Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

January 23rd, 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, 26th January 2026** at **6:30 pm** in **Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access.**

Yours sincerely

Valerie Watts

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 Environmental Benchmarking Survey Results 2025 - Circulated

4.2 Climate Change Sub Committee Notes 03 December 2025 - Circulated

4.3 Portglenone Community Toilet Scheme - Circulated (21.01.2026)

4.4 NI Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics 2024-25 - Circulated

4.12 NI Apprenticeship Week 2026 - Circulated

4.13 Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant - Circulated (23.01.2026)

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 *Additional Item* Bryson Recycling Update - Verbal (22.01.2026)

Representatives from Bryson Recycling to be in attendance

7.2 SEUPB PEACEPLUS “Smart Towns and Villages” Programme Screening Update - Circulated (21.01.2026)

7.3 Household Recycling Centres: Restricted Access for Commercial Vehicles - Circulated (21.01.2026)

7.4 Foxy Tail Electricity Supply - Circulated (22.01.2026)

Foxy Tail Electricity Supply.pdf — *Not included*

8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED COMMITTEE

8.1 Economic Appraisal for Connexus - Circulated

SEUPB PEACEPLUS funded Connexus Project Economic Appraisal.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 1   Connexus Project - Economic Appraisal.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 2   Connexus Project Locations and Activitiy.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 3   PP00876_V2.0 Connexus application.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 4 Connexus Budget.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 5   00876_Connexus_Steering_committee_outcome_letter.pdf — *Not included*

8.2 Business Case – Carrick Harbour and Marina Security Contract - Circulated (21.01.2026)

BC Carrick Harbour Marina Security Contract Jan 2026.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 1 BC - Carrick Marina Security Tender.pdf — *Not included*

8.3 Economic Appraisal - M&E Remedial Works at The Braid and Carrick Amphitheatre - Circulated

EA - Replacement of Heating and Cooling Systems.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 1-EA for Carrickfergus Amphitheatre and the Braid.pdf — *Not included*

App 2 - Carrickfergus Ampitheatre M&E Feasibility Report.pdf — *Not included*

App 3 - The Braid M&E Feasibility Report.pdf — *Not included*

8.4 *Additional Item* Asylum Funding 2025-2026 - Circulated (23.01.2026)

Asylum Funding 2025-2026 Council Allocations.pdf — *Not included*

Appendix 1 Council Hub Framework - December 2025.pdf — *Not included*

9 FORWARD PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY COMMITTEE - Circulated

E&E Committee - Forward Plan Template v22.pdf *Page 201*

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment and Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2025 Results**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

1.1. This report is to update Elected Members on the success of Council in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2025 (Appendix 1).

2. Background

2.1. The Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey (NIEBS) has been pushing the environmental agenda to the fore since 1998, assessing the extent to which environmental business practices have been embedded within the corporate strategies and operations of local organisations.

2.2. In November 2025, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council officers attended the Survey Results event at Titanic Belfast. Council achieved Gold Level in the 2025 survey.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. Results Overview

A total of 150 organisations participated (up from 132 in 2024) in the survey with an average score of 77% (up 1% from 2024) which equates to a silver band. Council scored 88% (down from 94% in 2024 due to a significant water loss event and increased use in natural gas), achieving Gold Level.

3.2. Gap Analysis - what we're doing well

Council scored highly for embedding environmental responsibility at senior management level and considering it in strategic decision-making. Also, for engaging with our staff and external stakeholders on environmental issues, supplier engagement including environment/sustainability weighting in tenders, and for excellent regulator engagement. We also received full marks for having an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place and for measuring Scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council has aligned greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting with reputable external initiatives including BITC's Climate Action Pledge and Science-Based Targets. Council is delivering a wide range of carbon emission reduction projects. Council has identified climate-related risks and has embedded them into our Council Risk Register. Council measure and monitor your consumption/usage across waste to landfill, recycling and water consumption, with excellent business operation performance data, verified externally and independently. Council is supporting a circular economy through use of recycled materials, promoting and adopting reuse, reducing single-use plastic, industrial symbiosis, refurbishing instead of replacing with new and include reduce, reuse, recycle principles in our Environment Policy. Council has included Nature and Biodiversity in our strategic planning and policies and have taken actions to identify/reduce our impact. Council has demonstrated improvements across total greenhouse gas emissions, waste generated, recycling and water consumption.

3.3. Gap Analysis - where we can improve

1. *Carbon emission reporting - Scope 3 emission measurements* - Council could obtain more points by collecting data on at least five of the 15 Scope 3 areas (e.g. capital goods purchased, investments, upstream and downstream leased assets etc).
2. Waste Management - to achieve a higher score for this question, consider ways to increase this amount. Council could do this by working with our waste contractor to assess options for diverting more waste to recycling, working with colleagues to more effectively segregate waste streams, or work with your suppliers to encourage them to provide you with more recyclable packaging and materials.
3. Council could consider measuring and reporting on Nature and Biodiversity, in-line with external initiatives (e.g. *BITC's Business and Biodiversity Charter*, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, TNFD, GRI Biodiversity Standard).
4. *Bring a business* – Consider encouraging and supporting one of your key suppliers or contractors to take part in the 2026 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey to help them get started on their environmental improvement journey.

3.4. How we will improve

1. Council has now (October 2025) publicly reported on Scope 1, 2 and partial 3 via the DAERA Climate Mitigation Reporting platform; requirements are set out in the Climate (NI) Regulations 2024.
2. For 2026/27 Environmental Performance and Carbon Footprint Report, Council will include reporting on five of the 15 Scope 3 emission categories.
3. Council will continue to work with staff to encourage recycling practices to improve on performance.

4. The Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager will liaise with the Parks Development team to discuss the opportunity to avail of the BITC Biodiversity Charter in early 2026.
5. For the 2026 survey, Council will engage early on with current partners/suppliers and provide support to guide them through the Survey.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. **Financial Implications** – environmental management ensures the efficient use of energy, water and fuel and reduces costs.

