasons outlined above, my Department has no current plans to change the limited waiting restrictions from 1 hour to 2 hours in these areas. This will also include Holywood and Comber at this time. Parking in town centres is something that may be looked at as part of the development of the Eastern Transportation Plan.

I can advise that officials will assess the existing restrictions in Donaghadee to determine whether there is a need to extend them onto part of Shore Street and the Parade.

Enforcement Anomaly

If a list of streets is available where this is reported as being a problem, we will arrange enforcement when resources permit.

Resident's Parking Schemes

You may be aware that the new demand led Resident's Parking Zone application process opened on 28 April 2026 for a period of three months, up to 31 July 26, and will enable individuals and communities to submit proposals for residents' parking zones in their area for formal consideration. This approach follows recommendations from the Residents' Parking Review Report which confirmed that residents' parking zones can work well where there is clear local need, but identified changes required to deliver schemes more effectively.

The demand led pathway will allow applicants to submit requests for their area to be considered for a residents' parking zones, providing the Department with information about the nature, extent and timing of parking pressures. In order for any scheme to be eligible for consideration, proposals must: demonstrate persistent commuter or nuisance parking; cover adopted, public streets only; have less than 50% of properties with access to private off-street parking such as driveways; and include evidence of local support for a scheme. Further information on residents' parking zones has been published on NI Direct as well as the Department's website. These resources will provide information to allow your constituents to consider whether a scheme is suitable for their area before submitting an application.

Pavement Obstructions

My officials are taking forward work to develop the necessary legislation to introduce a blanket ban across the North on parking a vehicle wholly on the footway, parking across dropped kerbs and double parking. It is my aim to introduce these changes in the latter part of 2026, subject to the legislative process.

The proposed legislation will not extend my Department's enforcement powers to cases where a vehicle is parked partially on a footway and causing an obstruction where no parking restrictions are marked on the carriageway. Responsibility for these cases will remain with the PSNI.

I hope you find this reply helpful and it explains our position on these matters at this time.

Is mise le meas,



LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	NI Amenity Council 'Best Kept' Awards 2026
Attachments	n/a
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA121 / 56050
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	None Narrative: resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation If multiple:

Background
The Northern Ireland Amenity Council's Best Kept Awards promote cleaner, greener and more attractive communities, recognising the efforts of councils, businesses, voluntary organisations and local residents in enhancing and maintaining their local environment. Across Ards and North Down, a number of Council services, including Waste and Cleansing, Parks, Property Maintenance, Neighbourhood Environment and Community Development, work collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders throughout the year to support high standards of environmental quality and civic pride.

Key Issues
The 2026 Best Kept Awards results demonstrate a strong performance across the Borough, with six locations achieving recognition at regional level:

- Crawfordsburn, Finalist in the Best Kept Small Village category
- Groomsport, Runner Up in the Best Kept Large Village category
- Donaghadee, Runner Up in the Best Kept Small Town category
- Comber, Runner Up in the Best Kept Medium Town category
- Holywood, Finalist in the Best Kept Medium Town category
- Bangor, Finalist in the Best Kept City category

These results reflect the continued commitment of Council services, businesses, community organisations and residents to maintaining and enhancing local environments. Recognition across a range of settlement types, from villages to the city category, demonstrates the breadth of effort taking place across the Borough and highlights the value of effective partnership working in delivering positive environmental outcomes.

This achievement follows a period of notable success for the Borough in environmental award programmes, including Groomsport's success in the Ireland's Best Kept Town Awards earlier in 2026.

While no category winners were achieved this year, the number of locations recognised through Runner Up and Finalist status represents a positive outcome and provides a strong foundation on which to build future participation and success.

Next Steps
Council officers will continue to work collaboratively across services and with local community groups, town teams, businesses and volunteers to maintain and improve the quality of public spaces throughout the Borough.

Feedback from the judging process will be reviewed, where available, to identify opportunities for enhancement ahead of future competitions. Ongoing investment in environmental improvement, horticultural displays, biodiversity initiatives, cleanliness and community engagement activities will continue to support efforts to achieve higher placings in future Best Kept Awards programmes.

Summary
The 2026 Best Kept Awards results reflect the strong commitment across Ards and North Down to creating attractive, welcoming and sustainable places. The recognition achieved by Crawfordsburn, Groomsport, Donaghadee, Comber, Holywood and Bangor is testament to the collective efforts of Council services, local businesses, community organisations and residents.

The results demonstrate the effectiveness of partnership working across the Borough and provide a positive platform from which to further enhance towns, villages and public spaces in future years.

RECOMMENDATION

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

ITEM 9

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Response to Notice of Motion 657 Greyabbey Playing Fields
Attachments	n/a
File Reference (if applicable)	NOM 657
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: Progress to Business Case
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background
A Notice of Motion was agreed by Council in March 2025 and, following restructuring, was assigned to the Parks and Cemeteries Service in October 2025:

"That Council task officers to bring forward a report on options and potential funding opportunities to enhance and improve Council football pitches at Islandview Road, Greyabbey, to ensure future intermediate football standards for local sporting clubs and the community of Greyabbey."

This report has been prepared in response to the Notice of Motion and outlines the current position, potential enhancement opportunities, stakeholder feedback, funding considerations and proposed next steps.

Officers have reviewed the existing provision at Greyabbey Playing Fields and note that the main playing pitch currently meets the relevant Irish Football Association requirements for intermediate football. Consequently, there are no identified compliance concerns requiring immediate intervention. However, opportunities exist to enhance the site's capacity, resilience, accessibility and long-term sustainability.

Officers have engaged with local Elected Members, the principal football club users and other stakeholders to identify priorities for future improvement and to consider how the site can better meet current and future community and sporting needs.

Key Issues
Greyabbey Playing Fields is a Council-owned sporting and recreational asset serving Greyabbey and the surrounding community. The site currently accommodates a senior intermediate standard football pitch, training activities and informal recreational use and is regularly utilised by local clubs, community groups and residents.

While the main playing pitch currently meets the relevant Irish Football Association requirements for intermediate football, increasing participation in sport and recreation has resulted in greater demand for training facilities and highlighted limitations within the existing site layout.

The current training area performs an important role but can be difficult to utilise effectively during periods of adverse weather. This can result in increased use of the main playing pitch for training activities, leading to additional wear, reduced recovery periods and potential impacts on pitch quality and availability.

There is also limited pedestrian infrastructure within the site. Opportunities exist to improve accessibility and connectivity between the playing fields, adjoining play park and nearby residential areas, including Northern Ireland Housing Executive housing. Improved pathways would enhance accessibility, provide safer circulation routes, reduce wear on grassed areas and support greater community use of the facility.

Subject to future funding availability, opportunities have been identified to enhance the site's functionality, resilience and accessibility. These include improvements to the existing training area through measures such as levelling, top dressing, drainage enhancements and associated infrastructure works to improve year-round usability.

Such improvements would increase training capacity, reduce reliance on the main playing pitch, help protect playing quality and potentially increase bookable usage.

Further opportunities exist to develop accessible pathways throughout the site, improving links to surrounding residential areas and recreational amenities. These improvements would support greater inclusion, encourage walking and active travel, improve accessibility for users of all abilities and strengthen the role of the site as a wider community recreation resource.

The proposals would also contribute to wider health and wellbeing outcomes by encouraging physical activity, outdoor recreation and active lifestyles. The opportunities identified within this report align with the Council's Corporate Plan 2024–2028 and support the wider outcomes of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down through the promotion of social inclusion, community wellbeing and sustainable communities. The proposals also support the objectives of the Council's Leisure Strategy by seeking to increase participation in active leisure, improve accessibility and maximise the social, physical and mental health benefits associated with recreation and sport.

At present, no confirmed external funding programme has been identified specifically for the enhancement opportunities outlined within this report. However, officers will continue to monitor and actively explore funding opportunities that may support the delivery of future improvements at the Greyabbey Playing Field.

Potential funding sources that may be available, subject to programme eligibility, funding criteria and application windows, include:

- Sport Northern Ireland funding programmes
- Irish Football Association facilities and infrastructure funding opportunities
- Department for Communities funding initiatives; and
- Other regional, community infrastructure and sports development funding programmes that may become available.

Officers will seek to maximise opportunities to secure external financial assistance where available, with the aim of reducing the level of Council capital investment required and improving overall project affordability, should a project be approved.

Any future funding application would require the preparation of detailed proposals, technical assessments, indicative costings, business case development and confirmation that the project meets the specific eligibility requirements of the relevant funding programme. The availability of external funding may also influence the scope, phasing and timing of any future enhancement works.

Where appropriate, officers will consider a blended funding approach, combining Council capital investment with external grant assistance and other partnership funding opportunities to maximise value for money and deliver the greatest possible community benefit.

In considering any future investment at Greyabbey Playing Fields, it is important to recognise that a number of football clubs across Ards and North Down currently participate at intermediate level and utilise Council-owned facilities. Council must

therefore consider investment decisions within a borough-wide context, ensuring resources are allocated fairly, transparently and in accordance with identified need, strategic priorities and available funding.

While the opportunities identified within this report have the potential to deliver local benefits, they should be considered alongside other investment requirements and borough wide recommendations that may arise from the forthcoming sports facility review.

Next Steps
Officers have undertaken an initial consultation with the principal users of Greyabbey Playing Field including the local football club to establish priorities for future investment.

- 100% strongly supported the creation of a more usable training facility
- 96% strongly supported the development of accessible pathways
- 89% considered improved pedestrian links to surrounding residential areas to be very important

The highest-ranked priorities identified by the stakeholders were:

- Improved training facilities
- Accessible pathways
- Additional seating provision
- Enhanced pedestrian connectivity

Indicative costings have been considered for the identified improvements and can be brought through the approval process in due course giving due consideration to technical requirements, deliverability, phasing opportunities and future maintenance implications.

