

April 17th, 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, 20th April 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 Draft Climate Change Sub Committee Notes – 24 March 2026 - Circulated

[*DRAFT - Climate Change Sub Committee Meeting Minutes 24 March 26.pdf*](#) *Page 1*

4.2 Economic Development Activity Report - Circulated

[*Economic Development Activity Report.pdf*](#) *Page 7*

4.3 Ballymena Business Improvement District Update - Circulated

[*Ballymena Business Improvement District Update.pdf*](#) *Page 16*

4.4 Student Pitch Challenge Competition - Circulated

[*Student Pitch Challenge Competition.pdf*](#) *Page 19*

4.5 Activate your Curiosity 2026-2027 - Circulated

[*Activate Your Curiosity 2026-2027.pdf*](#) *Page 22*

[*Appendix 1 - Keynote Speakers, Practical Workshops.pdf*](#) *Page 25*

[*Appendix 2 - Employer Engagement Activities - Pre-January Flagship Event.pdf*](#) *Page 27*

4.6 PEACEPLUS Screenings - Circulated

[*PEACEPLUS Screenings.pdf*](#) *Page 30*

[*Appendix 1 - Data Protection Impact Assessment.pdf*](#) *Page 33*

[*Appendix 2 Equality Screening.pdf*](#) *Page 45*

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 Local Economic Partnership Action Plan - Circulated (16.4.26)

Appendix 1 Local Economic Partnership Action Plan.pdf	Not included
Appendix 2 MEA LEP Action Plan 26-28.pdf	Not included
Appendix 2(a) Annex A Proposed Projects & Budgets Scoring Review Sheet.pdf	Not included
Appendix 2(b) Annex A Proposed Projects & Budgets Budget Review Sheet.pdf	Not included
Appendix 3 Annex B Economist Thoughts.pdf	Not included
Appendix 4 Annex C Final MEA LEP Action Plan Diagram.pdf	Not included
Appendix 5 Memorandum of Understanding - Final - Mid East Antrim.pdf	Not included
Appendix 6 Equality Screening - MEA LEP Action Plan.pdf	Not included
Appendix 7 Rural Needs Impact Assessment - MEA LEP.pdf	Not included
Appendix 8 Climate Environment and Social Assessment -MEA LEP Action Plan.pdf	Not included
Appendix 9 Data Protection Impact Screening - MEA LEP.pdf	Not included
Appendix 10 DPIA Full (working document) - MEA LEP Action Plan.pdf	Not included

7.2 Arc21 Waste Contract and Procurement Issues - Circulated

Arc21 Waste Contract and Procurement Issues.pdf	Not included
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7.3 Policy for Household Recycling Centres: Restricted Access for Commercial Vehicles - Circulated

<i>Policy for Household Recycling Centres Restricted Access for Commercial Vehicles.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 1 - MEABC HRC Terms of Entry.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 2 - HRC Restricted Access DPIA Screening.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 3 - HRC Restricted Access - Equality Screening.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 4 - HRCs_ Restricted Access for Commercial Vehicles Report.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 5 - HRC Restricted Access - Rural Needs Impact Assessment.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 6 - FAQs.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 7 - Things you CAN recycle.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 8 - Things you CANNOT recycle.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 9 HRC Booking System Policy.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

7.4 Digital Transformation Flexible Fund - Circulated

<i>Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 1 - Letters of Offer Awarded.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
<i>Appendix 2 - Analysis of MEA Applications under the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>

7.5 AI Growth Zones Update - Circulated

<i>AI Growth Zones Update.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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7.6 Go Succeed 2026-2027 - Circulated (16.4.26)

<i>Go Succeed 2026-2027.pdf</i>	<i>Not included</i>
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8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED COMMITTEE

9 FORWARD PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY COMMITTEE

📄 *E&E Committee - Forward Plan - 27 May 2026.pdf*

Page 82

Meeting Date: 24 March 2026 - Via Microsoft Teams

Climate Change Sub-Committee

1

Attendees: Ald R Logan (RL), Ald W McCaughey (WMcC), Cllr R Glover (RG), Cllr R Beggs (RB), Matthew McCallion (MMcC), Luke Irwon (LI), Anne Hardy (AH), Catherine Hunter (CH), A Penny (AP), Luke Irwin (LI), Keith Cullen (BRIC).

Apologies: Ald A Wilson, Cllr G McKeen, Cllr M Donnelly.

Notes: PA to Director

No	Action	By	Notes
1	WELCOME & APOLOGIES		
	<p>In the absence of a Chair and Vice-Chair, it was agreed Catherine Hunter would chair the meeting. It was noted that quorum had not been met, but no decisions were required at the meeting and the session was for information purposes.</p> <p>Apologies: Ald A Wilson, Cllr G McKeen, Cllr M Donnelly.</p>		
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
	None		
3	INFORMATION & NOTING		
3.1	Climate Change Sub-Committee Meeting Notes – 6 August 2025 - circulated – all agreed.		
3.2	Minutes of the All-Party Working Group (APG) – This group has not met since 12 November 2025. A further meeting has been scheduled for 24 April 2026 with a topic of decarbonising heat.		
4	KEY MATTERS ARISING		
4.1	Climate Adaptation		
	CH delivered an overview of the Council's work on climate adaptation.		

No	Action	By	Notes
	<p>It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's current four-year Climate Adaptation Plan was approved in March 2024; • The Council is now in Year 3 of that plan; • The plan was developed using the Climate NI Adapts five-stage approach. <p>CH advised that the Council is preparing to submit its first climate adaptation report under the Climate Change Public Body Reporting Regulations 2024, with the return due by 31 March 2026.</p> <p>Members were advised that the Council's risk-based approach draws on the Climate Change Committee's Climate Change Risk Assessment, which identifies 61 climate risks and opportunities for Northern Ireland, 31 of which require immediate action.</p> <p>The main climate risks identified for the Borough include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flooding of buildings and businesses; • coastal erosion; • water shortages; • heat-related health issues; and • damage to natural ecosystems from hotter, drier summers and wetter winters. <p>The principal categories considered across Council services are flooding, heat, storms and cold weather.</p> <p>CH reported on progress against the current adaptation plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 actions are green (delivered or being delivered); • 4 actions are amber (in progress); • 6 actions are red (not yet delivered). <p>Several preemptive actions were discussed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of a severe weather protocol for waste management operations; and • improving resilience of existing buildings and assets through maintenance and refurbishment. <p>It was further noted that:</p>		

Meeting Date: 24 March 2026 - Via Microsoft Teams

No	Action	By	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resilience principles are being embedded through the new Asset Management Strategy; • work will begin in 2026–27 on both a new Climate and Sustainability Action Plan and a new Adaptation Plan; • Future work will align with Climate Change Risk Assessment 4 and the newly launched Northern Ireland Climate Adaptation Programme. <p>MEA Community Resilience</p> <p>AH provided an update on community resilience and emergency planning. Members were advised that climate-related emergency response work is linked closely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency planning; • business continuity; • the adaptation plan; and • partnership working with external agencies, including DFI Rivers, DFI Roads, NI Water, PSNI, blue light services and the Red Cross. <p>AH outlined the increasing frequency and intensity of storms and emphasised the importance of building resilience at both the household and community level.</p> <p>Examples of locations previously identified as vulnerable included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahoghill; • Toome Road; • Whitehead; and • Carrickfergus. <p>AH advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community resilience work is moving towards a broader networked model; • a digital portal is being developed to support communities in sharing information, receiving alerts and accessing guidance; • this work will continue over the coming months. <p>Ald McCaughey queried available support for individual households in isolated areas near rivers, particularly in Kells, where residents had experienced repeated flooding. It was agreed</p>		

No	Action	By	Notes
	<p>that the matter would be looked at further, particularly around adding these residents to the alert warning system.</p> <p>Further discussion took place around flooding issues in Toome Road, including concerns regarding drainage, river management, gullies and inter-agency responsibilities. It was acknowledged that this remained a complex issue requiring continued partnership working and local engagement. Ald Glover requested to be included in any engagement with this residents of the Toome Road.</p> <p>Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC)</p> <p>Keith Cullen, Community Resilience Officer, delivered a presentation on regional developments in community resilience.</p> <p>Mr Cullen emphasised the need for a joined-up approach across all agencies and highlighted that community resilience begins with household preparedness.</p> <p>Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of households having basic emergency plans and supplies; • ensuring residents know who to contact during emergencies; • encouraging communities to sign up to alerts by text and email; • use of local communication networks such as WhatsApp groups; • supporting community action planning for flood and other emergency risks. <p>Mr Cullen outlined practical community resilience measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency kits; • wind-up radios; • first aid supplies; • grab bags; and • clear local action plans. <p>Members discussed the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening to local knowledge; 		

Meeting Date: 24 March 2026 - Via Microsoft Teams

5

No	Action	By	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting vulnerable residents; • ensuring rural and isolated properties are not overlooked; and • improving awareness of emergency contacts and warning systems. <p>Members welcomed the presentation and the opportunity to strengthen community focus within the next adaptation plan.</p> <p>It was suggested that there may be opportunities to circulate emergency contact information more widely to households, potentially alongside future Council correspondence.</p>		
	<p>4.2. ArcPro Climate Project</p> <p>MMcC and LI from the GIS team provided an update on the Council's climate risk mapping project. Members were advised that the project has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mapped Council assets against Northern Ireland Rivers flood models; • identified assets at risk from surface water, river and tidal flooding; • created 50-metre buffers around identified sites to assess nearby domestic and commercial properties potentially at risk; • incorporated utility data from organisations including NIE, NI Water and Northern Ireland Railways. <p>The project now includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mapped flood risk information for individual Council sites; • associated nearby property data; • records of utilities and infrastructure in proximity to assets; and • identification of any existing mitigation measures such as pumps. <p>It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the current 50-metre buffer approach is a practical first-stage tool; • more detailed refinement using topography and other geospatial analysis may be possible in future; • GDPR limitations prevent the identification of individual vulnerable persons through this mapping. 		

Meeting Date: 24 March 2026 - Via Microsoft Teams

No	Action	By	Notes
	<p>An example site was shown to members to demonstrate how the mapping system works in practice.</p> <p>Matthew advised that the longer-term goal is to develop an interactive GIS model, allowing relevant staff to interrogate sites directly and view flood layers, utilities and mitigation measures more easily.</p> <p>CH noted that this work will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of severe weather plans for high-risk assets, including Ecos; • implementation of the Asset Management Strategy; and • future resource and investment planning for resilience measures. 		
5	ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
	<p>No further items for discussion.</p>		
6	Proposed dates of next meetings		
	<p>It was agreed that the next meeting would likely take place towards the end of June 2026, subject to confirmation following the AGM period.</p>		

Meeting ended: 15:57



Council/Committee: Environment and Economy Committee
Date: 20 April 2026
Report Title: Economic Development Activity Report
Publication Status: Open
Author: Ursula O’Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
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	A separate report is tabled at this Committee.
Rural Development Programme	<p>Under the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 85 applications were received. As reported to December’s Environment & Economy Committee 3 were ineligible and 10 applications didn’t meet the required threshold. 72 remaining applicants were issued with a Letter of Offer from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 15 December 2025. The total value of the Letters of Offer were £313,007.48.</p> <p>The closing date for receipt of claims was midnight on 23 March 2026. 59 Claims have now been submitted,</p>

	<p>2 claims were not submitted despite reminders, 8 extensions were granted by DAERA and 3 organisations withdrew from the process. Claims are now being processed for payment.</p>
<p>Skills and Entrepreneurship</p>	
<p>Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Easement Bid Programmes</p> <p>For further details please email LMP@midandeantrim.gov.uk</p>	<p>LMP have secured an additional £87,500 to deliver the following programmes:</p> <p>Pathways to Leadership - The programme is designed to develop essential leadership and people-management capabilities across all sectors, enabling them to progress into Team Lead roles with confidence and competence.</p> <p>Reignite 50+ - The Reignite 50+ Programme is a 10-week structured support programme to help men aged 50+ prepare to re-enter employment or build their confidence and skills.</p> <p>Crafted Futures - The Crafted Futures Programme offers participants a valuable opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and skills within the Heritage and Craft sector.</p> <p>Youth Work Level 3 Academy- Participants will have the opportunity to complete the Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice qualification which is designed to develop and enhance competence in the planning, delivery and evaluation of a group work programme in a youth work context.</p> <p>Greenworks - This academy will offer participants an opportunity to build key competencies in a range of technical training (eg, Ground Care and Machinery Maintenance) to develop employability, personal skills and progress to employment or self-employment.</p>
<p>LMP Placement Insights</p>	<p>This programme is delivered in Castle Tower School for 20 special needs students who are preparing to leave school. The programme includes a combination of employability and personal development skills. The students will also take part in a social media workshop to create content for their granola social enterprise idea before two days test trading in the Tower/Fairhill Centre in May 2026.</p>
<p>LMP Programmes – Currently Recruiting</p>	<p>Counterbalance Forklift Training (2-days) Course delivery and content training is carried out to approved standards and uses a combination of theory and practical sessions to provide an understanding of forklift trucks, best practice and safe systems of work.</p> <p>Construction Skills Register Health & Safety Training (CSR Card) This 1-day training course provides the mandatory health and safety certification required for site access</p>