4.2. **Human Resources** – environmental management is currently coordinated by one officer in Council and delivered by colleagues across all services.

4.3. **Equality Screening** – n/a

4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** – delivering environmental management within Council helps to deliver requirements set out in the Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 and helps to deliver our sustainable development duty.

4.5. **Reputation** - there is significant political and community interest in the sustainability, which delivers across the economy, society and environmental aspects.

4.6. **Legal** - The Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 places statutory power on central and local government bodies to meet targets set out in the act which is supported through delivery of environmental management.

4.7. **Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – delivery of effective environmental management protects the natural environment from Council service impacts.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. It is proposed to complete delivery of the 2025/26 environmental objectives and to set new objectives for 2026/27, in collaboration with the EMS Management Team and the Environmental Champion team, and to manage carbon emission trajectory through Council's Energy Manager and Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended Elected Members note the success of the 2025 survey results and encourage ongoing effective environmental management

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1	NIEBS 2025 Report
Appendix 2	NIEBS 2025 Gap Analysis Report
Appendix 3	NIEBS Gold Comms Pack

2025 Northern Ireland environmental BENCHMARKING survey REPORT

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

SPONSORED BY:

Coca-Cola HBC Ireland & Northern Ireland

Funded via the Carrier Bag Levy by:

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs | Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe | Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

CONTENTS

THE SURVEY

ABOUT THE NI ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARKING SURVEY

The NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey is Northern Ireland's leading environmental benchmarking exercise, attracting organisations from numerous industries. It is a free, annual, self-disclosure exercise open to members and non-members of Business in the Community.

Taking part enables an organisation to publicly demonstrate its commitment to being environmentally responsible and transparent. The surveying process and results allow organisations to examine and reflect on their environmental performance and compare themselves to other organisations to drive improvements.

Started 27 years ago by George Dawson, former Director of Business in the Community's ARENA Network, the Survey is recognised as a positive influencer that is helping organisations throughout Northern Ireland to achieve more sustainable ways of doing business.

For a overview of the findings outlined in this report in video format, please click on the image below.

150

ORGANISATIONS TOOK PART IN 2025 – A 14% INCREASE ON 2024

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE NI ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARKING SURVEY

THE RESULTS | BY ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

TOP PERFORMER

Ove Arup & Partners Ltd			

PLATINUM

AG Paving & Building Products Ltd	↔		
Allstate Northern Ireland	↑		
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	↑		
Belfast City Airport	↔	20+	
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	↔	25+	V25
Belfast International Airport	↔	25+	
Breedon Group	↔		
Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland	↑	10+	
Collins Aerospace - Kilkeel	↔		
Danske Bank	↔	10+	
Dawson Wam	↑		
Dowds Group	↑		
Dunbia (UK)	↔		
Eakin Healthcare	↑		
Encirc	↔	10+	V25
Farrans Construction	↔	25+	V25
Felix O'Hare & Company LTD	↑		
Fibrus	↑		V24
Foyle Food Group	↔	10+	
GEDA Construction	↔		
Gilbert-Ash Ltd	↔	10+	
GRAHAM	↔	20+	
Henry Brothers	↔	25+	
Heron Bros Ltd	↔	10+	
Hyster-Yale Materials Handling	↔		
Kier	↔	10+	
Kinnex Energy	↔		V24
Marcon Fit-Out Ltd	↔		
McCue	↔		
Metal Technology Ltd	↔		V24
Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited	↔	10+	
Northstone Materials Limited	↔		
Openreach Northern Ireland	↔		
Ove Arup & Partners LTD	↔		
Phoenix Energy Group Limited	↔	25+	
Queen's University Belfast	↔	20+	
Seagate Technology (Ireland)	↔	25+	
Spirit AeroSystems	↔		
Translink	↔	25+	
Ulster University	↔	20+	
Veolia	↑		

GOLD

ABM Group UKI	↑		V24
ABPNI	↓		V25
Almac Group Ltd	↓		
Ards and North Down Borough Council	↑		
Belfast Metropolitan College	↔	10+	
BSG Civil Engineering LTD	NEW		
Business in the Community NI	↔	10+	
CDE Group	↔		
Caena	↑		
Combined Facilities Management	↑		
Finnebrogue	↑		V24
Greiner Packaging Dungannon	NEW		V25
Henderson Group LTD	↔	10+	
Huhtamaki Foodservice Delta Ltd	↓	10+	
JP Corry	↔	10+	
Kilwaughter Minerals Limited	↔		
Lidl Northern Ireland	↑		V24
McLaughlin & Harvey	↓	25+	
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	↓	10+	V24
Mutual Energy	↔		
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	↓		
SHS Group	↑		V24
SONI Ltd	↑		
South West College	↔		
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	↑	10+	
Spectrum Group	↑		
Thompson Aero Seating	↔		
VG MSO Ltd	NEW		

SILVER

A&L Goodbody Northern Ireland LLP	↓		
AMS	NEW		
Belfast City Council	↓		
Biopax Ltd	NEW		
Campbell Contracts Ltd	↔		V25
Co-Ownership	↔		
Digesters, Silos & Tanks LTD t/a Silotank	↑		V24
Education Authority	↔		
Energy Saving Trust	NEW		
Firstsource Solutions	NEW		
Galgorm	↔		
Haldane Group	↔	25+	
Heron Manufacturing Ltd	↑		
Irish Football Association	↔		
John Thompson & Sons Ltd	↔		
Mannok Build Ltd	↔		
McColgans Quality Foods	NEW		
McQuillan Companies Limited	NEW		
Mivan Ltd	↔		
MJM Marine Ltd	NEW		
Morrow Contracts	↑		V25
National Museums NI	↔		V25
North West Regional College	NEW		
Northern Ireland Assembly	↓	10+	
Power NI	↔		
Recon Waste Management Ltd	↑		
Riverridge	↑		
Smiley Monroe Ltd	NEW		
Southern Regional College	↔		
Technidrive Ltd	↑		
The H&A Group Ltd	NEW		
The McAvoy Group Ltd (HQ)	↔		
The Police Service of Northern Ireland	↔		
Titanic Belfast ltd	↑		
Unitrunk Ltd	↔		
Walter Watson Ltd	↔		
Western Health and Social Care Trust	↔	10+	V25
Woven Housing Association	↔		
Wrightbus	NEW		

