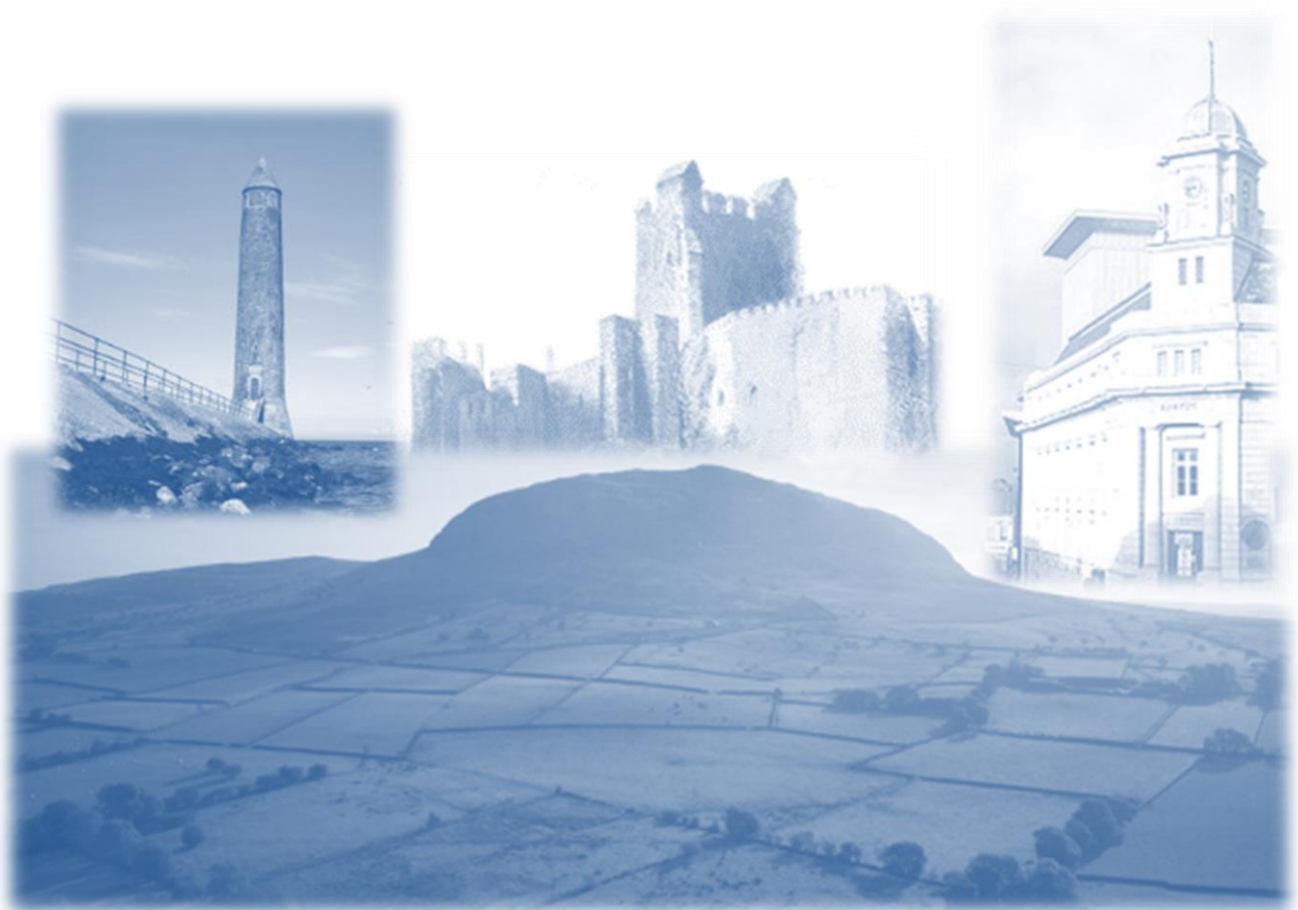


## **TOURISM**

**PAPER 7**

**MID & EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH**  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PREPARATORY STUDIES

**AUGUST 2015**  
Version 2



# CONTENTS

<b>Purpose of the Paper</b> .....	5
<b>Aims</b> .....	6
<b>Content Overview</b> .....	6
<b>Recommendation</b> .....	6
 <b>1.0 Setting the Scene</b> .....	 7
▪ Introduction.....	8
▪ Definition of Tourism.....	8
▪ Social & Economic Benefits of Tourism.....	8
▪ Sustainable Tourism.....	9
▪ Tourism’s Role in Rebalancing the NI Economy.....	9
▪ The Changing Profile of Visitors & Tourism to NI.....	10
▪ Departments, Agencies & Organisations with Tourism Role.....	11
▪ Regional level .....	11
▪ Sub-regional level.....	13
▪ Local level.....	15
 <b>2.0 Regional Planning Policy Context</b> .....	 19
▪ Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035: Building a Better Future.....	20
▪ Regional Planning Policy Statements.....	21
▪ Tourism in the Rural Area.....	22
 <b>3.0 Local Planning Policy Context – Existing Development Plans</b> .....	 23
▪ Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001.....	24
▪ Larne Area Plan 2010.....	24
▪ Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP).....	25
 <b>4.0 Tourism Profile of Mid &amp; East Antrim District</b> .....	 29
▪ Key Assets & Tourism Resources.....	30
▪ Statistics & Performance.....	31
▪ Overnight Trips.....	31
▪ Expenditure on Overnight Trips.....	31
▪ Reason for Visit.....	31
▪ Commercial Accommodation.....	32
▪ Visitor Attractions.....	33
▪ Employment in Tourism Related Industry .....	33
▪ Mid & East Antrim Key Tourism Facts .....	34
 <b>Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions</b> .....	 35

## FIGURES

Fig 1.1: Top Ten Visitor Attractions in NI- 2014 (excluding country parks/parks/forests/gardens)

Fig 1.2: Responsibility for Tourism Development in NI

Fig 1.3: Causeway Coastal Route Vision

Fig 1.4: Extent of Antrim Coast & Glens AONB

Fig 1.5: Proposed Tourism & Leisure Strategy from Larne Town Centre

Fig 4.1: Overnight Trips by LGD- 2014

Fig 4.2: Overnight Expenditure (£)- 2014

Fig 4.3: No. of beds available by accommodation type in Mid & East Antrim- 2014

## TABLES

Table 4.1: Mid & East Antrim visitor attractions and number of visitors-2011-2014

Table 4.2: Tourism Jobs in Mid & East Antrim- 2013

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

Table A1: Estimated overnight Trips, Nights and Expenditure - NI and Local Government District- 2014

Table A2: Estimated number of Overnight Trips in NI by Local Government District: 2011-2014

Table A3: Estimated average Overnight Trips in NI by Reason for Visit and Local Government District, 2012-2014 (3 year average)

Table A4: Accommodation Stock in Mid & East Antrim- 2014

Map A1: Accommodation Assets in Mid & East Antrim

Map A2: Tourism Assets in Mid & East Antrim

Table A5: Hotel Occupancy Rates by Local Government District: 2011-2014

Table A6: Key Tourism Assets in Mid & East Antrim

Table A7: Breakdown of tourism Jobs in Mid & East Antrim- 2011-2013

### APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

## PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Planning Committee with an overview of Mid & East Antrim tourism assets, an overview of the recent performance of the tourism sector in the area, and how a sustainable approach to tourism development can be developed in the Local Development Plan (LDP).

The paper also provides an overview of regional planning and policy context in relation to tourism and includes other government policy objectives in relation to this key sector, namely; the NI Executive's Programme for Government 2011-2015 (PfG), the Economic Strategy and Tourism Strategy and the Council's vision taken from its Corporate Strategy.

This paper allows members to commence consideration of the priorities for formulating a sustainable tourism policy to grow tourism in a manner which, in line with the Regional Development Strategy, balances the economic benefits of tourism with the environmental and social impacts. This in turn will assist the Council in the development of the LDP Plan Strategy.

However, at this stage the paper only aims to provide a foundation for future decision making which will need to be further informed by a Sustainability Appraisal, public consultation and stakeholder engagement.

## AIMS

- To build the capacity of members to make informed planning decisions, particularly within the plan making context;
- To provide baseline information which will inform planning policy making at local level;
- To link with important ongoing work in relation to the development of a Community Plan and other strategic work particularly the Tourism Strategy for the Borough, being undertaken by the Council.

## CONTENT OVERVIEW

The paper provides:-

- a summary of government policy objectives for the tourism sector along with a review of tourism strategies at a regional, sub-regional and local level;
- the regional policy context for formulating Local Development Plan policies for tourism;
- the existing local area plan context;
- a tourism profile of Mid & East Antrim District including key statistics and assessment of existing tourism assets;

## RECOMMENDATION

That members have regard to the findings and consider how:

- future sustainable tourism development and associated uses should be accommodated through the Local Development Plan across Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area;
- tourism assets should be safeguarded from inappropriate development through the Local Development Plan;
- this paper and the Local Development Plan should be used to help inform and support the Council's emerging Tourism strategy for the Borough.



## SECTION 1

### SETTING THE SCENE

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION OF TOURISM

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

TOURISM'S ROLE IN REBALANCING THE  
NI ECONOMY

THE CHANGING PROFILE OF VISITORS  
& TOURISM TO NI

DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES &  
ORGANISATIONS WITH TOURISM ROLE

- REGIONAL LEVEL
- SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL
- LOCAL LEVEL

# 1.0 SETTING THE SCENE

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 The preparation of a local development plan provides a key opportunity for council to consider how best to facilitate the growth of sustainable tourism in the Mid & East Antrim area.

1.2 This paper outlines the regional policy context for formulating Local Development Plan tourism strategies & policies. Of particular importance is the Regional Development Strategy 2035 – Building a Better Future (published 2012) which emphasises the need to support the growth of tourism in NI by achieving balance between tourism development opportunities and conserving natural, built and cultural assets. Measuring tourism benefit is challenging with no single measure providing a definitive statistic. This paper will attempt to paint a picture of the tourism profile of Mid & East Antrim District using a number of statistics provided by Tourism NI based on data published by NISRA.

1.3 Information has been derived from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), DETI and Tourism NI.

1.4 The new Borough comprises all of the existing districts of Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne save for a small area of the existing Carrickfergus District in the vicinity of Greenisland which will be transferred to Antrim & Newtownabbey District. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain reliable statistics for the area subject to the boundary change, therefore the data used includes this small area.

## DEFINITION OF TOURISM

1.5 Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) as comprising the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. The WTO further explains that “Tourism” refers to all activities of visitors including both “tourists (overnight visitors)” and “same-day visitors”.

1.6 Tourism encompasses a very wide range of activities. It can include travel and visits for business, professional and domestic purposes as well as for holidays and recreation. Often, more than one purpose may be involved. The duration of tourist trips is also highly variable as it can include the annual family holiday as well as a wide range of shorter visits, weekend breaks and day trips. Tourism is therefore an extremely diverse form of activity which is subject to changing trends in the types, distribution and duration of tourist activity.

## ECONOMIC & SOCIAL BENEFITS OF TOURISM

1.7 The NI Executive identifies tourism as one of the building blocks to underpin its priority of growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future. The Programme for Government (PfG) and DETI’s Economic Strategy contain key strategic targets for tourism that recognise its potential to deliver significant economic growth in the future and supports the local tourism sector’s long term aspiration to grow tourism into a £1billion industry in Northern Ireland by 2020.

1.8 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), the spatial strategy of the Executive also recognises tourism as a key element underpinning sustainable economic growth in Northern Ireland and Regional Guideline 4 (RG 4) seeks to promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure.

1.9 Tourism makes an important contribution to the Northern Ireland economy in terms of the revenues it generates, the employment opportunities it provides, and the potential it creates for economic growth.



1.10 At September 2014, the Quarterly Employment Survey estimated that tourism and leisure industries accounted for 56,890 employee jobs in Northern Ireland (8% of total jobs). (NISRA, *Northern Ireland Tourism Statistics October 2013 to September 2014*). During 2014 an estimated 2.2 million external visitors came to NI, spending an estimated £514 million (NISRA, *Tourism Statistical Bulletin, May 2015*).

1.11 Tourism spending helps to support a wide range of economic activities. As well as direct spending on tourist accommodation<sup>1</sup> and use of tourist amenities<sup>2</sup>, tourism plays an important role in helping to support the viability of many local suppliers, services and facilities. It improves assets and provides infrastructure for local people and tourists, supports the vibrancy of Northern Ireland's culture and heritage, and sustains communities.

1.12 Through utilising existing environmental, historical, cultural and geographic assets, tourism can be a key economic driver capable of stimulating further growth and development opportunities. This has been recognised by government through investment in various Tourism Signature Projects throughout Northern Ireland. Tourism can also benefit the assets on which it depends for example through assisting in the financing of conservation or enhancement initiatives. In towns and cities tourism can contribute positively to urban regeneration. In rural areas, tourism is important to the development of the rural economy and offers, for example, opportunities for farm diversification to supplement farm incomes or for broader rural diversification capable of providing employment. Tourism also has the potential to contribute to meeting broader government commitments aimed at relieving poverty and enhancing social inclusion and cohesion in areas subject to problems of this type.

### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

1.13 The WTO promotes sustainable tourism and defines this as: *"tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting*

*and enhancing opportunity for the future"*. It goes on to state that: *"the objective of sustainable tourism is to retain the economic and social advantages of tourism development while reducing or mitigating any undesirable impacts on the natural, historic, cultural or social environment."*

1.14 Sustainable tourism development<sup>3</sup> is brought about by balancing the needs of tourists and the tourism industry with those of the destination. This requires management, and the land use planning system has a key role in managing tourism-related development through planning policies that provide a framework for identifying appropriate development opportunities and safeguarding tourism assets from harmful development. The planning system also has a role in securing high quality design and integrating tourism provision with necessary infrastructure. In discharging these functions the planning system will ensure that such development is sustainable and achievable without damaging those qualities in the environment which are of acknowledged public value and on which tourism itself may depend.

### **TOURISM'S ROLE IN REBALANCING THE NI ECONOMY**

1.15 The **Programme for Government 2011-2015** identifies the actions the NI Executive will take to deliver its number one priority – a vibrant economy which can transform our society. Challenging targets for tourism to 2014 were set in the PfG to **increase visitor numbers to 4.2 million and grow tourist revenue to £676 million by December 2014**. In terms of NI's performance against the Programme for Government Targets, in 2014 there were 4.51 million overnight trips by all visitors (domestic & external) in Northern Ireland. This is an increase of 11% in the number of overnight trips from 2013 and is the largest number of overnight trips in the last four years. Associated tourist revenue increased by 4% to £751 million in 2014 (NISRA, *Tourism Statistical Bulletin, May 2015*).

<sup>1</sup> Overnight sleeping accommodation for tourists provided by way of trade or business (Art 2 Tourism NI Order 1992).

<sup>2</sup> An amenity, facility or service provided primarily for tourists, but does not include tourist accommodation (Art 2 Tourism NI Order 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Includes tourist accommodation, and tourist amenities.



1.16 DETI has produced a strategy to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy. [The Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity \(March 2012\)](#) has identified 5 key themes to stimulate economic growth and address gaps in productivity as follows: innovation, skills, competitiveness in the global economy, encouraging business growth and developing economic infrastructure. Tourism is clearly positioned within three of these key themes on the global economy, economic infrastructure and encouraging business growth.

1.17 The Economic Strategy highlights the importance in developing the potential of the Tourism sector to make important contributions to the development of the NI economy, through the development of tourism product and delivery of key signature events. Key to this is significantly increasing visitor revenue particularly through the attraction of more overseas tourism. The main long term targets are to increase overall visitor numbers to 4.5m and tourism revenue to £1billion by 2020. Achievement of these targets will directly benefit tourist businesses and organisations operating in NI and their employees. However, the Economic Strategy anticipates that wide economic benefits will accrue, particularly to the food and retail sectors.



1.18 [The Investment Strategy for NI \(ISNI\) 2011-21](#) sets out the investment programme of over £5 billion that will be injected into the local economy over the current Programme for

Government period. The Investment Strategy identifies the priority areas for investment. £19 million was allocated to Tourism between 2011/12 to 2014/15 with an anticipated rise to £36 million between 2015/16 to 2020/21, subject to the Executive budget.

1.19 This document recognises that the quality of our environment underpins the success of our tourism economy and acts as a broader magnet that enhances the attraction of the region as an investment destination. It also highlights that our rural areas offer real opportunities in terms of potential for growth in the provision of rural recreation and tourism.

1.20 The ISNI states that *'tourism has become one of our most important growth areas and with continued support for nine destination areas and other tourism schemes we can continue to improve the offering, attract more visitors and benefit from the major events and occasions that will be taking place'* (Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21 Pg. 40).

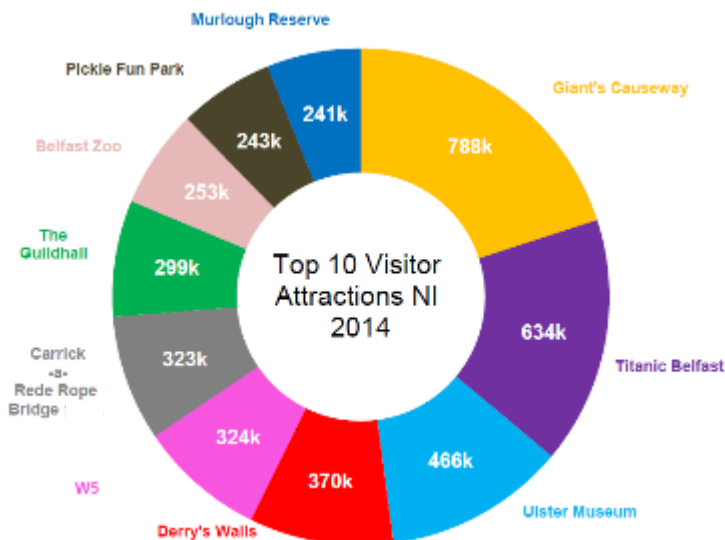
#### **THE CHANGING PROFILE OF VISITORS & TOURISM TO NI**

1.21 Following an unprecedented global downturn in 2008 consumer confidence deteriorated and the origins and profiles of visitors to NI changed. As visitors from Great Britain and beyond declined, domestic trips and spend grew at record levels. Forecasters have been predicting a slow recovery for travel from 2011 onwards at 4 to 5%. The trend for closer to home holidays is expected to continue with most short term growth in visitor numbers coming from the UK and Ireland. While around 7.5 million visitors from Great Britain and overseas visit the island of Ireland each year, only 20% come to NI. In terms of revenue, Northern Ireland only receives about 10% of the island of Ireland's share from GB and overseas visitors. Therefore there is significant scope for Northern Ireland to increase its share of these visitor numbers and revenue (NITB, [Corporate Plan 2011-2015](#)).

1.22 Popular opinion within the tourism industry believes that people no longer simply choose a holiday destination. They are motivated by an experience and will opt for whichever destination offers them a truly bespoke, authentic experience that most meets their

needs. Developing and delivering tailored, unique, world class experiences will make NI a competitive destination. Fig. 1.1 lists the Top 10 NI visitor attractions in 2014, none of which are currently located in Mid & East Antrim.

*Fig 1.1: Top Ten Visitor Attractions in NI- 2014 (excluding country parks/parks/forests/gardens)*



(Source: NISRA, Statistical Bulletin, 28 May 2015)

## DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES & ORGANISATIONS WITH TOURISM ROLE

1.23 Tourism in NI involves many different organisations. In the public sector there are currently seven government departments with an interest in tourism: DETI, DARD, DCAL, DOE, DSD, DRD and DEL. In addition since 1 April 2015, all of the new councils have been afforded greater responsibility for economic development. In Mid & East Antrim, tourism is an important aspect of this enhanced responsibility and developing the tourism potential of the area is one of the five strategic priorities of the Borough's new corporate plan.

*Fig 1.2: Responsibility for Tourism Development in NI*

Strategic Tourism Context		
Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment Other government departments		
Tourism NI	Tourism Ireland	Invest Northern Ireland
Lead agency for tourism development in NI	Overseas promotion of the island of Ireland	Tourism accommodation grants and business support

## REGIONAL LEVEL

1.24 [The Tourism Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007 \(SFA\)](#) set out priorities for tourism in Northern Ireland up to 2007 and underpinned development of the Tourism Signature projects. Since then much has changed both in terms of global trends in tourism and Northern Ireland as a destination presenting new opportunities for how a destination is developed, managed and promoted. These factors coupled with ongoing concerns such as the relatively low level of market share compared with competitor destinations and low levels of tourist spend prompted a review of tourism in NI. The outcome of this was the DETI [draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020 \(TSNI\)](#) published for consultation in March 2010. This document set out the principles of sustainable tourism and the basis for its assessment of tourism development proposals. The draft Strategy aimed to support tourism stakeholders in local regions throughout Northern Ireland in the production and delivery of "Destination Development Plans".

1.25 The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment commissioned an independent review of NITB and wider tourism structures in December 2013. The report by John Hunter was published in June 2014 and noted that the absence of a current NI tourism strategy has been a cause of concern for many stakeholders.

1.26 Following the [Hunter Review](#), the DETI minister in January 2015 pledged to work with the tourism industry to bring forward a new strategic plan for tourism which would coordinate the work of key partners in the industry, and in central and local government. The Minister undertook to implement the review recommendations, some of which included the following:

- NITB's name should be changed in order to signal the scale of its envisaged transformation.
  - NITB should continue its work with Invest NI to develop an economic development brand for NI;
  - NITB should clarify roles and responsibilities with key partner organisations, including the new District Councils;
  - Development of a Tourism Growth Fund jointly supported with the new Councils.
- (*DETI Ministerial Statement, 20 January 2015*)

## EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

1.27 NITB (now Tourism NI) developed five themes or “experience” pillars, designed to promote “experiential tourism”, with associated advice on market segmentation by target groups and country of origin. The 5 themes are described and developed in the NITB booklet “Creating Experiences: A Toolkit for the NI Tourism Industry”, published in 2013. They are:

- **Living Legends** – making our history, stories and legends alive and interactive;
- **Coasts and Lakes** – turning our coast and waterways into unique global destination experiences;
- **Unique Outdoors** – becoming a distinct outdoor recreation and adventure playground;
- **Culture and Creative Vibe** – promoting contemporary and vibrant NI experiences; and
- **Naturally NI** – experiencing local culture through nature.

1.28 In addition, and in support of particular experience pillars, the NITB has been working with several partners in designing and developing a series of activity attractions including golf, fishing, mountainbiking, hiking and canoeing. Such developments collectively point to the increasing segmentation and decentralisation of the market.

1.29 Some other Government Departments have a significant role in Tourism Development. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is the overarching body responsible for the **Forestry Service of NI** and the Loughs Agency. Each of these bodies has a remit in the promotion of tourism through their management of important natural assets and provision of public access for both recreational and tourism purposes.



1.30 DARD also manages the **Rural Development Programme** (RDP) with the latest programme scheduled to run from 2014 – 2020. The RDP supports economic growth in rural areas by assisting rural businesses and rural tourism. Key priorities include:

- Encouraging farm diversification in rural areas as a way of stimulating further income generation.
- Encouraging tourism in rural areas.
- Increasing recreational access to woodland.
- Help preserve the cultural and social uniqueness and beauty of rural villages.
- Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.



1.31 The **Northern Ireland Environment Agency** (NIEA), within the remit of DOE, has a role in regards tourism development given its responsibility for the protection of monuments and built heritage and management of country parks which are important tourist assets.

1.32 DoE supports Outdoor Recreation NI, an umbrella organisation for Walk NI, Mountain Bike NI, Cycle NI, Canoe NI and NI Orienteering to deliver a number of activity tourism projects which adds to the growing reputation of NI as an activity holiday destination.



1.33 The **Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure** (DCAL) promotes cultural tourism to Northern Ireland through its significant role in the organisation of festivals and events, as well as through other aspects of its remit such as the arts, museums and its architectural/built environment role. The Mid & East Antrim area benefits from facilities such as the Braid Museum and Arts Centre in Ballymena, which has a dedicated Visitor Centre providing information about opportunities to explore the heritage and culture of the region and wider afield. The Centre also provides stage productions and arts events, all of which generate visitor numbers to the region.

**Arts Council of Northern Ireland “Ambitions for the Arts”: A Five Year Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern Ireland 2013-2018 (DCAL)**

1.34 The Arts Council works in partnership with Tourism NI to enhance the ability to generate interest in ‘Cultural Tourism’. One aim of the strategic plan is provision of dedicated gallery for Northern Ireland, subject to economic feasibility.





1.35 The **Department for Social Development** (DSD) has responsibility for urban regeneration and community and voluntary sector development. Regeneration schemes in particular can have significant potential in promoting tourism and the potential for attracting tourists can help underpinning such schemes.



1.36 The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is responsible for the promotion of learning and skills in NI to meet the needs of the labour market including the tourism sector.

1.37 In recognition of the growth in the tourist sector, DEL established a “Future Skills Action Group” which brought together key stakeholders, to identify current and future skill trends and growth requirements for the tourism industry. In April 2010, the “Hospitality and Tourism Future Skills Action Group Review” was released. The document sets out an action plan to increase skills and training related to tourism employment within Northern Ireland.



1.38 The **Department of Finance and Personnel** (DFP), prioritise the use of resources available to NI, to ensure that these are used efficiently and secure the reform and modernisation of public services. DFP are also responsible for overseeing grants by the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme and the European Social Fund Programme which aim to strengthen competitiveness and attractiveness, as well as employment. DFP have been involved, through funding allocations, in the following projects in the Mid & East Antrim area:

- **Lough Neagh Partnership**- part funded by the DFPNI managed Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity (BSP) grant. In 2003, the Partnership received a funding package of £3.2m for a major regeneration initiative for the entire Lough Neagh area. The Partnership has since allocated all of its funding to projects around the Lough and is now focusing on the promotion and marketing of these projects and the whole of the

Lough Neagh wetlands area. The Partnership continues to prioritise, amongst other issues affecting the area, the development of a major heritage programme and marketing & promotion of the Lough.

- **Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative (NRRTI)** - The main aim of NRRTI was to put in place, within 5 years, some of the tourism infrastructure that would have developed over the last 30 years in the absence of the political unrest and violence which NI experienced and which has resulted in the tourism potential of Northern Ireland's natural resources remaining largely untapped.

### SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL

1.39 Tourism NI hope to use the opening of the Gobbins Path as an opportunity to re-launch the concept of the Causeway Coastal Route. Their vision is to use the Causeway Coastal Route as the ‘big concept sell’ to visitors with four proposed tourism clusters along the route as detailed in Fig 1.3. The aim is to capture a rich and diverse experience rather than communicating a collection of disparate experiences.