	<p>to improve site safety, reduce accidents and verify worker training.</p> <p>Individual Learning Account This fund will enable eligible residents to apply for funding to cover 100% of costs up to a maximum of £500 towards accredited or industry recognised training required for career development. The funding can be used to cover all associated costs of training, upskilling, qualification and accreditation.</p> <p>PROPEL The programme is for care experienced young people aged 18 – 25 to support individual care leavers to develop employability skills and work readiness through a range of economic activities to reduce barriers to employment.</p> <p>Construction & Scaffolding This 2-week programme in partnership with Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and local businesses will equip participants with the skills, training and accreditation required to start a career in the scaffolding and wider construction sectors.</p> <p>Inside Housing This programme will introduce participants to the diverse career opportunities within the Housing Association sector. The initiative aims to enhance employability, encourage future upskilling and provide a clear pathway into the sector across the borough.</p> <p>Career Boost This 8-week programme will provide tailored interventions that empower women returners to build confidence and overcome employment gaps to enter or re-enter employment.</p>
<p>Enterprise, Employability and Well-being Events</p>	<p>The following programmes/events are planned to take place during April to June 2026:</p> <p>Carrickfergus Employability Event – Carrickfergus Town Hall on Tuesday 21 April: This event is to help guide individuals who may be seeking alternative employment opportunities, upskilling and support for pathways into employment.</p> <p>Craft to Commerce is a four-week, flexible, structured support programme designed to help creatives explore their hobby-craft as a potential business, develop essential entrepreneurial skills, gain confidence and connect with real opportunities in the creative economy.</p> <p>Ready2Work is a support programme designed to assist SEN School Leaver Students who wish to prepare for work and build their confidence and skills. The programme aims to remove barriers, empower participants to identify meaningful career paths and</p>

	provide tailored guidance to support sustainable employment outcomes.
Investment and Place	
Making The Future Network (MTF)	<p>MTF recently hosted 32 delegates representing 21 local companies at a lean workshop on Driving Quality Through Standard Work delivered by Invest Northern Ireland's Operational Excellence team. This free support is helping participating companies to apply lean practices to improve productivity.</p> <p>8 representatives from 6 MTF companies are currently completing a fully funded Mini MBA in Leadership at Ulster University, delivered in partnership with the GEMX Network and funded by DfE. The programme covers key themes including empathetic leadership, digitalisation, lean, marketing, and organisational culture, and will conclude in June 2026.</p> <p>A feasibility study on the future direction of the MTF Network is underway funded by Invest NI's Cluster Acceleration Programme (CAP). Findings will help shape the network's strategic approach beyond 2026.</p> <p>The MTF Chair, David Watson, and an Officer continue to undertake company visits, and the network recently welcomed ASF Engineering as a new member.</p>
i4C Innovation and CleanTech Project	<p>The approval process for the addendum to the £20.5m BRCD-funded i4C Project is ongoing with a final Department of Finance approval decision expected in April/May. Plans for establishment of a pilot iLAB facility as a precursor to i4C have been submitted for co-funding under the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) programme.</p>
HyTech NI Project	<p>Members have previously been advised that the £15m HyTech NI project funded via the NI Complementary Fund is being appraised by Invest NI on behalf of the Department for the Economy.</p> <p>Officers continue to work with funders and partners to develop and deliver the project to secure economic benefits to the Borough.</p>
Investment Promotion and Opportunities	<p>Officers are actively engaged in activities to secure investment to the Borough including engagement with potential investors. There are several current opportunities that could see significant scale investment across the Borough in the next year. Officers provided an update report to Members at the last Committee on Powerhouse Energy's plans to establish a Waste to Hydrogen manufacturing facility</p>

	<p>and further information on the other opportunities will be shared with Members once commercial sensitivities including funding negotiations with Invest NI have been agreed.</p> <p>Officers supported several recent requests from businesses for suitable sites to locate or expand their operations across the Borough including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A GB based business seeking a 5,000-10,000 sq ft manufacturing facility ready for fit out, to include 1 acre of space and office facilities. • An existing Ballymena based engineering company seeking a 10,000-20,000 sq ft manufacturing facility ready for fit out. <p>Officers attended the Carrickfergus Rangers Investment Summit in March 2026, which saw over 100 investors and fans of the club travel from USA to Carrickfergus. Officers provided promotional materials at the event on key industrial investment sites and strategic projects from across the Borough and are currently following up on one expression of interest received from a potential investor who attended the event.</p> <p>A new website to showcase the Borough's investment proposition www.investmea.com is now live. It highlights our overall investment proposition, key sectoral strengths, local economic data, and current industrial opportunities.</p>
<p>(BCRPP) Belfast City and Region Place Partnership</p>	<p>Council is sponsoring the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) programme alongside the five other Belfast Region City Deal Councils.</p> <p>A key component of the programme is the UKREiiF Investment Conference in Leeds from 19-21 May 2026. Council has been allocated two delegate passes with Officer representation to be agreed to promote the Borough's investment proposition and engage with potential investors and partners.</p>
<p>ECOS Hub</p>	<p>EcOS Hub continues to operate at full occupancy. New hot desking facilities have been developed and are ready for use with a promotional campaign planned. A recent six-week social media campaign has generated positive outcomes including over 2,000 click throughs to the website, four new enquiries regarding venue</p>

	hire, and a 70% conversion rate from enquiry to confirmed booking
Business Growth	
Amplify Business Support Programme	<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 for those falling into the following two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses who have maximised the available hours of support on Go Succeed and are unable to return until the 1-year post support period has ceased and have a clear need for further support to continue with their growth plans • Businesses who are not seeking growth support but have a need to address issues in business performance and need intensive mentoring support to regain position and remain sustainable. <p>The programme aims to support up to 30 businesses by December 2026 with 10 businesses currently receiving support.</p>
Augmenting Business' Growth potential via Stakeholder Supports	<p>Council's Business Client Managers continue to work with local and regional Economic Development Partners and Stakeholders to make referrals to relevant supports on behalf of our local businesses.</p> <p>Strengthening collaborative working between Council and its stakeholders will remain a key priority. From April 2025 to date Business Client Managers have made over 145 referrals to various stakeholders inc, NRC, SERC, Intertrade Ireland, NIHE, QUB etc; leveraging over £420,303 of additional support for our local businesses.</p> <p>In recognition of our unique partnership working and to celebrate its success, Council hosted a Stakeholder Celebration Event on 25 March 2026. The event highlighted the impact of strong partnerships in supporting local business growth.</p>
<p>Invest NI Partnership Working</p> <p><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 support to potential applicants. From the latest call 8 applications had been submitted from local businesses. 2 of these businesses have received a Letter of Offer with a total value of £90,000, with a third business likely to receive an offer post March.</p> <p>4 local businesses were also successful in their bid to Call 2 of Invest NI BIG Innovation Grant; leveraging a total of £44,150.00 between them. In Call 3, 6 applications were made from local businesses with outcomes expected in May.</p>																
<p>Balmoral Show</p>	<p>The following businesses will exhibit on Council's stand in the NI Food Pavilion at Balmoral Show:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="673 763 1449 1384"> <thead> <tr> <th>Day</th> <th>Business</th> <th>Located</th> <th>Product</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wed, 13 May</td> <td>Green Fingers Family Ltd/YMBO Snacks</td> <td>Larne</td> <td>Award winning plant-based, gluten-free snacks</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thurs, 14 May</td> <td>Calio Cakes</td> <td>Carrickfergus area</td> <td>Unique celebratory cakes and traybakes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fri, 15 May</td> <td>Gold n Browne's</td> <td>Ballymena area</td> <td>Award winning gourmet, homemade gluten-free brownies/bakes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>On the first day, the Mayor will visit Council stand, and a visit to all local businesses exhibiting at the show has been organised. A full PR campaign will be conducted, giving coverage of all businesses attending .</p>	Day	Business	Located	Product	Wed, 13 May	Green Fingers Family Ltd/YMBO Snacks	Larne	Award winning plant-based, gluten-free snacks	Thurs, 14 May	Calio Cakes	Carrickfergus area	Unique celebratory cakes and traybakes	Fri, 15 May	Gold n Browne's	Ballymena area	Award winning gourmet, homemade gluten-free brownies/bakes
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Fri, 15 May	Gold n Browne's	Ballymena area	Award winning gourmet, homemade gluten-free brownies/bakes														
<p>AI Acceleration Tour</p>	<p>Council worked in partnership with the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre (AICC) to host the AI Acceleration Tour in the Borough. Two events took place - LEDCOM, Larne on Thursday 19 February 2026, and Ecos Hub, Ballymena on Thursday 12 March 2026. The events aimed to provide SMEs throughout the Borough with a practical workshop to introduce artificial intelligence (AI) and explore its real-world potential for business growth. There were 29 attendees from 20 businesses who benefited from the opportunity.</p>																

Town Centre Development	
Carrickfergus Artisan Market	The March and April Artisan Markets were well attended with steady footfall throughout the day and a full market of 15 artisans trading. A specialty 'Paws & Produce' dog themed market will take place on Saturday 2 May in Market place, which is the first outdoor market of the year and will include over 22 vendors alongside face-painting, walkout dog characters and a caricaturist.
Business Support	There is ongoing business engagement via the Town Centre Newsletters which are bespoke to each town. Daily support for town centre issues and business support for retailers continues to be provided.
Town Centre Animation Activity	A new programme of seasonal activity for each town centre will commence in the next financial year. Engagement will take place with businesses and stakeholders to get an insight on ideas for the year ahead and this will shape the Town Centre Action plan. As part of the seasonal programme, the Teddy Bear Hospital event was delivered in Larne Town Hall on Thursday 12 February, operating from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm during the mid-term break. This free, interactive initiative aimed at children aged six and over has proven popular in previous years and again attracted strong attendance. To complement the activity and enhance the town centre experience, live music was provided on Broadway from 12.00pm to 3.00pm by Sounds Good Music, contributing to an upbeat and welcoming atmosphere. Live music was also delivered in Ballymena as part of the mid-term activity programme, with performances taking place in the Harmony Hub on Thursday 12 and Friday 13 February from 12.00 pm to 3.00 pm. Entertainment was provided by Starling Entertainment, helping to create a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere in the town centre during the mid-term break.
Student Pitch Challenge	A separate report is provided at this Committee.
Shop Front Improvement Grants	Applications for the Shopfront Revitalisation Scheme Phase 3 closed on 1 December 2025. The scheme offers grants ranging from £500 to £7,500 to eligible businesses located within the Town Centre Boundary of Carrickfergus, Larne, Ballymena and Greenisland who want to improve the overall appearance of their Shop front.

	<p>The Grant can cover 80% of the cost of eligible items or works up to a maximum of £7,500 per business.</p> <p>To date 76 Letters of Offer have been awarded with a total grant amount of £342,309.30 with a further 10 applications pending.</p>
Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant	<p>The Revamp and Refresh scheme provides grant of up to 80% of eligible costs, capped at £1,000 per business. A total of 106 applications were received, of which 13 were deemed ineligible due to factors such as location outside the town centre boundary, incomplete submissions, or pre-purchased items.</p> <p>2 businesses withdrew at Letter of Offer stage due to rising costs. In total, 91 Letters of Offer were accepted, representing a total grant commitment of £75,499.15. An evaluation of the programme will be carried out and a report outlining the outcomes will be presented to a future committee.</p>
Revitalise Steering Group	<p>Officers continue 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. Live projects currently being worked through include cosmetic improvements to Dunluce Street, Larne pop-up park, CCTV provision, public art and new public realm schemes.</p>
Encouraging Footfall	<p>Cross Departmental development work is ongoing to identify opportunities to encourage footfall and rejuvenate the Town Centres.</p>
Vacancy Audit	<p>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.</p>

4. General Considerations / Implications

No implications relating to this update report.

5. Proposed Way Forward

The report is presented for noting.

6. Recommendation or Decision

The Environment and Economy Committee is asked to note the updated Economic Development Activity report.