Summary
Greyabbey Playing Fields is an important community and sporting asset that continues to provide opportunities for football, recreation and physical activity. While the existing facility remains capable of supporting intermediate football, opportunities exist to enhance its capacity, resilience and accessibility. Investment in the training area could improve year-round usability, increase available capacity and reduce pressure on the main playing pitch. Accessibility improvements would strengthen links with surrounding residential areas and promote greater community use of the site. Subject to future funding availability and prioritisation through Council's capital planning processes, these improvements have the potential to deliver sporting, health and wellbeing benefits whilst maximising the value of an existing Council asset.

RECOMMENDATION

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

ITEM 10

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update 2026
Attachments	Appendix 1: Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update Report 2026
File Reference (if applicable)	PCA 146 / 88050
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background
The Parks and Cemeteries Service Engagement Programme supports the Council's ambition to create vibrant, resilient and inclusive communities by encouraging residents to actively participate in the stewardship, enhancement and enjoyment of parks, cemeteries, allotments and green spaces across the Borough.

During 2025–26, activity focused on community growing and food resilience; volunteering and community stewardship; biodiversity, climate action and environmental education; events, wellbeing and inclusion; and community capacity building through partnership working.

Significant achievements during the year included the launch of the PEACEPLUS-funded Your Place, Reimagining Our Space Community Growing Programme; continued investment of £37,052.60 in community greening projects supporting 30 community groups; engagement with 278 children and young people through environmental education activities; expansion of biodiversity and coastal engagement initiatives; delivery of major community events attracting more than 5,400 attendances; and retention of seven Green Flag Awards.

The programme contributes to delivery of the Big Plan for Ards and North Down, the Corporate Plan, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Tree and Woodland Strategy and the Let's Grow Together Community Growing Strategy. Increasingly, the programme is focused on delivering wider social value outcomes through skills development, volunteering, community capacity building, biodiversity enhancement and climate adaptation activity.

Key Issues
The Engagement Programme continues to demonstrate strong levels of public participation and community interest across community growing, biodiversity, volunteering and community events. The launch of the PEACEPLUS-funded *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* programme represents a significant opportunity to further develop community growing infrastructure, increase social cohesion and strengthen community capacity across the Borough.

Interest in community growing, food resilience and environmental action continues to increase. As demand grows, there is an opportunity to further explore access to land for community growing initiatives, strengthen support networks for growers and consider the development of a more coordinated approach to food resilience through partnership working and future Food Partnership arrangements.

Increasing participation in biodiversity, coastal conservation and citizen science activities highlights growing public interest in climate adaptation, nature recovery and environmental stewardship. Building on initiatives such as the Dune Action Project and partnerships with organisations including Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, opportunities exist to further develop coordinated approaches to biodiversity engagement, environmental monitoring and habitat enhancement.

Climate adaptation is becoming an increasingly important consideration across the programme. Parks, green spaces, trees, woodlands and natural habitats have a key role to play in supporting community resilience to environmental change, creating

opportunities to further develop nature-based solutions, community awareness initiatives and environmental stewardship programmes.

Volunteering and community stewardship remain key priorities. While community interest remains strong, volunteer-led groups can often be dependent on a small number of individuals undertaking leadership and governance responsibilities. To support future growth and ensure volunteering opportunities remain inclusive, accessible and aligned with current best practice, a Volunteer Policy Working Group has been established to review existing arrangements and develop a modern framework for volunteering across the Service.

The Service has also continued to experience strong demand for events and engagement activities. Building on the success of programmes such as Love Parks, Awake the Garden Week and the Bangor Chilli Festival, there is an opportunity to use these events more strategically to support wider objectives around wellbeing, food resilience, climate-ready communities, biodiversity awareness and community participation, while expanding delivery into new locations across the Borough.

A key learning from the year has been the value of partnership working. Collaboration across Council services and with external organisations has strengthened programme delivery, enhanced community outcomes and created opportunities for future joint initiatives. There is also scope to further embed social value principles within project delivery and better demonstrate the wider social, environmental and economic benefits arising from community action and environmental improvement projects.

Next Steps
The coming year will focus on building on the strong foundations established during 2025–26 and creating greater opportunities for residents to become actively involved in shaping and improving their local environment.

Delivery of the PEACEPLUS *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* programme will be a key priority, including the establishment of six new community gardens and community sheds and the continued development of cross-community participation opportunities.

Work will continue to support delivery of the *Let's Grow Together* Strategy through the expansion of community growing opportunities, exploration of access to land for growing projects and consideration of opportunities to support food resilience through stronger partnership working and potential development of a Borough-wide Food Partnership.

Progression of the Volunteer Policy review will support the development of a modern, inclusive and accessible framework for volunteering, helping to create clearer pathways into community stewardship, Friends Groups and environmental action.

Biodiversity engagement, citizen science programmes and coastal conservation activities will continue to develop, with greater emphasis on nature-based solutions, climate resilience, biodiversity monitoring and habitat restoration. This work will build on the success of existing initiatives and growing public interest in environmental action.

The Service will continue to strengthen partnerships with schools, community organisations, environmental charities, statutory agencies and Council teams to maximise impact and deliver greater social value. Community events and engagement programmes will continue to support wellbeing, inclusion, biodiversity awareness, food resilience and environmental stewardship, while exploring opportunities to expand activity into new locations across both Ards and North Down and contribute to wider tourism and economic development objectives.

Alongside programme delivery, work will progress to explore how social value can be measured and embedded more effectively across projects and partnerships, ensuring that the wider social, environmental and economic outcomes generated through engagement activity are better understood and evidenced. Delivery of actions supporting the Tree and Woodland Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plan and wider environmental objectives will also remain a priority.

Summary
The Parks and Cemeteries Service Engagement Programme continues to evolve from a programme of activities to a programme of community capacity building, environmental stewardship and place-based engagement.

During 2025–26, the programme supported communities, schools, volunteers and partner organisations to become more actively involved in shaping, improving and caring for local parks, green spaces and natural environments. Through community growing, biodiversity engagement, volunteering, environmental education and public events, the programme has helped strengthen connections between people and place while supporting wider outcomes relating to health and wellbeing, community resilience, environmental sustainability and active citizenship.

The year has also seen important progress in building the foundations for future delivery. The launch of the PEACEPLUS-funded *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* programme, growing collaboration with environmental and community partners, increasing interest in biodiversity and climate action, and the ongoing development of volunteering and community stewardship initiatives have created new opportunities for communities to take an active role in local environmental improvement.

A key theme emerging from the year is the increasing importance of partnership working. Collaboration across Council services, schools, community organisations, environmental charities and statutory agencies has strengthened delivery, increased participation and helped maximise the social value generated through engagement activity.

Through continued investment in community growing, volunteering, biodiversity action, climate adaptation and community engagement, the programme will support the development of healthier communities, more resilient natural environments and stronger community stewardship across Ards and North Down.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Parks and Cemeteries Engagement Update Report 2026

1.0 Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Parks and Cemeteries Service Engagement Programme during 2025–26 and highlights its contribution to community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, biodiversity enhancement and active citizenship across Ards and North Down.

During the reporting period, the Service continued to expand opportunities for residents to engage with parks, allotments, cemeteries and green spaces through community growing, volunteering, biodiversity education, environmental stewardship and inclusive events. Working in partnership with schools, community organisations, environmental charities, statutory agencies, volunteers and local residents, the programme supported stronger, healthier and more resilient communities while encouraging greater participation in the stewardship of local green spaces.

Significant achievements during the year included the launch of the PEACEPLUS-funded *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* Community Growing Programme, the development of biodiversity and coastal engagement initiatives focused on dune conservation and climate adaptation, continued investment in community greening projects, successful delivery of flagship engagement events, expansion of environmental education opportunities and the retention of seven Green Flag Awards.

During 2025–26, the programme attracted more than 5,400 attendances through flagship events and community activities, engaged at least 278 children and young people through environmental education programmes, invested £37,052.60 in community greening projects and supported 30 community groups through grant funding programmes.

Delivery throughout the year focused on five key themes:

- Community Growing and Food Resilience
- Volunteering, Community Participation and Stewardship
- Biodiversity, Climate Action and Environmental Education
- Events, Wellbeing and Inclusion
- Community Capacity Building and Partnership Development

A significant development during the reporting period was the launch of the *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* PEACEPLUS Community Growing Programme,

which will support the establishment of six new community gardens and community sheds while creating opportunities for cross-community participation, skills development and social cohesion through shared environmental activities.

2.0 Context

The Parks and Cemeteries Service Engagement Programme supports the Council's ambition to create vibrant, resilient and inclusive communities by encouraging residents to actively participate in the stewardship, enhancement and enjoyment of parks, cemeteries, allotments and green spaces across the Borough.

The programme adopts a community development approach, working collaboratively with volunteers, Friends Groups, schools, community organisations, statutory agencies and environmental partners to deliver opportunities that improve wellbeing, strengthen community cohesion, enhance biodiversity and encourage active citizenship. Activities are designed to reduce barriers to participation, support lifelong learning and create opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to become involved in their local environment.

2.1 Wider Strategies

The programme contributes directly to the delivery of a number of corporate and regional priorities, including:

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (2017–2032)

The programme contributes across all five strategic outcomes by:

- Supporting lifelong learning through environmental education and skills development.
- Improving health and wellbeing through volunteering, outdoor recreation and community participation.
- Strengthening safe, confident and connected communities through volunteering and Friends Groups.
- Supporting a prosperous economy through skills development, tourism-related events and community capacity building.
- Enhancing and protecting the natural environment through biodiversity projects, community growing and environmental stewardship.

Corporate Plan 2024–2028

The programme contributes to the delivery of a sustainable, thriving and inclusive Borough by creating opportunities for residents to engage with parks and green spaces, participate in decision-making and become actively involved in community-led initiatives.

Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan

Activities support key service objectives relating to volunteering, community engagement, biodiversity enhancement, environmental education, community growing, Green Flag management and the development of strong partnerships that improve local parks and open spaces.

Public Health Agency Five Steps to Wellbeing

The programme continues to embed the Five Steps to Wellbeing across activity delivery:

- Connect through volunteering, events and community projects.
- Be Active through practical outdoor activities and environmental volunteering.
- Take Notice through nature-based learning and biodiversity engagement.
- Keep Learning through workshops, citizen science and skills development.
- Give through volunteering and stewardship opportunities.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Many programme activities directly support the Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan through habitat enhancement, species monitoring, citizen science, pollinator initiatives, environmental education and public engagement projects that encourage residents to take positive action for nature.

Let's Grow Together Community Growing Strategy

The programme supports the delivery of the Council's *Let's Grow Together* Community Growing Strategy through the development of community growing opportunities, support for allotments, schools growing programmes and community-led food-growing initiatives. Activities contribute to increased food resilience, skills development, environmental awareness and community participation while helping to expand access to growing opportunities across the Borough.

Tree and Woodland Strategy

The programme supports the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy through environmental education, community engagement, tree-focused learning opportunities, biodiversity projects and volunteer activities that increase awareness and appreciation of the Borough's trees, woodlands and natural habitats. Activities encourage residents to connect with woodland environments while supporting broader objectives around climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement and community stewardship.

2.2 Community Development and Social Inclusion

Through targeted engagement with schools, community groups, young people, volunteers and under-represented communities, the programme supports social inclusion, community cohesion and active citizenship. Increasingly, projects are designed not only to improve green spaces but also to strengthen community capacity, develop skills and create opportunities for meaningful participation in civic life.

The programme increasingly focuses on creating pathways from participation to action, supporting residents to progress from attending events and activities into volunteering, community growing, citizen science, Friends Groups and wider environmental stewardship initiatives. Through this approach, parks and green spaces are not only valued as recreational assets, but also as places where communities can connect, learn, contribute and help shape the future of their local environment.

3.0 Community Growing, Food Resilience and PEACEPLUS

Community growing continues to play an important role in strengthening community resilience, improving wellbeing and promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles across the Borough. During 2025–26, the Service continued to implement the recommendations arising from the Let's Grow Together Strategy Review while supporting allotments, community gardens and food-growing projects.

PEACEPLUS

A significant achievement during the year was the launch of the Your Place, Reimagining Our Space PEACEPLUS Community Growing Programme. Developed through extensive consultation and co-design, the programme supports community



gardens and Men's, Hen's and Community Sheds across the Borough and aims to establish six new community gardens and community sheds.

The programme formally launched at Bangor Castle in June 2026 and attracted approximately 60 registered participants. By September 2026, the programme had grown to 84 registered participants and delivered 38 hours of cross-community engagement through workshops, environmental activities, networking sessions and learning opportunities.

Key activities delivered included:

- Launch and co-design event at Bangor Castle.
- Portavogie community engagement event attended by 28 participants.
- Bat Walk and Talk event attended by 15 participants.
- Cross-border study visit to Dundalk Inclusive Garden involving 20 participants.
- Build, Grow, Share event at Bangor Castle Walled Garden attended by 33 participants.
- Engagement with groups in local areas to develop community growing spaces and community sheds in Ards and North Down.



Mayor Cllr Craig Blaney with Friends of Linear Park, Miriam Turley, Community Garden Support, and

YouTuber and Community Representative, Amy Kelly.

Schools Growing Club



The Schools Growing Club Programme continued to develop and engaged five schools: Bloomfield Primary School, Lakewood School, Portavogie Primary School, Castle Gardens Primary School and Sullivan Upper School alongside Sullivan Prep. A total of 78 children and young people participated through a programme of food-growing, biodiversity and sustainability activities delivered over four visits to each school. Additional partnership working with the Waste and Cleansing Team introduced composting and waste reduction themes into programme delivery.

Community Impact

Community growing projects continue to provide opportunities for residents to improve wellbeing, build confidence, learn new skills and strengthen local connections. Participants involved in PEACEPLUS activities have been able to connect with others through shared environmental interests while contributing to the development of future community projects and spaces.

The programme also contributes to food resilience, environmental sustainability and biodiversity enhancement, while encouraging stronger relationships between communities and local green spaces.

Looking Ahead

Future priorities include establishing six community gardens and community sheds through the PEACEPLUS programme, engaging 200 participants in sustained project activity and developing a stronger network of community growing organisations across the Borough.

The Service will continue to build the capacity of community groups, support community-led initiatives and explore opportunities to expand community growing provision where there is demonstrated need and long-term sustainability. This will include ongoing work to improve access to land for community food-growing projects, consideration of emerging Right to Grow principles and the exploration of opportunities for a Borough-wide Food Partnership to strengthen collaboration between community groups, public bodies, educational organisations and other stakeholders involved in food growing, food resilience and sustainable food systems.

By strengthening community growing infrastructure, partnerships and participation, the Service aims to increase access to growing opportunities, improve food resilience, support biodiversity and contribute to healthier, more connected and environmentally sustainable communities.

4.0 Community Stewardship, Volunteering and Friends Groups

Volunteering and community stewardship remain central to the Engagement Programme and continue to provide opportunities for local residents to play an active role in the care and enhancement of parks and green spaces.

During 2025–26, the Service began work to review and modernise its approach to volunteering. Officers engaged with Volunteer Now, NI wide local authority colleagues and other partner organisations to explore best practice in volunteer management, governance and programme delivery. In partnership with the Community Development Team, a Volunteer Policy Working Group has now been established to guide the review and development of a revised Volunteer Policy and associated procedures.

This work has identified a significant opportunity to strengthen the Council's approach to volunteering by creating a framework that is inclusive, accessible and responsive to current volunteering trends, while ensuring compliance with legislation, safeguarding requirements and best practice standards. The review will provide a foundation for expanding volunteering opportunities across parks and green spaces, supporting community stewardship initiatives and developing new volunteering pathways for residents of all ages and backgrounds.

The Service continued to support existing Friends Groups while encouraging the development of new groups across the Borough.

Key achievements included:

- Continued support for Friends of Linear Park, Hunts Park, Bangor Castle Walled Garden and Bryansburn Allotments.
- Re-engagement and development of Friends of Ballymenoch Park.
- Community engagement activities relating to potential groups within Castle Park, Cairn Wood and Kiltonga Nature Reserve.



Friends of Ballymenoch Park provides a particularly positive example of community stewardship. Following public information sessions and site visits in May and June 2026, volunteers developed a regular programme of improvement works throughout August and September. Volunteers attended weekly sessions focusing on path maintenance, weed removal and habitat improvement and are now exploring future projects including community orchard planting and biodiversity enhancement.

Friends of Linear Park also continued to expand its activity through a walkability audit, orchard restoration work and partnership projects involving Kilmaine Primary School and Orchardville.

During Invasive Species Week, approximately 50 volunteers took part in practical conservation activities across Castle Park and Ward Park, helping tackle invasive species and improve woodland habitats.

A key element of the Service's support for community stewardship has been the development and promotion of the Parks Development Tool Library. Throughout the year, community groups and volunteers accessed equipment to deliver practical conservation, habitat management, community growing and environmental improvement projects across the Borough. This approach has enabled communities to lead local action, build skills and confidence, and take greater ownership of parks and open spaces within their area.

Community Impact

Volunteering and Friends Groups continue to play an important role in strengthening community ownership of parks and green spaces across the Borough. Through practical conservation activities, environmental improvements, community gardening

and local action projects, residents are actively contributing to the enhancement of their local environment while developing skills, confidence and social connections.

The growth of community stewardship initiatives has helped foster a stronger sense of belonging and civic pride, while creating opportunities for residents to work alongside Council officers and partner organisations in shaping and improving local parks and open spaces. Community-led action continues to support biodiversity, improve site quality and strengthen relationships between local communities and their green spaces.

Looking Ahead

While community interest remains strong, the long-term sustainability of volunteer-led groups is often dependent on a small number of individuals taking on leadership and governance responsibilities. There is also an opportunity to increase participation from younger volunteers and create clearer pathways for people to become involved in environmental stewardship, community action and volunteering activities. To support future growth, a key priority for the coming year will be progressing the review of the Council's Volunteer Policy and associated procedures.

Working alongside the Community Development Team, a Volunteer Policy Working Group has been established and engagement has commenced with Volunteer Now, other local authorities and partner organisations to identify best practice and future opportunities. This work will focus on developing a modern, inclusive and accessible volunteering framework that is aligned with current legislation and good practice, while creating clear pathways for participation across a wider range of volunteering opportunities.

The review will support the continued development of community stewardship projects, specialist volunteering opportunities and volunteer-led initiatives, ensuring residents are well supported to play an active role in caring for and enhancing local parks and green spaces across the Borough. In parallel, opportunities to engage younger volunteers will be explored through projects such as the PEACEPLUS-funded Your Place, Reimagining Our Space programme, which incorporates skills development, environmental learning and community participation activities designed to encourage involvement from a broader range of age groups and backgrounds.

5.0 Biodiversity, Climate Action and Environmental Education

Supporting delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan remained a major focus throughout 2025–26.

Activity throughout the year included a growing programme of coastal biodiversity, climate adaptation and community engagement initiatives delivered through the Dune Action Programme.

In October 2025, the Council hosted a Sand Dunes Conference in Portavogie attended by 30 participants. The event brought together residents, elected members and environmental partners including NIEA, DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division, Buglife, Strangford and Lecale Partnership, True Harvest Seeds, Wild Ireland and Newry Mourne and Down District Council. The conference explored dune conservation, habitat restoration, coastal monitoring and opportunities for community involvement.