Fig 1.3: Causeway Coastal Route Vision

13



1.40 This concept is one of a ‘journey’ tapping into the following themes –

- **Mystery & Legend**
- **Close to the Coast**
- **Personal Touch**

1.41 Tourism NI list the following tourism assets along or close to the route as having potential to integrate with it, in order to secure mutual benefit-

1. Opportunity to create stronger links with Slemish mountain.
2. Carrickfergus Castle:-
  - a. Romanticism of castles appeal to overseas visitors but the castle is currently underperforming.
  - b. Potential for the castle to be redeveloped as key part of the Causeway Coastal Route if it can be unlocked and reimagined.
  - c. Potential to create links with the NI wide Ulster Scots connections/genealogy theme.

#### **Draft Tourism NI Causeway & Mourne Coastal Routes Tourism Masterplan**

1.42 The above document is currently being drafted by Tourism NI to identify the location of sites which could be developed to appeal to visitors and increase visitor footfall. Tourism NI anticipate that the Masterplan document will act as a key supporting document to seek future funding for the development of tourism infrastructure across the Causeway & Mourne Coastal Routes. Mid & East Antrim Council has agreed that the following sites be submitted for potential inclusion within the Causeway & Mourne Coastal Routes Tourism Masterplan:

1. Carnlough & Glenarm Signage/Heritage Trail;
2. Islandmagee/Whitehead Walking Trail;
3. Improvements to Larne Promenade;
4. Slemish Visitor Facilities;
5. Broughshane Visitor Facilities;
6. Broughshane Signage/Heritage Trail;
7. Whitehead Promenade;
8. Blackhead Path;
9. Carrickfergus Waterfront.

#### **Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Masterplan-2004-2013**

1.43 Produced by DETI this [Masterplan](#) was intended to serve as a blueprint for the development of tourism in the area, which included the former Ballymena, Carrickfergus & Larne Council areas. The following Tourism Capital Projects were delivered under the auspices of the 2004 Masterplan within Mid & East Antrim Borough: Carnfunnock Country Park and Glenarm Infrastructure & Interpretation, Portglenone Marina Development and Slemish Mountain Interpretation.

#### **Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership**

1.44 Over the past 16 years Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Partnership did much to support the growth of tourism-related businesses and facilities as well as being important in securing funding from the private sector. However, financial factors made their position untenable and the partnership was dissolved in March 2015. The partnership's Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Area Plan 2012-2017 was produced as a roadmap to guide stakeholders, the tourism and hospitality industry and local communities in their concerted efforts to build tourism in the destination. The document linked to 2020 strategic targets for tourism in DETI's Draft Tourism Strategy for NI.

#### **Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust**

1.45 Launched in February 2003, The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust is a public/private/voluntary sector partnership that seeks to promote environmental management and sustainable tourism for the benefit of both visitors and the people who live and work in the area. The Trust aims to raise awareness of, protect and enhance the special qualities of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Causeway Coast & Glens area including the Antrim Coast & Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Antrim Coast & Glens AONB covers 72,489ha of land and contains some of the most beautiful and varied scenery in Northern Ireland, including Rathlin Island, the Glens of Antrim and the coastal area between Larne and Ballycastle. The Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust provides a secretariat service for the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB Management Group.

*Fig 1.4: Extent of Antrim Coast & Glens AONB*



1.46 The Trust was also selected as the local delivery mechanism for the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative (NRRTI), a selective



financial assistance programme offered under the European Union special support programme for Peace & Reconciliation (Peace II). The NRRTI was open to the following wards in Mid & East Antrim Borough: Carncastle, Carnlough, Glenarm, Kilwaughter, Broughshane, Glenravel, Glenwhirry and Slemish. NRRTI assisted projects such as the establishment of a tearoom at Glenarm Castle, improvements to Carnfunnock Caravan Park, public visitor amenities at Slemish, improved visitor rest facilities at Drains Bay, Ballygalley and Glenarm.

1.47 The Trust published a [Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2016](#) which aimed to improve the sustainable development and management of tourism, taking account of the needs of local residents, local tourism businesses, visitors and the environment upon which it stands.

#### **Lough Neagh Partnership**

1.48 The Lough Neagh Partnership aims to ensure that the tourism and leisure potential of the Lough and its waterways is maximised. The main tourism opportunities are the diversity of water based sports and activities. Recently a [Lough Neagh & its Waterways Destination Management Plan 2014-2019](#) has been developed to maximise the benefits of increased tourism. This destination plan aims to dovetail with DETI's draft Tourism Strategy Northern Ireland 2010-2020, together with those of the local Councils and other government bodies.

#### **Lough Neagh & Lower Bann Advisory Committees**

1.49 The Lower Bann Advisory Committee published the [Lower Bann Environmental Management Strategy](#) in 2001. The document highlighted that Newferry and Portglenone are becoming increasingly popular as coarse angling match venues and represent an important tourism resource. The strategy found that because of the potential to develop tourism angling on the river a better understanding of the ecology and distribution of coarse fish in the Lower Bann is essential to ensure that management of the river is sympathetic to sustaining healthy fish stocks.

1.50 The Lough Neagh Advisory Committee, in conjunction with DoE, published the [Lough Neagh Management Strategy](#) in June 2002 and recommended 29 objectives to ensure the co-ordinated management and sustainable development of the Lough Neagh Wetlands. The strategy concluded that if the recommended objectives were implemented, the area would subsequently become more attractive to tourists, which would in turn have a beneficial effect on the local economy. The document recommended a balanced approach to ensure that the environmental impacts are alleviated through stringent monitoring and management techniques.

#### **LOCAL LEVEL**

##### **Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

1.51 One of the five strategic priorities in the draft Council Corporate Plan includes: [Developing our Tourism Potential](#). It is recognised that the potential of the Mid & East Antrim District tourism product has not been fully realised and that unlocking this potential has the promise of delivering great economic benefit to the area. Under this strategic priority five high level objectives have been identified:

1. Build the MEA brand and make Mid & East District a 'go to' destination.
2. Work in partnership with Tourism NI to shape a Regional Tourism Strategy reflective of the area's tourism objectives.
3. Make it easier for visitors to get around the Borough, through improved access, transport links and signage.
4. Actively involve local businesses and communities in developing and delivering tourism products.
5. Safeguard MEA tourism assets including the natural and built environment.

1.52 In May 2015, the Economic Growth & Development Committee agreed to tender for consultancy support in developing a Tourism Strategy for Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.

#### **Sister Cities**

1.53 Four Sister Cities partnerships existed within the 3 predecessors Councils: Ballymena (Moorehead, Kentucky); Carrickfergus (Danville, Kentucky & Anderson, South Carolina); Larne (Clover, South Carolina). These links are

important in terms of business links and more so tourism. A review and evaluation of the current Sister Cities arrangements has been initiated.

#### Tourism Strategies in legacy councils:

##### BALLYMENA

1.54 **The Tourism Audit, Strategy and Action Plan (2010-2013)** for Ballymena Borough Council explored the key issues as to why Ballymena, despite having a strong competitive advantage in terms of location, existing infrastructure (hospitality, retailing and service provision) and its environment (quality scenery with AONB status, a picturesque rural hinterland and award winning villages), was continuing to under-perform in attracting significant visitor spend. Ballymena is geographically well positioned to capture a greater share of the local and wider visitor market given its proximity to the air and seaports and good M2 road links to Belfast. The Strategy recognised that there is potential for the area to become a more significant gateway and orientation point to the Causeway Coast and Glens, coupled with the potential to exploit the tourism value of the relatively under-developed rural tourism product (Slemish, the Glens of Antrim and a number of attractive and historic local villages such Broughshane, Portglenone and Gracehill). The overall objectives of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan were:

- *To raise the profile of tourism in the Borough of Ballymena.*
- *To enhance the Borough's ability to attract visitors, tourists and investment to the Borough.*

- *To establish and build on existing provision and incorporate new dimensions e.g. culture and heritage provision, to enhance Ballymena's tourism and visitor offer.*
- *To increase the number of visitors to the Borough and maximise the economic benefits of tourism.*

1.55 Some of the key outputs of realised through implementation of this Strategy included:

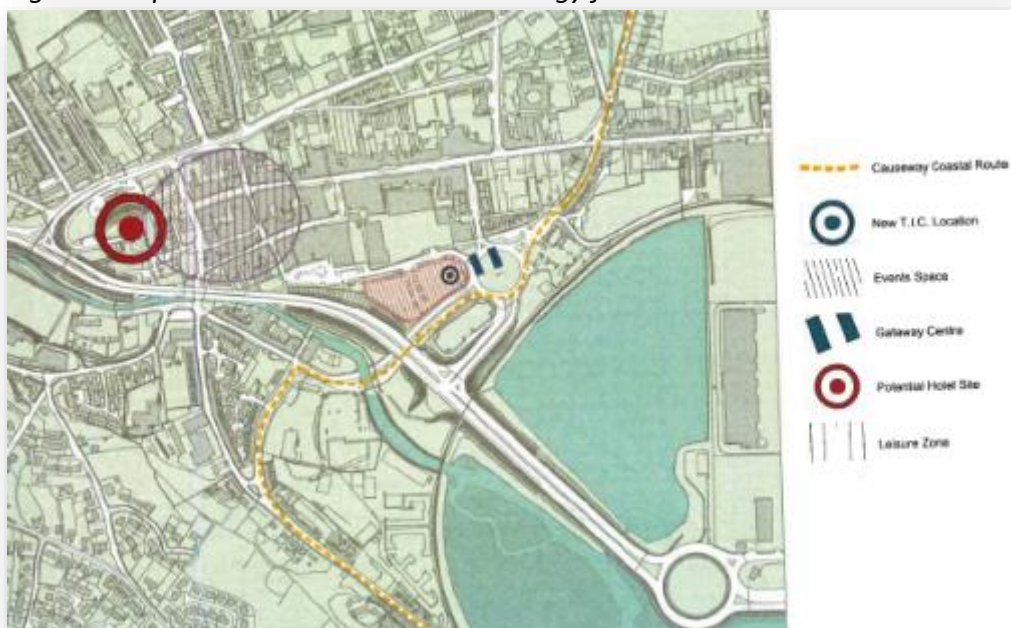
- the ECOS Centre, originally designed to promote environmental learning and sustainable tourism;
- £20 million Braid Museum & Arts Centre, which houses a state-of-the-art Tourist Information Centre;
- major upgrade to the Showground facilities;
- a programme of investment to realise the tourism potential of Slemish was also initiated alongside a new tourism brand 'Gateway to the Glens' which was part of a comprehensive marketing strategy.

1.56 There has also been substantial private sector investment in recent years including at Galgorm Hotel & Resort, Galgorm Golf Club, Tullyglass House Hotel, Adair Arms and Raceview Mill a former woollen mill transformed into a tourist attraction and affordable business park for fledgling businesses.

##### LARNE

1.57 **The Larne Tourism Strategy** was prepared by consultants on behalf of Larne Borough Council to cover the period from 2008 until 2011. This document highlighted the key issues that needed to be addressed in order to improve tourism in the town. The strengths of the town

Fig 1.5: Proposed Tourism & Leisure Strategy from Larne Town Centre



Source: Larne Town Centre Masterplan, 2010

were identified as its location next to the Port and on the Causeway Coastal route. The key weakness highlighted was the effect of the Harbour Highway 'bypass' and the notable lack of both attractions and facilities in the town. Key projects included in the strategy included the creation of a 'Gateway Centre'; the relocation of the Tourism Information Centre; the development of an events programme and the implementation of signage strategy. These key projects were all represented in the non-statutory [Larne Town Centre Masterplan](#) (2010).

1.58 The masterplan identified the Waterfront area as the most important area for tourism as it is highly visible and well connected from the Harbour Highway and centred around the Causeway Coastal Route. This area presented the ideal location for creating a tourism hub.

1.59 The masterplan also recognised that the leisure market relates closely to the tourism market and that a night-time economy in Larne town would help to draw both visitors and locals into the town in the evening, increasing the vitality of the town, improving its identity and diversifying its economic potential. This document proposes a large scale hotel development at Riverdale, which will form a highly visible landmark feature on the main approach into the town, intended to send out the message that Larne is not just a gateway but also a destination in its own right.

### CARRICKFERGUS

1.60 The former Carrickfergus Borough Council did not have an up-to-date tourism strategy. The Council relied to a limited extent on the [Ulster-Scots Feasibility Study \(USFS\) \(March 2012\)](#) (funded by DCAL). This project was a feasibility study to assess the potential for a Ulster Scots heritage trail within the Council areas of Lisburn, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey, and to recommend innovative means of communicating that heritage to visitors.

1.61 The study found that distinctiveness, unique culture, unique things to do that reflect that culture and sense of place all reinforced the importance of Ulster-Scots culture in tourism development. Amongst the most commonly undertaken pursuits by tourists were - visiting a castle; historic houses or other historic monuments; hiking or walking; visiting a park or

garden and going to a visitor or interpretation centre. These are important for the development of Ulster-Scots cultural tourism product delivery 'on the ground'. The research proposes a number of narrative trails, a potential walking trail around Carrickfergus Town Centre and a Carrickfergus Ulster-Scots Driving Trail.