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	20 April 2026
Report Title:	Ballymena Business Improvement District Update
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
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 the Ballymena Business Improvement District (BID) activity from November 2025 to March 2026.

2. Background

- 2.1. Members have previously been updated on the formation of the Ballymena Business Improvement District, the governance arrangements and the priorities that have been agreed by the BID to support Ballymena Town Centre businesses.
- 2.2. Council has six listed properties (including three car parks) within the Ballymena Business Improvement District boundary that equate to a levy of approximately. £15,083 per annum.
 - Ballymena Town Hall, Museum & Arts Centre
 - Springwell Street Carpark
 - Meeting House Lane Carpark
 - Greenmount Plaza Carpark
 - 12 - 16 Bridge Street
 - Wellington Court Building
- 2.3. At the Environment and Economy meeting held on 26 January 2026 Elected Members were advised that the Ballymena BID had been successful in the re-ballot process for a third term.
- 2.4. It was noted that the new BID term (term 3) would commence from 1 April 2026 for a five-year term and will be financed through a BID levy, the proceeds of which will be invested into the town centre and on the additional projects that businesses have identified and as set out in the Business Plan. Over the five years of the BID £1million plus will be generated to be spent in the BID area.

- 2.5. With Council being a BID levy payer and working in close partnership with BID it was agreed that updates on the Ballymena BID's activity would be presented on a regular basis.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. Advertising/Marketing/Events:

- The Ballymena Discount Day took place on 6 November 2025 with over 100 participating businesses taking part. There was strong trader feedback, with many reporting increased sales versus previous year and some extended opening hours beyond 9pm. Province-wide campaign across radio, outdoor, digital and podcast platforms. Secured 48 hours of positive PR coverage (BBC NI, UTV, Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter).
- BID enhanced the Christmas light switch on event with radio roadshow, advertising and additional staffing support.
- A festive Marketing Campaign was delivered (17 November – 23 December 2025) including a multi-channel campaign including TV, radio, outdoor and digital. The Social Media campaign (without paid advertising) reached the following number of users - November: 777K (Facebook), 190K (Instagram) December: 560K (Facebook), 160K (Instagram).
- A Christmas Animation & Events Programme was delivered; 29 November 2025: Spin to Win event (100+ prizes, all claimed within 2 hours). 6 December: Jingle All the Way support (staffing, entertainment, raffle raising £3,014 for NI Hospice). Weekly themed character appearances (Elves, Minions, Grinch, Santa). BID team delivered consistent in-town animation throughout the festive period.
- Further Charitable Efforts: 100+ gifts delivered for children via Digg Deep for Kids (funded through Fashion Show raffle and donations at other BID events). All gifts were sourced and purchased from Town Centre businesses.
- The Ballymena Gift Card continues to grow, December sales: +30% year-on-year/ Annual sales: +29% year-on-year. In addition a focused Mother's Day campaign was delivered in partnership with Councils Town Centre team.
- The January – February 2026 activity included continued business-focused content promoting sales, gift card usage and seasonal campaigns, dedicated online sales promotion page launched (from 27 December) and Half-term family event support at Tower Centre (13 February).

3.2 BID Partnerships:

- Housing for All: Continued collaboration with social housing partners to address town centre challenges.
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC): Ongoing cooperation with the Town Centre Team.
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI): Regular engagement to address security concerns.
- Revitalisation Group: BID representatives actively contribute.
- Local Economic Partnership (LEP): BID represents Ballymena in the MEA's Local Economic Partnership.

3.3 Upcoming Events:

- Easter Activity: Town-wide Easter Trail and Dino-themed family event on 10 April
- AGM provisionally planned for 24 June
- Ballymena 400 Events: Planned for 22 August and 25 August.
- Autumn Winter Fashion Show: Provisionally booked for 9 October.
- Discount Day 2026: Scheduled for 5 November.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial - Council properties are within the Ballymena BID boundary and Council will be required to continue to pay the BID levy which is approximately £15,083 per annum
- 4.2. Human Resources – Council continues to support partnership projects both through the support of the Town Centre Development Team & Council's Communications Team

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Council to continue to support the Ballymena BID through regular engagement and project development support.
- 5.2. Elected Members to generate awareness in relation to upcoming BID events and activities.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. The Environment and Economy Committee is asked to note the successful outcomes of Ballymena BID activity during the last quarter.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	20 April 2026
Report Title:	Student Pitch Challenge Competition
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Ryan Black, Director of Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the success of Town Centre Student pitch challenge competition.

2. Background

- 2.1. Elected Members will be aware that Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) which takes place in November is a week-long global initiative involving over 200 countries and millions of people. It is designed to support, connect, and inspire entrepreneurs while driving economic growth and innovation.
- 2.2. With pressures facing all high streets across Northern Ireland, including the decline in footfall, increased vacancy and the changing landscape of town centres, a project was developed to encourage teenagers within the borough to demonstrate their entrepreneurial skills whilst having a say on what would drive footfall to the towns within Mid & East Antrim.
- 2.3. The Student Pitch Challenge was launched on 5 November 2025 during Global Entrepreneurship week. The Mayor attended Slemish College in Ballymena for a photo opportunity with some of the students to launch the Student Pitch competition.
- 2.4. The competition involved students having to prepare a presentation lasting no longer than 10 minutes to a panel of judges. The theme of the presentation was The Future of our Town Centres and covered the following:
 1. Why have our town centres declined?
 2. Students present their idea
 3. How will it increase footfall?
 4. Breakdown of Costs
 5. Target Market
 6. Promotion and Branding



Entrants were asked to ensure that the idea put forward by each team must be realistic, and affordable, with a clear consideration of feasibility.

- 2.5. In October 2025 an expression of interest was sent to 15 Post Primary Schools in the Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne Area. 8 Schools registered an interest Ballymena (5), Larne (3). Follow up emails were sent to Schools who had not responded to the Expression of Interest.

In early November the competition launched on Council's social media and included a photograph of the Mayor with students from Slemish College.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 A total of 13 teams took part from 4 schools across the Borough, Larne Grammar, Slemish College, Cambridge House and Ballymena Academy. Unfortunately, due to other commitments there was no uptake from Carrickfergus.
- 3.2 The competition was held during February in both Larne and Ballymena. Students delivered their inspiring innovative presentations to the panel. Students presented a wide range of proposals including night markets, cultural events and festivals alongside themed town centre events and outdoor cinema nights. Indoor markets and activity centres featuring foods from around the world and a town centre rewards App where shoppers collect points and receive incentives from local businesses were also part of their pitches.

Many of the students' ideas showed strong potential to support local businesses, encourage community engagement and bring new visitors into the towns. These included rotating display pods for local artists and entrepreneurs to showcase their work within their community.

- 3.3 On 16 March and 19 March the Mayor hosted a lunch-time celebration event in Larne Town Hall and The Braid for students and their teachers, where the Mayor presented certificates and a goody bag to each team. Photographs taken at the event will be sent to schools.
- 3.4 Feedback from both students and teachers was overwhelmingly positive. Students were delighted to share their ideas and valued the opportunity to have their voices heard. Their research demonstrated a clear awareness of the decline of town centres, particularly the impact of online shopping and changing consumer habits. Many had also spoken with family members who shared stories of how their town centre once thrived, adding depth to their understanding. Teachers were impressed by the quality of the work produced and the thoughtful insights students brought forward. Students expressed a strong desire to see their town centre evolve into a space not just for shopping, but for leisure, community activity and social interaction.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications – Costs associated with running the Student Pitch Challenge were met through the Town Centre Development budget.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Council Officers will explore the viability of the ideas brought forward by the students with the intention of incorporating into future town centre action plans.
- 5.2. Council Officers to consider including the competition as part of GEW week in 2026 and engaging other schools in the borough.

6. Recommendation or Decision

The Environment and Economy Committee is asked to note the efforts of the students that took part in the competition and the success of the Student Pitch Challenge

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	20 April 2026
Report Title:	Activate Your Curiosity 2026-2027
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
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 the Activate Your Curiosity Initiative and to seek approval to deliver the programme in 2026-2027.

2. Background

- 2.1. At October 2019 Borough Growth Members gave approval to host the first Activate Your Curiosity (then known as Science Summer School), a concept devised in 2012 by Professor Brian Cox CBE and Lord Andrew Mawson OBE, in Northern Ireland. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the date was placed on hold. The first event took place in The Braid on Tuesday 15 November 2022 with the second taking place on 23 January 2024 and the third on Tuesday 21 January 2025. The fourth consecutive event took place on 20 January 2026.
- 2.2. Activate Your Curiosity was established through strong industry leadership from Making the Future companies (formerly known as Manufacturing Task Force). It aims to develop better links between companies and young people and inspire the next generation of scientists through an inspirational programme that mixes the best of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths).
- 2.3. Company interest in the event is high with £22,500 of private sector sponsorship financial support secured from Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions (formerly known as Kilwaughter Minerals) as the Headline Sponsor for the third consecutive year together with co-sponsors: Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, Michelin Development, Caterpillar, Phoenix Energy, Teva Pharmaceuticals, EPUKI Ballylumford and Moore Concrete. This support enabled a full programme of activities and events alongside the main event to ensure that the wider school community can benefit from this flagship event. Additional financial support was secured via the Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership, funded by DfC.
- 2.4. Interest from leaders in STEAM subjects is also high with in-kind support from organisations to facilitate a broad spectrum of interactive, engaging and

thought-provoking workshops and presentations, co-designed with teachers and educators to blend with the curriculum, skills needs and to appeal to young people.

- 2.5. Through collaboration with the National Science Programme, led by 360 Degree Society, opportunities arose to connect the Activate Your Curiosity initiative and flagship event to leading STEM Ambassadors. The event in January as welcomed 18 year-old Formula 4 Racing Driver, Rowan Campbell-Pilling who presented an inspirational keynote address to schools, workshop facilitators, presenters and programme partners live from United Arab Emirates.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. Science Summer School is an annual event that has run successfully in London since 2012. Led by Lord Mawson, 360 Degree Society and Professor Brian Cox it aims to develop the Science Summer School model nationwide with projects now in Rotherham and Skelmersdale as well as Northern Ireland through Activate Your Curiosity. 2022 was the first year the event was brought to the borough followed by larger events in January 2024 and 2025. The fourth consecutive event took place in the Braid on Tuesday 20 January 2026.
- 3.2. Activate Your Curiosity is not a stand-alone event but is a catalyst for a collaborative vision for the borough to nurture future talent. Council and partners have developed a comprehensive programme of schools' engagement activities, which take place in the school year (September to June). The 2025-26 programme has engaged with 2,922 students from primary and post primary schools to date.
- 3.3. The 2025-26 programme has delivered engagement activities with post primary and primary schools in the borough, delivered 20 activities, engaged with 15 external partners and represented the Council and the wider initiative at 5 career fairs and youth fairs, with further activities planned to take place up to June 2026.
- 3.4. The 2025-2026 series of schools and employer engagement activities is detailed at Appendix 2.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial Implications - Officers secured £22,500 in private sector sponsorship from local companies with considerable additional industry support in kind. Given the nature of the careers and company engagement programme Activate Your Curiosity was included in the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2025-2026, securing an additional £6,900 of funding from DfC.
- 4.2. Officers will work to secure private sector sponsorship in 2026-2027 with additional budget included in the Labour Market Action Plan 2026-2027.

- 4.3. Good Relations – Establishing partnerships with local companies, universities, college, schools and organisations for the 2025-2026 events and activities including GEMX, MEGA, Queens University Belfast and Space Office NI enabled the delivery of a number of engagement projects at no cost to Council. The power of these relationships continues to inspire engagement with existing and new companies in delivering a range of interactive and engaging activities with local schools into 2026. Activities are provided to all schools including special schools.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Officers will liaise with companies to secure private sponsorship to deliver the initiative in 2026-2027 and build on the strong relationships that have been established between Council, companies and schools.