This work was supported by further practical engagement through a Mini BioBlitz and Marram Grass Planting Event at Portavogie Beach attended by 16 participants. The event combined citizen science with practical habitat restoration and enabled participants to learn about coastal biodiversity while contributing directly to dune restoration.

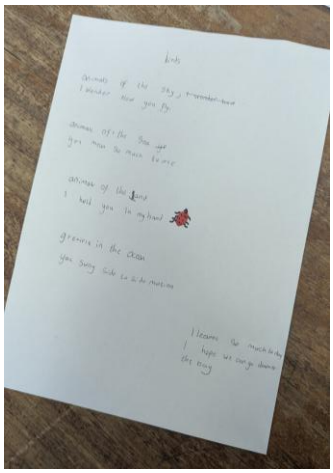


Volunteers at Portavogie Beach, with Ecologist David Thompson.

The Service also delivered Cloughey Beach BioBlitz , in June 2026, attended by 50 participants. Partner organisations including Ulster Wildlife, Marine Conservation Society, The Conservation Volunteers and Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership supported activities focused on wildlife surveying, species identification and citizen science.

Capacity building and professional development formed an important element of the programme during the year. The Parks Development Team coordinated and hosted

a Dune Action Training Day for local authorities and environmental organisations, bringing together representatives from local government, academia, environmental NGOs and conservation bodies to explore approaches to coastal adaptation, dune restoration and community engagement. The team also participated in a range of external learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities, including the Dune Action Conference, training and networking events delivered by Dunes IE, Accelerating Change Together, the University of Galway and partner organisations working within coastal conservation and climate adaptation.



These activities strengthened organisational knowledge and capacity in relation to dune systems, Nature-based Solutions, habitat restoration and community engagement, while developing relationships with key partners across local government, academia and the environmental sector. The learning and partnerships established through this work will support the future development of coastal resilience projects, biodiversity initiatives and community-led conservation activities across the Borough.

Educational engagement also expanded significantly throughout the year.

Key achievements included:

- Over 100 pupils engaged through biodiversity school visits delivered with Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership.
- 40 pupils participating in Shared Education workshops on dune conservation and coastal protection.
- 60 children participating in nest box and bird feeder building workshops.
- Operational staff biodiversity and rewilding training delivered by Buglife and True Harvest Seeds.





Additional public biodiversity activities included:

- Family Bug Hunt, Ballymenoch Park (16 participants).
- Bug Detectives, Ward Park (60 participants).
- Big Seaweed Search, Donaghadee (24 participants).
- Nature Writing Workshop, Groomsport (22 participants).
- Big Butterfly Watch, Ballywalter (7 participants).
- Kiltonga Nature Volunteers, Kiltonga Nature Reserve (5 participants).

Community Impact

Biodiversity engagement has continued to increase awareness of local wildlife, coastal habitats, climate adaptation and environmental stewardship across the Borough. Through practical conservation activities, citizen science programmes, environmental education and community engagement, participants have developed a stronger understanding of biodiversity and the role local communities can play in protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

The programme has also strengthened partnership working across the environmental sector, bringing together local communities, schools, government agencies, environmental organisations and academic institutions to support habitat restoration, biodiversity monitoring and climate adaptation initiatives. In particular, the development of a stronger working relationship with Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership has enabled a greater level of biodiversity engagement within schools and communities, while creating opportunities for more collaborative delivery of citizen science, coastal education and conservation projects across Ards and North Down.

Looking Ahead

The growing level of interest in biodiversity, coastal conservation and climate adaptation presents significant opportunities for future development. A key priority will be the continued development of a coordinated Coastal Communities and Dune Action Programme, building on the strong foundations established through the Dune Action Project, community restoration activities, citizen science initiatives and partnership working

The recruitment of a dedicated Sand Dunes Placement Student took place in September 2026, and significantly strengthens the Council's capacity to deliver biodiversity, coastal conservation and community engagement initiatives. These additional resources will support the development of habitat restoration projects, citizen science programmes, environmental education activities and community stewardship opportunities across the Borough.

Future work will focus on expanding citizen science opportunities, strengthening biodiversity monitoring, supporting habitat restoration projects and developing long-term partnerships that increase community involvement in biodiversity action and coastal resilience. Building on the successful partnership established with Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, there will be opportunities to develop a more coordinated approach to biodiversity engagement across Ards and North Down, including collaborative projects focused on citizen science, environmental education, species monitoring and community participation in nature recovery initiatives.

6.0 Events, Wellbeing and Community Capacity Building

The Service delivered a diverse programme of events and engagement activities throughout 2025–26, using parks and green spaces as platforms for community connection, wellbeing, environmental education and learning. Through collaboration with community organisations, schools, environmental partners, volunteers and Council services, activities were designed to encourage participation from a wide range of audiences while supporting the Council’s objectives around social inclusion, active citizenship, health and wellbeing, and environmental stewardship.

Awake the Garden Week

Awake the Garden Week was delivered in partnership with the Good Relations Team and attracted 752 direct participants through a diverse programme of nature-based, educational and cultural events at Bangor Castle Walled Garden. The programme celebrated diversity, encouraged participation and demonstrated the role of parks and gardens as welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.

The programme included:

- Women and Girls Night – *Our Garden Stories*, delivered in partnership with JoinHer Network, combining storytelling, nature connection, community art and Tai Chi (47 participants).
- Community screening of *Grow Your Own* (75 participants).
- Young Audiences Supporting Foodbanks film screening delivered in partnership with Cinemagic and Bangor Foodbank, engaging 130 pupils from primary, secondary and SEN schools.
- Bangor Horticultural Society Daffodil and Flower Arranging Competitions (100 participants).
- Awake the Garden Family Nature and Horticulture Day, featuring practical demonstrations, nature-based learning, community stalls and family-focused activities (300 participants).

The programme generated more than 2,300 visits to Bangor Castle Walled Garden during the week and contributed to increased use of the site beyond the event programme, with visitor monitoring recording approximately 520 additional visits in the following week.

Awake the Garden Week demonstrated the value of partnership working and highlighted how parks and gardens can support wellbeing, community cohesion, cultural expression, intergenerational learning and social inclusion.







Love Parks Programme

The Love Parks Programme was refreshed during 2026, moving from a traditional event-based approach to a broader season of engagement activities designed to encourage residents to connect with nature, develop new skills and explore local parks and green spaces.

The programme culminated in a Love Parks Celebration Day at Bangor Castle and Walled Garden which attracted approximately 1,500 attendees. The event brought together activities from across the Parks Development service, including cycling, volunteering, biodiversity engagement, environmental education, nature play, horticulture, wellbeing activities and outdoor recreation.



Working in partnership with community organisations and environmental groups, the wider programme also included specialist biodiversity and nature-connection activities such as Family Bug Hunts, Bug Detectives, the Big Seaweed Search, Butterfly Watch, volunteer action days, nature writing workshops and practical conservation activities, engaging a further 134 participants.

The programme also provided an opportunity to showcase projects and initiatives delivered across the service, encouraging residents to become more involved in parks, biodiversity, community growing and volunteering opportunities.

Partnership work with North Down Museum led to the development of a new Kids Tree Tour, introducing children and families to the Borough's trees, biodiversity and local heritage. The activity was piloted through the Museum's summer programme before being incorporated into Love Parks and will provide a foundation for future educational activities at other sites across the Borough.

Chilli Festival 2026

The Chilli Festival continued to develop as a flagship event for the Borough, attracting 3,213 visitors over the course of the weekend. The festival blended food growing, community participation, local enterprise and environmental engagement and provided opportunities to promote sustainable food growing, community gardening and local produce to a wide audience.

In addition to attracting visitors from across the Borough and beyond, the festival created opportunities for community groups, growers, local businesses and environmental organisations to engage with the public, share knowledge and showcase their work. The event also supported wider objectives around food resilience, community growing and community capacity building.

Community Impact

Collectively, the events programme attracted more than 5,400 attendances through flagship events and community activities during the reporting period. By combining environmental education, wellbeing, cultural activity and practical participation, these events encouraged residents to connect with nature, develop new skills and become more involved in their local communities.

The programme also strengthened relationships with a wide range of partners, including schools, community organisations, environmental charities, cultural organisations, community groups and volunteer organisations, helping to build community capacity and increase participation in parks and green spaces across the Borough.

A key learning from the year has been the value of partnership working, both across Council services and with external organisations. Collaboration with teams including Good Relations, North Down Museum, Waste and Cleansing, alongside a wide range of community and environmental partners, has broadened the range of opportunities available to residents while making more effective use of resources, expertise and funding opportunities.

Importantly, events increasingly act as a gateway into wider community engagement initiatives, creating opportunities for residents to progress into volunteering, citizen science activities, community growing programmes, Friends Groups, PEACEPLUS activities and environmental stewardship projects. This approach helps move participation beyond one-off attendance and supports longer-term community involvement and ownership of local green spaces.

Looking Ahead

Building on the success of Awake the Garden Week, Love Parks and the Chilli Festival, future programmes will continue to position parks and green spaces as places for wellbeing, learning, environmental action and community connection.

As Parks flagship engagement events continue to mature, there will be opportunities to build on established successes while expanding activities into new locations and communities across the Borough. Future event programmes will seek to ensure that residents across both Ards and North Down can benefit from accessible opportunities to connect with nature, participate in community life and become involved in local environmental action.

A particular focus will be placed on using events and engagement activities to support wider programme objectives relating to climate-ready communities, food resilience, biodiversity recovery, wellbeing and social inclusion. Events will continue to act as a gateway into longer-term involvement, encouraging residents to progress from participation into volunteering, citizen science, community growing and environmental stewardship opportunities.

