

June 19th, 2026

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend a meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Environment and Economy Committee

to be held on **Monday, 22nd June 2026 at 6:30 pm** in **Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access.**

Yours sincerely



Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Agenda

1 NOTICE OF MEETING

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality, they may have in respect of items on this Agenda.

4 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION

4.1 DfE: Geothermal Regulation Consultation - Circulated

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe/consultation-on-geothermal-regulation/>

Attachment: DfE Geothermal Regulation Consultation.pdf

Page 1

Attachment: Appendix 1 DfE Geothermal Regulations Consultation Draft Response.pdf

Page 5

4.2 Action notes from Ops Sub Committee - Circulated

Attachment: Draft - Operations SubCommittee Action Notes - 20 05 26.pdf

Page 9

4.3 Church Street 3 Car Park Barriers report - Circulated (18.06.26)

Attachment: Church Street 3 Car Park Barriers.pdf

Page 15

4.4 Economic Development Activity Report - Circulated

Attachment: Economic Development Activity Report.pdf

Page 17

4.5 Labour Market Partnership Update - Circulated

Attachment: Labour Market Partnership Update.pdf

Page 26

4.6 Town Centre Task Force Update - Circulated

Attachment: Town Centre Task Force.pdf

Page 33

4.7 Local Growth Fund Consultation Response - Circulated

Attachment: Local Growth Fund Consultation Response.pdf

Page 37

4.8 Service Level Agreements with Enterprise Agencies - Report Circulated - Appendix circulated 19.06.26

Attachment: Service Level Agreements with Enterprise Agencies.pdf

Page 52

*Attachment: Appendix 1 - DPIA Screening - Service Level Agreements with
LEAs.pdf*

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5 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

6 TABLED QUESTIONS

***Closed Committee - In accordance with Council policy, representatives of the Press will
not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.***

7 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION – CLOSED COMMITTEE

7.1 City Deal Update - i4C Outline Business Case Addendum - Circulated

Attachment: City Deal Update - i4C OBC Addendum.pdf

Not included

Attachment: App 1 - i4C OBC Addendum - 26 March 2026v2.pdf

Not included

7.2 Local Economic Partnership - Circulated

Attachment: Local Economic Partnership.pdf

Not included

*Attachment: Appendix 1- Mid and East Antrim Local Economic Partnership
presentation.pdf*

Not included

*Attachment: Appendix 2 - Workspace Development Programme Phase 1
Applications Assessment.pdf*

Not included

*Attachment: Appendix 3 - Equality Screening Workspace Development
Programme_R.pdf*

Not included

*Attachment: Appendix 4 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment Workspace
Development Programme_R.pdf*

Not included

*Attachment: Appendix 5 - Climate Environment & Social Assessment Workspace
Development Programme.pdf*

Not included

8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED COMMITTEE

8.1 Tender for Reprocessing of Materials from Household Recycling Centres– Economic Appraisal - Circulated

Attachment: EA for Tender for Reprocessing of Materials from HRCs.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 1 Economic Appraisal - Tender for HRC Reprocessing of Materials 2026.pdf

Not included

Open Committee

9 FORWARD PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY COMMITTEE

Attachment: Forward Plan EE June 2026.pdf

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Council/Committee: Environment and Economy

Date: 22 June 2026

Report Title: DfE: Geothermal Regulation Consultation

Publication Status: Open

Author: Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
and Joseph Jordan, Energy Manager

Approver: Rowan Moore, Director of Place

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Elected Members on the DfE Geothermal Regulation consultation and to seek approval for the draft response at **Appendix 1**.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Department for the Economy (DfE) is seeking views on proposals to introduce a new regulatory framework for geothermal energy in Northern Ireland.
- 2.2. Geothermal energy is the natural heat stored underground. It can be used to heat buildings, provide hot water, and in some cases cool buildings. It is a local, low-carbon energy source that is available at all times and does not depend on the weather. Increasing its use could help reduce carbon emissions, improve energy security, and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels.
- 2.3. Northern Ireland has significant potential for geothermal energy. While small scale systems for individual buildings are already in use, there is currently no specific regulatory framework in place, particularly for larger or more complex geothermal developments.
- 2.4. This consultation sets out proposals to introduce new legislation that would create clear and proportionate rules for geothermal development. The aim is to support the growth of a sustainable geothermal sector, while ensuring environmental protection and fair use of underground resources.
- 2.5. This consultation opened on 15 May and will close on 7 August 2026.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The consultation seeks views on proposals to:
- Introduce a licensing system for larger, deeper, or more complex geothermal developments.
 - Keep small-scale domestic systems (such as those used for single homes) largely exempt from licensing.
 - Ensure licensed projects meet standards for safety, environmental protection, and technical design.
 - Require ongoing monitoring of geothermal systems to ensure compliance with licence conditions.
 - Provide opportunities for public engagement, including consultation on licence applications.
 - Establish a geothermal data portal to publish information on projects and improve transparency.
 - Introduce a framework for public ownership of geothermal heat below 100 metres, while maintaining existing land ownership rights.
 - Improve cost transparency by requiring developers to provide information on project costs.
- 3.2. Council is supportive of the planned geothermal licensing and regulations as it establishes legal clarity to encourage/assure significant commercial investments, i.e. stability to attract green capital investment.
- 3.3. Exempting horizontal closed-loop systems and low-capacity (<60kWh) aligns with the 100 meters requirement and removes licensing requirements to enable small-scale domestic installs, helping the technology cross the adoption lifecycle chasm by unburdening householders and small-scale contractors, improving accessibility.
- 3.4. Council supports the three-tier approach to licensing and regulation for geothermal systems and storage, and concludes each tier has the appropriate approach scale and risk. Tier 1 – basic hydrogeologic assessment, Tier 2 - detailed thermal and groundwater modelling, Tier 3 – full EIA and ongoing monitoring.
- 3.5. Council supports the planned DfE use of installation and operations cost to benchmark system costs - market monitoring and affordability data would

help identify costs that are excessive/unjustified and support market development through cost transparency without strict set pricing.

- 3.6. Council supports the proposed geothermal licensing requirements for all systems over 60kW and the 25-year duration of a geothermal licence and includes public consultation as part of the licensing process.
- 3.7. Council supports the proposed enforcement measures, as essential for protecting the environment, public resources and developer investments, and also to publish the inspection details on a new NI Geothermal Data Portal.
- 3.8. The consultation estimates that 98% of boreholes will remain within the first 100m depth and remain within the rights of the property owner - Council is supportive of this. Council also agrees with the proposals for the public ownership of heat below 100 meters, with the Department for the Economy (DfE) acting as the central regulatory authority as this approach should deliver strategic resource stewardship and protection, ensuring geothermal energy is managed in a way that maximizes public benefit and long-term sustainability.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. *Financial implications* – supporting this licensing and regulatory approach establishes legal clarity to encourage/assure significant commercial investments, i.e. stability to attract green capital investment.
- 4.2. *Human Resources* – staff exploring the option of geothermal energy across Council estate and responsibilities for carbon reporting will be impacted.
- 4.3. *Equality Screening* – As the licensing framework exempts small, domestic-scale systems, focusing on commercial and institutional installations, it does not place any direct financial burden on individuals or vulnerable groups.
- 4.4. *Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan* – supporting this consultation will help Council deliver on strategic priorities in all four pillars of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.5. *Reputation* – geothermal is of significant public interest – by supporting this consultation we are demonstrating our commitment to address fossil-fuel derived energy systems and associated carbon emissions.
- 4.6. *Legal* - Currently, there is no specific legislation uniquely governing geothermal energy in Northern Ireland. Geothermal activities are regulated through existing environmental and planning laws, primarily relying on the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

- 4.7. *Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact* – This development also offers unique, positive opportunities for rural communities that frequently lack access to the natural gas grid. This typically results in higher levels of fuel poverty and air pollution through burning of high-carbon/high-cost heating oil, coal or LPG. Geothermal offers opportunity to address these environmental/social justice challenges.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. To seek approval of the draft response at **Appendix 1** and to submit to DAERA, prior to the deadline of 7 August 2026.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members:
- (i) Approve the draft response (Appendix 1) to this consultation.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 DfE: Geothermal Regulations Consultation Draft Response

Link: [Full consultation document portfolio:
https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe/consultation-on-geothermal-regulation/](https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe/consultation-on-geothermal-regulation/)

Appendix 2: Consultation Response: Geothermal Regulation

Question 1: Do you agree that licensing and regulation can encourage growth in the geothermal sector in an economically viable way?

Please provide reasons to support your answer.

Yes - this approach establishes legal clarity to encourage/assure significant commercial investments, i.e. stability to attract green capital investment.

Defining licencing/regulation of public heat ownership below 100 meters, this process should assure developers that neighbouring projects will not result in longer-term commercial risk through heat mining (over-exploitation/depletion of a shared thermal resource) so as to build long-term investor confidence.

However, alignment with existing planning and extraction permissions/consents needs to be considered, where undue duplication, delay or unnecessary additional layers may impact engagement.

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposed exemptions from geothermal licensing?

If not, please suggest an alternative and provide supporting evidence. (Please refer to Annex B for further details on exemptions).

Yes - exempting horizontal closed-loop systems and low-capacity (<60kWh) aligns with the 100 meters requirement, and depletion risk is generally low. Removing licencing requirements enables small-scale domestic installs, helping the technology cross the adoption lifecycle chasm by unburdening householders and small-scale contractors, improving accessibility.

Dense urban development e.g. large social housing development could collectively cause thermal interference ground temperature depletion over time. This could reduce the coefficient of performance (COP) resulting in higher electrical demand for householders.

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed licence requirements for geothermal systems?

Please comment on whether the level of regulation seems appropriate, proportionate and understandable. You may wish to refer to the technical details set out in Annex B when providing your views on the specific requirements. Please provide reasons to support your answer and any alternative suggestions.

Yes. The three-tiered system for thermal storage <200 MWh to Tier 3 >2000 MWh seems appropriate in demanding basic hydrogeological surveys for Tier 1, transitioning to full Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and real-time

monitoring for Tier 3. This configuration ensures regulatory resource and developer capital are focused, where sustainability risk is highest.

Question 4: Do you agree with the three-tiered approach to the licensing and regulation of thermal storage systems?

Please comment on whether you support a risk-based approach. You may wish to review the detailed criteria in Annex B when forming your response.

Yes:

Tier 1 (Small Scale/Low Risk): Aids in accessibility for public sector buildings / SMEs by limiting requirements to a basic application for systems storing up to 200 MWh at low temperatures. Appears to be appropriate to scale and risk.

Tier 2 (Medium Risk): The detailed thermal and groundwater modelling for systems 200-2,000 MWh or $> 40^{\circ}\text{C}$ seems appropriate to scale in considering sustainability without the additional burden of a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Tier 3 (Large Scale/High Risk): $> 2,000$ MWh or $>40^{\circ}\text{C}$ in urban areas the requirement of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), real-time monitoring and safety triggers would be a reassurance in both sustainability and public safety concerns.

Question 5: Do you agree that DfE will use installation and operation cost data to benchmark system costs?

Please provide reasons to support your answer.

Yes. Market monitoring and affordability data would help identify costs that are excessive/unjustified and support market development through cost transparency without strict set pricing, as the DfE does not currently plan to impose rigid price controls or set heat prices, it will instead use "proportionate cost transparency" to help the market mature and inform future benchmarking.

Ensuring consumer protection / value for money in publicly owned geothermal resource is essential.

Question 6: Should existing geothermal systems providing more than 60kW of heat be required to obtain a geothermal licence?

Please provide reasons to support your answer.

Yes - requiring existing systems over 60kW to become licenced would ensure **regulatory consistency**, ensuring all sizable geothermal developments are subject to the same oversight and standards regardless of installation date. Deemed licences could result in systems not to current standard realising identified risk(s).

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed initial 25-year duration of a geothermal licence?

Please provide reasons to support your answer.

Yes. This timeframe matches the expected lifecycle of commercial capital assets and provides long-term financial certainty require in green commercial investment. Balancing development needs 25 years with municipal oversight through 5-year review cycles.

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposals on public consultation as part of the licensing process?

Please provide reasons to support your answer and any alternative suggestions.