5.2 Partnership with 360 Degree Society (formerly Well North Enterprises)

The partnership with the 360 Degree Society has been pivotal to secure the prestigious flagship event, Professor Cox's and keynote speaker attendance at previous events and the year-round programme of activities offered to schools in the borough under the Science Summer School umbrella. It is important that programme is of the highest quality and an experience, which reflects, not only Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's aspirations but capitalises on the high-profile involvement of Professor Cox CBE, FRS. The connection with the 360 Degree Society will ensure that the involvement of Professor Cox remains interlinked with the event and help promote Council as an exemplar in employer/schools and public sector engagement with a national UK audience.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1 The Environment and Economy Committee is asked to
- Note the Activate Your Curiosity 2025-2026 delivery to date.
 - Recognise the commitment and contribution of the external companies, sponsors and academic organisations and the relationships developed with the Council in delivering a successful flagship event and wider programme.
 - Approve to host Activate Your Curiosity and all supporting activities in 2026-2027 subject to securing private sponsorship and DfC funding.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 – Keynote Speakers, Practical Workshops

Appendix 2 – Employer Engagement Activities - Pre-January Flagship Event



Appendix 1

Keynote Speakers, Practical Workshops, 20 January 2026

Guest Presenters	Presentation Title
Professor Raj Thakur Chair of Pharmaceuticals, and Founder, Re-Vana Therapeutics School of Pharmacy, Queen's University Belfast	Treating Eye Diseases: What Works Today and Why We Need Innovative Solutions
Dr Neil Reid Conservation Biologist at Queen's University Belfast	How many animals are there?
Dr Libby Keatley , Research Assistant at Queen's University Marine Laboratory and Dr Christine Morrow , Research Assistant at Queen's University Marine Laboratory	Northern Ireland's Hidden Depths – A Journey into our Underwater World
Dimitrios Lamprou Professor and Director of Internationalisation at the School of Pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast	Sweet Science: How Cacao and 3D Printing Can Help Us
Elita Frid Education & Industry Engagement Manager, Mid Ulster MEGA	What is Engineering? Discovering the variety of career paths within the Engineering sector
David Fearon Space and Science Presenter & Education Manager	It's All Relative
Noel Doyle Chief Operating Officer with Modern Democracy	What Happens When We Stop Being Curious?
Jonathan Martindale , Director of Business Development, Phoenix Energy and Kelly McClintock , Operations Engineer, Phoenix Energy	Renewable Gas Solutions Driving Decarbonisation in Northern Ireland



Practical Workshops

<p>A Look Into The Phoenix Energy Network <i>Phoenix Energy</i></p>	<p>Big Green Wall Challenge <i>Moore Concrete</i></p>	<p>The Power Behind Electricity: A Hands-On Exploration <i>EPUKI</i></p>
<p>Chemistry At Work: A Generics Powerhouse <i>Teva</i></p>	<p>The Art of Air: Investigating Cement Renders Through Touch & Feel <i>Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions</i></p>	<p>The Terumo Brownie Factory <i>Terumo</i></p>
<p>Electric Drive: Powering Into The Future <i>Caterpillar</i></p>	<p>Build The Big Bridge: Experience Engineering Like Never Before! <i>HMKNI</i></p>	<p>Vital First Aid and First Responder Skills For a Rural Environment <i>Queens University Belfast</i></p>
<p>Movie Magic Meets Medicine: The Science of Fake Injuries <i>Queens University Belfast</i></p>	<p>Experience Manufacturing on a Nanoscale! <i>Seagate Technology Team</i></p>	<p>The Art of Remote Sensing: Discovering What's Possible From Enterprise Level Drone Captured Imagery <i>Plotbox</i></p>



Appendix 2 Employer Engagement Activities

<p>Official launch of Activate Your Curiosity</p> <p>Sept 2025</p>	<p>Hosted at The Wool Tower, Broughshane in celebration to officially launch the 2025-26 Activate Your Curiosity initiative. Council was delighted to announce sponsorship support from some of the Borough's key employers, with headline sponsor once again from Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions and company sponsors, Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, Michelin Development, Caterpillar, Teva, Moore Concrete, EPUKI and Phoenix Energy.</p>
<p>Post Primary School Competition</p> <p>Sept-Oct 2025</p>	<p>In September, Council launched a competition for Post primary Students to 'Invent the Future'. The challenge invited students to imagine a world-changing invention or technology that could improve life on Earth by the year 2050. Participants showcased their visionary ideas through posters, short stories, and comic strips, with two standout entries from Ulidia College earning an exciting prize: a trip to Brooklands Innovation Academy Live in Surrey at the start of October.</p>
<p>Company Visit St Killian's College to Teva and Terumo</p> <p>Oct 2025</p>	<p>On this dual site visit, pupils from St Killian's College visited Terumo and Teva, both located on the same site in Larne, to learn about career pathways and to see behind the scenes of two local, major employers.</p> <p>15 students visited both companies.</p>
<p>Company Visit Larne Grammar to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions</p> <p>Nov 2025</p>	<p>Pupils from Larne High School took part in a career insight visit to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions (formerly Kilwaughter Minerals) which produces high quality products for the construction and agriculture sectors.</p> <p>25 students attended the visit.</p>
<p>Company Visit St Patrick's College to Teva and Terumo</p> <p>Nov 2025</p>	<p>On this dual site visit, pupils from St Killian's College visited Terumo and Teva, both located on the same site in Larne, to learn about career pathways and to see behind the scenes of two local, major employers.</p> <p>14 students visited both companies.</p>
<p>In-school workshop Teva to Slemish College</p> <p>Nov 2025</p>	<p>24 students attended the session hosted in-school by Teva. In the workshop students had the opportunity to wear protective clothing as worn by staff in the laboratories, check for cross contamination using UV lights, see how medication is broken down by the body</p>



	and learn about the various roles and career progression in the company.
Global Enterprise Week November 2025	<p>School activities for GEW 2025 included the Primary School Snack Attack Competition which received over 200 entries.</p> <p>Two winning entries (Carrickfergus Model and Corran Integrated) were awarded with an in-school workshop delivered to the entire class, created and facilitated by Buchanan's Whole Foods, Carrickfergus.</p>
Company Visit Ballymena Academy to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions Dec 2025	<p>Pupils from Ballymena Academy took part in a career insight visit to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions which produces high quality products for the construction and agriculture sectors.</p> <p>30 students attended the visit.</p>
Company Visit Ballymena Academy to Plotbox Jan 2026	<p>Pupils from Ballymena Academy took part in a career insight visit to Plotbox, a Ballymena-based company that provides a leading cloud-based management platform integrating cemetery mapping and records to streamline operations for cemeteries.</p> <p>13 students attended the visit.</p>
Company Visit St Patrick's College to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions Feb 2026	<p>Pupils from Ballymena Academy took part in a career insight visit to Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions (formerly Kilwaughter Minerals) which produces high quality products for the construction and agriculture sectors.</p> <p>12 students attended the visit.</p>
Company visit – Larne Grammar visit to Wrightbus Feb 2026	<p>Pupils from Larne Grammar visited Wrightbus to learn about career pathways and to see behind the scenes of a local, major employer.</p>
NIAW26 Feb 2026	<p>49 Students from St Patrick's College, St Killian's College and Castle Tower took part in Heritage and Constructions Skills day at Carrickfergus Civic Centre. The event provided the opportunity to get involved in workshops and learn about joinery, bricklaying, building surveying and conservation architecture.</p> <p>St Killian's College hosted an in-school Career Fair welcoming partnering companies involved in Activate Your Curiosity to attend. 250 year 12-14 students attended.</p>



	<p>Ballymena Learning Together Cluster hosted a Career Fair in Cambridge House and extended an invitation to all schools in the surrounding area. The Career Fair was attended by 50+ companies including representation from companies involved in Activate Your Curiosity and over 800 pupils.</p> <p>Larne High School hosted a Career Fair and extended an invitation to schools in the surrounding area. Carrickfergus Academy students attended the event. 400 students attended with 50+ companies represented.</p>
<p>CIW26 Feb 2026</p>	<p>As part of Creative Industries Week in February, the following events were delivered:</p> <p>16 students from Larne High School and 12 Roddensvale students participated in a Get into Film Making with Cinemagic event, with a SPFX workshop and SEN Animation workshop.</p> <p>40 Students from St Patrick's College and Cambridge House participated in an immersive performing arts workshop which offered a unique look at how a production comes to life, from backstage activity to on stage preparation. The workshop was facilitated by the renowned Belfast School of Performing Arts, founded by celebrated performer Peter Corry.</p> <p>16 Students from Larne High School and Ulidia Integrated College had the opportunity to step inside J14 Productions' fully functioning music studio for a hands on introduction to the world of music production as well as the wide range of roles involved in creating a professional track, from sound engineering to mixing and production, and gained practical experience using real studio equipment.</p>

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	20 April 2026
Report Title:	PEACEPLUS Screenings
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Ryan Black, Director of Growth and Major Projects

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the PEACEPLUS Screenings and assessments required to support implementation of the Mid & East Antrim PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan for noting.

2. Background

- 2.1. The PEACEPLUS allocation for Mid & East Antrim is €5,848,008 under the PEACEPLUS Measure 1.1 for Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plans for the period up to 2028.
- 2.2. The Environment and Economy Committee at their meeting on 2 March 2026 recommended the approval of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan Economic Appraisal, which was approved at March Full Council, allowing for the timely procurement of external suppliers.
- 2.3. A successful official launch of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan took place at the Ballygally Castle Hotel on 10 March 2026. Speeches were given by The Executive Office Junior Minister Joanne Bunting, Paul Sheridan of the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB), Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Councillor Jackson Minford and Chair of the PEACEPLUS Partnership Alderman Paul Reid. Acknowledgement via video was presented by The Executive Office Junior Minister Aisling Reilly and Minister of State Jerry Buttimer from the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht. The Executive Office and the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht are the Accountable Departments and provide the match funding for the PEACEPLUS Measure 1.1.
- 2.4. The PEACEPLUS Partnership continues to meet with the next meeting scheduled to take place on 14 April in Larne.
- 2.5. The staff position of Project Assistant was advertised in February 2026 and the recruitment process is ongoing.

2.6.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The requirements of the PEACEPLUS Programme include collection, processing and some limited sharing of personal and sensitive data of participants accessing the programme of activities. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required where a proposal involves the processing of personal data in a way that is likely to result in a high risk to individuals' rights and freedoms. Its purpose is to systematically identify, assess, and mitigate those risks at an early stage, ensuring that Council's data protection considerations are embedded into the design and delivery of any initiative. Elected Members are asked to consider the attached DPIA as it provides assurance that Council's legal obligations have been met when developing the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan, potential privacy impacts have been carefully evaluated, and appropriate safeguards will be put in place. Reviewing its contents supports Elected Members with informed decision-making, promotes transparency and accountability, and helps protect both the Council and the individuals whose data may be processed by the programmes.

The DPIA has been reviewed by the Legal Team and the Data Protection Officer. The IT Manager has been involved in the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation system throughout the development process. The DPIA has been provided to the IT Manager for comment and any amendments required after review will be included in the working document going forward.

- 3.2. A number of other screenings and assessments are required and have been completed. An Equality Screening has been completed, and screened out, as attached at Appendix 2, meaning that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. A Rural Needs Assessment has been completed at Appendix 3 and a Climate, Environmental and Social Assessment has been completed at Appendix 4.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1 The screenings and assessments consider potential impacts on Section 75 equality, rural needs, Data Protection and environmental and social impacts of the action plan. Please refer to Appendices 1 - 4 for the individual screening and assessment forms.
- 4.2 A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and System are under development, ensuring alignment with the DPIA.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The screening and assessment documents are working documents, they will be referred to, reviewed and updated where necessary throughout the delivery

of the Action Plan. Any amendments will be reviewed in line with statutory requirements and any significant changes reported to committee.

- 5.2 Partnership Agreements were issued to all 6 full project partners and signed and returned. This now allows for progression through the mobilisation phase of the project.
- 5.3 Recruitment for the Project Coordinator post will commence in the coming weeks. This post holder will assist partners in the development and implementation of project activities, ensuring complementarity whilst avoiding duplication with Council services.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. The Environment and Economy Committee is asked to note the development of the PEACEPLUS Data Protection Impact Assessment, Equality Screening, Rural Needs Assessment and Climate, Environmental and Social Assessment.

7. Appendices / Links

- Appendix 1 – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 – Equality Screening
- Appendix 3 – Rural Needs Assessment
- Appendix 4 – Climate, Environmental and Social Assessment



DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Project Title:	PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan
Publication Status:	Closed
Department	Economic Development
Date:	12/02/2026

A DPIA should be completed using this template at the beginning of any major project that involves personal data, where a DPIA screening has recommended it, or when making significant changes to an existing process.

This assessment is a valuable tool for identifying, evaluating, and mitigating potential data protection risks at an early stage, allowing changes to be made prior to commencing any projects. By doing this, we ensure compliance with data protection legislation from day one and uphold our responsibilities as a public authority when collecting, storing, and safeguarding personal data.

Please cover each point in the tables below, detailing as much as possible to demonstrate how you plan to look after personal data.

Step 1: Identify the need for a DPIA

It may be helpful to refer or link to other documents, such as a project proposal or online information.