KEY

New to the Survey in 2025	NEW
Remained in the same band as 2024	↔
Moved up from 2024	↑
Dropped from 2024	↓
Participated for at least 10 consecutive years	10+
Participated for at least 20 consecutive years	20+
Participated for 25+ consecutive years	25
Third-Party Verified 2024/2025	V

THE RESULTS | BY ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

BRONZE		
AG Wilson Civil Engineering	↔	
Antrim Electrical & Mechanical Engineers Ltd	↔	
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	NEW	
ATG Group	NEW	V25
Carson McDowell LLP	↔	
Creagh Concrete Products Ltd	NEW	
ENVA Northern Ireland LTD	NEW	
Evenun Ltd	NEW	
Everway	NEW	
Fish City	NEW	
Hinch Distillery	↔	
Holm Utilities	NEW	
Learning Pool Ltd	↔	
Michael Nugent Ltd	NEW	
NovoGen Engineering Solutions Ltd	↔	V24
Public Prosecution Service	↓	V25
Suki Tea Makers	↔	V24
TLI Group LTD	NEW	
Vaughan Engineering Services Limited	NEW	
Visit Belfast	↔	

GREEN		
A1 Transport (NI) Ltd	NEW	
Arbour Housing	↔	V24
Bann Ltd	NEW	
Clearbox Communications	↔	
Complete Beverage Services Ltd	NEW	
Consello	NEW	V25
Fusion Antipodes	NEW	
HNH Partners Limited	NEW	V25
Mackey Opticians	NEW	
McShane Packaging	NEW	
Milestone Rathfriland Ltd	NEW	
Northern Ireland Authority For Utility Regulation	↔	
Origin Northern Ireland	NEW	
Safety Advice Centre Ltd	NEW	
Stephens Catering Equipment Company Ltd	NEW	V25
Strida Design	NEW	
The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)	↔	
Thornton Roofing (Ireland) Ltd	NEW	V25
Ulster GAA	NEW	
Vantage Three Limited	NEW	
Volunteer Now	↔	
Waterman Environmental Group	NEW	

KEY	
New to the Survey in 2025	NEW
Remained in the same band as 2024	↔
Moved up from 2024	↑
Dropped from 2024	↓
Participated for at least 10 consecutive years	10+
Participated for at least 20 consecutive years	20+
Participated for 25+ consecutive years	25
Third-Party Verified 2024/2025	V

THE RESULTS | SMALL BUSINESS

TOP PERFORMING SMALL BUSINESS
Technidrive Ltd

SILVER
Digestors, Silos & Tanks LTD t/a Silotank
Technidrive Ltd

BRONZE
ATG Group
Everun Ltd
Fish City
Hinch Distillery
NovoGen Engineering Solutions Ltd
Suki Tea Makers
Visit Belfast

GREEN
Arbour Housing
Bann Ltd
Clearbox Communications
Complete Beverage Services Ltd
Consello
Fusion Antibodies
HNH Partners Limited
McShane Packaging Limited
Origin Northern Ireland
Safety Advice Centre Ltd
Stride Design
The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
Vantage Three Limited
Volunteer Now

ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE FEWER THAN 50 EMPLOYEES.

THE RESULTS | BY SECTOR

CONSTRUCTION

AG Wilson Civil Engineering	BRONZE
Antrim Electrical & Mechanical Engineers Ltd	BRONZE
Barm Ltd	GREEN
BSG Civil Engineering LTD	GOLD
Clarionet Facilities Management	GOLD
Creagh Concrete Products Ltd	BRONZE
Dawson Wam	PLATINUM
Dowds Group	PLATINUM
Farrans Construction	PLATINUM
Felix O'Hare & Company LTD	PLATINUM
GEDA Construction	PLATINUM
Gilbert-Ash Ltd	PLATINUM
GRAHAM	PLATINUM
Haldane Group	SILVER
Henry Brothers	PLATINUM
Heron Bros Ltd	PLATINUM
JF Corry	GOLD
Mascon Fit-Out Ltd	PLATINUM
McCue	PLATINUM
McLaughlin & Harvey	GOLD
Metal Technology Ltd	PLATINUM
Michael Nugent Ltd	BRONZE
Miven Ltd	SILVER
Specialist Group	GOLD
The H&A Group Ltd	SILVER
The McAvoy Group Ltd (HQ)	SILVER
Thornton Roofing (Ireland) Ltd	GREEN
Vantage Trees Limited	GREEN

EDUCATION

Belfast Metropolitan College	GOLD
Education Authority	SILVER
North West Regional College	SILVER
Queen's University Belfast	PLATINUM
South West College	GOLD
Southern Regional College	SILVER
Ulster University	PLATINUM

ENGINEERING

CDE Group	GOLD
Evenin Ltd	BRONZE
Hyster-Yale Materials Handling	PLATINUM
NovoGen Engineering Solutions Ltd	BRONZE
Ove Arup & Partners LTD	PLATINUM
Spirit AeroSystems	PLATINUM
Technidrive Ltd	SILVER
Unitrack Ltd	SILVER
Vaughan Engineering Services Limited	BRONZE
Walter Watson Ltd	SILVER