The Council broadly agrees with the inclusion of public consultation in the licensing process, as it enables community alignment through transparency, participation and potential for application of local knowledge.

Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed enforcement measures?

Please provide reasons to support your answer and any alternative suggestions.

Yes. **The Council broadly agrees with the proposed enforcement measures**, as essential for protecting the environment, public resources and developer investments. The proposal to publish all enforcement actions and inspection results on a public **NI Geothermal Data Portal** is welcomed as an assurance in transparency building community trust.

An alternative/additional suggestion would be the introduction of financial penalty for non-compliance, where this revenue is reinvested in the local communities.

Question 10: Do you agree with the plan to establish a public NI geothermal data portal?

Please provide reasons to support your answer and any alternative suggestions. Further information on the geothermal data portal can be found in Annex D

Yes. As additional to transparency, the portal would aid in building a valuable geothermal dataset to inform academic research, commercial opportunity and decarbonisation/energy security opportunities.

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposals for public ownership of heat and access to geothermal energy, with DfE responsible for the regulation of the resource?

Please provide reasons to support comments or alternative suggestions.

Yes. This is the case in other jurisdictions and balances the public interest against property rights. The consultation estimates that 98% of boreholes will remain within the first 100m depth and remain within the rights of the property owner.

Question12: Do you agree that clarifying ownership and access will contribute positively to the geothermal sector?

Please provide reasons to support comments or alternative suggestions.

Yes. Council agrees with the proposals for the public ownership of heat below 100 meters, with the Department for the Economy (DfE) acting as the central regulatory authority as this approach should deliver strategic resource stewardship and protection, ensuring geothermal energy is managed in a way that maximises public benefit and long-term sustainability.

Question13: Do you agree with DfE's assessment of the equality and rural impacts of licensing geothermal systems?

Please provide reasons and evidence to support your comments.

Yes. As the licensing framework exempts small, domestic-scale systems, focusing on commercial and institutional installations, it does not place any direct financial burden on individuals or vulnerable groups. This development also offers unique, positive opportunities for rural communities that frequently lack access to the natural gas grid. This typically results in higher levels of fuel poverty and air pollution through burning of high-carbon/high-cost heating oil, coal or LPG. Geothermal offers opportunity to address these environmental/social justice challenges.

Operations Sub Committee Notes – Wednesday 20 May – Hybrid Meeting

Attendees: Cllr G McKeen (Chair), Ald T Gordon, Cllr M Warwick, Ald M Morrow, Cllr R Quigley, Cllr A Skinner, Rowan Moore, Andrew Cassells (SIB), Donna Carey, Amy Millar, Catherine Hunter, Megan Bowe, David Anthony

Apologies: Ald A Wilson

Notes: PA to Director

Agenda Item	Action Required	By
1.	<p>Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest</p>	
3.	<p>Actions Notes of Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee held on 18 March 2026</p> <p>Minutes from the previous meeting were noted and approved for information..</p>	
4.	<p>Items for Decision / Update</p>	
4.1.	<p>Street Cleansing</p> <p>The Waste Operations Manager provided an update on street cleansing operations. Ongoing delays were noted due to seasonal pressures.</p> <p>It was agreed to develop a formal business case, which will remain a standing agenda item until completed. Supervisors are working to identify hotspot areas requiring attention.</p>	

	<p>Action: Develop and present business case at a future meeting.</p>	MB
4.2.	<p><i>Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) – including commercial waste management</i></p> <p>Members were updated that The Policies were approved in May, with planning now underway for full rollout. Work is ongoing to develop a timeline and implementation plan, including IT systems, website updates and communications. Infrastructure development is in progress.</p> <p>Members highlighted the importance of clear and early communication with the public.</p> <p>Staff training will take place prior to communications to ensure queries can be handled effectively. Engagement methods will include social media, flyers, and on-site information.</p> <p>Actions: Officers to finalise rollout plan and timeline. Communications plan to be developed and issued in advance of implementation.</p>	DA
4.3.	<p><i>Update on Waste Harmonisation</i></p> <p>a. Directors Update</p> <p>The Director updated the Members on an upcoming Waste Harmonisation Workshop that will take place in June. This will be an opportunity to discuss timelines and recommendations. Members were also updated that Andrew is currently preparing a detailed report that will be presented to Elected Members.</p> <p>b. Bryson Contract</p> <p>The Chair raised a query regarding the Bryson contract, which is due to end around September/October and sought clarification on future arrangements.</p> <p>The Director updated on a phased implementation approach</p>	

	<p>Officers confirmed that Bryson will manage contracts and extend arrangements where required.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about timing of service changes, particularly winter implementation risks. It was agreed that implementation should avoid winter where possible and be supported by a robust project plan. Communications must carefully manage public expectations to avoid backlash.</p> <p>The Director advised that there are a number of contributing factors such as the JR and ordering of new vehicles. It was discussed that Bryson may be in operation for another winter whereby Council need to balance the risks and ensure robust contract management during this period.</p>	
4.4.	<p><i>Update on standardisation of the Larne routes in preparation for Waste Harmonisation</i></p> <p>Members were provided an update on standardisation arrangements in the rural Larne area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rollout of bins is underway, with first collections completed on 12 May. • Progress is on track, with alignment towards a consistent schedule for brown bin collections. <p>No further comments were raised.</p>	
4.5.	<p><i>Update on Whitespace Implementation</i></p> <p>Members were updated on the replacement waste system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New waste calendars to go live on 27 May. • Improvements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ More accessible and dynamic information ◦ Dates displayed clearly in full ◦ Information available one month in advance • Some concerns raised regarding accessibility for residents without internet access. • It was confirmed that information can be provided on request, though most users access services online. <p>Actions:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure alternative access arrangements are communicated. • Public messaging to highlight how to access information. 	
4.6.	<p>Update on Commercial Waste Collection Policy Report</p> <p>Members were updated on the report that is being presented to E&E Committee on 27 May.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy development is ongoing, with no immediate changes for current users. • Workshop scheduled for 21 May for Elected Members. • Opportunity identified to present policy as a standalone, fully screened document within the business plan framework. 	
4.7.	<p>Marine Litter Engagement Sculpture Pilot, Ballygally Beach</p> <p>Elected Members were provided with a copy of the completed application form and updated on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Educational elements highlighting marine species ◦ QR codes linking to information ◦ Community litter-picking approach with collection points • Initiative described as positive, sustainable and educational. • Awaiting outcome from judging panel (expected end of May). 	
4.8.	<p>Environmental Performance & Carbon Footprint Report and ISO1001 Accreditation</p> <p>Members were updated on the report that is being presented to the E&E Committee on 27 May</p> <p>a. Carbon Footprint</p> <p>2025-26 saw a 3.5% decrease in Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions compared to 2024-25, and an overall 21.4% reduction to our 2019/20 baseline year.</p> <p>Energy (Oil, natural gas and electricity) all reduced, with LPG gas slightly increasing. Energy reductions were achieved through a programme of energy efficiency and renewable technology projects including solar PV, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and LED lighting projects.</p>	GM

Scope 3 emissions saw an increase in recycling performance (up to 61.13% compared to 60% in 2024/25). Water consumption also reduced this year, with an overall decreased by 30% compared to the 2019/20 baseline year.

b. Environmental Performance

The overall reduction in emissions has been captured through the delivery of 11 environmental objectives in our Environmental Management System.

Other key achievements over 2025-26 include:

- Increase of Green Flags at MEA schools through the Eco Schools Programme.
- Waste Communications – Recycle Week 2025, Food Waste Action Week 2026.
- Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme: £11k to 9 community groups / schools.
- Circular Economy Projects: 5 delivered including MEA School Uniform Scheme, Christmas Toy Scheme, Community RePaint.
- Business in the Community NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2025: Achieving Gold Level, aiming for Platinum in 2026/27.
- Economic Development: ongoing delivery of their HyTech Project delivery three strands of hydrogen pilots including a Hydrogen Training Academy, hydrogen-blending in St. Patricks Barracks social housing network, and collab with NI Water to testbed blue hydrogen created at ECOS Sustainability Hub.
- A wide range of consultation responses were submitted across climate, sustainability, environment, energy, waste, biodiversity.
- Biodiversity: a wide range of courses and training events delivered including Bat Walks, Healthy Oceans Healthy Mind, Biodiversity University.
- Overall, a very impressive year demonstrating improvement environmental performance and reduced carbon emissions.

Discussion

- Overall environmental performance was noted as very positive.
- A query was raised regarding energy use in community-managed centres, specifically the potential use of solar panels to reduce consumption.
- It was noted that the Energy Manager is reviewing opportunities, and funding options through sustainability programmes may be explored.

Action:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CH and G.McKeen to follow up on community energy and funding opportunities offline.	
5.	Next Operations Sub-Committee Meeting TBC after AGM	

Meeting ended 14.41



Council/Committee: Environment and Economy
Date: 22 June 2026

Report Title: Church Street 3 Car Park Barriers
Publication Status: Open

Author: Andrew Oliver, Car Park Manager
Approval: Rowan Moore, Director of Place

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Elected Members for Council officers to install automatic barriers in the Church Street 3 car park to address the issue of anti-social behavior (ASB).

2. Background

- 2.1. The car park has been the meeting place for groups of drivers who drive erratically and cause noise disturbance in the car park throughout the night.
- 2.2. A number of residents in the nearby Castle Street Mews have made complaints to Council officers and elected members requesting that action is taken to stop these drivers who are active throughout the evening and into the early hours of the morning. Many of the residents are elderly and some have illnesses and the ASB is causing them great distress.
- 2.3. Council recently installed CCTV cameras and erected signage however this has not had the desired effect and the ASB continues.
- 2.4. Officers originally sought to install barriers in 2023 however there were some issues as to where the barriers would be situated and agreement couldn't be reached with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Following a recent meeting with DfI an agreement has been reached to permit the installation of the barriers and DfI have also agreed to erect the appropriate signage.
- 2.5. A meeting also took place with the PSNI who are also in agreement to the installation of the barriers, furthermore the PSNI have agreed to patrol the car park after closure to ensure that nuisance drivers remaining after closure are made to leave. The three emergency services will be provided with a fob to access the car park after closing time if necessary.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. Officers seek to erect automatic barriers at a cost of circa £10k, these barriers would automatically close at 8pm preventing access into the car park but allowing vehicles already in the car park to exit after the 8pm closure. The barriers would open automatically at 7am the following day.
- 3.2. Installation of the barriers would take around 5 weeks to complete. This work can be completed in-house through Councils Facilities department therefore no Procurement exercise would be required.
- 3.3. Members are asked to consider the viability of installing automatic barriers to restrict access to the car park at night.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial Implication- The cost to install automatic barriers is circa £13,000. This money is available through revenue budgets.
- 4.2. Human Resources – Officers would no longer be dealing with the complaints from local residents regarding late night ASB.
- 4.3. Equality Screening – Screening was considered and the relevant Officers within Council were consulted and it is not required.