- 1. Explain broadly what the project aims to achieve and what type of processing is involved, such as:**
 - Project aims
 - Personal data involved

Participant monitoring is a contractual requirement for Council in accepting the funding for the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan from the funding body, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The participant target for the Action Plan is 5,848 people completing cross community project activity, through individual projects, programmes and activities. The Partners (including project partners, associate partners and delivery agents) will assist in the delivery of the Action Plan across three strategic themes. Participation is to be evidenced by Council and verified by the SEUPB before achievement can be recorded.

The PEACEPLUS M&E system is designed to capture participant and attendance records, collate equality data and evaluate the impact of the project. This is to ensure that all sections of the community have been able to successfully access project and programme activities.

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Step 2: Describe the processing

2. Describe the nature of the processing:

For example:

- How will personal data be accessed, collected, used, stored and deleted?
- What is the source of the personal data?
- Will the data be shared with anyone?
- What types of processing identified as likely high risk are involved?

Participants will register on the programme via an online registration form, using the likes of Microsoft Forms. They will be asked to provide name, address, email address, contact number and provide responses to a Section 75 questionnaire. Should they not wish to answer any of the Section 75 questions then there will be a 'prefer not to say' option.

To safeguard the information provided by participants, the responses will be downloaded via Excel into a secure SharePoint site, only accessible by a small number of MEABC PEACEPLUS staff, and relevant staff within the Partner organisations. Partners will need to register with MEABC PEACEPLUS staff for access to the SharePoint which will be password protected and only available to those invited. Each partner will only have access to their own registrations, and no access will be provided to other sections of the SharePoint site. If a staff member leaves the Partner organisation then access will be removed. The use of SharePoint with access for relevant staff members will limit the need for sending information via email. Partners will be asked to only submit personal or special category data via secure means i.e. within the SharePoint site.

The use of digital collection methods will mean that paper copies are not required to be collected. Should a back up be required (e.g. lack of internet at the site of the activity meaning digital form completion is not possible) paper copies of the registration may be required. Should participants need to sign up via paper copies, the Partner must then transfer the information via the usual digital means and destroy the paper copy within 90 days as per the PEACEPLUS Programme requirements. Where possible, all partners will be required to utilise the digital registration process rather than via paper copies.

A data processing or data sharing agreement will be put in place with each Partner.

It will be the responsibility of the project partners, delivery partners and associate partners to ensure participants are signed up correctly.

Registers of events will also be required, showing attendance of individuals at cross community activities - showing that there is a mix of community backgrounds at each event. This will be agreed and approved by the facilitator of the event and will be submitted in digital format to the SharePoint site.

Data Collection Requirements

The PEACEPLUS M&E System will:

- Capture individual participant data (participant target)
- Track attendance at activities or events per project (cross community contact hours)
- Collate equality data on the participants (equality monitoring form)

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

- Evaluate the impact of the project activity (journey travelled via post activity survey)

The data will be shared between the project partner delivering the activity and Council as Lead Partner. The Funder has also requested to see the data in anonymised and aggregated format. In order to verify the outputs and results of the project, SEUPB will also want to see individual participant IDs showing the hours the participant has engaged on / with the project. The use of participant IDs will mean that no individual will be identifiable by SEUPB.

Each time a participant attends an event, they will be recorded on the Participant database - facilitators will be able to provide the name of the participant, the date of the event, the name of the event, and the contact hours for that individual participant. The 'sort' function within excel will then be used to identify all of the activities attended by that person. This allows checks to be conducted to ensure the event attendance has not been duplicated, and also to total the number of hours, evidencing that the participant has achieved the requisite number of contact hours.

To anonymise data, each participant will be given a participant ID prior to the information being shared with the SEUPB. A Separate spreadsheet will be provided to the SEUPB, with the columns containing personal data that can identify an individual deleted, rather than hidden. Data will be aggregated via utilisation of pivot tables within excel and will show the number and percentage of participants that attended any particular event and the breakdown of the section 75 categories (e.g. 100 people attended the event, 55% were from the protestant community, 17% were from the catholic community, 45% were women and so on). Charts and graphs will also be provided.

In summary, collection and storage of personal data and holding of names / addresses / emails / contact numbers etc. is potentially high risk. This will be managed and minimised by utilising a secure repository (SharePoint), accessible only by a small number of project staff and a password system will be in place. Digital forms, directly depositing results into Excel will further minimise potential for data breaches.

3. Describe the scope of the processing:

- What is the nature of the personal data?
- Does it include special category or criminal offence data?
- How much data will be collected and used? How often?
- How long will the data be kept?
- How many individuals might be affected?
- What geographical area does it cover?

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Supporting data is required to evidence participation, that the participant has met the requisite number of contact hours (c.3 – 30 hours of cross community activity)

Special category data is required by the Funder – community background, political opinion, gender etc. but criminal offence data is not required

As the target for delivery is 5,848 participants, up to around 7,000 participants will need to be signed up, in order to manage drop off. Registrations are likely to take place daily / weekly and then monitoring will likely take place at least monthly. Sharing between the project partner and MEABC will therefore need to be at least monthly via the secure repository. This will limit any email traffic containing personal or special category data. Sharing of data between Council & SEUPB will be quarterly, in line with progress report submissions and information about data subjects will be anonymous and aggregated.

The PEACEPLUS Programme Manual states that document retention should be for a period of 5 years from when the final payment is received. Data will not be retained for longer than necessary and will be disposed of in line with Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule. As the Letter of Offer runs to December 2028, the final payments are likely to be received in 2029. Therefore the data will need to be held until at least 31 December 2034 but this may need to be extended if there are delays to payments.

The geographical area covered is throughout the MEABC area.

4. Describe the context of the processing:

- What is the nature of our relationship with the individuals?
- How much control will they have?
- Would they expect us to use their data in this way?
- Do they include children or other vulnerable groups?
- Are there prior concerns over this type of processing or security flaws?
- Is it novel in any way?
- What is the current state of technology in this area?
- Are there any current issues of public concern that should be factored in?

The individuals are participants on our PEACEPLUS Action Plan Programme

Once they have signed up, they are responsible for attending, and signing in at events. Otherwise, they will not control the data, they will provide data to the project partner, and subsequently Council to monitor project / programme activity.

The privacy notice will explain the requirements. The privacy notice will be specific to PEACEPLUS and made available to data subjects during the registration process, it will appear before the data subjects respond to the registration form and will include a link to the SEUPB privacy notice in line with the Data Sharing Agreement already in place. The Privacy Notice will be made available in plain language for all participants to understand.

Children & Vulnerable groups are expected to participate.

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

The Monitoring and Evaluation system and associated databases will be where data is held, and analysed.

5. Describe the purposes of the processing:

- What do we want to achieve?
- What is the intended effect on individuals?
- What are the benefits of the processing for us, for staff and more broadly?

The purpose of processing is to successfully manage and report to our funders in line with the Letter of Offer. To engage at least 5,8,48 cross community participants on the PEACEPLUS Action Plan.

To do this, we need to monitor a participant upon registration and track how many hours they have attended a project before they can be counted as achieved.

Step 3: Consultation process

6. Consider how/if to consult with relevant stakeholders:

- Describe when and how the individuals' views will be sought - or justify why it's not appropriate to do so.
- Who else do we need to involve within the organisation e.g. ICT; HR; Legal; Council?
- Have you liaised with Councils Consultation and Engagement Officer?

Due to the sheer number of individuals, and the fact that we will not know who the individuals will be before programme launch, it would not be possible for us to seek the views of individuals participating in the programme.

Technical advice and ongoing support will be required in the development and implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation System. This is a working document and will be updated as necessary throughout the rollout of the programme. For example, if any element of the system is found not to operate as smoothly as expected, adjustments may be made to improve its effectiveness.

Step 4: Assess necessity and proportionality

7. Describe compliance and proportionality measures, in particular:

- What is our lawful basis for processing?
- Does the processing actually achieve our purpose?
- Is there another way to achieve the same outcome?
- How will we prevent function creep?
- How will we ensure data quality and data minimisation?
- What information will we give individuals?
- How will we help to support their rights?
- What measures do we take to ensure processors comply?
- How do we safeguard any international transfers?

For the processing of personal data of participants in the PEACEPLUS Programme, we will rely on:

- Article 6(1)(e) - Public Task
Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest, specifically the administration, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, verification, and audit of the PEACEPLUS Programme in line with programme requirements.
- Article 6(1)(c) - Legal Obligation
Processing is necessary for compliance with legal obligations, including but not limited to:
 - Financial reporting requirements
 - Prevention and detection of fraud
 - Compliance with UK funding regulations
 - Audit and assurance obligations required by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and external auditors.
- Article 9 - Special Category Data
Where processing of special category data is required, we will rely on the following:
 - Article 9(2)(g) - Substantial Public Interest & Schedule 1, Data Protection Act 2018: Equality Monitoring (The Information Governance team will ensure an appropriate policy document is in place to reflect processing of special category data under Schedule 1)
(Used where special category data is collected for equality opportunity, reporting requirements, or compliance with statutory duties).
 - Article 9(2)(j) - Research and Statistical Purposes (used when personal data is anonymised and processed for evaluation or statistical reporting)

The Information Governance team will ensure an appropriate policy document is in place to reflect processing of special category data under Schedule 1 DPA 2018.

The processing of data achieves our purpose.

There is no other way that has been identified to date to achieve the same outcome

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

The data will only be used for reporting & monitoring purposes and will not be made available for other uses.

Project partners will be responsible for quality control checks upon registration, such as checking for existing participants signed up with the same information. Monthly checkins with partners will be required, as well as spot checks to review security and any source documentation held by the project partners / delivery agents etc. (source documents may include physical /printed registration forms or hard copy sign in sheets or similar)

Privacy notices will be finalised for participants to access. Participants may not want to answer all Section75 questions on registration, they do not have to answer any question that they do not wish to, and project partners should provide guidance where necessary. Whilst the legal basis for processing data is Public Task and not consent, participants may still request removal of their personal data. While we may not be able to erase all data due to statutory or programme requirements, we will seek to anonymise their personal data as far as possible.

Our project partners / delivery agents / associate partners will be given training on the M&E system and receive ongoing support

No international transfers are expected

Step 5: Identify and assess risks
Please detail any potential risks and rank them as low, medium or high

Describe the source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary.	Likelihood of harm	Severity of harm	Overall risk
Creation of a repository to host the database(s) such as SharePoint to ensure data is secure	Remote	Minimal	Low
Project partners / delivery agents / associate partners file containing participant registration information is accessed or compromised by an outside party.	Remote-to-Possible	Severe	High (at present, once the SharePoint system is in place and being used, this overall risk will be reduced)

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Paper copies of a signup sheet for a project or activity are stolen or misplaced.	Remote-to-Possible	Severe	High at present - as partners are trained, and the system is fully in place, this risk will be reduced
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Step 6: Identify measures to reduce risk				
<i>Identify additional measures we could take to reduce or eliminate risks identified as medium or high risk in step 5.</i>				
Risk	Options to reduce or eliminate risk	Effect on risk	Residual risk	Measure approved
<i>e.g. Unauthorised access to personal data</i>	<i>Implement strong access controls: role-based access, need to know basis, password protection, encryption</i>	<i>Reduced likelihood</i>	<i>Medium</i>	
Unauthorised access to personal data	All files containing data should be password protected and stored in a secure location	At least reduced, if not eliminated	Low	
Loss of hard copy material	Paper copies of signup forms must be stored in a secure location, such as a safe or locked filing cabinet by the delivery agent.	Reduced.	Low-to-medium, as there is still a risk that the locked hardware is broken in to.	
Errors in anonymisation	Training of staff - review of submissions by 2 nd checker prior to submission to SEUPB & minimal officers involved in data analysis	Reduced	Medium	

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

	/ submission of reports to funder			
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Step 7: Internal Clearance & Approvals

Once you have completed the sections above, please forward this document for signature.

ICT - Systems and Security

To be completed by Councils IT Department for advice on the systems security of any processing of personal data.

Position:		Date:	DD/MM/YYYY
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Summary of IT Advice:

Legal

To be completed by Councils Legal Department for advice on any legal implications involved in processing.

Position:	Acting Corporate Solicitor	Date:	24/03/2026
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Summary of Legal Advice:

The General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 govern how personal information is used by organisations. Council is a data controller i.e. it processes personal data information e.g an individual's name, telephone number, email address. The GDPR and Data Protection Act place a legal obligation on data controllers as to how they process personal information/data. The personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. It must be collected for a specific, explicit and legitimate purpose, be accurate and kept up to date, stored for no longer than necessary, be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed. The information must also be kept in a safe and secure manner. It appears that these principles have been taken into consideration and continued observance of the principles will ensure compliance with Council's legal obligations as a data controller.