1.62 The non-statutory [Carrickfergus Town Centre Masterplan \(2010\)](#) recognised that Carrickfergus is on the Causeway Coastal Route, with many tourists briefly stopping over in the town on their way to the north coast and Giants Causeway. This plan suggested that this should be further capitalising upon, possibly in reverse as a final point on the southwards route. The document also listed the following significant assets of the town:



1.63 The Masterplan noted the scope for all of these attractions to be improved and developed. One of the major issues is encouraging visitors to the Castle to cross the Marine Highway and explore the town. It is hoped that recent public realm works and pedestrian crossing will assist this. The Masterplan put forward 16 key proposals, which included:

- improvement of the physical appearance of the town, through an upgrade of the public realm and redevelopment of vacant and derelict buildings;
- improved connectivity and access;
- conservation of the Town Walls and the redesign of Marine Gardens aimed to protect and enhance the tourism offer;
- construction of a landmark Arts and Visitor Centre to support the Castle;
- major new 'Esplanade' civic space adjacent Castle;
- harbour restoration and enhancement proposed alongside new centre for sailing excellence.





## SECTION 2

### REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

**TOURSIM GENERALLY:**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2035

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS

**TOURSIM IN THE RURAL AREA:**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2035

REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS

## 2.0 REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

### TOURISM - GENERALLY

2.1 The Regional Policy Context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and regional planning policy statements. A summary of these documents as they pertain to plan making and tourism policy is provided in the following sections:

#### **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2035: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE (RDS)**



2.2 [The Regional Development Strategy 2035](#) (RDS), published on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012, is the spatial strategy of the Executive. It informs the spatial aspects of the strategies of all Government Departments and has a statutory basis. It is prepared under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Under that Order the Department for Regional Development (DRD) is responsible for formulating a strategy for the long term development of Northern Ireland.

2.3 The RDS provides an overarching strategic framework and spatial context for development plans and planning policies. By statute, all new development plans prepared by Council must take account of the RDS and other relevant central government policies and guidance and planning policies / guidance in furthering sustainable development.

2.4 The RDS aims to “**support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential**” including the “**provision of rural recreation and tourism**”. Promoting a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure (RG4) is one of five elements of regional guidance set out in the RDS aimed at underpinning sustainable economic growth in

Northern Ireland. The RDS emphasises the need to support the growth of tourism in NI by achieving balance between tourism development opportunities and conserving natural, built and cultural assets.

2.5 The guidance set out in RG 4 seeks to apply this sustainable approach to tourism development in the following ways:

- **Promote a balanced approach that safeguards tourism infrastructure while benefiting society and the economy.** Under this heading it is recognised that all new or extended infrastructure required to support the tourism industry needs to be sensitively sited with proper regard to both the tourism need and the natural and built environment.

- **Improve facilities for tourists in support of the Tourist Signature Destinations.** Under this heading the RDS encourages a joined up approach amongst stakeholders in regard to investment in access, accommodation and visitor facilities so as to effectively support the Destinations and secure maximum tourism benefit.

- **Encourage environmentally sustainable tourism development.** In regard to this the RDS recognises that the development of tourism infrastructure needs to be appropriate to the location to ensure that the natural assets are protected and enhanced.

2.6 Various RDS strategic guidelines that seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment are likely to have positive impacts on tourism, even though they are not directly aimed at promoting it. For example:

- to support urban and rural renaissance (RG7);
- to conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment (RG11);
- to protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets (SFG 5); and
- to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside by (SFG 13).



## REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS

### Planning Policy Statement 16 (PPS16): Tourism & A Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (draft SPPS)



2.7 The RDS, is complemented by the DOE's Planning Policy Statements, the most relevant of which is [PPS 16: Tourism](#). This document is to be replaced by the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#), a Draft of which was issued for consultation in February 2014. The draft SPPS does not represent a significant change to tourism policy but helps to shorten and simplify the guidance for Councils. The aim of both PPS 16 and the Draft SPPS is to,

*Manage the provision of sustainable and high quality tourism developments in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment.*

2.8 Both documents set regional policy objectives underpinning the RDS and are intended to inform local development plans. They seek to:

- facilitate sustainable tourism development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- contribute to the growth of the regional economy by facilitating tourism growth;
- safeguard tourism assets from inappropriate development;
- utilise and develop the tourism potential of settlements by facilitating tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale;
- sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale in rural areas; and

- ensure a high standard of quality and design for all tourism development.

2.9 The draft SPPS states that in preparing Local Development Plans (LDPs) councils shall bring forward a **tourism strategy**, together with appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the aim, objectives and policy approach of this SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area. The strategy should be informed by early engagement with relevant stakeholders and reflect wider government tourism initiatives and may address the following:

- how future tourism demand is best accommodated;
- safeguarding of key tourism assets<sup>4</sup>;
- identification of potential tourism growth areas;
- environmental considerations; and
- contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.

2.10 Policies in the LDP should:

- safeguard tourism assets;
- provide direction for the assessment of tourism development such as tourism accommodation (hotels, self-catering, holiday parks etc.), and tourist amenities (visitor attractions, leisure/recreation facilities etc.);
- promote high quality design and integration of tourism development with the necessary infrastructure.

2.11 The draft SPPS states that when preparing LDPs and determining planning applications, there should be a general presumption in favour of tourism development within settlements, subject to meeting normal planning requirements.

<sup>4</sup> A tourism asset can be regarded as any feature associated with the built or natural environment which is of intrinsic interest to tourists.



## TOURISM IN THE RURAL AREA

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2035

2.12 The RDS recognises that we must strive to keep our rural areas sustainable and ensure that people who live there, have access to services and are offered opportunities in terms of accessing education, jobs, healthcare & leisure.



Blackhead Path

2.13 A strategic objective within the RDS (SFG13) is to **sustain the overall strength of rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside**, and to improve connectivity of rural communities to services.

2.14 The RDS notes that to sustain rural communities, new development and employment opportunities which respect local, social and environmental circumstances are required. This means facilitating the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations, and ensuring they are integrated appropriately within the settlement or rural landscape. The RDS states that the expansion of rural tourism and associated development that is both sustainable and environmentally sensitive should be encouraged.

### REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS

**Planning Policy Statement 16 (PPS16): Tourism, Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS21): Sustainable Development in the Countryside & A Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (draft SPPS)**

2.15 [PPS21](#) became effective on 1 June 2010 and sets out planning policies for development in the countryside which it defines as land lying outside of settlement limits as designated in development plans.

2.16 The draft SPPS adopts a similar approach to PPS21, setting policy objectives aimed at:

- managing growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which supports a **vibrant rural community**;
- **conserving the landscape and natural resources of the rural area** and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
- facilitating development which contributes to a **sustainable rural economy**; and
- promoting **high standards in the design, siting and landscaping** of development.

2.17 PPS21 provides various forms of tourism development in the countryside. For example, proposals for appropriate tourist amenities, single unit self-catering accommodation, touring caravan/campsites, bunk houses and camping barns could potentially meet the policy tests set out in Policy CTY 11 (Farm Diversification) particularly where the proposal involves the reuse or adaption of existing farm buildings. Similarly, Policy CTY 4 of PPS21 provides opportunities for the conversion and reuse of existing buildings in the countryside for tourism proposals.

2.18 The draft SPPS and PPS16 recognise that the rural area offers potential opportunities for tourism growth due to a number of factors, including the presence of tourism attractions, highly valued landscapes and opportunities to engage in outdoor pursuits and activities such as angling and hill walking. The guiding principle of both documents is to facilitate tourism development where this supports rural communities and promotes a healthy rural economy and tourism sector. However, this is to be balanced with wider sustainability objectives, including those relating to rural amenity, rural character and environmental welfare. Accordingly, these regional planning policies promote farm diversification, the re-use of rural buildings and appropriate redevelopment and expansion proposals for tourism purposes, as offering the greatest scope for sustainable tourism development in the countryside. It is recognised that such proposals may occasionally involve the construction of new buildings.

The background of the page is a faded, sepia-toned photograph of a large bridge with multiple arches. In the foreground, two people wearing hard hats and safety vests are standing on the bridge's walkway, looking towards the right. The overall tone is professional and industrial.

## SECTION 3

### **LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT - EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

BALLYMENA AREA PLAN 1986-2001

LARNE AREA PLAN 2010

BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA PLAN 2015  
(BMAP)

## 3.0 LOCAL CONTEXT – EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PLANS

### BALLYMENA AREA PLAN 1986-2001

3.1 The Ballymena Area Plan 1986-2001 was adopted in November 1989.



3.2 Whilst the plan did not recognise Ballymena District as a prime tourist area it was viewed as an important link between Greater Belfast and the popular resorts of the North Coast. The main attractions to visitors in the District were listed as:

- The ancestral home of US President Arthur, in Cullybackey
- Slemish Mountain
- Gracehill Village
- Portgleneone Forest Park

3.3 In regard to policy for non-residential development in the countryside, the Plan stated that sympathetic consideration would be given to projects designed to facilitate the tourist industry. It further advised that planning applications for hotels and guest houses would be treated on their merits.

### LARNE AREA PLAN 2010 (LAP)

3.4 Adopted in March 1998, the [Larne Area Plan 2010](#) pre-dated publication of the RDS 2025 in September 2001.



3.5 The plan recognised Larne Borough as one of the most scenically impressive areas of NI with potential to attract increased numbers of tourists. The principal attractions of the Borough were listed as follows:

- The coast
- The glens of Glencloy & Glenarm
- Islandmagee peninsula
- Antrim Coast & Glens AONB (which takes in a large part of the Borough to the north of Larne town).

3.6 The plan also recognised that tourism made an important contribution to the local economy and had potential for considerable future growth. However, it was stressed that the development of this potential should not take place at the expense of the natural and man-made assets that attract tourist in the first instance.

3.7 This document highlighted a number of tourist schemes that had been developed in the Borough, including Carnfunnock County Park and Browns Bay. The reinstatement of the former Gobbins pathway system was also listed as a future scheme proposed by the council.

3.8 Three policies in the plan related directly to tourism and these were as follows:

- **T1 – The Department will protect the tourism resources of Larne Borough comprised in the landscape and the natural and man-made**

**environments from inappropriate forms of development** - a Countryside Policy Area was designated to protect landscapes within the AONB and coastal areas from development which was not considered essential.

- **T2 – The Department will normally give favorable consideration to the provision of tourist facilities or tourist accommodation by the sympathetic conversion or appropriate extension of existing buildings and the renovation of vacant buildings.**
- **T3 – The Department will require all proposals for tourist development to respect the basic principles of good design and landscaping.** Regard was to be given to:
  - Topography and features of the site.
  - Scale and character of the proposal.
  - Careful use of materials.
  - Impact on residential amenity.
  - Requirements of those with disabilities.

3.9 Within the **Glenarm** section of the plan it was proposed that the Whiting Mill would be relocated, with the vacant site then developed to provide tourist facilities and a touring caravan park. It was envisaged that the harbour would be repaired and upgraded for tourist and commercial use.

3.10 In regard to the small settlement of **Glenoe**, it was proposed that a walkway and visitor facilities should be developed at the National Trust owned Glenoe waterfall, which is an important scenic attraction in the area.

## **BELFAST METROPOLITAN AREA PLAN 2015 (BMAP)**

3.11 **BMAP**, was adopted on 9 September 2014 and replaces Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001.



## **BMAP Tourism Strategy**

3.12 The BMAP Tourism Strategy comprises the following elements:

- **promoting a sustainable approach to tourism development;**
- **protecting a varied range of tourism development opportunities;**
- **facilitating the development of tourism infrastructure; and**
- **enhancing the urban environment generally and, in particular, “first impression” points at major gateways, and in city and town centres.**

25

## **Promoting a sustainable approach to tourism development**

3.13 The Plan incorporates a sustainable approach to tourism development which seeks to protect key assets and to ensure that new development does not harm the environment, character or cultural heritage of the Plan Area. This is in accord with the policies of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and the DETI draft publication “Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland (TSNI) 2010-2020”.

## **Protecting a varied range of tourism development opportunities**

3.14 The Plan recognises that many tourism assets and opportunities are located within city and town centres e.g. Carrickfergus Town Walls. In addition, the network of Lough Shore, lakes and rivers are important assets, where coarse, game and sea fishing are an attraction for visitors to the area.



### Facilitating the development of tourism infrastructure

3.15 BMAP supports the development of new tourism facilities and encourages the recreational development of a number of sites including the Carrickfergus Escarpment.

### Enhancing the urban environment generally and, in particular, “first impression” points at major gateways, and in city and town centres.

3.16 BMAP recognised that a key challenge is to secure the benefits of tourism development, while conserving the assets of the natural and built heritage which provide the basis for visitor attractions. Excessive pressures can place these assets at risk. The Plan also emphasises the need for quality in the urban environment. Policies for improved design standards at locations, such as city and town centres and gateways to the urban area aim to boost tourism by providing memorable ‘first impressions’ for tourists (see Policy UE 1).

### Carrickfergus District - Tourism Policies

3.17 Part 4 Volume 4 of BMAP 2015 sets out policies on Carrickfergus District which have been developed in the context of the Plan Strategy and Plan Proposals contained in Volume 1 of the Plan and they reflect the policy content of the RDS.



3.18 BMAP recognised that the Borough of Carrickfergus is situated to the north east of the Plan Area along the shore of Belfast Lough. This Lough Shore location and magnificent backdrop of the Antrim Hills to the north and west provide an attractive landscape setting.



### Carrickfergus Marina

3.19 The designation of the BMA Coastal Area has been designed to protect the coastline and is complemented by the designation of an Urban Waterfront in Carrickfergus to promote the marina complex and its surroundings and encourage a vibrant and attractive waterfront that will continue to host a range of prestigious events including the annual Waterfront Festival and ‘Classic Sail’ sailing event.



### Carrickfergus Town Centre

3.20 The Anglo Norman town of Carrickfergus is an important tourism centre based on its significant heritage interest including the medieval Castle, town wall and gates, dating from the 12th century. The town’s location on the Lough Shore offers the potential to attract visitors on route to the major tourism attractions and destinations of the North Coast.