FINANCIAL

Danske Bank	PLATINUM
HNH Partners Limited	GREEN

FOOD AND DRINK

ABP NI	GOLD
Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland	PLATINUM
Dunbia (UK)	PLATINUM
Finnebrogue	GOLD
Fish City	BRONZE
Foyle Food Group	PLATINUM
Galgorm	SILVER
Henderson Group LTD	GOLD
Hinch Distillery	BRONZE
John Thompson & Sons Ltd	SILVER
McColgans Quality Foods	SILVER
Moy Park Rathfriland Ltd	GREEN
SHS Group	GOLD
Suki Tea Makers	BRONZE

GENERAL MANUFACTURING

AG Paving & Building Products Ltd	PLATINUM
Almac Group Ltd	GOLD
Biopole Ltd	SILVER
Collins Aerospace - Kilkeel	PLATINUM
Digesters, Silos & Tanks LTD t/a Sixtowie	SILVER
Eakin Healthcare	PLATINUM
Encirc	PLATINUM
Fusion Antibodies	GREEN
Greiner Packaging Dungannon	GOLD
Heron Manufacture Ltd	SILVER
Huhtamaki Foodservice Delta Ltd	GOLD
McShane Packaging	GREEN
MJM Marine Ltd	SILVER
Origin Northern Ireland	GREEN
Seagate Technology (Ireland)	PLATINUM
Smiley Monroe Ltd	SILVER
Stephens Catering Equipment Company LTD	GREEN
Thompson Aero Seating	GOLD
VG MSO Ltd	GOLD

GENERAL SERVICES

A&L GOODBODY NORTHERN IRELAND LLP	SILVER
ABM Group UK	GOLD
AMS	SILVER
Belfast City Airport	PLATINUM
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	PLATINUM
Belfast International Airport	PLATINUM
Carson McDowell LLP	BRONZE
Clearbox Communications	GREEN
Complete Beverage Services Ltd	GREEN
Conaldo	GREEN
Mackey Opticians	GREEN
Safety Advice Centre Ltd	GREEN
Titanic Belfast ltd	SILVER
Visit Belfast	BRONZE
Volunteer Now	GREEN
Waterman Environmental Group	GREEN
Wrightbus	SILVER

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY

National Museums NI	SILVER
Northern Ireland Authority For Utility Regulation	GREEN
Public Prosecution Service	BRONZE
The Police Service of Northern Ireland	SILVER

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES TRUST

Southern Health and Social Care Trust	GOLD
Western Health and Social Care Trust	SILVER

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Allstate Northern Ireland	PLATINUM
Ciena	GOLD
Exemplar	BRONZE
Firstsource Solutions	SILVER
Learning Pool Ltd	BRONZE
Slide Design	GREEN

LOCAL AUTHORITY

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	PLATINUM
Ards and North Down Borough Council	GOLD
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	BRONZE
Belfast City Council	SILVER
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	GOLD
Northern Ireland Assembly	SILVER
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	GOLD

Back to Agenda

THE RESULTS | BY SECTOR

MINING AND QUARRYING

Breedon Group	PLATINUM
Campbell Contracts Ltd	SILVER
Kilsaughter Minerals Limited	GOLD
Maypole Build Ltd	SILVER
Northstone Materials Limited	PLATINUM

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

Arbour Housing	GREEN
Business in the Community NI	GOLD
Co-Ownership	SILVER
Irish Football Association	SILVER
The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)	GREEN
Ulster GAA	GREEN
Woven Housing Association	SILVER

RETAIL

Lidl	GOLD

TRANSPORT/LOGISTICS

AI Transport (NI) Ltd	GREEN
Translink	PLATINUM

UTILITIES

Fibrus	PLATINUM
Kelvex Energy	PLATINUM
Hirsh Utilities Ltd	BRONZE
Kier	PLATINUM
Morrow Contracts	SILVER
Mutual Energy	GOLD
Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited	PLATINUM
Openreach Northern Ireland	PLATINUM
Phoenix Energy Group Limited	PLATINUM
Power NI	SILVER
SONI Ltd	GOLD
TLI Group LTD	BRONZE

WASTE/ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ATG Group	Bronze
Energy Saving Trust limited	Silver
ENVA Northern Ireland LTD	Bronze
McQuillan Companies Limited	Silver
Recon Waste Management Ltd	Silver
RiverRidge	Silver
Veolia	Platinum

BRING A BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS IN 2025	REFERRAL BUSINESS
ATG Group	Danske Bank
BSG Civil Engineering Ltd	Arup
Creagh Concrete	Specialist Group
Enva	Encirc
Greiner Packaging	[illegible]
McQuillan Environmental	Almac Group
MJM Marine	Mivan
Nugent	Gilbert-Ash
Origin	Kilwaughter
SAC	SpiritAero
Stride Design Ltd	Coca-Cola HBC
Thornton Roofing	Metal Technology
TLI Group	NIE Networks
Vaughans M&S	Heron Bros
Waterman Environmental Services	ABM Ireland