The Service will also continue to strengthen partnership working across Council departments and with external organisations, building on successful collaborations with schools, community organisations, environmental partners, cultural

organisations and local businesses. In addition to delivering positive social and environmental outcomes, future event programmes will seek to support tourism, increase footfall and contribute to the vibrancy and economic sustainability of villages, towns and city across the Borough.

7.0 In Bloom, Environmental Awards and Green Flag Success

Supporting community pride, environmental quality and place-making continued to be an important element of the Engagement Programme during 2025–26. Through grant funding, environmental awards and partnership working, the Service continued to encourage communities to take an active role in improving local environments, enhancing biodiversity and creating attractive, welcoming places for residents and visitors.

A total of £37,052.60 was invested through the In Bloom Grant Programme, supporting 30 community groups to deliver local greening, planting, biodiversity and environmental improvement projects across the Borough. The programme continues to provide communities with practical support to improve local spaces, promote civic pride and encourage wider participation in environmental action.

The annual In Bloom Awards ceremony, attended by 95 participants, provided an opportunity to celebrate the commitment, creativity and dedication of local residents, community groups, schools and businesses who continue to enhance towns and villages across the Borough. The event also highlighted the increasing focus on sustainable planting, biodiversity and food-growing initiatives within community projects.

The Borough continued to achieve significant success through regional and national award programmes, demonstrating the strength of both community involvement and Council investment in environmental quality.

Achievements included:

Ulster in Bloom 2025

- Donaghadee achieving 1st Place in the Ulster in Bloom Town Category.
- Donaghadee receiving a Gold Award in Britain in Bloom.
- Crawfordsburn achieving 2nd Place in the Ulster in Bloom Village Category.

Best Kept Awards 2025

- Groomsport winning Best Kept Large Village.

- Groomsport being named Ireland's Best Kept Small Town.
- Donaghadee reaching the final of the Ireland's Best Kept Town Competition.

The Borough also successfully retained seven Green Flag Awards for Ballymenoch Park, Castle Park and Walled Garden, Cairn Wood, Clandeboye Cemetery, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Linear Park and Londonderry Park. These awards recognise the quality, accessibility, environmental standards and management of some of the Borough's most important green spaces.

The Green Flag Task and Finish Group continued to play an important role in supporting continuous improvement across sites. Through regular meetings, site visits, mock assessments and staff development opportunities, the group has helped strengthen understanding of Green Flag standards while encouraging greater collaboration between operational teams and support services. Investment in biodiversity and rewilding training, delivered in partnership with Buglife and True Harvest Seeds, has further supported site improvements and strengthened environmental management practices.



Community Impact

Environmental awards and community greening initiatives continue to strengthen civic pride, encourage community stewardship and contribute to the overall attractiveness of towns, villages, city and parks across the Borough. Through grant

programmes, recognition schemes and environmental improvement initiatives, local communities are actively contributing to the creation of cleaner, greener and more biodiverse places.

The continued success of Bloom, Best Kept and Green Flag programmes demonstrates the value of partnership working between communities, volunteers and Council services. These initiatives not only enhance the physical environment but also contribute to tourism, local identity, wellbeing and community resilience.

Looking Ahead

The Service will continue to support community greening projects, strengthen participation in Bloom and Best Kept initiatives and build upon the success of the Borough's Green Flag sites.

Future priorities include encouraging participation from new communities, supporting projects that promote biodiversity, climate resilience and sustainable planting, and strengthening links between environmental awards, community stewardship and local environmental action. The Service will also continue to use the Green Flag process as a tool for continuous improvement, helping ensure that parks and green spaces remain welcoming, accessible, environmentally sustainable and valued community assets.

8.0 Conclusion

The 2025–26 reporting period has demonstrated the growing role that parks, green spaces and the natural environment can play in supporting community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, learning, inclusion and active citizenship across the Borough.

While many activities delivered during the year were diverse in nature, a consistent theme has been the creation of opportunities for residents to move from participation to action. Whether through community growing, volunteering, biodiversity projects, environmental education, citizen science, Friends Groups or major public events, increasing numbers of residents are becoming actively involved in shaping and enhancing the places where they live.

The year has also seen significant progress in building the foundations for longer-term community and environmental outcomes. The launch of the PEACEPLUS-funded *Your Place, Reimagining Our Space* programme, the development of stronger partnerships with organisations such as Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, Buglife and Dunes IE, continued investment in community greening projects, and growing interest in biodiversity and coastal conservation all

demonstrate an increasing appetite for community-led environmental action across the Borough.

Importantly, the programme has increasingly focused on capacity building rather than activity delivery alone. Through investment in communities, development of partnerships, support for volunteers and the creation of opportunities for learning and participation, the Service is helping to build the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to support healthier communities, stronger environmental stewardship and more resilient green spaces.

Looking ahead, there is a significant opportunity to build upon this momentum. The PEACEPLUS programme, emerging biodiversity and coastal engagement initiatives, strengthening citizen science programmes and the continued development of volunteering and community stewardship opportunities will help support climate-ready communities, food resilience, biodiversity recovery and community wellbeing.

The continued success of this work will depend upon strong partnership working, both across Council services and with external organisations, communities and volunteers. By working collaboratively and investing in people as well as places, the Service is helping to create a Borough where parks and green spaces are not only valued community assets, but are increasingly recognised as catalysts for environmental action, community resilience and long-term social wellbeing.

ITEM 11

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Play and Recreation Annual Update
Attachments	Appendix 1: Calendar of Events 2025/2026
File Reference (if applicable)	CW4 / 88050
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 6. Opportunities for people to be active and healthy If multiple:

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the delivery of the Play and Recreation Programme during 2025/26 and to outline planned next steps.

Over the past twelve months, the Service has continued to develop a wide-ranging programme of initiatives designed to support the delivery of the Council's Play and Recreation Strategies. Following the appointment of a Development Officer (Play and Recreation) in July 2024, significant progress has been made in promoting inclusive play opportunities, increasing community engagement, and delivering innovative approaches to play provision across the Borough. The role was established with the aim of:

- Effectively implementing the Play Strategy
- Promoting diverse, non-fixed approaches to play provision across the Borough
- Creating Play Champions and delivering play training across the Borough
- Engaging with the public, children and young people to get their input on play in the Borough
- Delivering various types of play that are inclusive and for all ages
- Keeping up to date and responding to emerging themes and best practice in play.

A key element of the Development Officer's role is the implementation of the Alternative Play element of the Play Strategy, incorporating more opportunities for play into the lives of children and young people. During 2025/26, a range of approaches to play provision, extending beyond traditional equipped play areas, were successfully delivered across the Borough.

A variety of activities were integrated into the wider recreation programme, ensuring opportunities for active, creative, social and inclusive play. Careful consideration was given to the play value of each initiative to maximise opportunities for children and young people to engage in different forms of play. Inclusive play has become an increasingly important aspect of service delivery and accessibility and inclusion have been embedded throughout the programme.

The delivery of the Play and Recreation Programme directly contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028, the Play Strategy, the Big Plan Citizen Engagement Programme, and the Council's obligations under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

A suite of events, detailed in Appendix 1, aligns closely with the overarching goals outlined within Ards and North Down Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Key Issues

The Play Strategy places a strong emphasis on engagement and consultation with children and young people, recognising their right to be heard under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms every child's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them.

The Play Strategy and subsequent play activities help the Council meet its obligations under the Children's Services Co-operation Act by:

- Promoting the wellbeing of children and young people through coordinated, cross-sectoral planning
- Ensuring that play is recognised as a right and a developmental necessity, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Using innovative, age-appropriate methods to gather children's views on the design and themes of new play parks. This approach ensures that play spaces are relevant, engaging and inclusive, while enabling children to develop a sense of ownership and pride in their local environment

This participatory model also supports the Big Plan Citizen Engagement workstream and reinforces the Council's commitment to co-designing public services alongside local communities.

Engaging children in decision-making empowers them by fostering a sense of ownership, confidence and civic responsibility. It also leads to better outcomes, as children are experts in their own play and their insights help create more engaging, inclusive and relevant spaces. In addition, consultation supports equity and inclusion by ensuring that the views of all children, including those with disabilities and those from underrepresented communities, are heard and valued.

As part of the Play Strategy, Council conducted a series of consultation exercises throughout 2025/26 across Portaferry (Older Children Provision), Bangor (Sportsplex and Skipperstone), Ballyhalbert, Millisle, Abbots Estate/Bowtown (Newtownards) and Tullymalley. To ensure meaningful engagement, officers partnered with local primary schools, secondary schools and youth organisations situated close to the proposed play park refurbishment sites.

During these sessions, children actively shaped design proposals by selecting the overall theme for their local park and identifying preferred pieces of equipment. Participants also shared their broader views on play, helping to inform future planning and investment decisions. The findings demonstrated that young people enjoy a wide variety of play experiences, including play parks, physical play, constructive play, competitive play, sensory play, nature play and technology-based play. Community engagement remains a key objective of the Play Strategy, ensuring that local people continue to recognise the importance of play as a valuable community asset.

The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Moss Road, Ballygowan officially opened in April 2026, with a launch event taking place in July. Local teenagers participated in Parkour and gymnastics activities as part of the opening celebrations. Since opening, the facility has been used regularly by young people for informal recreation and social interaction. Together with the new walking trail, the facility has brought increased activity and vibrancy to the local community.

Construction of the MUGA at Sea Park, Holywood has commenced, while the MUGA at Demesne View, Portaferry is scheduled for completion before the end of March 2027. During spring and summer 2025/26, Council delivered a number of BMX, scooter and skateboard taster sessions at MUGAs, skate parks and pump tracks

across the Borough, encouraging participation in alternative recreational activities among older children and young people.