3.21 The Plan proposals aim to promote new development in the historic core and to achieve a high quality of design which is sensitive to the traditional appearance which will improve the physical appearance of the town centre to visitors and shoppers alike. A town wall walk has been developed and promoted in recent years and the protection and ongoing development of this asset in association with new development proposals will further promote the tourism



potential of the town based on its unique heritage. Policy CS 32 states that planning permission will not be granted for development that will prejudice the protection and conservation of the historic Town Wall.

3.22 Policy CS 31 outlines a number of urban design criteria to be applied to Carrickfergus Town Centre which will help safeguard the character of the area and ensure development in the vicinity of the waterfront preserves and where possible enhances views to the Castle.

3.23 The plan states that proposals for visitor infrastructure, such as centres for activity breaks, cruising and water sports facilities and accommodation, including hotel developments, will be considered favourably within the town.

3.24 BMAP also supports the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan proposals to improve the quality of the urban environment and to facilitate continued success of the tourism industry in the town, this includes:

- road narrowing, reduced speed limits and surface treatment on the core section of the Marine Highway running between the centre of Carrickfergus and the Castle/Harbour area, coupled with improved pedestrian crossing facilities.
- further traffic calming in the Town Centre to increase pedestrian priority.

3.25 The document also sets out some of the additional opportunities for recreation and tourism including:

- provision of a coastal path;
- close proximity of the National Cycle Network;
- the coastline – a popular location for maritime pursuits including sailing, jet skiing and sea fishing;
- the countryside – opportunities for golf, angling and a number of scenic walks including part of the Ulster Way.

3.26 In summary the Carrickfergus District Proposals identify, define, designate and safeguard, as appropriate, specific areas where the retention or provision of additional open space areas, recreational, tourism and other community facilities are required to serve the needs of the Borough.







## SECTION 4

### TOURISM PROFILE OF MID & EAST ANTRIM

KEY ASSETS & TOURISM RESOURCES

STATISTICS & PERFORMANCE

- OVERNIGHT TRIPS
- EXPENDITURE ON OVERNIGHT TRIPS
- REASON FOR VISIT
- COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION
- VISITOR ATTRACTIONS
- EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM RELATED INDUSTRY

MID & EAST ANTRIM KEY TOURISM  
FACTS

## 4.0 TOURISM PROFILE OF MID & EAST ANTRIM DISTRICT

### KEY ASSETS & TOURISM RESOURCES

4.1 The potential to attract tourism and to sustain interest and investment has historically been based on a mixture of both private and public interests and investment.

4.2 Natural and built heritage resources are often deemed to be the key players in the ability to generate and attract tourism and associated revenue.

### Natural Heritage & Landscape

4.3 As outlined in the previous position paper on Environmental Assets, Mid & East Antrim contains a rich natural heritage and high quality landscape. Significant areas and sites are protected by various environmental and landscape designations to ensure retention of these special characteristics, delicate ecosystems and unique biodiversity (see below). The Antrim Coast road is a major tourist attraction of regional significance. Some 65 miles of this road falls within Mid & East Antrim Borough and is currently being marketed as a key link of the Causeway Coastal Route between Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. In addition part of the

Antrim Coast & Glens AONB is located in MEA. This AONB is dominated by the Antrim Plateau rising to over 500m and cut by fast flowing rivers to form a series of picturesque glens running east and north-east towards the sea. These areas attract tourists and provide opportunities for a wide range of outdoor activities including hiking, fishing and cycling.

### Built Heritage

4.4 The area also has a rich archaeological heritage with standing stones, raths, cairns and monuments distributed across the countryside. The area's cultural, historical and built heritage includes visitor attractions such as Carrickfergus Castle, Andrew Jackson Cottage, and the museums in Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne towns.

4.5 The ability of these assets to attract visitors can be enhanced through the hosting of events and activities by Council and other organisations seeking to promote tourism in the area. (*Appendix A: Map A2 & Table A6 outlines in greater detail the key tourism assets & attractions available throughout the Mid & East Antrim area*).

Environmental & Landscape designations include:

- 4 Ramsar sites
- 5 Special Protection Areas
- 3 Special Areas of Conservation
- 1 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 36 Areas of Special Scientific Interest
- 7 Nature Reserves





## STATISTICS & PERFORMANCE

4.6 Measuring tourism is challenging with no single measure providing a definitive statistic. The latest regional tourism statistics were published on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015 by NISRA and are referred to in the introduction (paragraph 1.15).



Carnlough

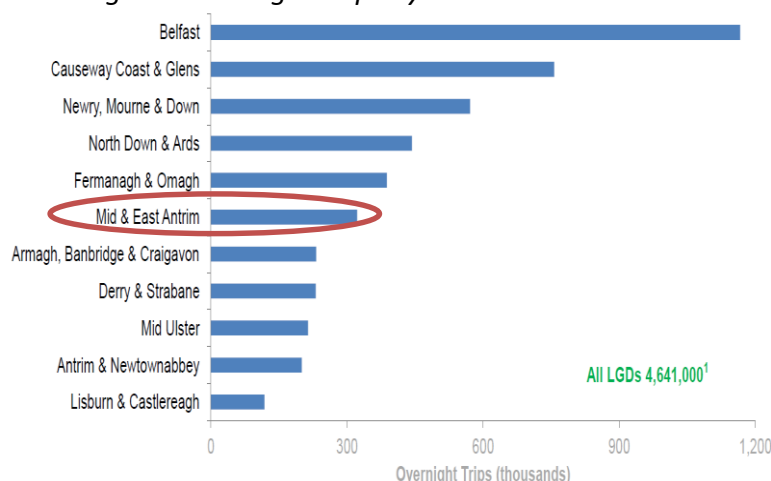
4.7 The latest local government level tourism statistics, were released by NISRA on 30 July 2015 and relate to the year ending 2014. A tourism profile of Mid & East Antrim district based on these statistics can be demonstrated under the following indicators:

1. Overnight trips (2014)
2. Expenditure on overnight trips (2014)
3. Reason for Visit (2011-2014)
4. Commercial Accommodation (2014)
5. Visitor Attractions (2014)
6. Employment in Tourism Related Industry (2014)

## OVERNIGHT TRIPS

4.8 In 2014, 322,107 overnight trips were made to Mid & East Antrim, a 28% increase from the 2013 figure. This represented 7% of the NI total and ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of the 11 new councils. The estimated number of nights spent on overnight trips equalled 1,146,307 and averaged 3.5 days (Fig. 4.1 & Appendix A: Table A1 & A2)

Fig 4.1: Overnight Trips by LGD- 2014

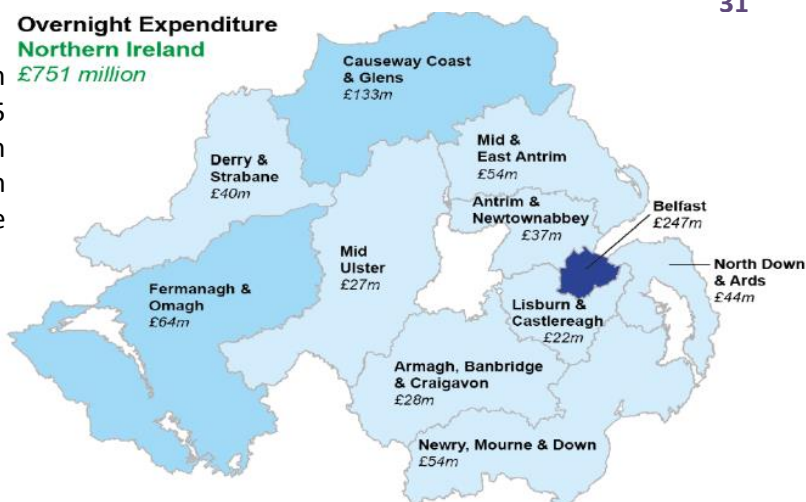


Source: NISRA Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

## EXPENDITURE ON OVERNIGHT TRIPS

4.9 As the number of overnight trips increased so did the expenditure on overnight trips by 33% since 2013 and equated to an estimated spend of £53,784,132 in the district. This represented 7% of the total spend in NI and ranked 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 11 new councils. The average spend per trip was £167 (Appendix A: Table A1).

Fig 4.2: Overnight Expenditure (£)- 2014



Source: NISRA Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

## REASON FOR VISIT

4.10 Overnight trips for holiday purposes makes up 45% of the Northern Ireland market, visiting friends and relatives 42% and business trips 8%. However, this masks significant local variation. The reason for the majority of overnight trips to Mid & East Antrim were to visit friends and relatives accounting for over half (53%) of all trips taken in the area. The majority of overnight trips

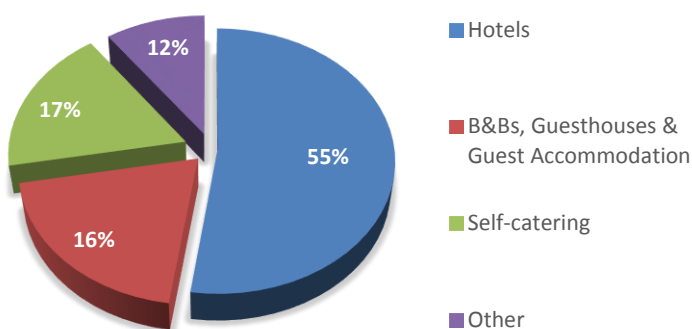
can be attributed to the domestic and GB markets (Appendix A: Table A3).



### TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

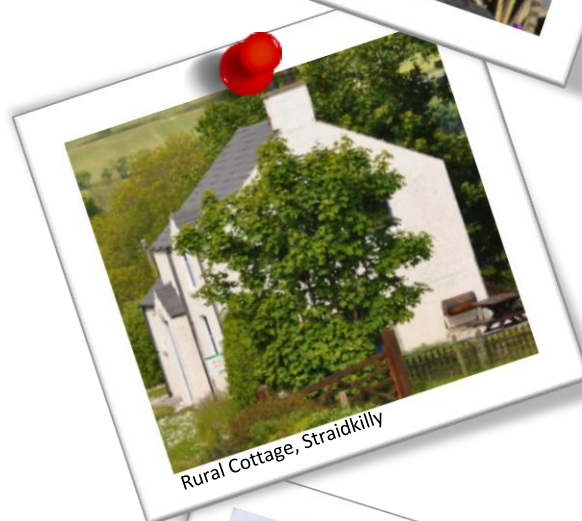
4.11 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has 6.4% of the available hotel beds in NI, 4.8% of available B&Bs/Guesthouse and Guest Accommodation beds and 3% of the available self-catering beds in NI. Ballymena currently has four hotels in close proximity to the town, with a further two hotels recently granted approval adjacent to the M2. There are three hotels in Carrickfergus and only one in Larne town. A further 3 hotels are dotted along the Coast Road (Appendix A: Map A1). Across the various types of tourist accommodation stock the former Larne Council area has the largest number of bed spaces in MEA Borough (Fig. 4.3 & Appendix A: Table A4).

Fig 4.3: No. of beds available by accommodation type in Mid & East Antrim- 2014



Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

4.13 Within the Borough there are currently four touring caravan/motorhome parks, located at Carnfunnock Country Park, Curran Court, Islandmagee & Carnlough. In addition there are four motorhome service points located at Portglenone Marina, Houston's Mill Broughshane, Carrickfergus Harbour and Bentra Golf course. Campsites are available at three locations in Larne and Islandmagee (Appendix A: Map A1).





### VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

4.14 The number of visitor attractions included in NISRA statistics in MEA increased from 8 to 15 between 2011-2014. The number of visitors to these attractions increased by 190,079 (56%) between 2013 and 2014 to a total of 527,300. The top attraction was Carnfunnock Country Park followed by the Arts Centre at the Braid (Table 4.1). Carnfunnock also came out top in the 2015 Ni4 Kids magazine 'Family Visitor Attraction of the Year (Large)' category.

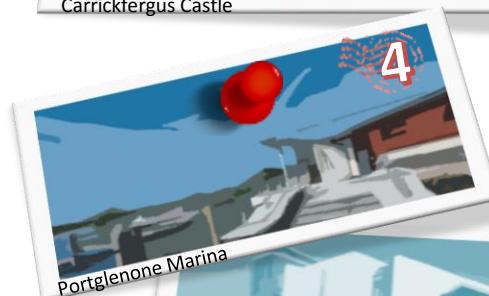
Table 4.1: Mid & East Antrim visitor attractions and number of visitors- 2011-2014

		2011	2012	2013	2014
1	Carnfunnock Country Park	230,615	193,389	204,534	192,241
2	Arts Centre at the Braid	106,721	94,888	104,557	94,409
3	Carrickfergus Castle	67,501	58,422	66,559	70,063
4	Portglenone Marina	.	.	.	65,814*
5	Mid Antrim Museum at the Braid	29,348	34,766	24,729	34,922
6	Carrickfergus Museum	18,114	20,305	20,823	25,268
7	Slemish Mountain	.	.	.	12,338
8	Portglenone Forest Park	.	.	9,222	8,859
9	The Steensons Jewellery Shop	3,810	3,900	4,100	5,100
10	Larne Museum & Arts Centre	5,063	4,489	3,725	3,619
11	Flame! The Gasworks Museum Of Ireland	1,969	1,421	2,106	2,186
12	Andrew Jackson Cottage & US Rangers Centre	1,153	1,379	1,421	2,167
13	Arthur Ancestral Home	5,000	2,600	.	1,222

Note: Ranked based on 2014 visitors & based solely on attractions who participated in survey Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014  
\*TBC



Carrickfergus Castle



Portglenone Marina



Mid Antrim Museum @ Braid



Carrickfergus Museum



Slemish



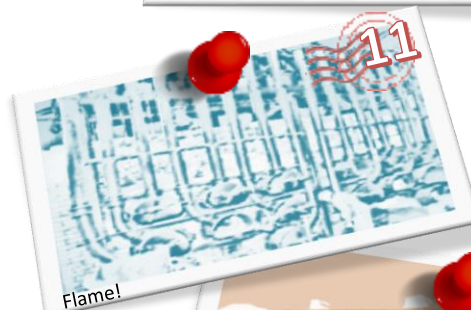
Portglenone Forest



Steensons Jewellery



Larne Museum



Flame!