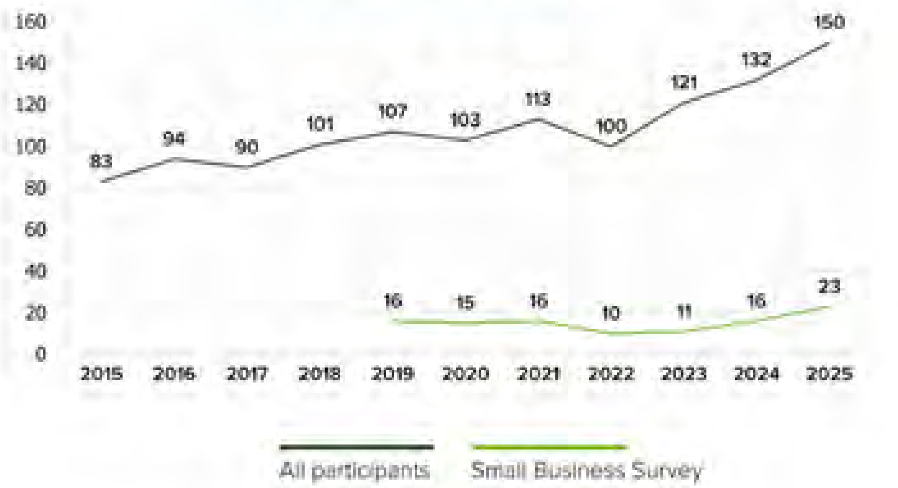
BRING A BUSINESS

15

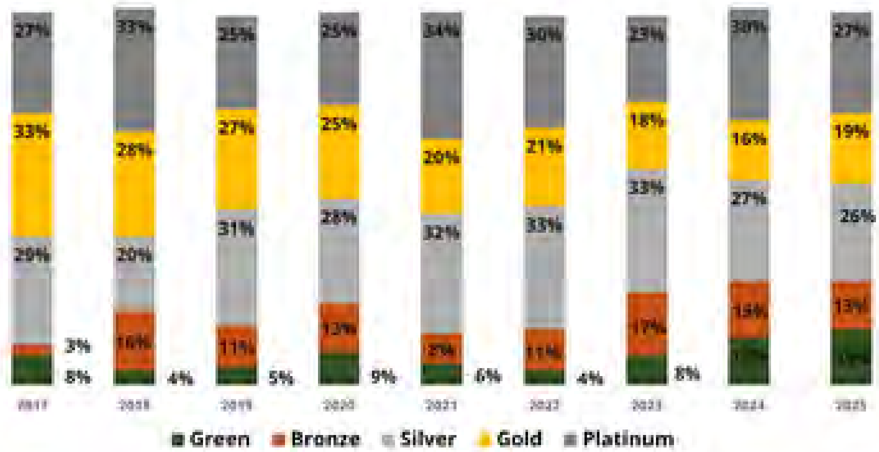
ORGANISATIONS DEMONSTRATED ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP BY INTRODUCING ANOTHER BUSINESS TO JOIN AND COMPLETE THE SURVEY IN 2025

THE HEADLINES

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



PROPORTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH BAND



23

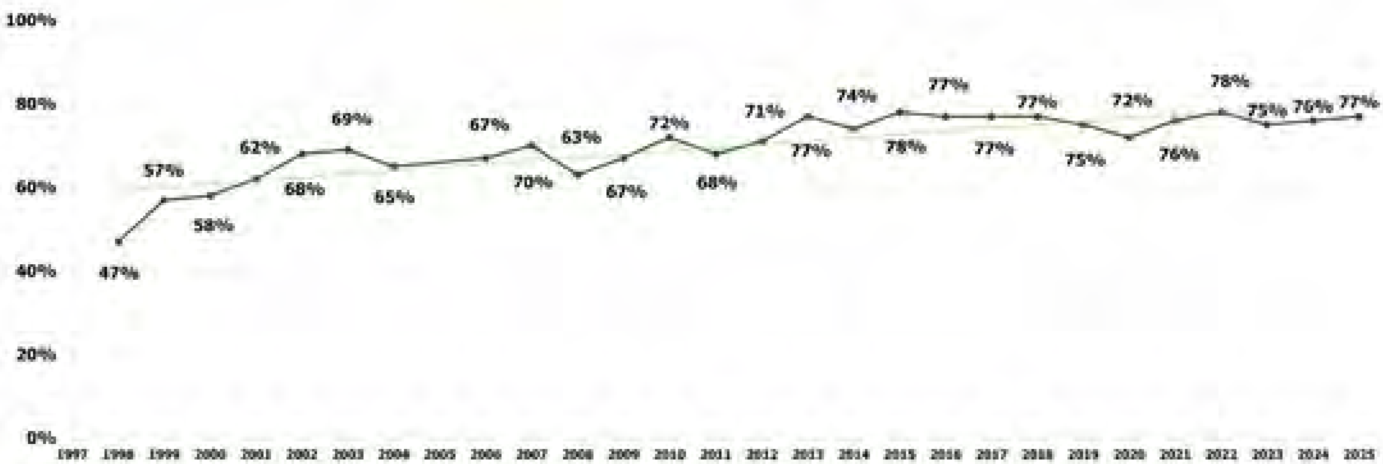
SMALL BUSINESSES PARTICIPATED IN THE SMALL BUSINESS SURVEY AND A TOTAL OF **150** ORGANISATIONS TOOK PART IN 2025 – A 14% INCREASE ON 2024