5. Proposed way forward

- 5.1. The report is now presented for Elected Members' deliberation and members are invited to consider the request to install automatic barriers in the Church Street 3 car park.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to:
 - (i) Approve the installation of automatic barriers at Church Street 3 Car Park



Council/Committee: Environment and Economy Committee
Date: 22 June 2026

Report Title: Economic Development Activity Report
Publication Status: Open
Author: Ursula O'Loughlin, Assistant Director
Approver: Ryan Black, Director of Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on current Economic Development activity.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Economic Development Function includes five key strategic areas including:
- Skills and Entrepreneurship
 - Business Growth
 - Investment and Funding
 - Investment and Place
 - Town Centre Development

3. Key Issues for Consideration

The following update is to provide Members with an overview across the five key operational areas within the Economic Development Team:

NAME OF ACTIVITY:	UPDATE:
Investment and Funding	
PEACEPLUS Programme	<p>Partner Engagement</p> <p>All Partnership Agreements have now been signed and returned to Council and partners attended a workshop in May to receive training on Claims, Reporting, Procurement, Communications and Monitoring & Evaluation.</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>The Capital ICT procurement and the "Plot to Plate programme" closed on 5 June with assessment of tenders ongoing.</p> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation System</p> <p>The Monitoring and Evaluation system is currently in the final stages of development with testing of the system under way prior to final roll out.</p>

	<p>Staffing</p> <p>The Project Officer post has now been filled with the new staff member in post from 14 May 2026. Recruitment of the Project Coordinator post for the Strengthening Communities Programme will commence in the coming weeks.</p>																																				
<p>Skills and Entrepreneurship</p>																																					
<p>Labour Market Partnership (LMP)</p>	<p>A separate report is tabled at this Committee</p>																																				
<p>Enterprise Pathways</p>	<p>Enterprise Pathways provided enhanced support to unemployed/underemployed/economically inactive residents who wanted to start their own business since 2022. In 2025/26 participants benefited from business and personal development mentoring over several months and were able to apply for up to £750 'Get Started' funding to acquire goods and services to help them test trade, launch and develop their venture. Enterprise Pathways is positioned to complement Go Support, with participants typically utilising Enterprise Pathways prior to progressing to Go Succeed for follow on support. Enterprise Pathways has consistently achieved or exceeded targets set in connection with business starts as per the table below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="676 1128 1466 1514"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2"></th> <th colspan="2">Participants</th> <th colspan="2">Started Trading</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Cohort</th> <th>Year</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2022-23</td> <td>15</td> <td>15</td> <td>8</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>2023-24</td> <td>16</td> <td>16</td> <td>6</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>2024-25</td> <td>14</td> <td>16</td> <td>8</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>2025-26</td> <td>16</td> <td>12</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Officers are engaging with the Go Succeed Project Management Office in Belfast City Council regarding the possibility of funding for an Enterprise Pathways cohort in 2026/27.</p>			Participants		Started Trading		Cohort	Year	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	1	2022-23	15	15	8	13	2	2023-24	16	16	6	11	3	2024-25	14	16	8	11	4	2025-26	16	12	9	9
		Participants		Started Trading																																	
Cohort	Year	Target	Actual	Target	Actual																																
1	2022-23	15	15	8	13																																
2	2023-24	16	16	6	11																																
3	2024-25	14	16	8	11																																
4	2025-26	16	12	9	9																																
<p>Go Succeed</p> <p>For further information or to sign up please visit:</p> <p>www.gosucceed.com</p>	<p>Delivery of the 2026/27 Go Succeed service is underway with 81 diagnostics carried out (71 for entry to the Engage pillar and 10 for Foundation) during April and May 2026. A range of masterclasses covering topics including Developing Video Content, Starting a Business from Home and Marketing using AI Tools has been scheduled with more to be added throughout the year, for further details and registration please see Business Events & Networking in NI Go Succeed.</p>																																				

	<p>There is provision for 102 businesses to be supported under Grow and Scale mentoring by 31 March 2027. 13 businesses successfully onboarded to date.</p> <p>Officers have developed a tailored programme within the funding specifically for Mid and East Antrim businesses with a series of business growth Masterclasses for the year ahead. Further information to be reported in due course.</p>
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Investment and Place

<p>MTF 'Making the Future' Network (MTF)</p>	<p>The MTF Chair and Officers attended the Manufacturing NI Anchor High Summit on 28 May 2026, where c150 senior manufacturing leaders, policymakers and industry experts came together as part of Manufacturing Month 2026. The event outlined the opportunities and challenges facing the manufacturing sector and was a valuable opportunity to hear from sector leaders and gather insight into the priorities shaping the future competitiveness of manufacturing in NI.</p> <p>The MTF Steering Team meeting was held on Monday 8 June, with c40 representatives from member companies and key stakeholders in attendance. The meeting focused on three agreed priority areas: skills development, lean/digitalisation, and cleantech. The session also included dedicated time for peer-led discussions and input from local companies including ASF Engineering, Clarke, Cranswick and Hutchinson.</p> <p>The first MTF Lean Leadership Summit, delivered in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland, took place on 17-18 June 2026. The programme commenced with a half-day conference at the Ecos Hub on 17 June, followed by a series of factory visits across Ace Fixings/Apeer Doors, Norbev, Demanu, and Moore Concrete. Keynote speakers included Paul Blahyj and Julian Ball of Toyota. The Summit attracted approximately 90 manufacturing leaders, including 60 representatives from MTF member companies across the borough.</p> <p>In April 2025, MTF was awarded funding under Invest Northern Ireland's Cluster Acceleration Programme (CAP) to assess the feasibility of the network's future and its role in a Northern Ireland Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Super Cluster alongside Manufacturing and Engineering Growth and Advancement (MEGA) in Mid Ulster and Generating Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (GEMX) in the Northwest. The feasibility report will be completed in</p>
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	<p>August 2026 and the recommendations on the future direction of the MTF will be presented to members in due course. In the meantime, one action being pursued currently is the establishment of the MTF as a limited company to be able to apply for funding and generate membership fees to support the growth and development of the network.</p>
<p>i4C Innovation and CleanTech Project</p>	<p>The i4C addendum has received final approval from the Department of Finance (DoF), and Council can now submit claims for work carried out to date by the ICT team. Progress with the design and layout continues as does engagement with Oxford Innovation, the managing agent to progress the project to the next stage.</p> <p>i4C will include an iLAB/makerspace facility with £250k of funding available from Belfast Regional City Deal for a pilot iLAB to be located in temporary premises in Ballymena ahead of permanent relocation to i4C. Funding for fit out and specialist expertise for the iLAB is being sought from a range of sources including Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and PEACEPLUS.</p>
<p>HyTech NI Project</p>	<p>HyTech NI is a £15m hydrogen innovation programme funded by the NI Complementary Fund and delivered by Queens University Belfast (QUB), Ulster University and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC). The universities lead the Hydrogen Accelerator, while Council has been leading on three Demonstrators: Gas Blending, Transport & Mobility, and Energy & Skills.</p> <p>The Outline Business Case (OBC) was submitted to Invest NI in March 2025 and appraised in 2025. The appraisal confirmed strong industry backing and well-developed Council Demonstrators but highlighted State Aid challenges for industry partners and major gaps in the Accelerator proposal requiring further work by QUB and University of Ulster (UU).</p> <p>As delays have continued and grant intensity rates for industry reduced, project viability is becoming more difficult for industry partners. Officers and partners are scoping alternative projects and engaging with the funders, Invest NI to progress these. The Council-led Energy & Skills Demonstrator remains unchanged and casework approval for this demonstrator and the Accelerator and PMO costs is scheduled for September 2027.</p>
<p>Investment Promotion and Opportunities</p>	<p>Officers regularly engage with existing and new businesses seeking to locate or expand in the borough. There are several live enquiries where finding suitable property across the borough is challenging.</p>

	<p>A recent search has been conducted for a small to medium enterprise (SME) engineering business seeking an industrial unit in the Larne area c2,000 sq ft to allow the business to expand further. Officers have provided details of various options for consideration and will continue to support the business to try and secure a suitable location.</p>
<p>(BCRPP) Belfast City and Region Place Partnership</p>	<p>Following attendance at UKREiiF in May 2026, Officers have progressed engagement with regional partners involved in the BCRPP delegation to capture key insights and learning outcomes from the conference. These discussions have also focused on identifying opportunities for further collaboration, strengthening regional partnerships, and enhancing the borough's investment proposition in line with emerging opportunities highlighted during the event.</p>
<p>ECOS Hub</p>	<p>EcOS Hub is currently at full occupancy, with several existing tenants expressing interest in office space that may become available within the building. A new co-working space is now fully operational with three new users utilising the services. A social media campaign is being developed for the summer period to build on the strong performance of previous campaigns in generating leads for meeting rooms and co-working facilities.</p>
<p>Business Growth</p>	
<p>Amplify Business Support Programme</p>	<p>The Amplify Business Support Programme was developed in partnership with Michelin Development Ltd, offering micro and small businesses, primarily in manufacturing with tailored mentoring support is ongoing and open for recruitment. The programme aims to support up to 30 businesses by December 2026 with 16 businesses currently receiving support.</p>
<p>Augmenting Business' Growth potential via Stakeholder Supports</p>	<p>Officers are working with stakeholder to establish the support offerings available at present and continue to signpost and support businesses to lever additional and complementary supports.</p>
<p>Invest NI Partnership Working <i>Update on Council's local level partnership work to increase the pipeline of businesses capable of access Invest NI financial assistance.</i></p>	<p>Ambition to Grow call opened on Monday 12th January and closed on Friday 30th January. The programme targets businesses that are not currently Invest NI clients, with successful applicants becoming Invest NI clients and receiving a grant offer of up to £45,000 to assist with new employment and growing sales in new markets.</p> <p>Council's Business Client Managers worked closely with Invest NI to promote the opportunity and offered tailored support to potential applicants.</p>

	<p>From 1 April 2026 two clients have been successful with their Ambition to Grow Applications, with value of support totalling £60K. Two clients have received an Innovation Voucher in the last call, now confirmed in April 2026 value totalling £10K.</p>
<p>Balmoral Show</p>	<p>Three local businesses participated at Council's stand within the NI Food Pavilion, each using the platform to support ongoing business development activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Fingers Family / YUMBO Snacks: Engaged with multiple trade buyers, contributing to the development of potential retail and wholesale leads. • Calio Cakes: Utilised the event to increase brand visibility and established a new connection with a Belfast based buyer/café, supporting wider recognition within the artisan bakery sector. • Gold & Browne's: Undertook brand awareness and customer engagement activity, resulting in increased consumer reach and further consolidation of their profile as an artisan producer. <p>The Mayor and Mayoress attended on Wednesday 13 May 2026, undertaking a coordinated visit to 18 MEA businesses exhibiting at the show, accompanied by the Economic Development and Communications teams. The Director of Growth and Major Projects attended on Friday 15 May, completing a similar programme of engagement alongside a Business Client Manager from the Economic Development team. The Director of Place was also in attendance. This approach received good media coverage and was well received by the businesses. A full report on outcomes and next steps will be brought to Committee in due course.</p>
<p>Digital Transformation Flexible Fund</p>	<p>Call 7, is expected to be the last call within this fund. This call has completed its Expression of Interest (EOI) phase and a total of the 28 EOIs were received from within the Council area. From those 21 businesses were successful and invited to make an application; the breakdown by area is as follows: Ballymena area – 14, Carrickfergus area – 4 and Larne area – 3. The deadline for Full applications was 1st May 2026. A total of 13 applications were deemed eligible and have moved to next phase of assessment; 9 from the Ballymena area, 2 from the Larne area and 2 from the Carrickfergus area.</p>
<p>Town Centre Development</p>	
<p>Carrickfergus Artisan Market</p>	<p>The Artisan Market took place on 6 June 2026 and was relocated to the Town Hall due to inclement weather. There was a full market of 15 traders in attendance. The market was very well attended with steady footfall</p>