Council has also delivered a series of successful events and promotional initiatives and remains committed to continuing this programme. These initiatives enhance the profile of play, promote alternative play opportunities, provide educational experiences and encourage community participation. All events were designed with accessibility and inclusion at the forefront and catered for a broad range of age groups, including both younger children and teenagers. Activities were delivered at locations throughout the Borough to maximise accessibility and participation. A full list of 2025/26 events can be found in Appendix 1.

Next Steps

Building on this year's successes, Council will continue to embed the Five Steps to Wellbeing throughout all aspects of service delivery while exploring new partnerships and innovative approaches to promote health, wellbeing and community resilience.

The events delivered to date demonstrate strong alignment with the Council's strategic objectives and have successfully engaged diverse audiences, promoted sustainability and strengthened community connections. These initiatives will continue to underpin the Council's commitment to creating a sustainable and thriving Borough.

The 2025/26 programme demonstrated high levels of community engagement across a broad range of outdoor recreation, biodiversity, educational and play-focused activities. Officers will continue to deliver a year-round programme of play, urban sports, cycling, biodiversity and wellbeing events across the Borough.

In 2026, officers joined the Sport NI Physical Literacy Forum. This engagement provides an additional platform to promote play and physical literacy while supporting the development of lifelong healthy habits and encouraging participation in sport and physical activity.

Physical literacy forms the foundation for active living. It encompasses the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding required to value and take responsibility for participation in physical activity throughout life. Beyond physical skills, it promotes positive attitudes towards movement and activity, supporting lifelong participation and improved health outcomes.

By integrating physical literacy across a range of settings, Council can create engaging opportunities for children and adults to develop movement skills through play. Play provides a natural and enjoyable means of promoting exploration, creativity and social interaction. Developing physical literacy from an early age helps individuals build confidence and motivation to remain active throughout adulthood, leading to healthier lifestyles and improved wellbeing.

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

this momentum through new facilities, seasonal programmes and innovative play opportunities.

These initiatives demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible parks, play facilities and open spaces that support health, wellbeing and community development.

Summary

The Play and Recreation Programme has made a significant contribution to the delivery of both the Council's Corporate Plan and the Parks and Cemeteries Service Plan during 2025/26.

Through a comprehensive programme of events and initiatives, including story trails, urban sports activities, biodiversity projects and wellbeing programmes, the service has successfully promoted active lifestyles, environmental awareness, community participation and the importance of play.

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

The programme continues to demonstrate the Council's commitment to creating a sustainable, vibrant and inclusive Borough. Through continued investment, partnership working and innovative programming, Play and Recreation will remain an important contributor to community wellbeing, resilience and the effective use of the Borough's parks, open spaces and recreational assets.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Appendix 1 Calendar of Events Sept 2025 – Sept 2026

Month	Event Info	Location
September 2025		
17	Teens on wheels	Ards Blair Mayne
19	Sensory Garden Press Release	Ward Park
20	Sensory Garden visit with EHNI	Ward Park
26	SERC Student- Greenway workshop	New bridge, Ark Farm
27	Park Pedal	Bangor Ward Park
Oct 2025		
4	Shorelife Festival/ Play in the Parks Monthly	Castle Espie/ Mount Stewart
25 Oct – 2 Nov (8 days)	Halloween Event- Haunted Harvest Trail	Bangor Walled Garden
November 2025		
15	Tale Trails launch	Cairnwood
December 2025		
6 to 21	Jingle Bell Trail 10-3pm Daily	Bangor Walled Garden
13	Park Pedal	Bangor Castle Park
January 2026		
22	School Workshops - Bird Watch AM session	Walled Garden Bangor
22	School Workshops - Bird Watch PM session	Walled Garden Bangor
24	Winter series walk	Glenlyon Park, Holywood
February 2026		
3	National Hedgehog Day	Bowtown & Castle Gardens Nursery
16	Bird box Week	Castle Gardens Primary
March 2026		
3	EVAWG- Twilight Walk 1	Bangor Seafront
6	World Book Day with Ballymagee Nursery	Ward Park, Bangor

9	Clandeboye WW1 Play- shared education	Clandeboye Estate
10	EVAWG- Twilight Walk 2	The Commons Donaghadee
16	Clandeboye WW1 Play- shared education	Linear Park, Bangor
23	Clandeboye WW1 Play- shared education	Clandeboye Estate
24	Awake the Garden	Londonderry Park, Newtownards
28	Park Pedal	Londonderry Park Newtownards
April 2026		
2	Trail of the Eater Bunny	Linear Park, Bangor
3	Trail of the Eater Bunny	Londonderry Park Newtownards
9	Bowtown Pop Up Play	Abbots MUGA Newtownards
10	Trail of the Eater Bunny	The Ropewalk, Portaferry
13	Portaferry teens public engagement	Market Square Portaferry
14th	Wheels and Thrills- Teen girls EVAWG event Healthy Relationships	Queens Hall, Newtownards
21	Park Yoga	Bangor Ward Park
23	Clandeboye WW1 Play- shared education	Clandeboye Estate
25	Park Pedal	Comber
29	Sportsplex Bangor Play Area engagement with Rathmore Primary School	Rathmore Primary School
May 2026		
5	Park Yoga	Londonderry Park, Newtownards
6	Wheels and Thrills- BMX taster	Comber Skate Park
8	Youth Club engagement at Play Area	Skipperstone Community Hall
8	Seapark Holywood Play Area Launch with St	Seapark Holywood
12	Park Yoga	Londonderry Park, Newtownards
16	Walking Week- Tale Trails	Cairnwood
16	Park Pedal 1.30-4pm	Ward Park, Bangor
20	Northfield Play Area Launch with Donaghadee Primary School	Donaghadee
21	World Orienteering Day	Ward Park
27	Launch of Islandview Play Area with local school	Greyabbey

June 2026		
5	Beach Pilates	Ballywalter Beach
6	Park Pedal	Breezemount Conlig
3	Portaferry teens Play engagement with St Columbus School	St Columbus School, Portaferry
9	Bike Week- BMX taster sessions	Portavogie- postponed
10	Bike Week- BMX taster sessions	Ards Blair Mayne Pump Track-
11	Bike Week- BMX taster sessions	Killinchy Pump Track
12	Groomsport Play Area Launch with Ballyholme P.School	Seafront Groomsport
16	Ballyhalbert Play Area engagement with Victoria P.School	Victoria P.School, Ballyhalbert
26	Beach Pilates	Ballywalter Beach
July 2026		
1	Wheels and Thrills – Park Our Gymnastics	Teens Provision – MUGA Launch
2	Summer of Play	Killinchy
7	Summer of Play	Londonderry Park
8	Summer of Play	Kingsland Bangor
22	Wheels and Thrills- Skateboard Taster session	Ards Blair Mayne Skate Park
Aug 2026		
5	Wheels and Thrills- BMX taster session	Portavogie
5	National Play Day	Millisle
8	Wellbeing and Play Event	Bangor Auora
12	Summer of Play	Cloughey Beach
15	Love Parks- play and nature	Bangor Castle and grounds
19	Summer of Play	Holywood Seapark
Sept 2026		
18	Bangor Sportsplex Play Area Launch with Rathmore Primary School	Bangor Sportsplex

ITEM 12

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	North Down Coastal Path Working Group Minutes
Attachments	Appendix 1 Minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 29 June 2026 Appendix 2 Presentation to the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 29 June 2026
File Reference (if applicable)	CW30 / 88008
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014
Resource Implications	Staffing Narrative: staff attendance at meeting
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background

The North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group was established in September 2023 to address issues relating to connectivity, access and maintenance along the North Down Coastal Path, following the withdrawal of the planning application for the proposed Kinnegar to Donaghadee Greenway Scheme. The Working Group is comprised of Elected Members and representatives from community and business organisations.

Key Issues

A meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group was held on 29 June 2026 and the minutes of the meeting were agreed by the Working Group at the 28 September 2026 meeting (attached at Appendix 1). A copy of the presentation delivered at the meeting is attached at Appendix 2.

Next Steps

Council is requested to note the minutes and the progress of the North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group.

Summary

The North Down Coastal Path Task and Finish Working Group, established in September 2023 to address issues relating to connectivity, access and maintenance, has finalised the minutes of its meeting held on 29 June 2026. Council is asked to acknowledge the progress made by the Group, which meets quarterly to oversee improvements along the North Down coastline.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Notes** the attached minutes of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group held on 29 June 2026 and the progress made by the Group.

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the North Down Coastal Path Working Group of Ards and North Down Borough Council was held in Church Street, Newtownards, on Monday 29 June 2026 at 6:00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Brady (Chair)

Alderman Graham
Councillor Cochrane
Councillor Harbinson
Councillor Hennessy
Councillor W Irvine
Councillor McClean (6.07pm)
Councillor McKee
Councillor Newman

Stephen McCrory (AND Cycle Campaign Group)
Alison McQueen (For Another Path)
James Hunter (Greenspaces Bangor)
Charlie Reid (Friends of Columbanus Bangor)
Allan Smith (Donaghadee CDA)

Also in Attendance: Barry Brennan (Nerve Centre, Belfast)

Officers: Head of Parks and Cemeteries (S Daye), Parks & Cemeteries Development Manager (J Bettes) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. APOLOGIES

The Chairman (Councillor Brady) sought apologies at this stage.

Apologies had been received from Alderman McRandal and Councillors McBurney, McCollum & Quinn.

NOTED.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman sought Declarations of Interest at this stage.

No Declarations of Interest were made.

NOTED.

3. MINUTES OF NORTH DOWN COASTAL PATH WORKING GROUP DATED 27 APRIL 2026

Previously Circulated: Minutes of Meeting of North Down Coastal Path Working Group dated 27 April 2026.

Page 3 – Update Report and Presentation

Alison McQueen noted that reference had been made to 'Gray's Halt' and suggested that should instead read 'Grey Point'.

NOTED.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

NOTED.