THE AVERAGE SCORE IS

77%

MINING AND QUARRYING WAS THE HIGHEST SCORING SECTOR, WITH EDUCATION A CLOSE SECOND

SURVEY SCORES OVER TIME

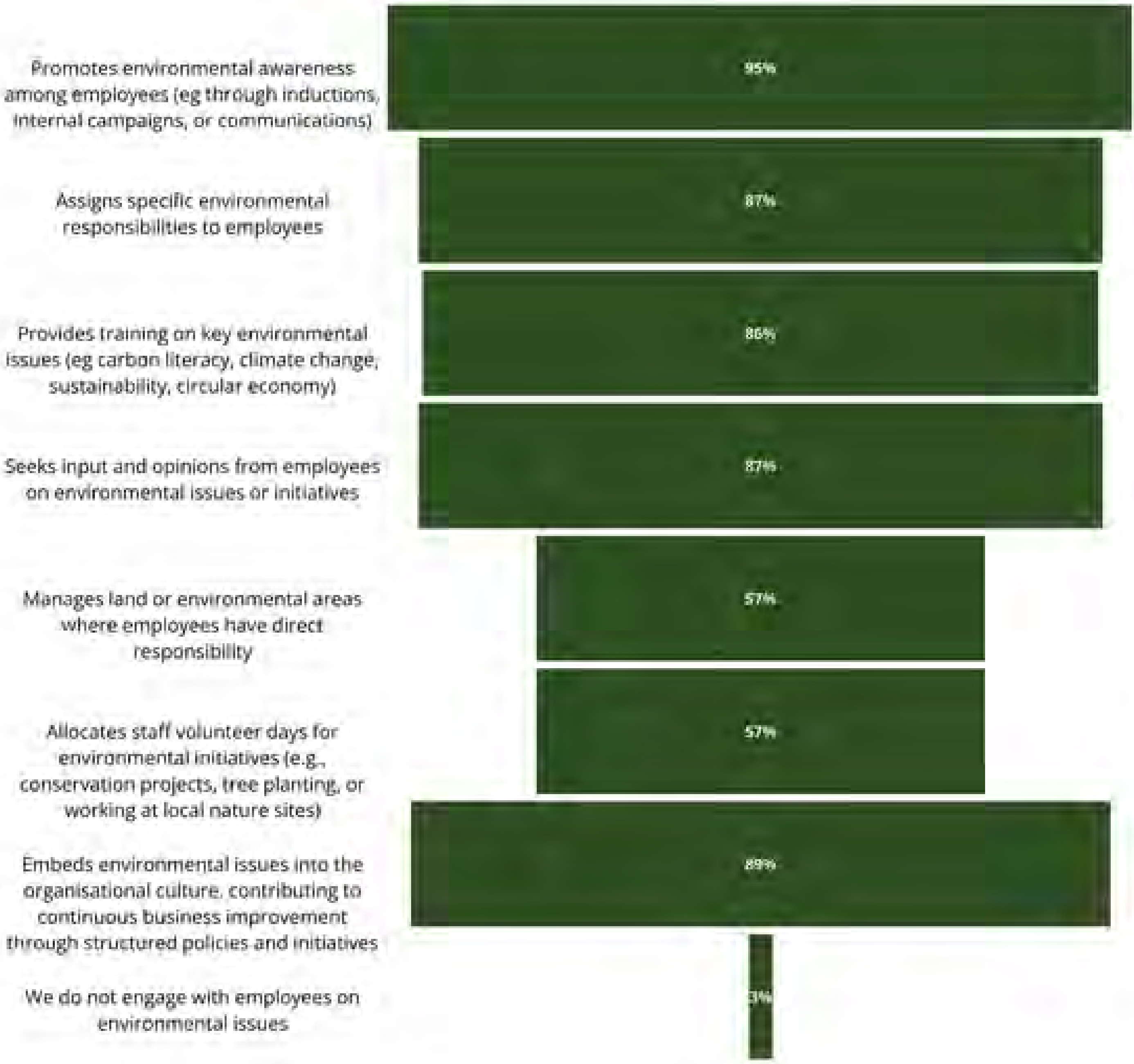


INSIGHTS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Employee Engagement

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANISATION ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYEES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