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Data Protection

To be completed by Council's Data Protection Officer for advice on compliance, step 6 measures and whether processing can proceed.

Summary of DPO Advice:

I have reviewed this Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) in my capacity as the Council's Data Protection Officer, in accordance with Articles 35(2) and 39(1)(c) of the UK GDPR. I confirm that I was not involved in determining the purposes or means of the processing and therefore my advice has been provided independently.

This DPIA was completed due to the Council's DPIA screening exercise identifying potentially high risk processing.

The DPIA appropriately describes the proposed processing activities, assesses their necessity and proportionality, identifies potential risks to the rights and freedoms of data subjects, and documents suitable technical and organisational measures to mitigate those risks. The assessment demonstrates consideration of the data protection principles and the Council's accountability obligations, as per the guidance of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

I am satisfied that an appropriate Article 6 lawful basis has been identified, together with the additional Article 9 basis to process any special category data. As outlined within the DPIA document, the Information Governance team will ensure an Appropriate Policy Document is in place to reflect processing of special category data under Schedule 1, DPA 2018.

I am satisfied that the Section 6 mitigations are appropriate and have been well thought through. The Section 6 mitigations rely heavily on success controls therefore the policy lead should ensure to monitor the role-based access controls on a regular basis, especially during times of staff turnover.

I have discussed concerns about the collection of section 75 data where there is an option to not provide an answer as this would indicate that it is not necessary to collect it at all. However, I am satisfied that the funding for council is dependent upon attempting to collect this information and therefore council must collect it and will ensure that it is processed lawfully.

I am satisfied that an appropriate level of consideration has been shown in respect of managing the Sharepoint access controls.

I note the requirement to digitise records when paper records are created due to no digital access. However, 90 days feels like a large window of risk that a security incident could occur with the hard copy records. I would recommend that in these instances, the relevant individuals are encouraged to digitise paper records without undue delay, with the 90 day window acting as a maximum timeframe.

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

The requirement for data sharing/processing agreements has been appropriately identified and is noted. Council’s Information Governance team will provide any assistance that is required by the Investment and Funding Manager when ensuring these are in place.

The requirement for accessible and appropriate privacy notices has been appropriately identified and is noted. Council’s Information Governance team will provide any assistance that is required by the Investment and Funding Manager when ensuring these are in place.

The policy lead should ensure that all staff involved in delivery of this project attend the Council’s internal data protection training modules. If a requirement for additional data protection training becomes evident, the policy lead should consult with the Information Governance Manager & DPO.

The processing for this Plan does not appear to present such a high residual risk that the Council would be unable to mitigate for it. Subsequently, no prior consultation with the Information Commissioner’s Office is required, as outlined under Article 36 of the UK GDPR.

This DPIA should be kept under review in line with the project’s review schedule and updated if there are any material changes to the data processing, including changes to purpose, scope, technology, data types, or risk profile.

This DPIA should be reviewed if a complaint or concern is received by the Council in respect of the data processing within this project.

My comments are made without sight of the IT review of this DPIA. However the Investment and Funding Manager has advised me that IT have been working with her for a number of weeks to develop the Monitoring and Evaluation system. She has advised that IT have detailed awareness of this project and have provided guidance on the appropriate use of MS forms, Sharepoint etc. The IT team are setting up the Sharepoint site to be used in this project and developing the necessary forms. Council’s IT team should not encounter any difficulty in developing these items with full data protection compliance.

Date: 03/04/2026

DPO advice accepted: YES NO

If the DPO’s advice is rejected, you must explain your reasons below:

Position: Investment and Funding Manager **Date:** 03/04/2026

DPIA Conducted by:			
Please complete below			
Position:	Investment and Funding Manager		
Department:	Economic Development	Date:	18/03/2026
DPIA Approval:			
This should be the relevant Information Asset Owner, this is usually - Director/ Assistant Director/ Head of Service			
Position:	Head of Economic Development		
Department:	Economic Development	Date:	24/03/2026

Ongoing Compliance with DPIA will be kept under review by:

Position:	Information Governance Manager & DPO	Date:	03/04/2026
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The copy of the approved DPIA must be forwarded to the DPO for compliance records

The Information Governance Team is available to provide advice and review the assessment - contact infogov@midandeantrim.gov.uk

Section 75 Equality Screening

Part 1	Policy Scoping
Part 2	Screening Questions
Part 3	Screening Decision
Part 4	Monitoring
Part 5	Approval and Authorisation

Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Part 1: Information about the policy

Information about the policy	
Name of policy	PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan
Is this an existing, revised or new policy?	New Programme
What is it trying to achieve? (<i>intended aims/outcomes</i>)	The overall objective of the Action Plan is to build more vibrant, inclusive and cohesive communities across Mid and East Antrim by increasing cross-community integration, connection and mutual understanding between diverse groups. This contributes to PEACEPLUS Programme's specific objective of promoting peace and reconciliation by enabling increased sustained contact between those of different community backgrounds and by building respect for all cultural identities.

The emphasis of the Action Plan is on the normality of cross community integration. Rather than focusing on what makes us different, the emphasis is on our shared concerns and opportunities, how we can learn from one another, and how the best way to thrive is to work collectively.

Participation will reflect the demographics of the Council area (NISRA Census 2021) - 17% Catholic, 58% Protestant, 1% other and 24% none. It is acknowledged that in different parts of the Borough these proportions may vary which is why collaboration and working in and across all areas is a key aspect of all planned programmes.

The key challenge being tackled is the need to break down existing societal divisions and promote positive relationships between the predominantly Protestant/Other Christian and Catholic communities, as well as communities of other nationalities and ethnic backgrounds from across the Borough. The expected change is increased social inclusion, celebration of diversity, and greater mutual respect and understanding across all cultural identities in Mid and East Antrim.

The plan has the overall SMART target to engage a minimum of 5,848 participants across all of its activities and outputs. The key targets aligned to PEACEPLUS output indicators are:

- 1,700 participants in local community regeneration/transformation activities.
- 1,580 participants in activities promoting thriving and peaceful communities.
- 2,568 participants in activities building respect for all cultural identities.

The beneficiaries will include young people, women, ethnic minority communities, ex-service members, community leaders and the general public from both Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist/Republican communities, as well as other diverse backgrounds.

The three main activities/thematic strands centre around three core themes:

1. Local Community Regeneration and Transformation

2. Thriving and Peaceful Communities
3. Celebrating Cultures and Diversity

These will be implemented through local community partnerships and supported by Council over the 3-year project delivery timeframe. The activities within the Action Plan will span the entire Borough area.

Delivery includes;

Community Social Enterprise Hubs (Capital Element)

This Programme will support the capital costs and establishment of 3 shared spaces - 1 shared space in the centre of each of the three main towns in the Borough, in which a range of community and social enterprise activities can then take place. 3 x community social enterprise hubs to be refurbished

Total 600 participants

Community/Sports Facilities Major Capital Works Programme

This Programme will support the capital development costs of 3 new or improved strategically significant shared spaces and facilities across the Borough (1 per legacy Council area), to enable increased physical activity, health, and wellbeing opportunities, as well as to facilitate meaningful cross-community interaction to occur. The 3 strategically significant community/sports facilities will be provided with up to £200,000 capital to maximise greater participation by all communities within each legacy Council area. 3 x strategically significant capital works projects at community/sports facilities (one per legacy council area) across the programme.

Total 600 participants

Community/Sports Facilities Capital Enhancement Programme

This Programme will revitalise communities from across the Borough, by bringing underused facilities into community use and/or refurbishing existing community/sports facilities. Capital improvements of up to £30k per project to include measures to e.g. improve energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, health and safety, modernisation, or access (this list is not exhaustive).

10 x improved community /sports facilities across the Borough

Total 500 participants

Community Social Enterprise Hubs (Programme Support Element)

This Programme will support the capital costs and establishment of 3 shared spaces - 1 shared space in the centre of each of the three main towns in the Borough, in which a range of community and social enterprise activities can then take place. 3 programmes of community driven activities.

600 participants (not additional participants - directly linked to Community Social Enterprise Hubs (Capital Element) above.

Strengthening Communities Programme

The Strengthening Communities Programme aims to develop area-based programmes in each of the legacy Council areas, for shared learning, cooperation, and celebration between local community and voluntary organisations.

Each programme will be community-led and tailored to the specific skills and needs of the local area, fostering collaboration, social cohesion, and capacity-building. Partners will work closely with Council in the design and delivery. 3 x area-based programmes co-developed and delivered (based on legacy Councils)

Total 800 participants

Events and Festivals Programme

(sub-part of Strengthening Communities)

Each area to provide 4 events or festivals and facilitate related volunteer training.

Delivery to include facilitating, coordinating, and leading on community festivals, events, and celebrations organised with and supported by local organisations.

12 x community led festivals

6 x volunteer training programmes

Total 60 participants

Social Enterprise Development Programme

(sub-part of Strengthening Communities)

A social enterprise programme bespoke to the aspirations of the community and voluntary sector groups in the area - this could be themed around facilities; makers; service providers etc.

3 x social enterprise development programmes

Total 60 participants

Plot to Plate Programme

This Programme is designed to engage community organisations, volunteers, and individuals across the Borough through a variety of approaches, maximising participation opportunities, including participation from schools in some elements. This core health and wellbeing programme encourages outdoor activities, improved nutrition knowledge, and promotes sustainability and horticulture's wider mental health benefits.

1 x initial scoping exercise of existing provision

6 x training networking and collaboration programmes and activities

Total 230 participants

Women's Programme

This aim of this Programme is to bring women from a variety of areas and backgrounds together to share experiences and build confidence and skills. It will involve initially engaging with individuals and women's groups within the Borough to identify what they want and need from the programme to help shape the content.

1 x Borough wide programme

210 participants

Youth Programme

The Youth Programme will fully engage with young people to co-design and implement a comprehensive program to build cultural awareness, promote inclusion and empathy, and provide intercultural activities across the Borough.

1 x co-production / co-design process throughout with young people to develop programme content and resources.

1 x 'train the trainer' programme for 20 young facilitators to roll out to their peers

10 x youth led / youth facilitated events / projects in local youth / education settings.

220 participants

Who Do We Think We Are? Programme

This Programme aims to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in creative activities that explore the

history of their local communities and the meaning of the word 'community' itself.

Through various artistic mediums such as poetry, storytelling, art, song, and drama, participants will delve into their shared histories, legends, and personal stories, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and understanding of their communities.

1 x primary school programme and 1 x post primary school programme

21 x community projects

2 x programmes of showcase events / exhibitions.

Total 898 participants

Veteran's Programme

The aim of this Programme is to increase social inclusion among individuals and families from the services background. The primary focus of the Programme will be about building trust, relationships, and confidence.

The Veteran's Programme will include facilitating a number of events in a 'safe space' where the participants are most comfortable but will progress beyond this by collaborating with other organisations.

10 x people from ex-services background intensively supported per annum over the 3-year period.

12 x themed events to promote social inclusion

Total 270 participants

Sports Cluster Programme

The Sports Cluster Programme will facilitate sports clubs and physical activity groups from across different communities throughout the Borough to come together and develop multi-sport programmes. The goal of the Programme is to build physical literacy, core skills, and lasting relationships between clubs from different sporting and very often community backgrounds.