5. UPDATE REPORT AND PRESENTATION

At this stage the Chairman welcomed Barry Brennan from the Nerve Centre Belfast and invited him to make his presentation. (Appendix I)

Mr Brennan introduced himself and proceeded to guide members through his presentation which provided an overview of the PeacePlus funded project, 'Bringing Life to Historical Heritage'.

(Councillor McClean entered the Council Chamber at this stage – 6.07pm)

The project consisted of three strands at two sites within the Borough i.e. Whitespots Country Park and North Down Coastal Path. Recruitment was taking place for a cohort of younger people aged 16 to 25 and people who were 55 years or older. The idea was that those two cohorts would work together to identify stories and memories of the two chosen sites which would then be interpreted through virtual reality and augmented reality. It was noted that the project would see technology being used to bring heritage to life through Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. On completion of the recruitment of participants site visits would be undertaken. Mr Brennan indicated that this concluded his presentation.

Questions were sought from members at this stage, and the following comments were made:

- It was planned to recruit 80 participants aged 55 years or older and 60 participants aged 16 to 25.

- It was noted that Ballyholme Beach had been used as part of D-Day Landing exercises by those who had then went on to Omaha Beach. A Viking boat had also been found on Ballyholme Beach.
- Engagement would be undertaken with the Over 50s group

The Chairman thanked Mr Brennan for his presentation.

Previously Circulated: Update Report and Presentation (Appendix II)

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager guided members through the Presentation highlighting the salient points within it.

James Hunter noted that old signage posts remained in place along the Coastal Path and was advised those would eventually be replaced as the new signage was rolled out.

Following a query from Alison McQueen around the acquisition of coloured benches, it was noted all new benches would be made of a composite material and therefore would not need to be painted.

Referring to Events and Promotion and the Cycling Masterplan, the Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager advised that once finalised details on both would be circulated to members of the Group.

Continuing, the Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager referred to the 'For Everyone Initiative' and reported on recent workshops which had been held which while being tough at times had been useful for all.

James Hunter commented that he had recently travelled along the new Greenway and had enjoyed this new traffic free route. He had cycled into Newtownards and got as far as Newtownards Tech where the path had ended with a set of steps. He asked if there were any plans for a ramp to be installed to enable access to the bridge. The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that as part of the Greenway project that was where the path ended, however it was intended in the future to investigate the provision of a ramp through discussions with SERC.

Charlie Reid noted that the Greenway at Jacks Cut ran parallel to a new housing development and asked if consideration had been given to the provision of links from that onto the Greenway.

The Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that was the intention eventually with gaps intentionally left for that purpose.

NOTED.

6. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that there was one item of Any Other Notified Business as detailed below from Allan Smith and Alderman Mark Brooks.

a) Ask that the North Down Coastal Forum back a proposal for Council officers to explore the opportunity after the reform of local government to extend the Coastal Path from ending in Orlock to ending in Donaghadee thus ending at a natural point where the Borough has major tourism sites such as the Camera Obscura and the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat. The extension of the path is a rebranding and would require updated signs and maps though not any infrastructure changes.

Allan Smith introduced himself to the Group and outlined his proposal as detailed above. Having walked the path, he believed it to be an excellent asset with feedback received of a similar nature. He had been approached by Donaghadee Community Development Association (DCDA) to ask why the path stopped at Orlock and did not continue on to Donaghadee.

The Chairman clarified that the proposal was for signage rather than new infrastructure as an existing path was already in place.

Allan Smith confirmed that to be the case adding that the path could continue along the Warren Road into Donaghadee and end at the Commons, by passing the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat exhibition.

Alison McQueen asked if it would be necessary to install a crossing where the path came to a natural end in and around Donaghadee Golf Club. In response the Head of Parks and Cemeteries suggested that a date be sought for members to walk the route and familiarise themselves with it.

Responding to a further query Allan Smith confirmed that the coastal path followed the length of the Warren Road, Donaghadee up to the vicinity of the Golf Club.

Charlie Reid reported on the lack of signage at Orlock and existing confusing signage in the vicinity. Continuing he commented that local maps produced for the North Down Coastal Path lacked information on public transport and public conveniences. He also referred to the ongoing works at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and suggested reference was made to that and the facilities available there.

In response Allan Smith acknowledged the points which had been made and confirmed that his proposal was not for infrastructure and while there was a point where the path ended, the road could be safely crossed without the need for a crossing. In essence what he was proposing was marketing and signage and that in turn would help promote tourism and the local economy in Donaghadee.

At this stage Councillor Irvine welcomed the proposal and sought clarification around the next steps and whether a report would be brought back to the September 2026 meeting of the Group.

In response the Head of Parks and Cemeteries indicated that next steps would include the route being walked and an audit undertaken of where any new signage could go. In response to a further query he confirmed there were no plans at this stage to expand the Path further down the coastline. He did however advise of plans for a Feasibility Study for a Greenway from Donaghadee to the Green Road, Bangor.

Councillor McKee noted the proposal which had been made and sought clarity around maps and signage which had recently been produced, and which now seemed to lack the information referred to by Allan Smith. In response the Park & Cemeteries Development Manager confirmed that could be investigated and discussions undertaken with DfI around the inclusion of transport links.

At this stage Councillor Cochrane asked when the site visit to walk the path would take place and which Committee the matter would be reported back to. The Head of Parks and Cemeteries confirmed that a date would be circulated to the Group in due course and the matter reported back through the Council's Environment Committee. Members were reminded that a budget would be required for this adding that £50,000 was available for the current year.

Allan Smith suggested that much of the marketing could be carried out digitally.

NOTED.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date was Monday 28 September 2026 at 6.00pm.

Members were advised of the following 2027 meeting dates: 11 January, 5 July and 4 October.

NOTED.

END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.03pm.

North Down Coastal Path Working Group

29 June 2026

Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Bringing Life to Our Historical Heritage
Barry Brennan – Nerve Centre

Looking for participants aged 55+ to take part in a unique intergenerational heritage project exploring the stories, memories and history connected to these local places.

Working alongside younger participants aged 16–25, you'll help preserve and share personal experiences, local knowledge, family stories and reflections connected to the Coastal Path and Whitespots — from childhood memories and community life to industry, wildlife and local history.

Participants aged 55+

https://nervecentre.org/whats-on/explore-heritage-with-immersive-technologies

Participants aged 16-25

https://nervecentre.org/whats-on/explore-heritage-with-immersive-technologies-2

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Planning Application

- Work to compile the planning application is ongoing to ready it for submission in due course.

- Land Owners are being identified.

- Discussions and notifications will need to be held with the relevant landowners along this section prior to the submission of the planning application.



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Walkability Audit

- Walkability Audits are a great way of understanding how an area works for people, and how it could be improved.
- A walkability audit involves a group of people getting together and walking a short, planned route of between 800 metres and one kilometre (half to three-quarters of a mile) in order to assess it for how easy or difficult it is to walk.
- It is proposed to engage with members of the Over 50 Council to assist in undertaking a Walkability Audit of the coastal path.

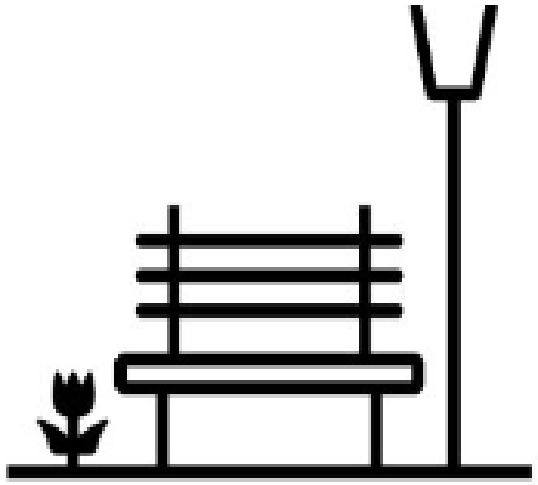


Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Benefits of Completing a Walkability Audit

- Helps people and organisations to evaluate the age-friendliness of the built environment.
- Hear the views and needs of local people.
- Enable local people to complete a self assessment of their local area.



Works Logged

- Work has begun to repair and replace benches on coastal path from Holywood town to Seapark.
- Replacing old and out of date signage including 35 dog fouling & 9 no consumption of alcohol signs.
- Outcome is to unify information, consolidate and update signage and street furniture along the coastal path.











Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Audit of Assets

- Signage and street furniture audit has been completed.
- 283 assets audited to date – shown below as coloured dots.
- First step to focus on signage – removal, cleaning & updating of 37 signs.



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Events and Promotion







Officers have facilitated a programme of ongoing events along the coastal path, during the past quarter and upcoming:

- **Mindful Walks -** planned for August
- **Four Seabird sightings** with Adam Ringland completed

Upcoming events details and registration on AND Eventbrite and [Parks Activities and Events - Ards and North Down Borough Council]

Ards and North Down Borough Council

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Cycling Friendly Borough

- Continuing to work with the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) on Active Travel Strategy and projects.
- Suggested interim link has been identified linking the greenway from Green Road to Bangor city centre with DFI.
- Cycling Masterplan is being finalised.
- First phase of the greenway will be open by the end of June with signage being installed at start of July.
- Progress is underway to continue the link towards Comber.

Ards and North Down Borough Council

For Everyone Initiative

- The 'For Everyone Initiative' will take place along the new greenway over the summer period, to promote respectful use of the greenway by all users promoting the 'Share, Respect, Enjoy' message.

- There will be a number of events held on the greenway including a festival day in September (date tbc).

- Stakeholder Workshops will take place in:
  - Comber Leisure Centre 24th June
  - Green Road Community Centre 25th June
  - Londonderry Park 26th June

Next Meeting Dates

- Monday 28th September 2026 - 6pm to 9pm

Proposed meeting dates for 2027

- 11th January
- 5th July
- 4th October

No meeting in April 2027 due to the pre-election period.