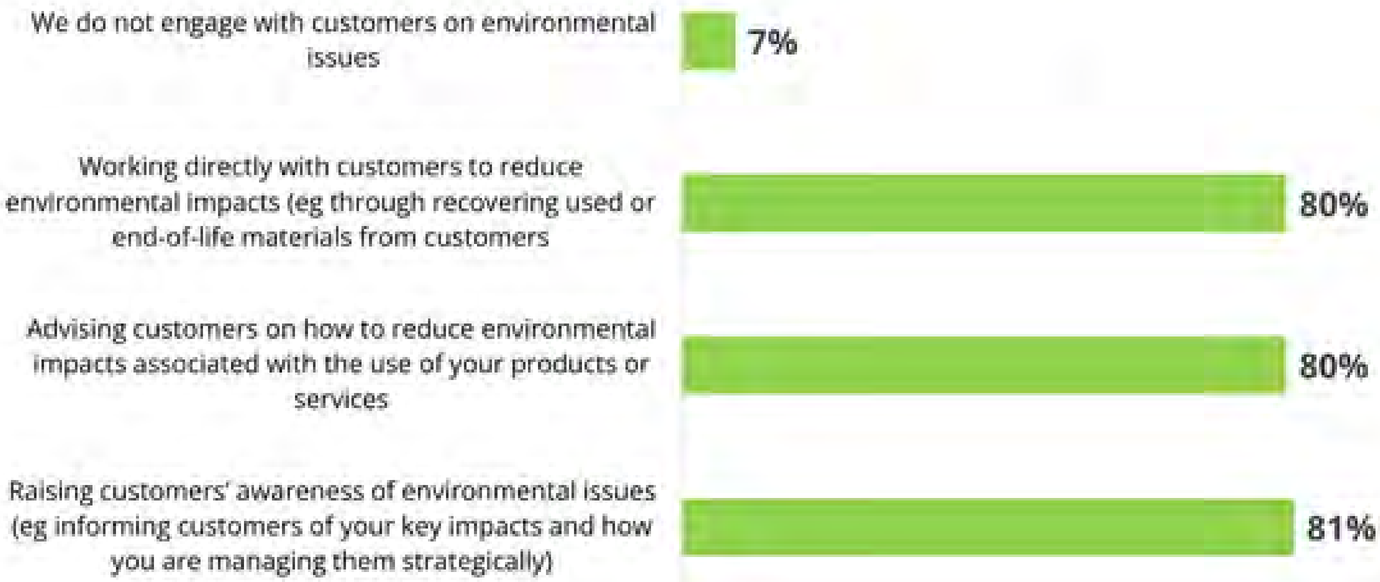


INSIGHTS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

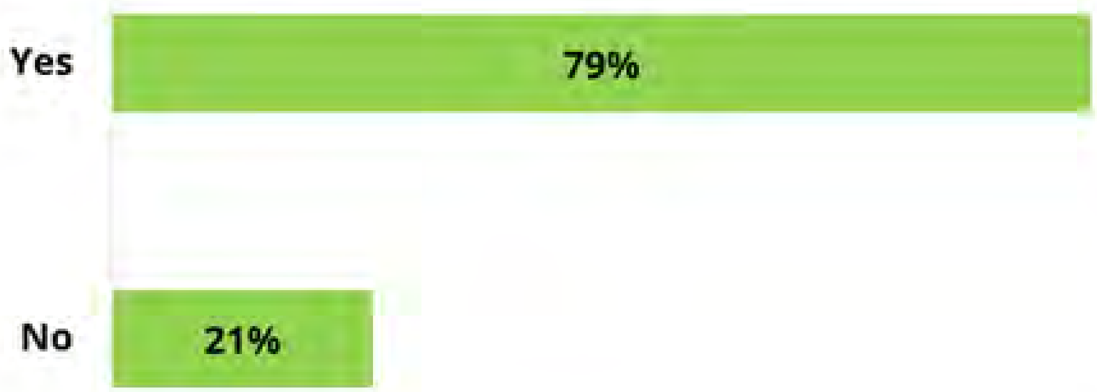
Customer Engagement

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANISATION ENGAGE WITH CUSTOMERS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?



Supplier Engagement

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A PROCUREMENT POLICY THAT EXPLICITLY INCLUDES ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA (OR AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ADDRESSING SUPPLY CHAIN SUSTAINABILITY), AIMED AT REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM THE SUPPLY CHAIN? THIS POLICY MUST BE APPROVED BY THE BOARD/ SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND REVIEWED AT LEAST ANNUALLY.

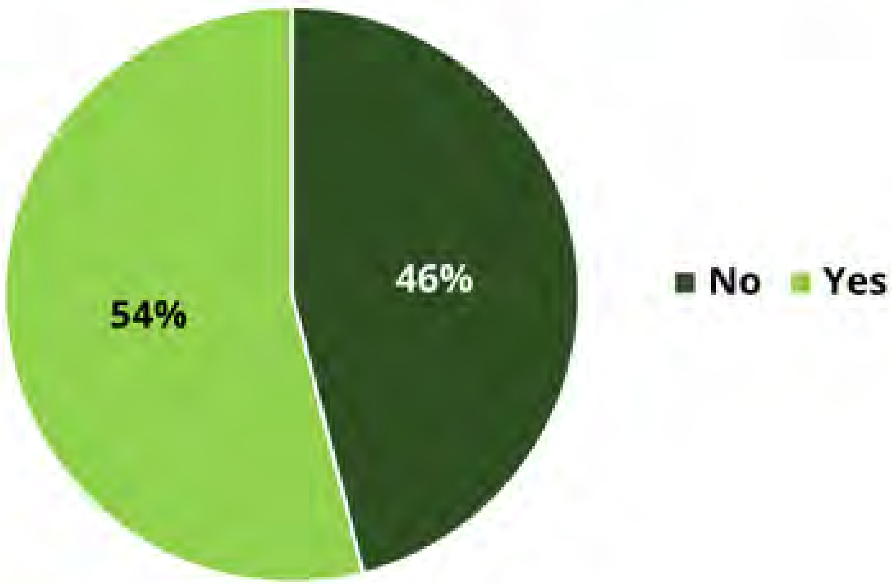


INSIGHTS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Supplier Engagement

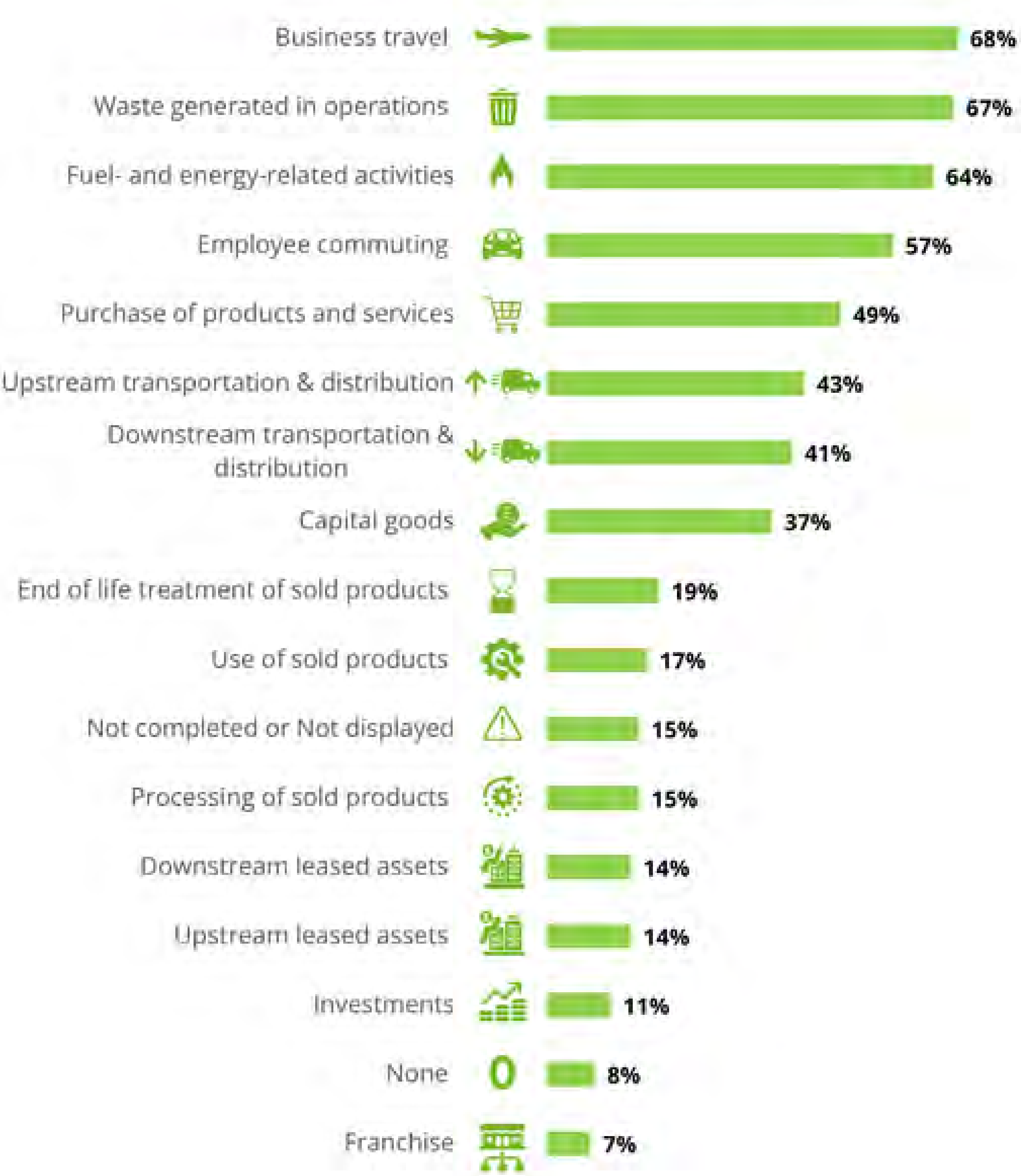
DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE REGULAR ENVIRONMENTAL AUDITS OF PRIORITISED SUPPLIERS, CONDUCTED INDEPENDENTLY OR SHARED WITH OTHERS?