Andrew Jackson Cottage



Arthur Ancestral Home



Carnfunnock Country Park



Arts Centre @ The Braid

**EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY**

4.15 Tourism jobs in MEA increased by 6% between 2011 and 2013 to 3,476 jobs. Of the 11 new councils this was joint third behind Causeway Coast & Glens (12% increase) and Derry Strabane (8%). However, MEA still had the third lowest number of tourism jobs out of the 11 councils and lags well behind the front runner, Belfast City Council (17,319 tourism jobs)(Appendix A: Table A7).

*Table 4.2: Tourism Jobs in Mid & East Antrim- 2013*

	Accommodation for Visitors	Food & Beverage serving activities	Sporting & recreational activities	Tourism Jobs
<b>NI</b>	10,057	32,948	7,135	<b>58,042</b>
<b>Mid &amp; East Antrim</b>	839	2,128	352	<b>3,678</b>
<b>Ballymena</b>	474	1,049	121	<b>1,794</b>
<b>Carrickfergus</b>	172	681	98	<b>1,008</b>
<b>Larne</b>	193	398	133	<b>875</b>

*Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014*

## MID & EAST ANTRIM KEY TOURISM FACTS

TRIPS, NIGHTS & SPEND	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014 v 2013	2014 % of NI
<b>Trips</b>	250,130	256,076	251,338	322,107	<b>+28%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Nights</b>	782,770	655,395	839,953	1,146,307	<b>+36%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Spend</b>	£35.2m	£32.8m	£40.5m	£54m	<b>+33%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Average length of stay</b>	3.1	2.6	3.3	3.5		
<b>Average spend per trip</b>	£141	£128	£161	£167		



527,300 visits to visitor attractions in Mid & East Antrim LGD in 2014. Carnfunnock Country Park attracted the most visitors in 2014.

Tourism jobs in Mid & East Antrim increased by 6% while non-tourism jobs have remained the same since 2011

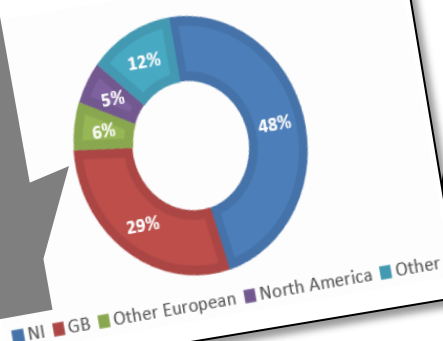


3,678 tourism jobs in Mid & East Antrim LGD – 9% of total employee jobs.

### ORIGIN OF VISITORS 2012-2014 (3 year rolling average)

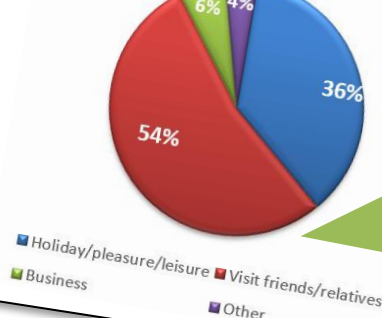
The majority of overnight trips can be attributed to the domestic and GB markets.

Four other LGDs attracted greater proportions of European/North American overnight trips.




### REASON FOR VISIT 2012-2014 (3 year rolling average)

Visiting friends/relatives overnight trips are important in the Mid & East Antrim LGD, accounting for over half of all trips taken in the area.



### ACCOMMODATION STATISTICS 2014

	STOCK			OCCUPANCY	
	Number	Rooms	Beds	Room	Bed-space
 <b>Hotels</b>	13	503	1,112	62%	49%
<b>GH/GA/B&amp;B*</b>	48	143	326	23%	22%
<b>Self-catering</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Rooms</b>	<b>Beds</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>Peak (April-Sep)</b>
	51	176	341	35%	44%

\*Guesthouse/guest accommodation/bed & breakfast

Mid & East Antrim LGD has 6.4% of the available hotel beds in NI, 4.8% of B&B/Guest house and Guest Accommodation beds and 3% of the available self-catering beds in NI.

This LGD has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest hotel bed-space occupancy of all the LGDs

Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

Notes: Tourism performance estimates presented above are based on overnight trips made by NI residents and visitors from outside NI. Estimates relate to overnight trips only and excludes day trips

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Planning Committee with an overview of Mid & East Antrim tourism assets, an overview of the recent performance of the tourism sector in the area, and how a sustainable approach to tourism development can be developed in the Local Development Plan (LDP).

A summary of the key findings are as follows:

- (i) In 2014 the Mid & East Antrim area had the sixth highest number of overnight trips secured and the fifth highest expenditure on overnight trips of all the local government districts;
- (ii) The reason for the majority of overnight trips to Mid & East Antrim were to visit friends and relatives accounting for over half (53%) of all trips taken in the area. The majority of overnight trips can be attributed to the domestic and GB markets;
- (iii) Mid & East Antrim has the third highest number of hotels but is only sixth out of the 11 local government districts in terms of the number of hotel bed spaces. The district has the fifth lowest number of guest house/bed and breakfast bed spaces in all the local government districts;
- (iv) Mid & East Antrim has the second highest hotel bed space occupancy (49%) of all the local government districts;
- (v) The restoration of The Gobbins cliff path complete with visitor centre, café and playground, will create a unique coastal attraction and further improve the visitor experience in the Causeway Coast and Glens region. It is hoped that the site will become a major tourism asset of regional significance and a strengthening factor for the local economy;
- (vi) Activity tourism such as angling, hill walking and horse riding have the potential to create important economic benefits particularly in the rural area. The Causeway Coastal Route within the Borough also has potential to attract cyclists as part of the legacy of the Giro d'Italia Grand Depart event in 2014;
- (vii) The district also has potential to benefit from the £50m golf could generate in the Northern Ireland economy within the next five years<sup>6</sup>. Golfers spend considerably more money than regular tourists and Galgorm Castle Golf Club set in the grounds of a prestigious historical estate is one of Ireland's finest Championship courses;
- (viii) Water sport activities, including those based on the River Bann and along the coast, have important tourist potential;
- (ix) Mid & East Antrim has a number of built heritage assets including Carrickfergus Castle and deep links to Ulster Scots Heritage which are strong incentives towards attracting visitors to the area;
- (x) The hills, glens, coast and inland waterways of the area are very important in terms of their natural heritage and landscape value.
- (xi) Despite recent increases in job numbers, employment in the tourism sector in Mid & East Antrim is well below the NI average, with the Borough having the third lowest number of tourism jobs out of all the local government districts.

<sup>6</sup> Minister Foster, March 2015, launch of NI Golf Strategy



## CONCLUSIONS

The contribution of the tourism sector to economic growth and employment cannot be underestimated. It can also bring other positive benefits to an area such as improved well-being and increased leisure/recreational opportunities. Tourism is an integral part of rural regeneration and diversification but is also important to our towns and villages helping to sustain local attractions such as museums, galleries, festivals and art and craft workshops.

It is evident that tourism in the Mid & East Antrim Council area has been underperforming in comparison to some other councils, such as Belfast and Causeway Coast and Glens. It is also evident that there is a distinct tourism brand 'Gateway to the Glens' in operation in the former Ballymena Council area but there does not appear to be similar distinct identity or branding in the former Larne and Carrickfergus Council areas. The new council is currently trying to devise a strong tourism brand to promote the Mid & East Antrim Borough and to this end is engaging with Tourism NI in exploring how Mid & East Antrim can be effectively integrated and aligned with the Causeway Coastal Route as the 'big concept sell' to international visitors.

Tourism NI and other government related bodies alongside Mid & East Antrim Council are responsible for promoting and developing the tourism offer and work on the preparation of a Tourism Strategy has recently commenced by Council.

The role of the planning system is focused on land use and in regard to tourism, essentially includes facilitating tourism development for the benefit of the local economy and community, whilst safeguarding the assets or attractions on which tourism depends. In turn, this requires the formulation of a Strategy, through the Local Development Plan, designed to achieve a sustainable balance between these objectives. It will be important that the Plan Strategy takes into account the following:

- tourism needs as reflected through the emerging overarching Regional Tourism Strategy;
- tourism needs in Mid & East Antrim as identified through the emerging Council Tourism Strategy;
- adequately safeguard key tourism assets associated with the natural environment and built/archaeological heritage from inappropriate development;
- how future tourism demand is best accommodated, taking account of market needs and sustainable development considerations;
- take into account environmental impacts of tourism development;
- sustain a vibrant rural community and recognise the potential of settlements by supporting tourism development of an appropriate nature, location and scale; and
- ensure a high standard of quality and design for all new tourism development such as new tourism accommodation amenity facilities.

Members are requested to note the content of this paper and the role of the Local Development Plan in regard to tourism development.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A TOURISM STATISTICS

APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

## APPENDIX A:

Table A1: Estimated overnight Trips, Nights and Expenditure - NI and Local Government District- 2014

	Overnight Trips		Nights		Expenditure	
		% of NI		% of NI	(£)	% of NI
Antrim & Newtownabbey	199,940	4% (10 <sup>th</sup> )	728,568	5% (9 <sup>th</sup> )	37,224,267	5% (8 <sup>th</sup> )
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	231,999	5% (8 <sup>th</sup> )	769,335	5% (8 <sup>th</sup> )	28,279,314	4% (9 <sup>th</sup> )
Belfast	1,166,224	25% (1 <sup>st</sup> )	3,684,076	24% (1 <sup>st</sup> )	247,497,836	33% (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Causeway Coast & Glens	756,564	16% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	2,703,920	18% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	133,288,227	18% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Derry & Strabane	230,961	5% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	810,462	5% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	39,738,714	5% (7 <sup>th</sup> )
Fermanagh & Omagh	387,703	8% (5 <sup>th</sup> )	1,067,134	7% (6 <sup>th</sup> )	63,748,956	8% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
Lisburn & Castlereagh	117,625	3% (11 <sup>th</sup> )	471,200	3% (11 <sup>th</sup> )	22,470,853	3% (11 <sup>th</sup> )
Mid & East Antrim	322,107	7% (6 <sup>th</sup> )	1,146,307	8% (5 <sup>th</sup> )	53,784,132	7% (5 <sup>th</sup> )
Mid Ulster	213,740	5% (9 <sup>th</sup> )	622,114	4% (10 <sup>th</sup> )	26,589,691	4% (10 <sup>th</sup> )
Newry, Mourne & Down	571,175	12% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	1,488,281	10% (4 <sup>th</sup> )	54,282,767	7% (4 <sup>th</sup> )
North Down & Ards	442,943	10% (4 <sup>th</sup> )	1,571,905	10% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	44,333,737	6% (6 <sup>th</sup> )
Northern Ireland	4,640,981	100%	15,063,302	100%	751,238,493	100%

Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

Table A2: Estimated number of Overnight Trips in NI by Local Government District: 2011-2014

	2011		2012		2013		2014	
		% of NI		% of NI		% of NI		% of NI
Antrim & Newtownabbey	219,003	5%	250,806	6%	234,263	6%	199,940	4%
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	222,200	5%	128,572	3%	201,334	5%	231,999	5%
Belfast	984,181	24%	1,152,534	28%	1,123,803	27%	1,166,224	25%
Causeway Coast & Glens	797,904	20%	774,608	19%	704,716	17%	756,564	16%
Derry & Strabane	168,064	4%	164,264	4%	254,314	6%	230,961	5%
Fermanagh & Omagh	366,799	9%	295,061	7%	364,682	9%	387,703	8%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	145,321	4%	123,564	3%	123,727	3%	117,625	3%
Mid & East Antrim	250,138	6%	256,076	6%	251,338	6%	322,107	7%
Mid Ulster	115,796	3%	168,532	4%	141,232	3%	213,740	5%
Newry, Mourne & Down	540,609	13%	454,092	11%	453,109	11%	571,175	12%
North Down & Ards	256,380	6%	339,991	8%	342,684	8%	442,943	10%
Northern Ireland	4,066,394	100%	4,108,100	100%	4,195,200	100%	4,640,981	100%

Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

Table A3: Estimated average Overnight Trips in NI by Reason for Visit and Local Government District, 2012-2014 (3 year average)