	<p>throughout the day. The next market will take place outdoors in Market Place on Saturday 4 July 2026.</p>
<p>Business Support</p>	<p>Ongoing business engagement continues through the dissemination of Town Centre Newsletters, bespoke to each town.</p> <p>Daily support for town centre issues and business support for retailers continues to be provided.</p> <p>Larne Pilot Content Creation Scheme</p> <p>The Larne pilot content creation scheme has been successfully delivered, with all video shoots completed on 19, 28 and 29 May 2026. The content creator visited all 10 participating businesses, accompanied by a member of the town centre team with each session lasting around 90 minutes.</p> <p>Businesses engaged well with the process with some contributing their own ideas, while others took guidance from the content creator. Final video content was issued to all businesses before mid-June to support promotion across their social media channels.</p> <p>Feedback has been consistently positive. Businesses particularly valued access to professional content creation support, noting that this is not typically affordable or readily available to them. Being provided with the one to one support on the day has provided valuable skills for the businesses to take away.</p> <p>Carrickfergus Content Creation Scheme</p> <p>The above programme will be launched in July 2026.</p>
<p>Town Centre Animation Activity</p>	<p>A new programme of animation activity for Spring/Summer/Autumn is currently being planned for each town commencing in June:</p> <p><u>Ballymena</u></p> <p>Many events will be joint ventures with Ballymena Business Improvement District (BID)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Fun Friday events 24 July, 31 July, 7 August, 14 August 2026 – inclusive family events throughout the town • Ballymena end of summer party 22 August 2026 • Ballymena birthday fun (Ballymena 400) Tuesday 25 August 2026 • Ballymena Fashion Show on 9 October 2026 • Halloween Family event on 30 October 2026 • Ballymena town centre businesses were invited to apply for Ballymena 400 branded bunting to support shopfront decoration. To date, 38 businesses have successfully applied and received bunting, with additional stock remaining available.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branded Ballymena 400 shopping bags have also been purchased and will be distributed at the summer events. <p><u>Carrickfergus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisan market held on 6 June, 4 July, 1 August, 5 September, 3 October 2026 • Street entertainment aligned to market day in August 2026 • Live music 1st Saturday of every month • Spooky Silent Disco 30 October 2026 <p><u>Larne</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel good Fridays, live music and street entertainment in Broadway, commencing 17 July to Friday 21 August 2026 • Summer Carnival – August 2026 • Summer Radio Roadshow • Horticultural & Food Demos • Halloween Family Event on Thursday 29 October 2026
Shop Front Improvement Grants	It is expected to open a further phase of the shop front grants in July 2026
Pavement Cafe Furniture Project	<p>Hospitality businesses across Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne town centres have been invited to apply for pavement café furniture to support outdoor dining during the summer months. The available provision includes bistro tables, chairs, parasols, and hedging barriers.</p> <p>The expression of interest process has now closed, with 18 businesses applying for furniture. The procurement process is currently underway, following which furniture will be allocated and distributed. Allocation will be based on previous support received and the available space within each business.</p> <p>All participating businesses will be required to have a valid pavement café licence in place prior to receiving the furniture.</p>
Revitalise Steering Group	Officers continue to work collaboratively with the Regeneration Team to support the Revitalise Steering Group to develop and roll out regeneration projects and initiatives for each of the Town Centres as prioritised in the Investment Plans and Town Centre strategies.
Encouraging Footfall	Cross Departmental development work is ongoing to identify opportunities to encourage footfall and rejuvenate the Town Centres.
Vacancy Audit	The Town Centre team, working with the Planning team, has successfully carried out a vacancy audit in each of the town centres. The data collected will now be analysed to present the figures for 2026.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications: All Economic Development activity is undertaken within the approved estimates budget with additional funding levered from a range of key Stakeholders and Government Departments.
- 4.2. Human Resources: Economic Development staffing resources are included within agreed budgets.
- 4.3. Equality Screening: Economic Development activities are equality screened as required in line with Letters of Offer requirements from co-funders.
- 4.4. Assets: No direct asset impact.
- 4.5. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan: All Economic Development activity is aligned with the People and Place corporate objectives within Council's Corporate Plan.
- 4.6. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact: Any rural needs implications will be identified using the Council's screening process

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. The report is presented for noting.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to:
 - (i) Note the updated Economic Development Activity report.

7. Appendices/Link

N/A



Council/Committee: Environment and Economy Committee
Date: 22 June 2026

Report Title: Labour Market Partnership Update
Publication Status: Open
Author: Ursula O’Loughlin, Assistant Director
Approver: Ryan Black, Director of Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide update for Members on the delivery of the Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Action Plans.

2. Background

- 2.1. In December 2024, the Environment and Economy Committee recommended approval of the Labour Market Partnership Action Plans for 2025-2027.
- 2.2. The Initial Letter of Offer of £402,365.44 for 2025-2026 was issued in May 2025 with a subsequent Letter of Offer for the full 2025-2026 period of £512,101.47 issued in November 2025. Confirmation of the full funding enabled implementation of a number of programmes that were put on hold until this point.
- 2.3. In January 2026, the LMP was awarded an additional £41,000 as part of an easement bid for the delivery of two further programmes (Inside Housing and Career Boost) and in March 2026, a further £87,500 was awarded as part of a second easement bid to deliver an additional five programmes Pathway to Leadership, Greenworks, Crafted Futures, Reignite 50 and Youthwork Level 3.
- 2.4. MEA LMP are currently awaiting the Letter of offer for 2026-2027. In March DfC issued an interim allocation as The NI Executive have not yet agreed the draft budget for 2026-2030. The grant allocation for this first 3-month period is £100,591.36. The delay has impacted the ability to roll out the full range of planned employability and skills initiatives.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. An update is provided below under the LMP Action Plan 2025-2026:

Interventions	Update
Community Skills and Employer-led Up-skilling Initiatives	Education and Training – 17 participants have completed the Level 3 Education and Training upskilling programme and achieved the Level 3 Award in Education. 3 participants have gained new employment.



	<p>7 participants increased their working hours, and 2 participants are looking at self-employment options.</p> <p>Plant Operations – 26 individuals have completed a qualification in Counterbalance Forklift To date 10 participants have entered employment. LMP Officers are continuing to engage with participants providing employability support.</p> <p>Youthwork Level 2 – 13 participants commenced the Youthwork Academy in September. All 13 participants have achieved an OCN Level 2 in Youthwork. To date 5 participants have gained employment and 4 progressed to the Level 3 Youthwork Upskilling programme.</p> <p>Security Industry Authority (SIA) - 17 participants registered for the Level 2 Door Supervisor Qualification. Sessions have been delivered in Carrickfergus and Ballymena. 15 participants completed the course and have received their SIA Licence. To date 6 have taken up employment within the security industry.</p> <p>Hospitality Taster - 10 participants completed the Hospitality Taster programme achieving 26 qualifications between them. 6 participants have secured employment. 1 participant is looking to return to employment after 12 years and is progressing to another programme to receive additional employability support.</p> <p>Learn to Use Your Sewing Machine – sessions took place on 8 and 15 June 2026 for 9 participants in Ballymena with a further 9 participants taking part in sessions in Larne on 22 and 29 June 2026.</p> <p>Individual Learning Account (ILA) - 37 applications have been received for ILA and 27 have been approved. 19 participants have completed their training to date and officers are engaging with training providers to arrange training for the remaining applicants. Courses funded under ILA include: City and Guilds 2391-52 Inspection and Testing, NASPAR Level 3 Medical Terminology, Telescopic Forklift, SAGE Payroll, Accredited Embodied Trauma-Informed Training, Lantra Training & Assessment, Chainsaw Maintenance, Cutting and Felling, Rope Access and Working at Heights Level 2 Pool and Lifeguard Training</p>
<p>Do It Herself</p>	<p>The programme completed delivery on 28 May 2026 with 11 female participants achieving Level 1 Numeracy and Level 2 Vocational Skills. Participants gained real life experience by redecorating three rooms (painting, panelling, shelving and wallpapering) in the new premises of the Veterans Support Group Ballymena</p>



	which enabled the participants to develop practical problem-solving skills.
Insight Youth	This 24-week programme for young adults aged 16 - 24 who are economically inactive or unemployed, offers inclusive training on job specific skills and provides placement opportunities with employers to bridge skills gaps and create employment opportunities. The programme commenced in early January with 13 participants registered on the programme. All 13 young people completed the programme with 7 securing employment, 4 into further education and 2 taking up volunteering.
Start Out 19-24 (young people with disabilities)	Start Out offers personalised training, supported work placements and ongoing career coaching ensuring that the successful participants are not only job-ready, but fully supported throughout their journey. 10 participants have enrolled on the programme and are currently completing their Employability Level 1 qualification. They have completed CV building, interview preparation and mock interviews and will now commence their Customer Service Level 2. 4 have currently moved into employment.
PROPEL	This programme is for disadvantaged young people aged 18-25 to develop employability and work readiness through a range of economic activities to reduce barriers to work. The programme commenced on 29 May 2026 in Ballykeel supporting 10 young people.
Work Connections	Work Connections offers unemployed/economically inactive residents with disabilities a route to employment via accredited qualifications, work placements and employability support. 21 participants were engaged, 19 completed training in both Level 2 Customer Service and Level 1 Progression to Employment. 17 employers were engaged, 14 placements facilitated and 6 job outcomes plus 2 voluntary roles confirmed to date.
Classroom Entry Academy	13 completed the Academy with 10 moving into employment in local schools. The remaining 3 continue to receive tailored one-to-one support to help them identify and secure suitable positions within the education sector.
Pathway to Leadership	A 6 week programme to develop future leaders through the delivery of essential leadership and people-management masterclasses. 10 participants will complete the training with a final in person session on 23 June 2026 at Ecos Hub.



<p>Placement Insights Programme</p> <p>Castle Tower</p>	<p>A 6 week project working alongside participants in Castle Tower, exploring bitesize practical activities, education and employability support through engagement with local employers. This programme aims to introduce the world of work to our young people and help them develop pragmatic, transferrable skills. This programme commenced in January 2026 with 15 young people attending two Energy Efficient cooking sessions. Five further sessions were held in employability, CV writing & interview skills, content creation, merchandising & visual display, meet the employer site visit and one-day test trading in Fairhill Centre. A Celebration Event is planned for The Braid on 23 June 2026 with a number of support agencies in attendance to provide ongoing support to the SEN leavers.</p>
<p>Placement Insights</p> <p>Roddensvale</p>	<p>The programme was delivered for 15 pupils which focused on developing CV writing skills and interview techniques, alongside practical baking and restaurant skills. Throughout the programme, the 15 students developed a range of valuable skills to support them when leaving school. These included, time management, experience working in a cafe setting, customer service skills, and broader personal development skills. The programme aimed to prepare pupils for future employment by building confidence, teamwork, and workplace readiness.</p>
<p>Classroom Upskilling Academy</p>	<p>The Classroom Assistant Level 3 Upskilling Academy commenced in September 2025. All 15 participants have now completed their final sessions and portfolios will now be sent for internal verification at the end of June 2026.</p>
<p>Cleantech</p>	<p>17 participants have completed a total of 38 qualifications which include Installation of Solar Panelling, EV Charging and Battery Storage. 10 participants have increased employment opportunity.</p>
<p>Adult Social Care Upskilling</p>	<p>11 participants enrolled on the academy and have completed their mandatory units. All participants are on target to achieve the Level 4 Diploma in Adult Social Care. The course will complete on 30 June 2026.</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>16 participants were recruited to the sixth cohort of the Transport Academy in January 2026. 8 participants have now passed the theory element and progressed to practical training, 4 participants are at theory stage with the remaining participants unable to complete for various reasons.</p>



Medical Admin	8 participants completed the Medical Admin Academy in October 2025, Since April 2026, 100% of participants have now moved into employment. A second cohort is currently being delivered and commenced on 19 May 2026. 12 participants have registered and are engaging well on the programme.
REIGNITE 50+	A flexible, structured support programme designed for men who wish to prepare for work, return to employment, or strengthen their confidence and skills to move closer to employment. The programme commenced on Tuesday 9 June 2026.
Career Boost	To provide tailored interventions that empower women to build confidence for interviews, overcome employment gaps, and successfully re-enter or enter employment. This programme commenced delivery on 8 June 2026.
Childcare Level 5 Upskilling Academy	12 participants completed the academy and are waiting for certification for their Level 5 Diploma in Childcare.
Activate Your Curiosity	Delivery is almost complete for this year's Activate Your Curiosity programme with a range of competitions, visits and workshops taking place. Two STEM events aimed at Year 9 students took place in the Amphitheatre Leisure Centre, Larne on 17 June 2026 and Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Ballymena on 25 June 2026.
Jobs and Benefits Offices (JBO) Employability Outreach & Job Fairs 2025/26	JBO Outreach Events – LMP Officers have held outreach events in all Jobs and Benefits Offices within the borough, to engage with residents and promote LMP Academies/Projects with 38 participants attending the outreach events. An Employability and Wellbeing Support event was held in Carrickfergus on 21 April 2026. 20 employers and support agencies were in attendance with 80 participants attending. An Employability and Wellbeing Support event was held in Larne Town Hall on 28 May 2026. 9 employers and 6 support agencies were in attendance with 24 participants attending the event.
Upcoming Programmes Open for recruitment June - August	Construction & Scaffolding –Participants will undergo an intensive two-week training programme as part of MEA Scaffolding Academy with training commencing 22 June 2026. Inside Housing - Bite-sized programme that introduces participants to the diverse career opportunities within the housing association sector. Training commenced on 11 June 2026.