14 x sports cluster projects

Total 420 participants

It's Our MEA Too - Conscious Inclusion Programme

The Programme aims to improve access for people with different abilities and neurodiversity rather than creating separate programmes. It is designed to

	<p>promote and support conscious inclusion across all community activity.</p> <p>The Programme will initially involve working with individuals, disability groups and organisations to identify the themes that will be promoted through the programme i.e. autism, visual impairment, learning disability, learning difficulty, age related issues, emotional health etc.</p> <p>36 x awareness raising events. 6 x awareness raising campaigns 15 x adjustment supports to increase inclusion.</p> <p>Total 500 participants</p> <p>It's Our MEA Too - Inclusion Of All Backgrounds Programme</p> <p>This Programme aims to build, improve, and sustain relationships between minority communities (including newcomers, refugees, asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, and neurodiverse individuals) and the wider resident community in the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area. The Programme aims to address issues of trust, prejudice, and intolerance while increasing levels of understanding, integration, and civic participation among these groups.</p> <p>12 x cultural competence events for professionals 12 x cultural awareness events for communities 1 x support programme for newcomer families and individuals.</p> <p>Total 480 participants</p>
<p>Are there any section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit for the intended policy? <i>If so, explain how.</i></p>	<p>Yes, all section 75 categories are expected to benefit from this programme, due to its inclusive nature and activities as noted above.</p>
<p>Policy Lead Officer <i>(who initiated or wrote the policy)</i></p>	<p>Investment and Funding Manager.</p>
<p>Who owns/implements the policy?</p>	<p>Economic Development (with partners across the Borough, governance managed via a Partnership Agreement)</p> <p>Mid & East Antrim Borough Council is the Lead Partner</p> <p>Project Partners Ballymena Business Centre LEDCOM</p>

Implementation factors
<p>Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?</p> <p>If yes, are they <i>(please tick as appropriate)</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> financial</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> legislative</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify _____</p>
Main stakeholders affected
<p>Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? <i>(please tick as appropriate)</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service users</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other public sector organisations</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voluntary/community/trade unions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____</p>
Other policies with a bearing on this policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what are they? <p>Equality scheme and action plan MEABC Community Plan MEABC Corporate Plan MEABC Environment strategy This list is not exhaustive, and a range of other regional policies are included in the full application to the SEUPB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who owns them? <p>MEABC Plus, our partners as listed above</p>

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to signpost to S75 data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information																		
Religious belief	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <p>Protestant and other Christian religions comprise the majority of citizens within MEA Borough at 58% compared to 17% Catholic respectively.</p> <p>Citizens with a non-Christian belief comprise 1% of the Borough and citizens without a religion is represented by 24% of the Borough.</p>																		
Political opinion	<p><u>Local Government Elections - May 2023</u></p> <p>The political opinion within MEA Borough is broken down as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 1093 1027 1541"> <thead> <tr> <th>Party</th> <th>MEA Borough (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>DUP</td> <td>30.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UUP</td> <td>17.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Alliance</td> <td>18.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TUV</td> <td>15.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sinn Fein</td> <td>9.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SDLP</td> <td>2.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green</td> <td>0.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others</td> <td>4.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Party	MEA Borough (%)	DUP	30.9	UUP	17.3	Alliance	18.9	TUV	15.9	Sinn Fein	9.3	SDLP	2.0	Green	0.9	Others	4.7
Party	MEA Borough (%)																		
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TUV	15.9																		
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SDLP	2.0																		
Green	0.9																		
Others	4.7																		
Racial group	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <p>The racial breakdown within MEA Borough is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 1765 1027 1928"> <thead> <tr> <th>NI Census 2021</th> <th>MEA Borough (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>97.78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other/None recorded</td> <td>2.22</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	NI Census 2021	MEA Borough (%)	White	97.78	Other/None recorded	2.22												
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White	97.78																		
Other/None recorded	2.22																		

Age	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <p>The largest age range in MEA Borough is 40-64 at 34% followed by citizens aged between 15 and 39 at 29%.</p> <p>Over 65s make up 20% with those aged 0-14 comprise 17% of the Borough.</p>														
Marital status	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="438 526 1027 864"> <thead> <tr> <th>NI Census 2021</th> <th>MEA Borough (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Single</td> <td>33.43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Married</td> <td>49.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Civil Partnership</td> <td>0.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Separated</td> <td>3.53</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Divorced</td> <td>6.83</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Widowed</td> <td>6.91</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The number of residents who are single, in a civil partnership or divorced has risen since the 2011 Census.</p>	NI Census 2021	MEA Borough (%)	Single	33.43	Married	49.15	Civil Partnership	0.16	Separated	3.53	Divorced	6.83	Widowed	6.91
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Sexual orientation	<p><u>2021 Census - Citizens aged 16+</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="438 1052 1027 1442"> <thead> <tr> <th>NI Census 2021</th> <th>MEA Borough (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Straight or heterosexual</td> <td>91.04</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gay or Lesbian</td> <td>0.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bisexual</td> <td>0.56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Sexual orientation</td> <td>0.13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to say</td> <td>4.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>3.19</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	NI Census 2021	MEA Borough (%)	Straight or heterosexual	91.04	Gay or Lesbian	0.86	Bisexual	0.56	Other Sexual orientation	0.13	Prefer not to say	4.21	Not stated	3.19
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Bisexual	0.56														
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Prefer not to say	4.21														
Not stated	3.19														
Men and women generally	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <p>The population of the Borough is 49% male and 51% female.</p>														
Disability	<p><u>2021 Census</u></p> <p>There are 138,994 residents within Mid and East Antrim and 25% live with a limiting long term health problem or disability. However, the number of households affected by a resident or residents with a limiting long term health problem or disability totals 45% of the 58,283 households within the Borough.</p> <p>Therefore, nearly half the number of households in Mid and East Antrim are affected by one of the 50,121 limiting long term health problems or disability recorded for the area.</p>														

Dependants	<u>2021 Census</u>								
	27.07% of MEABC households have 1 or more dependant children. This has fallen from 32.14% recorded in the 2011 census. The age breakdown of the dependant children is as follows:								
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">Age</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">MEA Borough (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">0-4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">9.65</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">5-11</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">9.39</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">12-18</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">8.03</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	MEA Borough (%)	0-4	9.65	5-11	9.39	12-18	8.03
	Age	MEA Borough (%)							
0-4	9.65								
5-11	9.39								
12-18	8.03								
The majority of children within households with dependant children are aged between 0 and 4.									

If you do not have enough data to tell you about potential or actual impacts you may need to conduct a pre-consultation to generate more data and to distinguish what groups are potentially affected by your policy.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below:

Section 75 category	Details needs, experiences and priorities
<p>Religious belief</p>	<p>There is no evidence of differing needs, experiences or priorities for people of different religious beliefs.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people of all religious beliefs. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive for all.</p>
<p>Political opinion</p>	<p>There is no evidence of differing needs, experiences or priorities for people of different political opinion.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people of all political opinion. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive for all.</p>
<p>Racial group</p>	<p>People from diverse backgrounds may require additional accessibility support to access programme activities. Any necessary specific adjustments will be managed through the planning and implementation of the programme activities.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people of all different backgrounds. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive for all.</p> <p>In addition, the Action Plan will deliver specific activities to people from ethnic minority communities under the It's Our MEA Too - Inclusion of All Backgrounds Programme</p> <p>This Programme aims to build, improve, and sustain relationships between minority communities (including newcomers, refugees, asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, and neurodiverse individuals) and the wider resident community in the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area. The Programme aims to address issues of trust, prejudice, and intolerance while increasing levels of</p>

Section 75 category	Details needs, experiences and priorities
	<p>understanding, integration, and civic participation among these groups.</p> <p>12 x cultural competence events for professionals 12 x cultural awareness events for communities 1 x support programme for newcomer families and individuals.</p> <p>480 participants in total</p>
Age	<p>Older people may require additional accessibility support to access programme activities. Any necessary specific adjustments will be managed through the planning and implementation of the programme activities.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people of all age groups. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive for all.</p> <p>In addition, the Action Plan will deliver specific activities to Young People through the Youth Programme. The Youth Programme will fully engage with young people to co-design and implement a comprehensive program to build cultural awareness, promote inclusion and empathy, and provide intercultural activities across the Borough.</p> <p>1 x co-production / co-design process throughout with young people to develop programme content and resources. 1 x 'train the trainer' programme for 20 young facilitators to roll out to their peers 10 x youth led / youth facilitated events / projects in local youth / education settings.</p> <p>220 participants in total</p>
Marital status	<p>There is no evidence of differing needs, experiences or priorities for individuals based on marital status.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people, no matter their marital status. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive of all.</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>There is no evidence of differing needs, experiences or priorities for individuals based on sexual orientation.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people, no matter their sexual orientation. It is a requirement</p>

Section 75 category	Details needs, experiences and priorities
	<p>of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive of all.</p> <p>Please note that Under 18s will not be asked questions about their sexual orientation.</p>
<p>Men and women generally</p>	<p>There is no evidence of differing needs, experiences or priorities for individuals based on gender.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people, no matter their sex or gender. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive of all.</p> <p>Please note that Under 18s will not be asked questions about their gender.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Disabled people may require additional accessibility support to access programme activities. Any necessary specific adjustments will be managed through the planning and implementation of the programme activities.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to people, ensuring people with disabilities or other accessibility requirements will not be disadvantaged. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive of all.</p> <p>In addition, the Action Plan will deliver specific activities to promote accessibility through It's Our MEA Too - Conscious Inclusion Programme. The Programme aims to improve access for people with different abilities and neurodiversity rather than creating separate programmes. It is designed to promote and support conscious inclusion across all community activity.</p> <p>The Programme will initially involve working with individuals, disability groups and organisations to identify the themes that will be promoted through the programme i.e. neurodiversity , sensory disability, learning disability, learning differences, age related disability, emotional health etc.</p> <p>36 x awareness raising events 6 x awareness raising campaigns 15 x adjustment supports to increase inclusion.</p>

<p>Section 75 category</p>	<p>Details needs, experiences and priorities</p>
	<p>500 participants in total.</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>People with dependants may require greater flexibility with timings / days to participate in programme activities.</p> <p>All activities to be delivered within the Action Plan are open to all people. It is a requirement of the PEACEPLUS Programme that Council encourages participation from all sections of the community and is inclusive of all.</p> <p>Activities will be delivered over various days / times to allow for comfortable attendance. The Conscious Inclusion Programme noted above will also have elements related to participants with dependents.</p>

Part 2. Screening questions

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? Positive major Positive minor None Negative major Negative minor
Religious belief	People from different religious beliefs will be actively encouraged by the project partners to participate in activities across the borough.	Positive major
Political opinion	People with differing political opinions will be actively encouraged by the project partners to participate in activities across the borough.	Positive major
Racial group	People from different racial backgrounds will be actively encouraged by the project partners to participate in activities across the borough. The ethnic minority community makes up 2.3% of the borough, all sections of the community will have access to activities to be delivered within the overall Action Plan with specific activities to engage people from our ethnic minority communities within the It's Our MEA Too - Inclusion Of All Backgrounds Programme.	Positive major
Age	People of all ages will be actively encouraged by the project partners to participate in activities across the borough. A specific Youth Programme will also be delivered as part of the overall Action Plan.	Positive major
Marital status	The programme will seek to be inclusive for all participants irrespective of marital status	Positive major
Sexual orientation	The programme will seek to be inclusive, irrespective of sexual orientation.	Positive major

Men and women generally	The programme will seek to be inclusive, irrespective of gender.	Positive major
Disability	People with disabilities will be supported with all premises being accessible and inclusive programmes developed to meet the needs of all participants. In addition, the It's Our MEA Too - Conscious Inclusion Programme will provide further, long term advice and plans for local organisations.	Positive major
Dependants	The programme will seek to be flexible around childcare provision and existing infrastructure to ensure availability of services and activities for those with caring responsibilities.	Positive major
2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious Belief	Yes, the programme supports cross-community engagement at its core.	
Political opinion	Yes, the programme supports cross-community engagement at its core.	
Racial group	Yes, the programme supports cross-community engagement at its core with specific activities to engage and enhance our ethnic minority communities.	
Age	Yes, the programme supports people of all ages with a range of activities. A specific Youth Programme is also to be delivered.	
Marital Status	Yes, the programme supports participant engagement, regardless of marital status.	
Sexual Orientation	Yes, the programme supports participant engagement, regardless of sexual orientation.	
Men and women generally	Yes, the programme will promote inclusivity by providing access, encouraging participation in all activities.	
Disability	Yes, the programme will promote inclusivity by providing access, encouraging participation in programmes and providing any specific adjustments required to support people with disabilities as well as delivering capacity building for local organisations in relation to accessibility requirements.	
Dependents	Yes, the programme will promote inclusivity by providing access, encouraging participation in programmes and providing	

	any adjustments required to support people with dependents.	
3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? Positive major Positive minor None Negative major Negative minor
Religious belief	The programme is part of PEACEPLUS, with a specific focus on developing initiatives that foster peace, prosperity and reconciliation amongst people of different political and religious beliefs, whilst promoting engagement with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. The programme will focus on building trust, creating new relationships, encouraging collaborative working, and jointly delivering initiatives across the borough.	Positive Major
Political opinion	The programme is part of PEACEPLUS, with a specific focus on developing initiatives that foster peace, prosperity and reconciliation amongst people of different political and religious beliefs, whilst promoting engagement with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. The programme will focus on building trust, creating new relationships, encouraging collaborative working, and jointly delivering initiatives across the borough.	Positive Major
Racial group	The programme is part of PEACEPLUS, with a specific focus on developing initiatives that foster peace, prosperity and reconciliation amongst people of different political and religious beliefs, whilst promoting engagement with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. The programme will focus on building trust, creating new relationships, encouraging collaborative working, and jointly delivering initiatives across the borough.	Positive Major
4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons

Religious belief	Yes, the programme will create new opportunities for interaction between community members of different religious beliefs.	
Political Opinion	Yes, the programme will create new opportunities for interaction between community members with differing political opinions.	
Racial Group	Yes, the programme supports engagement with our ethnic minority communities	

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

The programme will collect Section 75 data on all participants, a requirement of PEACEPLUS. There are no known adverse impacts on any participant with multiple identities.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

No identified adverse impacts.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.
A full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. The screening process has not identified any adverse impacts on any of the Section 75 equality categories. The programme is designed to be inclusive, transparent and accessible, and provides structured opportunities that are available on an equal basis to all eligible individuals.
If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details.
Not applicable.
If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.
Not applicable.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is ‘minor’ and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If so, give the reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.
Not applicable.