	Holiday/Pleasure/ Leisure			Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)			Business			Other			All		
		% HPL	% LGD		% VFR	% LGD		% Business	% LGD		% Other	% LGD		% NI	% LGD
Antrim and Newtownabbey	81,833	4%	34%	122,605	7%	50%	22,420	6%	9%	17,175	6%	7%	244,033	6%	100%
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	40,162	2%	20%	128,992	7%	65%	14,816	4%	7%	14,715	5%	7%	198,685	4%	100%
Belfast	484,543	26%	40%	450,621	24%	37%	197,087	49%	16%	72,161	27%	6%	1,204,412	27%	100%
Causeway Coast and Glens	448,607	24%	60%	212,455	11%	28%	28,279	7%	4%	64,546	24%	9%	753,887	17%	100%
Derry and Strabane	67,977	4%	32%	98,883	5%	46%	31,827	8%	15%	14,736	6%	7%	213,423	5%	100%
Fermanagh and Omagh	160,175	8%	45%	158,806	9%	45%	19,465	5%	6%	14,381	5%	4%	352,828	8%	100%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	37,995	2%	30%	71,215	4%	55%	16,544	4%	13%	2,854	1%	2%	128,609	3%	100%
Mid and East Antrim	102,195	5%	36%	148,718	8%	53%	17,838	4%	6%	11,412	4%	4%	280,163	6%	100%
Mid Ulster	55,811	3%	32%	95,811	5%	54%	16,867	4%	10%	8,675	3%	5%	177,165	4%	100%
Newry, Mourne and Down	254,012	13%	51%	195,660	11%	39%	19,880	5%	4%	26,391	10%	5%	495,943	11%	100%
North Down and Ards	165,207	9%	44%	172,337	9%	46%	18,436	5%	5%	20,662	8%	5%	376,642	9%	100%
Northern Ireland	1,898,516	100%	43%	1,856,105	100%	42%	403,460	100%	9%	267,707	100%	6%	4,425,789	100%	100%

Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

Table A4: Accommodation Stock in Mid & East Antrim- 2014

Accommodation Type		Ballymena	Carrickfergus	Larne	Mid & East Antrim
Hotels	Number	5	4	4	13
	Rooms	208	158	137	503
	Beds	468	342	302	1,112
Guesthouses	Number	1	0	3	4
	Rooms	3	0	20	23
	Beds	6	0	43	49
Bed and Breakfasts	Number	20	9	18	47 (44)
	Rooms	52	28	50	130 (120)
	Beds	115	68	115	298 (277)
Hostels	Number	0	0	1	1
	Rooms	0	0	9	9
	Beds	0	0	51	51
Self-Catering Units	Numbers	17	16	19	52 (51)
	Units	28	17	33	78
	Rooms	76	38	64	178 (176)
	Beds	145	70	131	346 (341)
Guest Accommodation	Number	0	0	0	0
	Rooms	0	0	0	0
	Beds	0	0	0	0
Bunk House	Number	1	0	1	2
	Rooms	4	0	7	11
	Beds	19	0	16	35
Campus	Number	0	0	1	1
	Rooms	0	0	131	131
	Beds	0	0	140	140
All	Number	44	29	47	120 (116)
	Rooms	343	224	418	985 (973)
	Beds	753	480	798	2,031 (2,005)

Source: NISRA Local Government District Certified Tourism Stock (administrative geographies) 2014. Figures in brackets for Mid & East Antrim sourced from DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014 and show some anomalies with the cumulative total of former council areas.

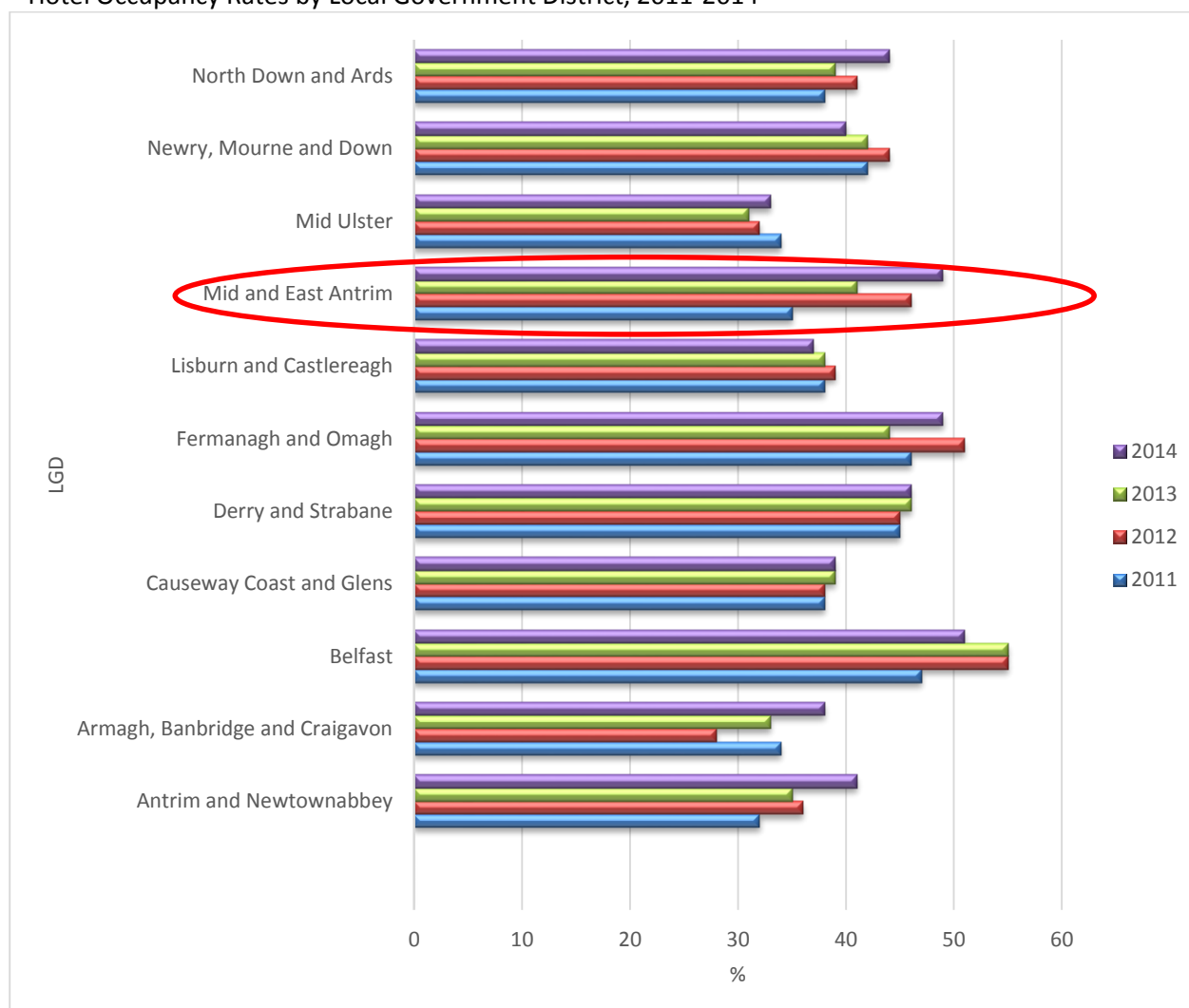


Table A5: Hotel Occupancy Rates by Local Government District, 2011-2014

	2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy
Antrim & Newtownabbey	47%	32%	50%	36%	50%	35%	58%	41%
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	49%	34%	44%	28%	54%	33%	56%	38%
Belfast	63%	47%	73%	55%	72%	55%	74%	51%
Causeway Coast and Glens	57%	38%	59%	38%	58%	39%	59%	39%
Derry and Strabane	61%	45%	61%	45%	68%	46%	60%	46%
Fermanagh & Omagh	55%	46%	65%	51%	58%	44%	59%	49%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	55%	38%	63%	39%	57%	38%	52%	37%
Mid and East Antrim	47%	35%	56%	46%	53%	41%	62%	49%
Mid Ulster	45%	34%	46%	32%	42%	31%	47%	33%
Newry, Mourne & Down	53%	42%	57%	44%	59%	42%	52%	40%
North Down & Ards	49%	38%	53%	41%	55%	39%	56%	44%
Northern Ireland	57%	42%	64%	47%	64%	46%	65%	46%

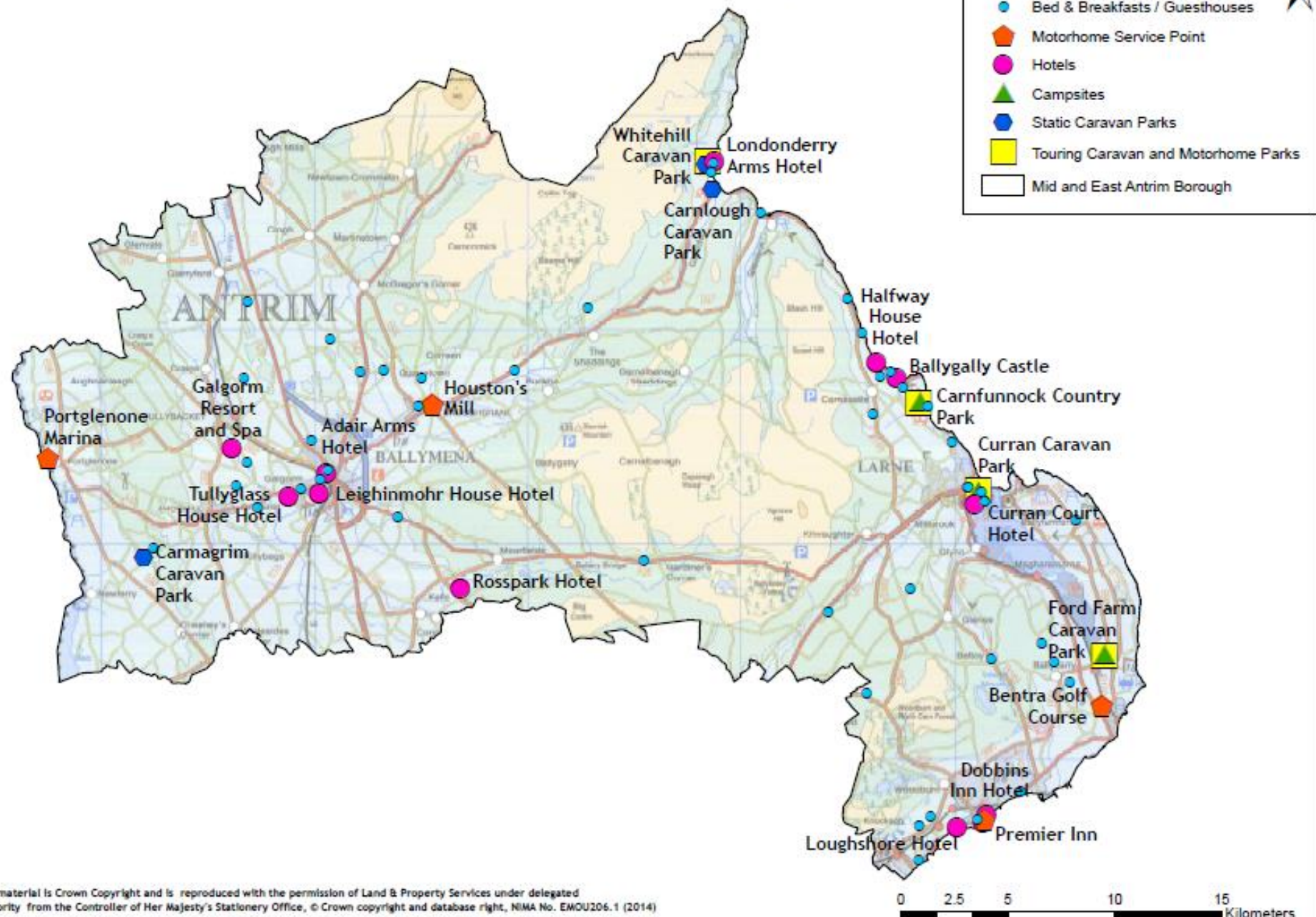
Source: DETI Local Government District, Tourism Statistics 2014

Hotel Occupancy Rates by Local Government District, 2011-2014



Map A1:

# Accommodation Assets in Mid and East Antrim Borough



Map A2:  
Key Natural and Historic Tourism Assets in  
Mid and East Antrim

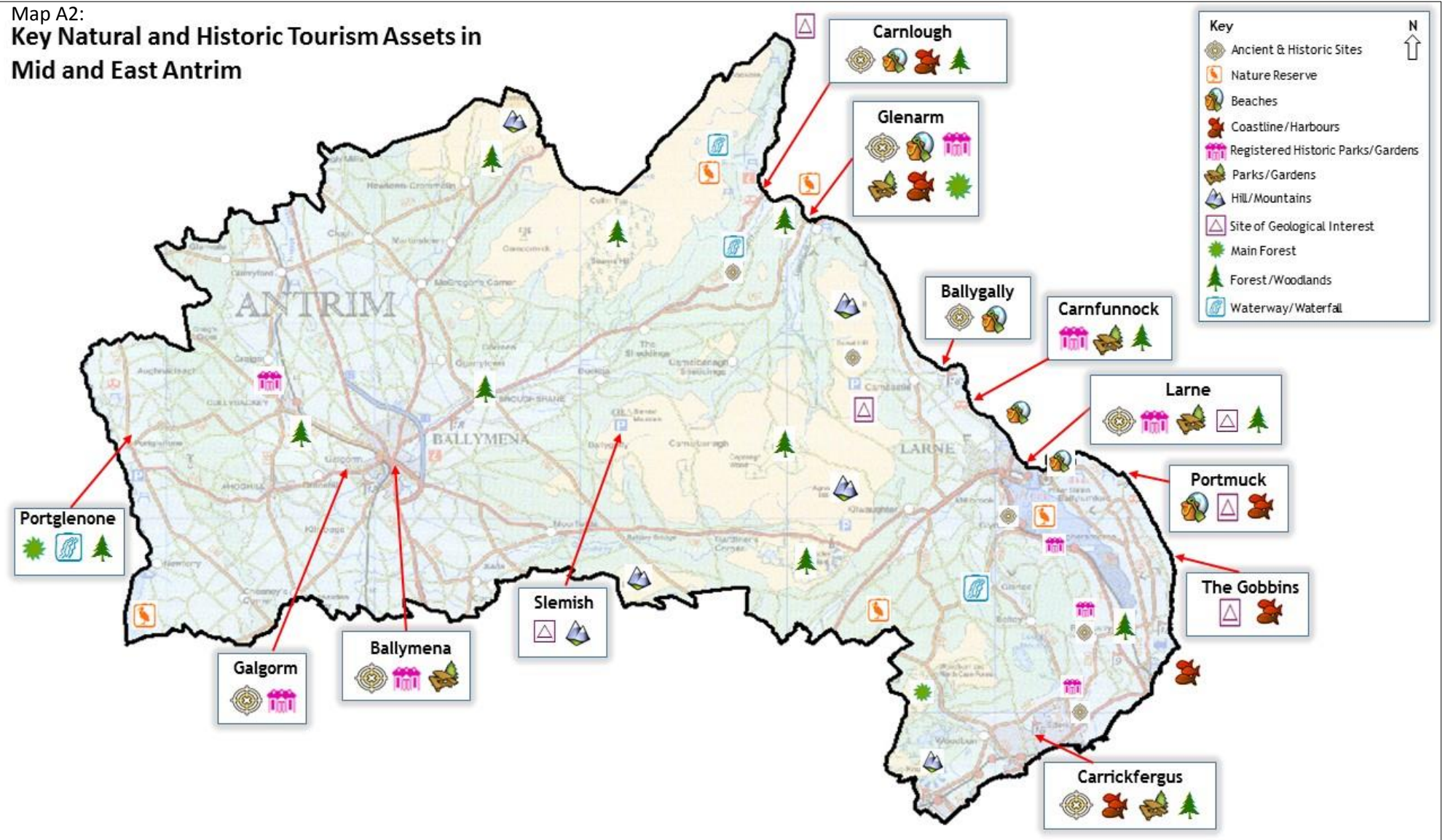




Table A6: Key Tourism Assets in Mid &amp; East Antrim

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Other Forests/Woodland contd.
<b>AONB</b>	Seaview Wood, Seacourt, Larne
Antrim Coast and Glens AONB	Clements Wood, Ballygowan Road, Larne
<b>MOUNTAINS/HILLS</b>	Straidkilly Nature Reserve
Slemish	Carnfunnock Woodland
Slievenanee, Glenravel	Oakfield Glen
Soarns Hill/Slievebane	Diamond Jubilee Wood, Whitehead
Big Collin	Bashfordsland Wood, Carrickfergus
Scawt Hill, Cairncastle	Woodland at Amphitheatre Mill Ponds
Sallagh Braes, Cairncastle	<b>NATURE RESERVES</b>
Agnews Hill, Larne	Lough Beg (partly in MEA)
Knockagh, Greenisland	Cranny Falls, Carnlough
<b>SITES OF GEOLOGICAL INTEREST</b>	Clements Wood, Larne
Slemish	Straidkilly
Garron Point	Swan Island
Scawt Hill, Cairncastle	<b>PARKS &amp; GARDENS</b>
Portmuck, Islandmagee	Peoples Park
The Gobbins, Islandmagee	Memorial Park
Waterloo Beds, Larne Foreshore	Moat Park
<b>COASTLINE – CLIFFS/ HARBOURS</b>	King George V Park
The Gobbins, Islandmagee	Carnfunnock Country Park & Walled Garden
Portmuck Harbour, Islandmagee	Dixon Park
Carnlough Harbour	Curran Park
Glenarm Harbour	Chaine Park
Blackhead Path, Whitehead	Town Park
Carrickfergus Marina	Glenarm Walled Garden
<b>BEACHES</b>	Marine Gardens
Drains Bay	Knot Garden
Ballygally	Shaftesbury Park
Glenarm	<b>REGISTERED HISTORIC PARKS, GARDENS AND DEMESNES</b>
Carnlough	Galgorm Castle
Browns Bay, Islandmagee	Hillmount
Ferris Bay, Islandmagee	People's Park
Portmuck, Islandmagee	Carnfunnock
<b>WATERWAYS/WATERFALLS</b>	Chaine Park
Portglenone Marina (River Bann)	Drumalis
Cranny Falls, Carnlough	Glenarm Castle
Doonan Waterfall (Doonan Leap)	Magheramorine House
Gleno Waterfall	Red Hall
<b>FORESTS</b>	Castle Dobbs
<b>Main Forests</b>	
Portglenone Forest	
Glenarm Forest	
Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus	
<b>Other Forests/Woodland</b>	
Top Wood, Finlaystown Rd, Portglenone	
Bracknamuckley Forest, Gortgole Rd, Portglenone	
Cleggan Forest, Carnlough Rd, Broughshane	
Keel Wood, Kennelbridge Road, Ballymena,	
Galgorm Wood, Cullybackey	
Little Acorn Wood, Broughshane	
The Drum, Cargan	
Ecos Woodland	
Ballyboley Forest, Larne	
Capanagh Forest, Starbog Rd, Larne	

Ballymena Area
Larne Area
Carrickfergus Area





<b>BUILT ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>SELECTION OF ANCIENT &amp; HISTORIC SITES</b>	Dolmen at Cairncastle and Ballylumford
The Chain Memorial, Larne	Knockdhu, Cairncastle – Area of Significant Archaeological Interest
Olderfleet Castle (ruins), Larne	Linford Earthworks, Cairncastle
The Black Arch, Coast Road, Larne	Templecorran Church & graveyard, Ballycarry
St Cedma's Church, Inver	St John's Islandmagee
War Memorial (The Cenotaph), Larne	Motte and bailey, Harryville
Bridge Lime Kiln, High Street, Carnlough	Galgorm Castle
The Bridge, Harbour Road, Carnlough	St Patrick's Church & graveyard, Ballymena
Doonan Fort Motte, Carnlough	Old Parish Church & graveyard, Ballymena
Glenarm Castle	Carrickfergus Castle
The Barbican Lodge/Gate, Glenarm	St. Nicholas' Church, Carrickfergus
Glenarm Bridge	Town Walls, Carrickfergus
St Patrick's Church and Glenarm Friary	Gasworks, Carrickfergus
Ballygally Castle	Dalways Bawn (NE of Carrickfergus)
Glynn Old Church	Conservation Areas in: Gracehill, Glenarm, Carrickfergus & Whitehead

<b>FESTIVALS/EVENTS</b>	<b>ARTS/CULTURE/RELIGIOUS</b>
Ballymena Showgrounds- Agricultural show	Arthur Cottage & Interpretative Centre, Cullybackey
Big Splash Triathlon & River Festival, Portglenone	Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey, Portglenone
Gig 'n' the Bann Festival, Portglenone	Slemish pilgrimage (St. Patrick) (Myth & Legend)
Dale Farm Milk Cup Tournament	Art in the Park – People's Park
Ulster Festival of Steam & Transport, Ballymena	Museum & Arts Centre /Mid Antrim Museum at the Braid
NI Open at Galgorm	Gracehill Moravian settlement
St. Patrick's Day at Slemish mountain	Crosskeys Inn – Traditional Irish music sessions
The Broadisland Gathering, Ballycarry	Billy Andy's- Traditional Irish music sessions
Carnlough Carnival Week	Ballygally Castle Hotel Ghost (Myth & Legend)
Dalriada Festival, Glenarm Castle	Larne Historic Church Trail
Annual Tulip Festival, Glenarm Castle	Larne Museum & Arts Centre
Cairncastle Ulster Scots Bluegrass & Folk Festival	Carrickfergus Castle
Siege of Carrickfergus Re-enactment	Carrickfergus Museum
<b>COOKERY &amp; CRAFTS</b>	Flame! The Gasworks Museum of Ireland
Raceview Mill, Broughshane Craft Village	Andrew Jackson Cottage, Carrick
Raceview Gallery, Broughshane	Steam Trains Ireland, Whitehead (The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland)
Gracehill Gallery, 3 Mill Street, Ballymena	Ulster Scots Heritage
The Braid Gallery, Railway St Ballymena	Game of Thrones tour – sites in Mid & East Antrim include –
Glen Gallery, 48 Fenagh Rd, Cullybackey	Cairncastle, Steensons Jewellery Economusee, Glenarm,
The Tommy Workman Gallery, Point St Larne	Ballygally Castle Hotel Game of Thrones Afternoon Tea,
The Port Gallery, Agnew St Larne	Magheramore Quarry, Shillnavogy Valley (close to Slemish)
Flower arranging, Kilcoan Gardens, Islandmagee	
The Steensons, Glenarm – Jewellery workshop	
The Jonathan Swift Gallery, Kilroot Pk Carrickfergus	
Thomas Joseph Gallery/Garden Art Gallery, 38 Scotch Quarter, Carrickfergus	
The Gallery, Whitehead	

Ballymena Area
Larne Area
Carrickfergus Area



<b>TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES</b>
The Braid, Ballymena
Larne, Narrow Gauge Road, Larne
The Gobbins, Visitor Information Centre, Islandmagee (opening soon)
Glenarm Tourist Information
Carrickfergus Visitor Information Centre, Carrickfergus Museum & Civic Centre, 11 Antrim Street

Ballymena Area
Larne Area
Carrickfergus Area

Name- Gasworks Museum of Ireland





**Mid & East  
Antrim**  
Borough Council



Table A7: Breakdown of tourism Jobs in Mid &amp; East Antrim- 2011-2013

		<i>Accommodation for Visitors</i>	<i>Food and Beverage serving activities</i>	<i>Transport</i>	<i>Sporting and recreational activities</i>	<i>Other</i>	Total Tourism Jobs	Total Non- Tourism	Total Jobs
2011	<b>Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey</b>	*	2,217	866	574	*	4,388	49,999	54,387
	<b>Armagh, Banbridge &amp; Craigavon</b>	549	2,462	191	780	288	4,270	62,206	66,476
	<b>Belfast</b>	2,682	9,599	1,351	1,791	1,422	16,845	189,851	206,696
	<b>Causeway Coast &amp; Glens</b>	1,123	2,102	319	479	207	4,230	34,151	38,381
	<b>Derry &amp; Strabane</b>	*	2,299	*	620	254	3,928	46,541	50,469
	<b>Fermanagh &amp; Omagh</b>	925	1,597	99	331	295	3,247	34,900	38,147
	<b>Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh</b>	303	2,383	79	891	147	3,803	48,121	51,924
	<b>Mid &amp; East Antrim</b>	*	2,075	*	272	*	3,476	38,770	42,246
	<b>Mid Ulster</b>	606	1,662	171	482	134	3,055	42,544	45,599
	<b>Newry, Mourne &amp; Down</b>	926	2,616	87	637	286	4,552	45,598	50,150
	<b>North Down &amp; Ards</b>	575	2,731	76	501	515	4,398	32,768	37,166
	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	9,730	31,743	3,591	7,358	3,770	56,192	625,449	681,641
2013	<b>Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey</b>	*	1,957	835	*	*	4,074	51,005	55,079
	<b>Armagh, Banbridge &amp; Craigavon</b>	427	2,544	200	716	295	4,182	63,822	68,004
	<b>Belfast</b>	2,839	9,956	1,150	1,747	1,627	17,319	193,105	210,424
	<b>Causeway Coast &amp; Glens</b>	983	2,683	350	511	224	4,751	34,582	39,333
	<b>Derry &amp; Strabane</b>	*	2,318	*	621	335	4,227	46,026	50,253
	<b>Fermanagh &amp; Omagh</b>	1,022	1,613	107	338	367	3,448	34,996	38,444
	<b>Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh</b>	357	2,277	84	940	166	3,824	47,659	51,483
	<b>Mid &amp; East Antrim</b>	839	2,128	*	352	*	3,678	38,724	42,402
	<b>Mid Ulster</b>	623	1,797	167	*	*	3,165	44,693	47,858
	<b>Newry, Mourne &amp; Down</b>	993	2,782	100	545	361	4,780	46,398	51,178
	<b>North Down &amp; Ards</b>	577	2,894	114	411	600	4,595	32,449	37,044
	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	10,057	32,948	3,555	7,135	4,347	58,042	633,459	691,501
Change 2011-2013	<b>Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey</b>	*	-12%	-4%	*	*	-7%	2%	1%
	<b>Armagh, Banbridge &amp; Craigavon</b>	-22%	3%	5%	-8%	2%	-2%	3%	2%
	<b>Belfast</b>	6%	4%	-15%	-2%	14%	3%	2%	2%
	<b>Causeway Coast &amp; Glens</b>	-12%	28%	10%	7%	8%	12%	1%	2%
	<b>Derry &amp; Strabane</b>	*	1%	*	0%	32%	8%	-1%	0%
	<b>Fermanagh &amp; Omagh</b>	10%	1%	8%	2%	24%	6%	0%	1%
	<b>Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh</b>	18%	-4%	6%	5%	13%	1%	-1%	-1%
	<b>Mid &amp; East Antrim</b>	*	3%	*	29%	*	6%	0%	0%
	<b>Mid Ulster</b>	3%	8%	-2%	*	*	4%	5%	5%
	<b>Newry, Mourne &amp; Down</b>	7%	6%	15%	-14%	26%	5%	2%	2%
	<b>North Down &amp; Ards</b>	0%	6%	50%	-18%	17%	4%	-1%	0%
	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	3%	4%	-1%	-3%	15%	3%	1%	1%



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