	<p>Green Works - will offer 8 participants interested in outdoor roles (such as gardening, groundskeeping, horticulture and landscape management) accredited training opportunities and employability support to progress to employment or self-employment.</p> <p>Crafted Futures – This programme is designed to support hobby/craft enthusiasts to develop their products into business opportunities. The programme will be delivered during June with a special showcase event scheduled for Saturday, 27 June 2026.</p> <p>Content Creation: Mastering the Smartphone Lens This one day practical and engaging session being delivered on Saturday 27 June 2026, will show participants how to transform their smartphone into a professional-grade production studio.</p> <p>Merchandising Essentials Programme - A structured training and development programme designed to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals working in merchandising and retail environments. The programme will support participants who are economically inactive, unemployed and existing staff to understand merchandising principles, improve performance and increase sales through effective product presentation and stock management. This programme is currently taking expressions of interest.</p>
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4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications: The Department for Communities provides funding to implement the LMP Actions Plan. Officers have also secured additional resources from Michelin Development Fund, Clanmil and private sponsorship for Activate Your Curiosity to provide this wide-reaching employability, skills and careers delivery.
- 4.2. Human Resources: There is no cost to Council and the agreed funding fully supports 3 full-time staff as part of the LMP delivery team.
- 4.3. Equality Screening: Completed for the 2025-27 Action Plan.
- 4.4. Assets: No direct asset impact.
- 4.5. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan: The project directly links to the corporate plan and community plan in particular the 'Progress in education and employment' theme.



- 4.6. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact: Screened in the development of the 2025-27 Action Plan.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. MEA Labour Market Partnership continues to meet bi-monthly to review progress. DfC have asked all LMPs to develop Action Plans for the period 2027-2030 to be submitted to the Department in late August before presenting to the Regional LMP in September. Officers are currently engaged with LMP members, stakeholders, businesses and community organisations to develop the actions for 2027-2030.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Members are asked to:
- (i) Note the update on the LMP Action Plan 2025-2026 and promote the forthcoming initiatives to clients and contacts.
 - (ii) Note the current 2026-2027 funding situation and plans for the development of the 2027-2030 Action Plans which will be tabled at a further meeting for Members consideration and approval.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	22 June 2026
Report Title:	Town Centre Task Force Update
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Assistant Director
Approver:	Ryan Black, Director of Growth & Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on progress of establishing a Mid and East Antrim Town Centre Task Force.

2. Background

- 2.1. At Full Council on 20 March 2026 a motion was proposed by Councillor A Clarke and seconded by Councillor G McKeen to establish a Town Centre Task Force for Mid and East Antrim Borough.
- 2.2. It was noted that the Task Force should comprise of Elected Representatives, Council Officers, representatives from local retail and hospitality sectors, business organisations, town-centre partnerships, and any other relevant stakeholders.
- 2.3. The intention is that the Task Force will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Borough's three town centres, including footfall patterns and consumer behaviour, infrastructure, accessibility, public realm considerations and opportunities for diversification and investment.
- 2.4. The motion referenced that the Task Force shall review existing town centre boundaries, assessing whether these should be compressed or redefined to better reflect current economic activity and to support more targeted regeneration. This may include proposals for the creation of Enhanced Zones within each town centre, where focused interventions such as public realm improvements, business support initiatives, marketing campaigns or investment incentives are progressed.
- 2.5. The aim of the Task Force is to bring forward a strategic action plan for each of the towns, outlining short, medium and long term measures to support local retail and strengthen town centre resilience.
- 2.6. Members noted the efforts of the existing organisations across the three town centres and welcomed the new opportunity to network, learn and share ideas to assist the business community in town centres.

- 2.7. Full support was secured within the Chamber to establish a Town Centre Task Force for Mid and East Antrim Borough.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. To progress the motion Officers are proposing six core phases that should be worked through that will result in a coherent framework for establishing the Town Centre Task Force.

1. Internal scoping – focusing on current activity, challenges and opportunities
2. Review of existing town centre partnerships
3. External Stakeholder scoping
4. Establishing the Task Force cognisant of the feedback from the scoping process
5. Establishing Priorities & Focus
6. Implementation & Delivery

- 3.2. Internal scoping with staff – A series of cross Departmental internal meetings took place on 11 and 12th June 2026 with staff across Council Directorates with responsibility for Regulatory Services, Waste, Parks, Regeneration, Town Centres, Communications, Car Parks, Tourism, Community, Assets and City Deal

The findings of the small group discussions will be presented at a workshop where Officers will be encouraged to feed into the findings, identifying any gaps. Facilitated discussions will take place so that Officers can discuss recommendations to improve their current service provision, identify any opportunities and detail short and long term actions that will be presented to the Task Force for consideration.

It is important that staff on the ground working across the three towns feed into strategic priorities, the information that is gathered will help shape the focus and inform the Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Task Force.

- 3.3. Review of town centre partnerships/ stakeholder bodies – to ensure that there is no duplication in existing partnerships and that the Task Force can build on what already is in place. Council Officers have been identifying all formal and informal groups across the three town centres. A scoping exercise will be carried out to see what's working, what is dormant and any gaps. The exercise will inform whether the Town Centre Task force will complement, replace, or improve coordination of these groups.
- 3.4. External Stakeholder Scoping – Meetings have commenced with key External Stakeholders and Town Centre representative groups. The focus of the discussions have centred around shared challenges, the identification of quick wins, and longer-term opportunities for each of the towns, along with

consideration as to how the stakeholders feel they should be represented in the Task Force.

The outcomes of the engagement process will provide a robust evidence base to support the Town Centre Task Force agenda and will help inform the governance and structural arrangements required for the Task Force.

Additional meetings will be arranged with representatives from Department of Infrastructure (DfI), Department for Communities (DfC), NI Water, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to identify and map key issues, constraints and opportunities related to improving town centres. Involving these External Departments is essential, as Council is highly dependent on them to ensure that any strategic plans are realistic and deliverable. Their participation is also critical to any effective co-design process.

- 3.5. Establishing the Task Force – The key findings from the internal and external meetings will be presented to Elected Members at a workshop scheduled during August/September 2026.

This will ensure Members have opportunity to discuss the findings and provide direction informing the purpose, priorities and focus of the Town Centre Taskforce.

To ensure the Task Force is properly established, Council will appoint external support to assist with developing the governance framework, defining the purpose, priorities and focus, making recommendations on membership, preparing terms of reference, along with proposals for how the Task Force should be operated and supported to ensure effective implementation and delivery.

- 3.6. Members will be involved and kept updated with the process for establishing the Town Task Force.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications: The Task Force is likely to require budget for planned activity which will be presented in due course.
- 4.2. Human Resources: This work will be supported by the Growth & Major Projects Directorate working collaboratively with Officers within the Town Centres and Regeneration teams.
- 4.3. Equality Screening: Any equality implications will be identified using the Council's screening process.
- 4.4. Assets: No direct asset impact.

- 4.5. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan: The formation of the Town Centre Task Force is aligned with the Council's Place corporate objectives in that it supports our towns to help regenerate and stimulate economic activity whilst promoting the borough as an ideal place to do business.
- 4.6. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact: Any rural needs implications will be identified using the Council's screening process.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. The Proposed Way Forward includes:

- Ongoing internal scoping with Council teams.
- Council Officers to continue to engage with stakeholders and Town Centre representative groups.
- Consultant to be appointed to facilitate the governance arrangements for setting up the Town Centre Task Force.
- Elected Members workshop to be scheduled.
- Further updates to be presented at future meetings of the Environment and Economy committee.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. Elected Members are asked to:

- (i) Note the update on the progress of establishing a Mid & East Antrim Town Centre Task Force.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy
Date:	22 June 2026
Report Title:	Local Growth Fund Consultation Response
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Assistant Director
Approver:	Ryan Black, Director, Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a draft Council response to the Local Growth Fund Consultation for consideration and approval.

2. Background

- 2.1. In the 2025 Spending Review, the UK Government announced a new targeted approach to local growth funding, comprising a set of interventions to drive growth and strengthen communities across the UK. The Local Growth Fund (LGF) forms part of this approach, with a focus on supporting each nation to deliver long-term investments for sustained economic growth.
- 2.2. Through this Fund, the UK Government is investing in transformational programmes and projects that will create lasting jobs and opportunities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over £129 million of funding will be available over the next three years with the ambition to empower local delivery partners to address specific structural challenges that limit growth but also build on opportunities for development. £43m per annum has been provided by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the Local Growth Fund for Northern Ireland during 2026-29.
- 2.3. The 2026/27 resource funding allocations were agreed between the UK Government and NI Executive in December 2025 with this funding to be used to deliver £9.3 million to economic inactivity projects and £2.5 million for Go Succeed which are now in delivery. Capital funding that was made available in Northern Ireland for 2025/26 has been utilised by the Executive to progress a community-based workspace project to support economic growth in North Belfast. This consultation seeks views on resource funding from 2027/28 to 2028/29 and Capital funding from 2026/27 to 2028/29.
- 2.4. The consultation closes on Friday 26 June 2026. Following this the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) will work with the Northern Ireland Executive to design an Investment Plan for the Local Growth Fund. This Plan will set out details on the priorities, eligible initiatives and delivery approach and, by aligning to the Programme for Government 2024-2027, will complement Northern Ireland Executive funding.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. Two core priorities have been outlined for the Local Growth Fund in Northern Ireland:

- **Enhancing productivity** - through business support and promoting innovation, infrastructure investment and skills enhancement.
- **Promoting active participation in the workforce** - through investment in economic inactivity.

3.2. **Enhancing Productivity:** NI's productivity is 12% below the UK average, ranking it 8th out of 12 UK regions. Key issues are:

- Sectoral imbalance: Shift from higher-productivity sectors (e.g. manufacturing) to lower-productivity, labour-intensive services (e.g. hospitality and administrative support).
- Lower proportion of employment in sectors that have experienced stronger growth across the UK such as ICT and professional services.
- Public sector concentration: as of December 2025, public sector jobs accounted for 27% of total employment, highest among UK regions and significantly higher than the UK average of 18%, highlighting the need to stimulate private sector innovation.
- Greater distance from the UK average presents additional challenges for progressing economic growth.
- Stagnating population growth: NI's population is projected to increase by just 3.6% by 2050, a stark contrast to the 12.7% projected for the UK and 19.9% for Ireland.
- With unemployment already at a historic low (2.2%), labour shortages will become a severe constraint on growth unless we increase productivity.

3.3. **Promoting active participation in the Workforce:** Significant economic inactivity and skills mismatch continue to impact the local labour market and economy:

- The UK's highest inactivity: At 26.7%, NI's economic inactivity rate is the highest in the UK (UK average: 20.7%). Of those who are inactive, 16.2% would like to work (i.e. currently want a job) while 50% expect to work at some point in the future (i.e. would definitely or probably work again), representing an untapped resource.
- The health barrier: 36.2% of NI's inactive population cite long-term sickness or disability - equating to 9.6% of the total working-age population.

- NI also faces the largest disability employment gap in the UK (44 percentage points vs. 29 UK average).
 - The skills gap: NI has the second-lowest percentage of bachelor-level qualifications in the UK. By 2033, an annual undersupply of 7,000 individuals educated at this level or above is projected, alongside an oversupply of those with low or no qualifications
- 3.4. Under Sub-priority 1.1 – Business Support and Innovation – Councils are well placed to support core service delivery through their evolving Go Succeed model. This has created a strong track record of delivery and is built on a strong partnership involving the 11 councils working closely with Department for Economy (DfE); Invest NI and the Further Education colleges as well as a wider support network to ensure effective local coverage in keeping with the Minister for the Economy's priorities around sub-regional growth, driving entrepreneurship and productivity improvements.
- 3.5. Under Sub-priority 1.2 – Local infrastructure investment – the delivery lead will depend on the specific infrastructure element to be supported. For example, Councils may work with Department for Communities (DfC) on local regeneration support but green growth investments may be led by Invest NI or academia in partnership with local Council and others.
- 3.6. Under Sub-priority 1.3 – Skills enhancement – DfE is likely to be the lead partner on this element but we would propose close collaboration with Councils specifically relating to Labour Market Partnership (LMP) activities and localised delivery in the Cleantech sector in Mid and East Antrim including i4c.
- 3.7. Under Sub-priority 2.1 – Education, skills and reskilling – DfC is likely to have a view on the most effective deployment but Councils will have a direct role in advising also on potential local solutions. The LMP provides a mechanism for this engagement at local level – ensuring that resources are most effectively deployed. DfE may also become engaged around reskilling support – particularly where this is supporting progression.
- 3.8. Under Sub-priority 2.2 – Localised economic inclusion – this falls directly within the scope of LMPs and they would be best placed to guide and support delivery.
- 3.9. Under Sub-priority 2.3 – Early intervention – DfE (and potentially Department of Education/Education Authority) may be best placed to advise on prioritisation. Delivery support could be channelled through LMPs and/or Community Planning Partnerships – depending on how significant this challenge is in local areas.
- 3.10. While the Executive Departments have a key role to play within the delivery of the LGF, the administration of the fund should be agile and streamlined

without putting undue burden and time delay on the delivery agents. Councils worked very closely with MHCLG on the Shared Prosperity Fund, and the administration approach adopted – commissioned service delivery from MHCLG to Councils and provided an effective delivery model through Go Succeed.