ITEM 13

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Environment Committee
Date of Meeting	04 November 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Environmental Services
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Parks and Cemeteries
Report title	Bi Monthly update on Portavogie and Penninsula 3G Pitches
Attachments	Appendix 1 Portavogie 3G Pitch Update Appendix 2 Penninsula 3G Pitch Update
File Reference (if applicable)	CW74 / 88005
Legislation	Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Recreation and Youth Services Order (1986)
Resource Implications	Budget and Staffing Narrative: resources in place
Screening Requirements	*The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:* Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 3: Social 1. An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment If multiple:

Background

In February 2024, Council agreed to the following:

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

Since that decision, Members and key stakeholders have been kept informed of progress on the two 3G pitch projects through a range of communication methods, including email updates and direct engagement with Officers.

Key Issues

This report provides the bi-monthly update requested by Council in relation to the two 3G pitch capital projects. Progress is presented using the Council's agreed Red-Amber-Green (RAG) reporting format, highlighting current status, key milestones, risks and next steps. The reports have been rationalised to remove historic information which is no longer relevant following feedback from stakeholders on the last progress reports issued September.

Next Steps

Officers will continue to provide bi-monthly updates to the Environment Committee using the agreed RAG reporting format and will keep Members informed of project progress, emerging risks and key delivery milestones.

Summary

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 23.
Information up to date as of 20th October 2026

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

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

For Information – RAG status

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

Background

The Portavogie 3G Pitch Project planning application was submitted in September 2020. During the planning process a number of significant technical matters required resolution, including NI Water drainage requirements, environmental mitigation measures associated with synthetic pitch infill and revised access arrangements requested by DfI Roads. These matters resulted in extensive design development and consultation with statutory agencies. Planning permission was subsequently granted on 31 March 2026. The project is now focused on progressing the approved scheme through detailed design development, updating project costs and completion of an updated Business Case to support future Council consideration.

The next phase of the project will focus on progressing the approved scheme towards delivery. This will include completing the Stage 4 design revisions to ensure full alignment between the technical design and the approved planning proposals, alongside finalising updated project cost estimates to reflect current market conditions and project requirements. These outputs will inform completion of the updated Business Case, which will be presented for Council consideration and approval. Subject to approval, work will then progress on the development of a procurement approach and a detailed delivery strategy, providing a clear pathway towards implementation of the Portavogie 3G Pitch Project.

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 23.
Information up to date as of 20th October 2026

1. Programme

Green	Amber	Red
	The programme is currently being reviewed and updated through the Business Case process. Progress continues; however, project timescales remain subject to completion of the Business Case and subsequent Council approval.	

Further to receipt of planning approval on the 31st March 2026,a realistic timeframe for project delivery is being considered as part of the Business Case development process. The programme is dependent on the planned delivery date of the OBC to officers and reporting to Council as currently planned. Council approval of the updated Business Case thereafter will be required before an updated timeline can be set. Progress since the last report includes stakeholder engagement activities and commencement of the detailed design review.

2. NI Water: Offsetting

Green	Amber	Red
	A technical solution has been agreed with NI Water and conditional approval secured. Progression is dependent upon completion of the associated legal agreement with the Education Authority.	

Following re-consultation through the planning process, NI Water confirmed its conditional approval of the proposed drainage offsetting solution in July 2024. The approved approach will create capacity within the adjacent combined sewer network by diverting drainage from Portavogie Primary School, thereby facilitating a foul drainage connection from the proposed development to the existing public sewer.

Implementation of the offsetting solution requires legal consent from the Education Authority (EA) to undertake works within the grounds of Portavogie Primary School. Securing this approval remains a key dependency for the project and is necessary before the development can proceed.

Engagement with the EA has continued; however, the Authority has advised that a number of higher-priority projects requiring legal input have delayed consideration of

the Council's request. The Council is awaiting confirmation of a timescale for securing the necessary legal agreement, and the matter has been escalated through the Department of Education to support progression of this critical project dependency.

Further information has recently been provided to the EA to address some ongoing issues that it has with the scheme.

3. NI Water: Requisition

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

Following payment of a £10,000 deposit, NI Water appointed consultants to prepare a detailed design for a requisition sewer. The proposed requisition sewer is required to drain surface run off from the proposed site and facilitate a connection for the re-routed PPS storm drainage (subject to receipt of the EA's legal permission). This aspect of the drainage proposal has received NIW's conditional approval through the formal planning process. NIW's consultants have been liaising directly with Council's appointed Civil Engineers to finalise the design with some co-ordination required recently to finalise drainage levels.

An application for a Marine Construction Licence has been made by NIW to DEARAs Marine Licencing Branch for the construction of a new outfall pipe to serve the development.

4. Planning: Statutory Consultation – Shared Environmental Services

Green	Amber	Red
All statutory consultation requirements have been satisfactorily addressed and planning permission has been granted.		

All environmental matters raised through the planning process have now been satisfactorily addressed. Statutory consultees accepted the Council's proposed mitigation measures, including the use of natural infill materials within the 3G pitch specification. Planning permission has been granted. Next Steps: Ensure approved environmental mitigation measures are reflected within detailed design and procurement documentation and continue compliance with planning conditions.

Portavogie 3G Project. Update 23.
Information up to date as of 20th October 2026

5. Planning: Statutory Consultation – DfI Roads

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

DfI Roads approved the revised access arrangements that formed part of the planning approval granted in March 2026. Access requirements have therefore been addressed through the planning process and incorporated into the approved scheme.

The approved access arrangements will be developed within detailed design updates and QS costs are being updated and this will be progressed as part of the overall project programme.

6. Planning Update: General

Green	Amber	Red
Planning Approval secured in March 2026		

The planning process has concluded successfully and planning permission was granted on 31 March 2026. The project has transitioned from planning and statutory approval activity into detailed design review, cost validation and Business Case development.

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

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

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

For Information – RAG status

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

Background

The Peninsula 3G Pitch Project proposes the development of a new floodlit 3G playing surface, changing pavilion, parking and associated infrastructure at Portaferry Leisure Centre. The project aims to address the identified deficit in all-weather sports provision across the Ards Peninsula and support increased participation in sport and physical activity.

- Design Team appointed and project governance arrangements established.
- Site investigations, environmental assessments and technical surveys completed or substantially completed.
- Planning application submitted on 13 March 2026 and remains under consideration.
- Ongoing engagement with statutory consultees and stakeholders, including NI Water, NIEA, Education Authority and Department of Education.
- The project has progressed through RIBA Stages 1 and 2 and elements of Stage 3 are being advanced to support planning and project development.

Current Position

The planning application remains under consideration with a determination currently anticipated in March 2027. Additional information has been submitted to support the application, including an updated Planning Statement and covering letter outlining the demonstrated need for the facility within the Peninsula area. Engagement continues with statutory consultees, with NI Water currently representing the principal outstanding consultation issue. Bat survey work remains ongoing, with the final ecological report expected by end of November 2026.

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

Discussions continue with NI Water regarding the Article 154 approval process and with relevant stakeholders regarding lease and management arrangements. The programme will be reviewed and updated following receipt of planning and statutory consultee responses. Until these approvals are secured, it remains difficult to provide certainty regarding future procurement and construction timelines.

1. Programme

Amber (No change)

The programme for the delivery of the project cannot be determined unless planning is granted first as there are too many variables. A planning decision is currently expected in March 2027.

RIBA Stage 2 is completed with the Consultant's report submitted. Elements of RIBA Stage 3 underway to enable consultation with planning. RIBA Stage 4 (Technical Design and Procurement) is scheduled to run from July 2027 to January 2029.

The procurement strategy will be delivered in two phases:

- Phase 1 PQQ – works associated with the relocation of the priority habitat area.
- Phase 2 PQQ – main construction works, which will commence following completion of Phase 1.
- PQQ processes for both phases will be run concurrently in August 2027.

The project programme remains focused on securing planning approval and progressing other statutory approvals. While progress continues across key workstreams.

2. Key Risks

Amber

The principal risks remain largely unchanged and continue to be actively managed through the Project Board, the top risks are:

1. Funding allocated is currently £2.2m within the current capital project portfolio. Current estimated cost however is more than £6.5m, this is currently not included in council rate setting budget yearly profile. It was agreed at a recent committee meeting a report to include a current cost estimate for members consideration and this will need to be presented at the appropriate time.
2. Water based habitat system over a large element of the site, cost of mitigation currently being established in the region of £1m.
3. NI Water approvals remain outstanding and present a risk of delay in the programme.

4. Entrance off the public road required widening, this will add cost and whilst positive discussions have taken place with DfI Roads they will only sign off proposals through the planning processes.

5. Close out of statutory consultees including NIEA through PAD process

3. Costs

Red

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

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

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

- The pavilion was smaller
- New electrical supply to the site was not taken for
- Preliminaries were a far lower percentage, a more realistic percentage based on recent experience has now been used
- A smaller car park was proposed
- No optimism bias allowance
- No allowance for earth works
- No allowance for fencing
- No allowance for drainage
- No allowance for new organic infill

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

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

Project development costs are sitting at: £264,000
The Outline Business Case (OBC) will be refreshed in 2027 if planning approval is obtained.

4. Environmental Issues

Amber
• Environmental assessment work continues in support of the planning application. Smooth Newt surveys have been completed and bat activity surveys remain ongoing, with the final survey report anticipated by the end of November 2026. Findings from these assessments will continue to inform the planning process and statutory consultations.

5. Lands

Green
Engagement continues with the Education Authority and Department of Education in relation to the land requirements associated with the project. The Management Agreement has been received and is currently under review; however, the associated lease documentation remains outstanding. Additional work is also progressing to establish an agreed land valuation for inclusion within future project cost estimates and business case considerations.