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	
Relevance to a public authority's functions	

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

<p>Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?</p> <p>If yes, please provide details.</p>
<p>Not applicable.</p>

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 - 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Equality Screening undertaken by:	
Position/Job Title:	Investment and Funding Manager
Department:	Economic Development
Date Completed:	18/03/2026

Equality Screening approved by:	
Position/Job Title:	Head of Economic Development
Department:	Development/Economic Development
Date Completed:	27/03/2026

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.



Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

Section 1: Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by MEABC that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

MEABC PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan

1B. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1A above relates to.

Developing a	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devising a Public Service	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering a Public Service	Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>

1C. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1B above.

MEABC PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan

1D. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The overall objective of the Action Plan is to build more vibrant, inclusive and cohesive communities across Mid and East Antrim by increasing cross-community integration, connection and mutual understanding between diverse groups. This contributes to PEACEPLUS Programme's specific objective of promoting peace and



reconciliation by enabling increased sustained contact between those of different community backgrounds and by building respect for all cultural identities.	
1E.	What definition of 'rural' applies in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).
<input type="checkbox"/>	A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.
<i>Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.</i>	
Not applicable.	
<i>Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.</i>	
Not applicable.	
<i>Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.</i>	
Not applicable.	



Section 2: Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A.	Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If the response is NO GO TO Section 2E

2B.	Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.
<p>The Action Plan will deliver a range of activities to participants from across the borough with a host of capital works and programme of activities hosted by partners within the three main towns of the borough; Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne.</p> <p>Several of the planned activities are in rural areas; Delivery of major Capital works programmes of up to £200,000 have been allocated to organisations across the borough, some in rural areas. This capital expenditure will refurbish and upgrade community or sporting facilities.</p> <p>Small capital enhancement capital works for support of up to £30,000 will also be provided to various sport / community groups in rural areas throughout the borough.</p> <p>Each organisation in receipt of capital enhancement works will each have a target of 50 participants.</p> <p>All activities across the programme will encourage participation from across the borough.</p>	

2C.	If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact people in rural areas more or less than people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.
<p>All activities across the programme will encourage participation from across the borough, with activities accessed in Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne. Whilst activities will be centred in these three main towns, anyone from across the borough can participate.</p> <p>As noted above, several of the project activities will be delivered in rural areas. Some strategic level activities and sporting activities generally will naturally also have participants that come from rural areas. An example is Ballymena Rugby Club that has members and players from across the MEABC area.</p>	

Other activities such as the Who Do We Think We Are? Programme will explore the history of local areas through the arts.

The Action Plan was co-designed with a number of local groups and organisations, to ensure all activities are open to all.



2D.	Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Services is likely to primarily impact on.			
Rural Business	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Jobs or Employment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Rural Education or Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rural Broadband or Mobile Comms	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rural Transport Services or Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Health or Social Care Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Poverty in Rural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deprivation in rural areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
The programme of activities has wide reaching benefits, including other - good relations work				
If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A				

2E	Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.
Not applicable.	



Section 3: Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas.

3A. Has MEABC taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by MEABC to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods of Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources MEABC used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names or organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

The co-design workshops and community consultation events completed to inform the Action Plan were held across the Borough during 2022-24. In addition, a number of sectoral meetings were held across the Borough in order to fully identify and understand priorities and requirements across a number of sectors e.g. youth, women, men, economically inactive, sport, health, and domestic violence.

- The initial engagements identified a number of priorities which included:
- Celebrating local communities.
 - Cleaning / Tidying towns and villages.
 - Encouraging community spirit and belonging.
 - Encouraging more people into volunteering and community leadership.
 - Improving wellbeing.
 - Increasing access to suitable facilities for community and physical activity.
 - Increasing collaboration and partnership working.
 - Local heritage - natural, historical, and cultural.
 - Raising Aspirations.

- Understanding what is meant by “community”.

Further engagement of the co-design process then tested these priorities with groups and individuals across the Borough and initiated the process of developing actions, programmes, and projects under these priorities. The final phase of engagement included:

- A second survey asking for views on identified actions.
- A round table event which presented the broad framework of the Action Plan for feedback.
- Engagement with key stakeholders from across the Borough.

The Local Action Plan is centred around three established core themes:

1. Local Community Regeneration and Transformation
2. Thriving and Peaceful Communities
3. Building Respect for all Cultural Identities

Council Officers in conjunction with EOS Community Consultancy arranged multiple consultation and co-design events on a Borough wide basis. These were widely publicised and attended by a diverse range of interested individuals and organisations. The list includes:

Identifying Priorities Workshops

- 24 October 2022 at Sandy Bay Centenary Pavilion, Larne.
- 25 October 2022 at Houstons Mill, Broughshane.
- 25 October 2022 at Whitehead Community Centre.
- 26 October 2022 at Oakfield Community Centre, Carrickfergus.
- 5 November 2022 at the Bank, Portglenone (drop in).
- 7 November 2022 at Ballymena Library.
- 8 November 2022 at Carnlough Heritage Hub.

First Set of Workshops

- Arts and Creative Groups - 30 January 2023 at 2.30pm in the Braid, Ballymena.
- Organisations supporting people with disabilities and/or additional needs - 1 February 2023 at 10.30am in Carrickfergus Townhall.
- Sports/Physical Activity Clubs and Groups - 8 February 2023 at 7.00pm in Larne FC Academy.

Second Set of Workshops

Theme 1: Local Community Regeneration and Transformation

- 27 February 2023 at 7.00pm in Access Employment Limited (AEL), Larne.
- 28 February 2023 at 7.00pm in Bann Maine West, Cullybackey.

Theme 2: Thriving and Peaceful Communities

- 6 March 2023 at 7.00pm in Ballygally Community Hall.
- 13 March 2023 at 6.00pm in Carrickfergus Library.

Theme 3: Building Respect for All Cultural Identities

- 7 March 2023 at 7.00pm in Ballymena North Business Centre.
- 14th March 2023 at 7.30pm in Greenisland Football Club.

Third Set of Workshops

- 19 September 2023 - 2.00pm to 4.30pm in the Des Allen Room, Ballymena Showgrounds.
- 19 September 2023 - 6.00pm to 8.30pm in the Market Yard, Larne.
- 20 September 2023 - 2.30pm to 5.00pm in the Dobbs Room, Carrickfergus Townhall.

Strengthening Communities Follow-Up

- 5 February 2024 - 7.00pm to 9.00pm in the Braid, Ballymena.
- 29 February 2024 - 7.00pm to 9.00pm in the Dobbs Room, Carrickfergus Townhall.
- 5 March 2024 - 7.00pm to 9.00pm in the Wilson Room, Larne Townhall.
- 11 March 2024 - 7.00pm to 9.00pm in the Braid, Ballymena.

Community Social Enterprise Hubs Community Events

- 18 April 2024 - 6.30pm to 8.00pm in Ballymena Midtown Makers, Ballymena.
- 26 April 2024 - 6.30pm to 8.00pm in LEDCOM, Larne.
- 27 April 2024 - 6.30pm to 8.00pm in Carrickfergus Enterprise.

Stakeholders Engaged

Below is a general list of some of the stakeholders engaged during the co-design and consultation process. There were multiple attendees from the same organisations on occasion, with not always the same persons attending each

session. The process was managed by Council along with EOS Community Consulting, who facilitated the discussions, feedback, follow-up, co-design etc.:

- AEL, Larne
- Allotment holders' groups
- Area Learning Communities (for schools)
- Ballymena East Rural Community Cluster
- Ballymena South Community Cluster
- Bann Maine West Community Cluster
- Broughshane Community Development Association
- Carrickfergus Community Forum
- Carrickfergus Cultural Centre
- Carrick YMCA
- Carson Project, Ballymena
- Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust
- Churches forums
- Community Networks
- Council officers - DEA officers / capital / economic development / tourism / sports
- D3M Action Collective, Ballymena
- EA youth service
- Factory Community Forum, Larne
- Groundwork NI
- Harbour Bears Pre-School, Larne
- Interethnic Forum
- Larne Community Care Centre (LCCC)
- Larne YMCA
- Local Enterprise Agencies
- Local heritage groups
- Mae Murray Foundation
- MEEAP
- MEA Youth Voice
- Mencap
- NACN
- NI Housing Executive
- North Ballymena Community Cluster
- Northern Trust

- NRC
- ONUS / Women's Aid
- Portglenone Enterprise Group
- Positive Carrickfergus
- PSNI
- RNIB
- RNID
- Royal British Legion
- Scullery O'Tullagh, Ballymena
- Services Club (Ballymena)
- Start 360 Ballymena
- Sustainable Food Partnership
- Triangle Housing
- Turning Point NI
- Various support Organisations
- Veterans Champions
- Veterans Support Group (Ballymena)
- Volunteer Now
- Whitehead Community Association

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by MEABC?

The Action Plan is implemented in line with wider MEABC strategies and policies including;

Putting people first - the community plan for Mid and East Antrim

Mid and East Antrim Policing and Community Safety Strategy

Mid and East Antrim Good Relations Strategy

All project activities were designed around improving social needs of people in all areas of MEABC, including those living in rural areas. Based on the co-design process, all community groups within MEABC area were given the opportunity to identify their needs which were evaluated and, where possible, included in the plan.



If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by MEABC to identify the social and economic needs of people

Not applicable.



Section 4: Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

As noted in the sections above, local groups and organisations across the borough were involved in the co-design process of the Action Plan. Feedback provided during the co-design process was used to develop activities to be delivered.

An expression of interest process was undertaken to identify local groups and organisations capital enhancement requirements. This allows smaller rural community organisations to enhance and / or refurbish facilities for use by their local communities, enabling additional activity to take place.



Section 5: Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **5C**

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

As noted above - feedback from the co-design process informed the development of the activities to be delivered within the Action Plan.

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES** GO TO Section **6A**

C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

Not applicable.

Section 6: Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by MEABC and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I can confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained, and relevant information compiled

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	
Position/Grade:	Investment & Funding Manager
Department	Economic Development
Date:	24/03/2026

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	
Position/Grade:	Head of Economic Development
Department:	Development/Economic Development
Date:	26/03/2026

Date created
25/02/2025

Lead author
Helen Donaldson

Organisation
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Your report

PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan

Our Climate, Environment and Social Assessment has been designed to help make sustainable development more readily understood by examining the everyday work taking place within an organisation.

PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan

Completed by	Completion time	General result
Helen Donaldson	15 minutes	

Key

- Long term negative impact
- Short term or limited negative impact
- No known impact
- Short term or limited positive impact
- Long lasting positive impact



Tips & Advice

We've identified several factors in your assessment that could have an impact. Here are some advice and tips.

Has this work considered climate change at a strategic level?



- Climate affects nearly every aspect of our lives, from our food sources to our transport infrastructure, from what clothes we wear, to where we go on holiday. It has a huge effect on our livelihoods, our health, and our future.
- It is vital that all rows plans and policies strategically consider and outline the climate-related factors associated with their work at the earliest stage.
- Identifying and planning for climate-related risks and impacts is a necessity for any project and failing to do so can have severe negative implications for the local environment and community.
- The LGA has several resources available that are specifically designed to help councils and other local authorities take strategic action against climate change. These can be found here: [Climate change resources | Local Government Association](#)



Forward Plan – Environment & Economy Committee

1. Planned Agenda Items Next meeting

	Items	Purpose
27 May 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Activity Report • PEACEPLUS Update • Outcome of Stakeholders Support to Local Businesses • Ballymena Business Excellence Awards • Capital Plan FY 2025/26 Update: Quarter 4 • Glenarm Regeneration Sub Committee (minute) • DfC Revitalisation Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting • Noting • Noting • Noting • Noting • Approval • Noting
22 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference • Economic Development Activity Report • Labour Market Partnership Update • Local Economic Partnership Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval/Noting • Noting • Noting • Noting
Adhoc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Ballymena Chamber of Commerce (date to be finalised) • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

2. 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