- 3.11. Consideration should be given to the role of Local Authorities managing the LGF directly – particularly in those areas identified above where in our view, they should have a lead role. Existing partnership-based structures such as LMPs and Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) have the advantage of building off mature collaborative working arrangements to tackle locally identified challenges that can both drive productivity and promote active participation in the workforce.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications: There are no financial implications as this is a consultation response.
- 4.2. Human Resources: No direct staffing resources.
- 4.3. Equality Screening: Not applicable as consultation response only at this point.
- 4.4. Assets: No direct asset impact at this point.
- 4.5. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan: Approach proposed aligns with Corporate, Community and Economic plans.
- 4.6. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact: Not applicable as consultation response only at this point.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Officers will submit Council's response to the Local Growth Fund Consultation and will continue to work with Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and other partnerships in the development of the Local Growth Fund Plan for Northern Ireland.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to:
 - (i) Approve Council's draft response to the Local Growth Fund Consultation including amendments from Members as required.



7. Appendices / Link

[Public Consultation: The Local Growth Fund in Northern Ireland .docx](#)

Appendix 1 – MEA Consultation Response Form The Local Growth Fund in Northern Ireland – May 2026

Public Consultation: The Local Growth Fund in Northern Ireland (2026–2029)**Consultation response form**

Your name: **Ursula O'Loughlin**

Organisation (if applicable): **Mid and East Antrim Borough Council**

Your email: **ursula.oloughlin@midandeantrim.gov.uk**

Your address: **Lamont Building, Trostan Avenue, Ballymena, BT43 7BN**

Responses should be returned by **5:00pm on Friday, 26 June 2026**

Please provide your comments and send it to either of the following:

- **Email:** NILGFconsultation@nio.gov.uk

or

- **Post:**

Northern Ireland Office,
Erskine House,
20-32 Chichester St,
Belfast,
BT1 4GF

Anonymity

Responses to the consultation may be published. Your response will be anonymous.

Consultation Questions

Strategic Priorities

Question 1.

Do you agree that the two core priorities - Enhancing Productivity and Promoting active participation in the workforce - are the correct priorities for the Local Growth Fund over the next three years?

Enhancing Productivity

(insert an X under the relevant heading)

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
X				

Supporting comments:

Council agree that this priority is important for the Local Growth Fund in Mid and East Antrim area as the Council area has a high concentration of manufacturing and engineering activity, where productivity improvements have a strong multiplier effect.

Productivity improvement is a key driver for DfE investment in Local Economic Partnerships. MEA LEP have planned a range of interventions to drive productivity improvements and it will be important to explore how new Local Growth Fund plans complement or add value to these.

Promoting Active Participation in the Workforce

(insert an X under the relevant heading)

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
X				

Supporting comments:

Council agree that this priority is important for the Local Growth Fund in Mid and East Antrim area as active participation in the workforce complements the ambitions to improve productivity. MEA like many other NI councils continues to see persistent economic inactivity with significant skills shortages across key sectors (manufacturing, logistics, hospitality, health and social care). In addition, the number of young people considered 'NEET' is steadily increasing and early intervention to promote active participation in the workforce should be viewed as a priority. There is a need for a co-ordinated and creative approach to combatting the structural barriers which impede labour market participation including access to transport, digital connectivity, and childcare benefits.

Activities to support labour market participation are more likely to utilise revenue rather than capital funding. However, given the balance of this fund, consideration may need to be given to wider investments that promote labour market engagement (supporting infrastructure; investment in facilities) rather more traditional support mechanisms. While 57% of the indicative allocation towards this priority is capital funding, it is unclear from the consultation document what types of eligible capital expenditure can be incurred within this priority.

Question 2.

Looking at the proposed activities under each priority, is the indicative balance of funding between the priorities appropriate? If not, what should it be?

(Insert an X under the relevant heading)

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
			X	

Supporting comments:

More revenue funding than capital is likely to be a more appropriate split given that the types of activities which support skills development, active participation in the workforce and general employability programmes require more resource than capital.

Given the rates of EI, NEET and the disability employment gap in NI, the funding needs to be place-led and provide a greater amount for 'promoting active participation in the workforce'. Investment should be made in providing wraparound support to both participants and employers. Specialist and ongoing employment support is integral to job retention and long-term career pathways.

Whilst capital investment in businesses and start-ups is strongly welcomed there is still a core requirement for advice and support particularly to encourage startups to utilise research and development and think about digital transformation from the outset and even more important to hand hold those long established businesses who need to invest in digital transformation and who need to be encouraged to look at R&D. This requires more resource support to shape strategies, give advice on best options for investment to then access the capital support to invest in the right options at the right time, to ensure any capital funding is utilised correctly to drive real change in the long term.

MEA like the other local councils would be well placed to explore how place-based approaches could consider both priorities which would align well within the scope of proven delivery under LMP, local regeneration, community plans and the actions being planned under the LEP.

Priority 1- Enhancing productivity

Question 3.

Which of three sub-priorities identified (Business support and innovation, Strategic infrastructure investment, Skills enhancement), or others, would you focus on to deliver higher value-added activity and increase the efficiency of the economy?

(insert an X under the relevant heading)

Business support and innovation	X
Strategic infrastructure investment	X
Skills enhancement	X

Supporting comments:

There is merit in supporting all three of the sub-priorities, with a balanced approach across each area most likely to see the greatest return on investment. The priority areas are mutually reinforcing and collectively essential for delivering higher value-added activity and improving economic efficiency. Investment in strategic infrastructure, business support and innovation and skills enhancement will all work collectively to improve the two measures of productivity and promoting active participation in the work force.

A strong business support environment is essential to drive future growth in Northern Ireland. Focus should be placed firstly on revenue funding to encourage start-ups and support scalable, growth-oriented firms to expand their workforce. This investment will be necessary to stimulate demand in infrastructure and additional staff. Emphasis must be placed on enhancing the business start-up and growth ecosystem within NI, consulting with industry to establish the key parameters for programme development that will make a real difference in helping them to grow, scale up and employ more staff.

There is a strong manufacturing and engineering base, including energy, cleantech and agri-food sectors. Targeted business support, innovation adoption, and productivity programmes will help firms scale, export, and transition to higher-value activity.

Infrastructure constraints, including digital connectivity, serviced industrial land, and town centre regeneration needs, limit the borough's ability to attract investment and support business growth. Strategic capital investment will unlock private-sector growth and improve long-term competitiveness.

MEABC faces skills shortages in key sectors and pockets of high economic inactivity. Skills development, employability pathways and workforce participation programmes are essential to ensure residents can access new opportunities and employers can grow. Structural changes to traineeships, apprenticeships including supports for employers, community-based delivery and the adoption of shared apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship models need to be considered to ensure NEETs have the opportunity to receive the necessary supports to gain and sustain employment.

Question 4.

How can the Local Growth Fund best support SMEs and business start ups to grow and move up the value chain, including engaging in Research and Development?

Answer:

The Local Growth Fund can best support SMEs and start-ups by combining targeted business support, access to innovation and R&D resources, skills development, and suitable infrastructure. This includes helping firms adopt new technologies, providing small-scale innovation funding, creating collaboration opportunities with colleges and universities, developing technical and leadership skills, and ensuring access to flexible workspace and digital infrastructure. Together, these interventions help businesses improve productivity, innovate, and move up the value chain.

This might include access and support through research or innovation centres such as QUB AMIC, NITC, Northern Regional College, i4C Centre, AFBI, etc.

Grants and investment should be targeted to help new businesses and existing businesses focus on their marketing and attract customers to successfully launch a business or expand to new customer groups and markets. Councils have successfully implemented the Go Succeed Service which could be augmented to deliver a wider remit of business and innovation support.

Question 5.

Regarding local growth infrastructure, which specific local barriers (e.g., wastewater, flooding, transport, digital, green energy) are most significantly preventing business growth in your local area?

Answer:

The most significant infrastructure barriers which exist in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area include:

Wastewater Capacity Constraints - NI Water has explicitly warned that budget reductions and under-investment in wastewater infrastructure will restrict new business and housing development across Northern Ireland, including MEA.

Transport Connectivity Limitations - MEA's Climate & Sustainability Action Plan identifies transport as a key theme requiring improvement, including: Better connections to industrial estates, Low-carbon transport options and Infrastructure to support logistics and manufacturing growth. The lack of affordable public transport, poor pedestrian infrastructure and underdeveloped active travel networks can restrict access to employment, reduce labour mobility and make it more difficult for businesses to retain and attract workers.

Digital Infrastructure Gaps - MEA's Integrated Economic Development Strategy (Amplify) identifies infrastructure as one of its five strategic priorities, including digital connectivity. While urban areas are well-served, rural parts of the borough still face patchy high-speed broadband, limited 5G coverage and Barriers to digital adoption for SMEs

Green Energy and CleanTech Infrastructure Needs - MEA has major ambitions to become Northern Ireland's CleanTech hub, with significant projects such as: The i4C Innovation & CleanTech Centre but to support these, the areas needs Grid capacity upgrades, Hydrogen production, storage, and refuelling infrastructure and Renewable energy generation and connection capacity.

Priority 2 - Promoting active participation in the workforce

Question 6.

What specific support is most needed to help those currently economically inactive move toward employment, including self-employment and starting their own business?

Answer:

Specialist employment support should be a core element and embedded into any employability programmes for economic inactivity. Funding regimes have restricted the ability to adequately deliver support to those deemed 'economically inactive'. Short funding periods do not meet the multi-faceted needs of people in this group.

The majority of economically inactive participants face multiple and overlapping barriers and mainstream programmes currently are not designed or resourced to provide the specialist skills and expertise which these participants require. The participants are not just 'unemployed', they are unable or reluctant to engage because of health conditions, caring responsibilities, poor public transport infrastructure, disability, trauma, anxiety/depression, low educational attainment and multi-generational disengagement from education and employment.

The most effective support for economically inactive people combines wrap-around help to remove practical barriers, community-based employability programmes, employer-led skills training, and tailored pathways into self-employment. This includes barrier and transport support, one-to-one mentoring, digital skills training, start-up support, micro-grants, and strong employer engagement with in-work support. Together, these interventions help people build confidence, gain relevant skills, and move into sustainable employment or start their own business.

Specialist employment support programmes offer tailored support to the individual on a needs-led basis and cannot be offered as a 'one size fits all'. Wraparound support can include 1:1 mentoring, confidence building, mental health support, employer liaison with regards to reasonable accommodations, soft skills development and progression pathways. Hard to reach participants can distrust certain institutions and can feel isolated and disconnected.

In addition, hard to reach economically inactive participants who may want to explore self-employment/business start-up options will usually require more than standard advice and guidance. Many will require a person-centred combination of practical business support, personal development and long-term mentoring. This type of bespoke support will assist with sustainability and equip participants with the skills to do this. Self-employment for economically inactive participants can offer more suitable options than traditional employment as it can offer flexibility, control over working hours and work adapted to individual needs. Self-employment may also be a more relevant and realistic option for participants living in rural areas with fewer employers. MEA have proven delivery in support unemployed and economically inactive into self-employment through bespoke delivery on their Enterprise Pathways Programme, a model which could be integrated into future delivery.

Question 7.

What specific adult education or reskilling models have proven most effective at re-engaging those with qualifications below NQF Level 2?

Answer:

Approaches taken by the LMPs in providing community skills and entry level academies have been well received and successful.

The most effective models for re-engaging adults below Level 2 are community-based learning, small "stepping-stone" pathways, embedded essential skills, employer-led sector programmes, supported self-employment, wrap-around support, paid traineeships, and digital inclusion initiatives. These approaches build confidence, remove practical barriers, and provide clear, achievable routes into work, training, or entrepreneurship.

Employer-led employment academies with industry-specific training are beneficial to create short interventions which marry together the need for pre-trained/qualified participants with recruiting employers. Training and upskilling should be meeting the needs of the labour market and show clear pathways to employability and skills development. Training should also be related to a tangible outcome i.e. employment and not just training for training's sake.

Question 8.

What capital programmes / projects can best promote active participation in the workforce?

Answer:

The capital projects that most effectively promote active workforce participation are those which remove practical barriers and create accessible pathways into training and employment. This includes investment in skills and training facilities, community employability hubs, childcare infrastructure, transport improvements, digital access points, and affordable enterprise space. These capital interventions enable people to access training, overcome barriers, and move into sustainable employment or self-employment.

Examples might include:

- Innovation Laboratories with modern equipment (CNC, robotics, welding bays);
- A Hydrogen & CleanTech Training Academy (building on MEA's existing strengths);
- A Digital Skills Hub offering digital training, coding, and remote-work skills; or
- Mobile training units that bring skills provision into rural communities.

Delivery and equality**Question 9.**

Which organisations are best placed to deliver each sub-priority of the fund and why? (For example, NI departments, local government, third sector organisations, the private sector, education providers).

Answer:

Business Support and Innovation - Local Council's should be key to developing and delivering business support programmes and innovation initiatives given their established and proven track record in delivering business growth and scaling programmes. Individual Councils have knowledge of the business and innovation environment within their locality, the key challenges businesses face and the appropriate contacts within the business ecosystem to guide businesses towards wider growth support such as Invest NI, Intertrade Ireland, FE Colleges etc. demonstrating their strength in delivering impartial support to businesses reflective of their real time needs.

Mid and East Antrim Council, with their unique Business Client Manager model where business advisors employed by Council work directly with micro and small businesses to diagnose growth needs and barriers, develop programmes and implement business improvement mentoring strategies has proven successful since 2018 helping to support over 2,000 SMEs improve their growth potential and capabilities. Mid an East Antrim Council's dedicated staff resource work closely with wider stakeholders to ensure access to wider innovation and productivity support. This model should be utilised to develop and implement business support and innovation programmes.

Skill enhancement – Council through its LMP organise various skills academies and employability programmes targeted at the needs of individuals across Mid and East Antrim Borough. Council are well placed to develop and deliver skill enhancement programmes and activities. Through liaising with micro and small businesses Council has been able to develop and deliver skills interventions in areas of need such as digitalisation, sustainability and manufacturing to support SMEs, economically inactive and unemployed access valuable skills and training. Skill enhancement supports should be developed and managed by local Councils in partnership with industry, FE colleges and universities to continually review and address market challenges and trends.

Strategic Infrastructure Investment - Infrastructure projects require statutory powers, long-term planning, and capital delivery capability. NI departments and arm's-length bodies are responsible for transport, utilities, energy, regeneration, and digital infrastructure and therefore are best placed to deliver. Councils are best placed to deliver local regeneration, workspace, and town-centre projects. Private-sector partners bring investment, technical expertise, and delivery capacity for energy, digital, and industrial-site development.

Question 10.

Are there opportunities to better align with existing or planned provision (For example by boosting an existing local or NI project or initiative)?

Answer:

Yes. There are clear opportunities to align the Local Growth Fund with existing and planned provision, both locally and regionally.

There is opportunity to align the Local Growth Fund with existing and planned business support being delivered both locally and regionally. Go Succeed programme, the Northern Ireland wide business support programme for prestart, start up, growth and scaling is an important mechanism and driver of business growth support in Northern Ireland. The 11 local Council's all work in partnership to deliver Go Succeed in each of their localities and to tailor their own support provisions based on sub regional needs. For example, in Mid

and East Antrim, initiatives delivered via Go Succeed and Council's own financial resources have focused on digital skill acceleration, green practices to drive growth and sustainability, innovation, enhancing export and new market potential as well as support those who are unemployed or economically inactive to move into self-employment.

Aligning the Local Growth Fund with Go Succeed and individual Councils for tailored sub regional approaches including through the Labour Market Partnership and Local Economic Partnership would significantly benefit the NI economy.

The fund could also strengthen ongoing skills and employability programmes delivered by FE colleges and community organisations, expand MEA's clean-tech and hydrogen initiatives such as the Hydrogen Training Academy and i4C Centre, and scale existing business-support programmes run by councils, Invest NI and enterprise agencies.

It could also complement town-centre regeneration already underway in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus by repurposing vacant units for skills, enterprise or community use. Finally, aligning with planned infrastructure upgrades by NI Water, NIE Networks and DfI would help unlock stalled development and support wider economic participation. It should also closely align with the projects and the priorities set out in both the Local Economic Partnership Action Plans and the Labour Market Partnership initiatives.

MEA Community Planning Partnerships has a series of interventions to support place-based support across key themes including Progress in Education and Economy which could link with both priority areas.

The emerging Shaping Sustainable Places also presents a more collaborative, engaged model for developing solutions to specific place-based challenges through funding local physical and infrastructure projects.

Question 11.

Are there any groups protected under Section 75 who may be adversely affected by the proposed sub-priorities set out in this proposed Framework? Are there opportunities for promoting good relations?

Answer:

There is potential for some Section 75 groups to be adversely affected by the proposed sub-priorities, but these risks can be minimised through proper planning, inclusive design, and robust equality screening.

Question 12.

The Local Growth Fund aims to promote regional balance. Are there any further considerations we should give to ensuring support benefits rural communities as per the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016? How can we ensure that investments in infrastructure and skills are delivered in a way that effectively supports rural communities and businesses?

Answer:

There is potential for rural communities to be overlooked unless the Local Growth Fund is planned and delivered with the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 firmly in mind. However, these risks can be minimised through proper rural-proofing, targeted outreach, and ensuring that investment models work for dispersed populations. Any proposals should reflect the planning policy context set out in the Plan Strategy (PS). The PS states: There are a range of types of development which in principle are considered to be acceptable in the countryside and that will contribute to the aims of sustainable development. Other types of development will only be permitted where there are overriding reasons why that development is essential and could not be located in a settlement. These policies aim to strike a balance between the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, while supporting rural communities.

Question 13.

If you have any related comments which have not been addressed in the above questions, please use this space to share them.

Answer:

MEA are mindful of the time pressure on spend and would encourage NIO to move at pace in securing agreement around the investment plan in order to move forward on delivery.

We note the annual funding allocations (both capital and revenue) and would ask NIO to explore opportunities for flexibility across each spend year. This is particularly important given the capital-focused nature of the programme and the need for flexibility in these schemes, including working across financial years.

Short term funded programmes are counterproductive because the people and the communities facing the biggest barriers to employment or social inclusion usually need long-term and consistent support. Short term funding cycles can be detrimental to lasting and sustainable outcomes and run the risk of encouraging quick outputs and unstable, fragmented services/programmes. Trust and engagement take time for hard-to-reach participants so progress is not lost and skilled staff leave due to job insecurity. What is needed is multi-year funding, flexible outcome measures and a joined-up approach between employment services, local government, education, community and voluntary sector as well as health providers.

Council/Committee: Environment & Economy Committee
Date: 22 June 2026

Report Title: Service Level Agreements with Enterprise Agencies
Publication Status: Open
Author: Ursula O'Loughlin, Assistant Director
Approver: Ryan Black, Director of Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present Members with the outcomes of the 2025-2026 Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs) and seek approval to continue these Service Level Agreements during 2026–2027.

2. Background

- 2.1. Following the Independent Review of Council's Service Level Agreements which were presented and agreed at October 2017 Full Council, Members approved the recommendation that an annual fee of up to £7,500 would be made available to each Local Enterprise Agency to promote economic activity and complement existing entrepreneurship service provision provided by Council and other partners.
- 2.2. There was no cost of inflation increase factored into this budget until 2024, where there was an approval to an increase in the annual fee up to £9,500 per LEA to allow for the higher operational costs experienced by the Enterprise Agencies.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. Enterprising Women – Overview of 2025-2026

The pooling of Service Level Agreement funds continues with Ballymena Business Centre and Carrickfergus Enterprise Agency to ensure the Enterprising Women Network is resourced to grow and develop. This collaboration has been very beneficial in growing the network across the borough ensuring a unified response to referrals to the network and key messaging.

- 3.2. Membership has continued to grow year on year. A review of 'live' memberships is undertaken annually each August to ensure non-engaging members are no longer holding membership spaces, allowing new members to join. As of March 2026, the current membership is 167, which is an 11% increase on the previous year. New membership requests continue to grow due to the strength and value of the brand and referrals from existing members and stakeholders.

43% of members have started their business in the last 3 years with 35% of members from Ballymena, 31% from Larne and 34% from Carrickfergus.

3.3. Over the period May 2025-March 2026, the following activities were delivered under the SLA:

- 6 Social Networking to Grow events including 3 Coffee and Networking and lunch Events in Larne, Carrickfergus and Ballymena.
- A Winter showcase event held in the Fairhill Shopping Centre, Ballymena with 13 traders taking part to showcase their products and services to local shoppers and generating around £6,500 sales and further follow up enquiries/orders.
- Following feedback from members an exchange visit was organised to the Dunadry Hotel with a collaborative networking event held with members of Antrim and Newtownabbey female networks with the view to identifying common themes to explore future funding opportunities and collaborative projects.
- With the excellent variety of masterclasses and portal resources provided under Go Succeed, the 2025-2026 Enterprising Women schedule focused on management and personal skills including 3 workshops in: Ignite Your Sparkle, Money Matters – Financial Essentials for Business and Advanced Canva.
- 3 workshops under the theme of Health and Well Being: A Morning in Nature, A Different Language and Selling with Confidence.
- 11 ladies received coaching or mentoring totalling 45.5 hours in topics including social media, website review, financial management and personal coaching. This was agreed with Council Officers as any Enterprising Women members who wished to receive mentoring must have completed mentoring through Go Succeed in the first instance. This ensured no duplication and mentoring time available was maximised.

3.4. **New Opportunities Programme**

During 2025/26 LEDCOM delivered the New Opportunities Programme which aimed to support 15 economically inactive residents to explore and progress into self-employment via a series of workshops. A total of 5 hours one to one mentoring was provided and up to £500 to acquire goods and services required to progress their business idea with access to the financial support limited to 8 participants.

The programme exceeded targeted outcomes with 16 participants availing of mentoring support and 7 progressing to Go Succeed. 8 applications for financial support with an average value of £460 were approved, enabling participants to acquire items including laptops, industrial shelving and tripods to support their business formation.

3.5. Enterprising Women - Service Level Agreement Proposal for 2026-2027 (Ballymena Business Centre and Carrickfergus Enterprises)

A review of the 2025-2026 programme has clearly showed the value and impact made by Enterprising Women on its members, local stakeholders and the wider local community.

Feedback received from attendees throughout the year, general comments and responses from a dedicated post programme focus group revealed the high esteem in which members hold Enterprising Women. They now see it as a solid community that they feel part of and that can help improve their confidence in not only networking but in developing their business and them personally. Members are also intentionally networking outside formal meetings and collaborating together for product and service delivery. Over 60 positive endorsements have been received in support of continuing the Network.

3.6. The proposed 2026-2027 programme aims to:

- Maintain and grow the Enterprising Women Network and encourage corporate membership for local employers for their employees to upskill, develop connections and collaborations. There are now opportunities to enhance this through the PEACEPLUS programme as well as build on the linkages with other female networks to identify potential funding opportunities.
- Continue to gain referrals from stakeholders to ensure spread and outreach from women across the Borough and develop a strong referral process through to mainstream delivery under Council's 'Go Succeed' service.
- Delivery will take place under 4 key themes:
 - Management and Personal Development Skills (3 workshops)
 - Health and Well Being (3 workshops)
 - Networking Events - 6 events including an exchange visit and a Member Showcase.
 - Connecting Members - Members have asked for more intentional networking in advance of events. Alongside the workshops there will be provision for a personal and business coaching service on a one to one or group basis, whilst ensuring no duplication of available Go Succeed support.

3.7. **Proposed 2026/27 Service Level Agreement (LEDCOM)**

LEDCOM propose to use this year's SLA to provide additional support following Go Succeed provision whereby clients that have completed the 'Engage' pillar of support but don't meet the conditions required to progress to 'Foundation' (i.e. potential to create employment / register for VAT).

The proposal involves the provision of up to 5 hours additional mentoring to trading businesses who have previously completed Engage. An application process will be implemented (capturing details of previous support provided, Engage completion date, assurance that Go Succeed masterclasses or portal cannot provide the necessary support, details of mentoring requested by the client along with anticipated outcomes) which will require approval by Council Officers prior to support being confirmed to ensure no duplication.

The project is expected to facilitate delivery of 137 mentoring hours to at least 27 clients.

4. **General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1. Financial implications: The recommended budget for 2026-27 is as follows:
- A joint Letter of Offer for up to £19,000 for Carrickfergus Enterprise and Ballymena Business Centre to support the Enterprising Women Network
 - £9,500 allocated to LEDCOM to fund delivery of business development mentoring.

These budgets have been included within the Economic Development estimates for 2026-2027.

- 4.2. Human Resources: The project will be managed by the Skills and Entrepreneurship staff within the Economic Development Team as part of Councils' statutory duty where responsibility for 'Promotion of entrepreneurship and encouraging business start-up', 'Provision for under-represented groups in entrepreneurship' and 'Promotion of social enterprise' transferred to Councils from DFE/DETI as part of RPA in 2015. Officers will assist the LEAs in the marketing and delivery of the SLA projects.
- 4.3. Equality Screening: Any equality implications will be identified using the Council's screening process
- 4.4. Assets: No direct asset impact
- 4.5. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan: The project directly links to the corporate plan and community plan in particular the 'Progress in education and employment' theme which includes the following pertinent outcomes and priorities:

- We have a skilled workforce able to adapt to a changing economy.
- Our Borough provides opportunities for all and supports people to achieve their potential.
- We provide a range of education pathways to employment.
- We reduce or remove the barriers to our people achieving their potential.
- We encourage entrepreneurship and vocational training.

4.6. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact: Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact screening have been completed.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Officers to issue Service Level Agreements to cover proposed activities during the 2026-2027 financial year subject to Members approval.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. Elected Members are asked to:

- (i) Note the achievements of the three Local Enterprise Agencies during 2025/26.
- (ii) Approve a joint Letter of Offer for up to £19,000 for Carrickfergus Enterprise and Ballymena Business Centre to support the Enterprising Women Network.
- (iii) Approve £9,500 to LEDCOM to fund delivery of a business development mentoring support programme as part of the Service Level Agreements for 2026/27.

7. Appendices / Link

Appendix 1 – DPIA Screening
Appendix 2 – Equality Screening
Appendix 3 – Rural Screening
Appendix 4 – Sustainability Screening



IDENTIFYING THE NEED FOR A DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT (DPIA) - SCREENING QUESTIONS

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is a process to help you systematically and comprehensively analyse your personal data processing and help you identify and minimise any data protection risks of a project.

You must do a DPIA before you begin any type of personal data processing that is “likely to result in a high risk.”

This set of screening questions will help you decide whether a DPIA is necessary. Please note, if there is a change to the nature, scope, context or purposes of your processing you will be required to complete this screening template again.

You will be accountable for the screening decisions you make. Therefore, it is critical that you document via “Explanatory Notes” the screening decisions you have made, providing logical reasons regarding whether to do a DPIA or not.

Section A - Project Details	
Title of Project/Plan/Policy	Service Level Agreements with Local Enterprise Agencies
Is this an existing, revised or new project?	SLAs are agreed annually.
What is the purpose of the project, plan or policy? <i>e.g. intended aims/outcomes</i> Include any relevant background information here	Following the Independent Review of Council’s Service Level Agreements which were presented and agreed at October 2017 Full Council, Members approved the recommendation that an annual fee would be made available to each Local Enterprise Agency to promote economic activity and complement existing entrepreneurship service provision provided by Council and other partners.
Which MEABC Department owns or holds responsibility for this project, plan or policy?	Economic Development

Section B - Personal Data		
Does this project, plan or policy involve the processing of personal data?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If the answer to this question is ‘No’, you do not need to conduct a DPIA. Please proceed straight to **Section E**.

If the answer to this question is ‘Yes’, please proceed to **Section C**.

Section C: Questions 1 - 13

Examples are for guidance only and should not be considered exhaustive or definitive.

For questions 1 to 13, a DPIA **MUST** be carried out if the answer is **YES**. Your documentation should explain very clearly whether there are any indicators that a type of processing will likely result in ‘high risk’.

High risk means a risk that could result in a significant impact on individuals’ rights and freedoms.

For some of these questions, the answer will only be “yes” if the processing occurs in combination with criteria (see questions 14 to 22) in the Article 29 Data Protection Working Party’s European Guidelines.

Screening Questions - <u>Will the project:</u>		Yes/No	Explanatory Notes
1	Use systematic and extensive profiling or automated decision-making to make significant decisions about people? <i>e.g. using technology to analyse personal data or make decisions without human involvement.</i>	No	
2	Process special category data or criminal offence data on a large scale? <i>e.g. health, medical, racial/ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, trade union or political views.</i>	No	
3	Systematically monitor a publicly accessible place on a large scale? <i>e.g. CCTV.</i>	No	
4	Use innovative technologies or the novel application of existing technologies? <i>e.g. AI-driven systems, or repurposing data for new functions.</i> <i>(Note: A DPIA is required where this processing is combined with any of the criteria from the European guidelines.)</i>	No	
5	Use profiling, automated decision-making or special category data to help make decisions on someone’s access to a product, service, opportunity or benefit? <i>e.g. use of computer systems to automatically decide, or by using sensitive data to decide whether someone can get access to a service provided by Council.</i>	No	

6	<p>Carry out profiling on a large scale?</p> <p><i>Profiling is using personal data to assess or predict things about a person, e.g. job performance, financial situation, interests, reliability, behaviour, location, or movements.</i></p> <p><i>To decide what constitutes 'large scale' you should consider and include information on factors such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of individuals concerned - volume of data - variety of data - duration of processing - geographical extent of processing. <p><i>Also see examples in ICO's guidance of processing/ projects they consider to be large scale.</i></p>	No	
7	<p>Process biometric data?</p> <p><i>e.g. Fingerprints, facial/voice recognition.</i></p> <p><i>(Note: A DPIA is required where this processing is combined with any of the criteria from the European guidelines.)</i></p>	No	
8	<p>Process genetic data?</p> <p><i>e.g. DNA or data from ancestry/genetic testing</i></p> <p><i>(Note: A DPIA is required where this processing is combined with any of the criteria from the European guidelines.)</i></p>	No	
9	<p>Combine, compare or match personal data from multiple sources?</p> <p><i>e.g. proof of life enquiries, receiving information from external organisations.</i></p>	No	Officers expect that information held on the Go Succeed CRM will be accessed e.g. to check project beneficiaries' progress.
10	<p>Process personal data without providing a privacy notice directly to the individual?</p> <p><i>Signposting to a privacy notice on the website is sufficient to satisfy this requirement.</i></p> <p><i>(Note: A DPIA is required where this processing is combined with any of the criteria from the European guidelines.)</i></p>	No	Respective privacy statements are shared with Go Succeed and Enterprising Women participants at sign up.
11	<p>Process personal data in a way which involves tracking individuals' online or offline location or behaviour?</p> <p><i>e.g. are you collecting information about where people go or what they do? [online activity or GPS].</i></p> <p><i>(Note: A DPIA is required where this processing is combined with any of the criteria from the European guidelines.)</i></p>	No	
12	<p>Process children's personal data for profiling or automated decision-making or for marketing purposes, or offer online</p>	No	

	services directly to them? e.g. <i>running an online library service for children and using their reading history to suggest new books.</i>		
13	Process personal data which could result in a risk of physical harm in the event of a security breach? <i>e.g. revealing home addresses of people in a protected role.</i>	No	

**Section D:
Article 29 Data Protection Working Party’s European Guidelines**

When considering if your processing is “likely to result in high risk,” you should consider the [European guidelines](#). These define **nine** criteria of processing operations likely to result in high risk. In most cases, a combination of two factors indicates the “need” for a DPIA. Although this is not a strict rule.

Therefore, if the answer to any of questions 14 to 23 is “yes” a DPIA should be “considered.”

Your documentation should explain very clearly whether there any indicators that a type of processing will likely result in high risk.

Will the project:		Yes/No	Explanatory Notes
14	Involve evaluation or scoring? <i>e.g. a recruitment panel scoring candidates against set criteria.</i>	No	
15	Involve automated decision-making with legal or similar significant effect? <i>e.g. an automated system decides to assign a fixed penalty notice without human review.</i>	No	
16	Involve systematic monitoring? <i>e.g. CCTV, use of software to monitor staff emails</i>	No	
17	Involve sensitive data or data of a highly personal nature? <i>e.g. processing health information or information about neighbour disputes</i>	No	
18	Involve data processing on a large scale? <i>e.g. electoral roll data for all residents</i>	No	
19	Involve matching or combining datasets? <i>e.g. matching HR records with payroll data or combining customer data from different</i>	No	

	<i>platforms, e.g. combining someone's Te Dogs record with their planning portal application.</i>		
20	Involve processing of data concerning vulnerable data subjects? <i>Note: this does not always mean a traditionally considered vulnerability, e.g. staff may be considered to be vulnerable data subjects due to the imbalance of power between employer and employee.</i>	No	
21	Use innovative technological or organisational solutions? <i>e.g. AI.</i>	No	
22	Prevent data subjects from exercising a right or using a service or contract? <i>e.g. restricting access to an online application unless identity verification is completed, restricting someone's right of access, etc.</i>	No	
23	Process personal data which could result in a risk of other forms of harm (e.g. emotional, psychological, financial) in the event of a security breach? <i>e.g. details of a disciplinary investigation or complaint, bank details, etc.</i>	No	

Section E: Findings		
Does this screening indicate that a DPIA is required?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Note: Data Protection legislation and ICO guidance state that you should seek your DPO's advice when you need to do a DPIA. If this box is ticked 'yes', please complete the full Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) template on the P-drive.</i>		
Has a DPIA been recommended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<i>You may wish to conduct a DPIA even if the screening indicates that one is not required. A DPIA is a useful tool to consider any impacts and/or risks involved in processing personal data.</i>		

Final Comments
<i>Please outline anything you feel relevant to the decision whether to conduct a DPIA or not.</i>
<p>Project will require processing of personal data (e.g. contact details) for admin purposes by Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs) which are aware of their data protection obligations.</p> <p>- Economic Development Officer</p>

As personal data is collected and managed through the partnering organisations, no further action is required. MEABC will be collecting minimal personal information - the majority of which will be accessed via Go Succeed CRM.
 MEA Skills & Entrepreneurship team will liaise with Information Governance when establishing the SLA to ensure matters regarding data protection governance are appropriately detailed within. - *Information Governance Officer*

DPIA Screening completed by:			
Please detail level of Council Officer completing this screening and forward for further sign off			
Position:	Economic Development Officer		
Department:	Economic Development	Date:	09/06/2026
Information Governance review:			
This screening can be reviewed by any member of the Information Governance team			
Position:	Information Governance Officer	Date:	10/06/2026
DPIA Screening Approval:			
This should be the Information Asset Owner, which is usually the HoS/AD			
Position:	Assistant Director		
Department:	Economic Development	Date:	DD/MM/YYYY



Forward Plan – Environment & Economy Committee

Planned Agenda Items Next meeting – 10 August 2026

Items	Purpose	Report by:
• Economic Development Activity Report	Noting	Ryan
• Ballymena Business Improvement District Update	Noting	Ryan
• Go Succeed	Noting	Ryan
• Making the Future Network Update	Noting	Ryan
• World of Work	Approval	Ryan
• Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2027-2030	Approval	Ryan
• Town Centre - Connect & Showcase Grant Support	Approval	Ryan

Items to be programmed

Item	Purpose
Business Cases (DC)	Report for Approval
Business Cases for Fleet for year ahead	Report for Approval
Tenders	Report for Approval
Terms of reference	Report for Approval