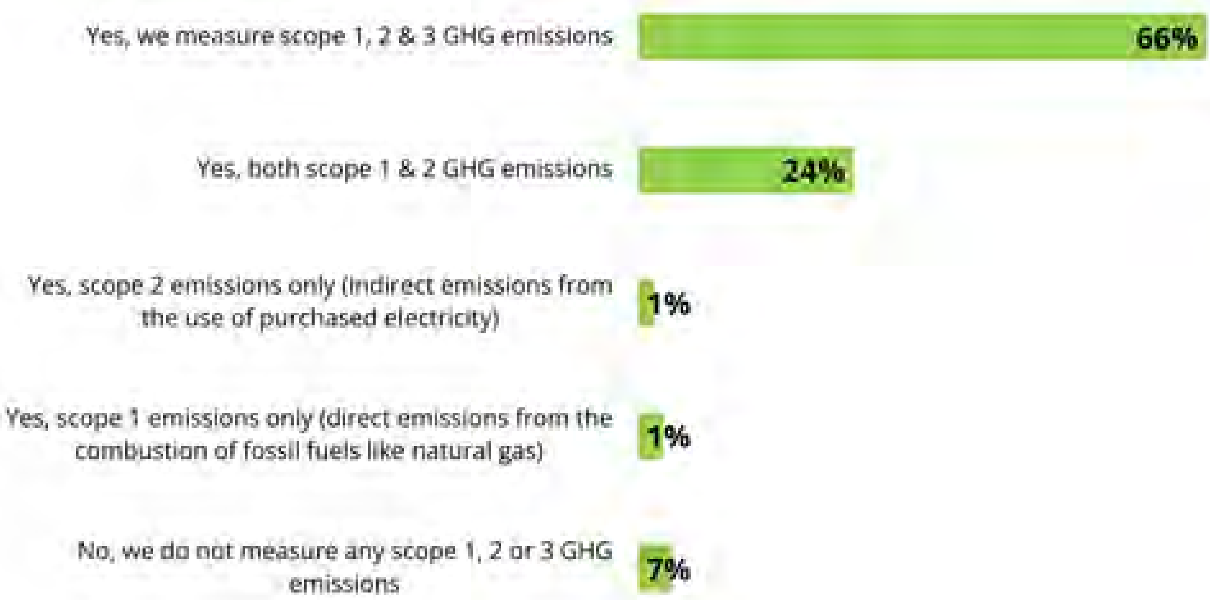
INSIGHTS

GHG EMISSIONS MEASURING AND REPORTING

WHAT SCOPE 3 GHG EMISSIONS DATA DO YOU COLLECT?



MEASURING AND REPORTING ON GREENHOUSE GASES (GHG)

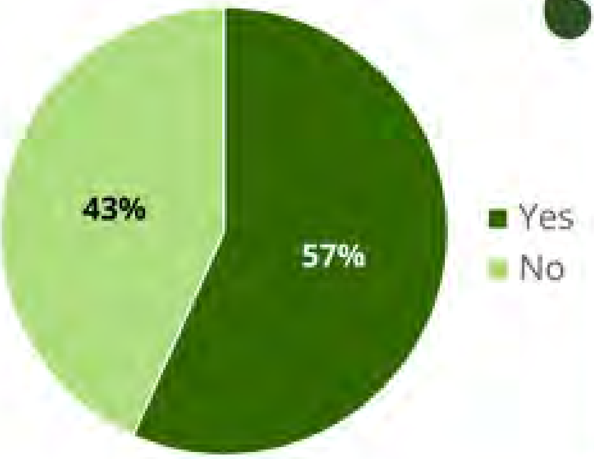


DO YOU PUBLICLY REPORT ON YOUR GHG EMISSIONS?

INSIGHTS

SCOPE 3 MEASURING AND REPORTING

DO YOU HAVE TARGETS TO REDUCE SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS?



Participants reported:

"We have set annual targets to reduce annual business miles by 5% over 2025/26."

"We're aiming to reduce scope 3 emissions by 27.5% by 2030 (SBTI verified) and by 90% by 2045 (net zero by 2045)."

"We are actively involving our supply chain in emission reduction efforts and striving for a 100% reduction in our scope 3 net emissions by at least 2050, measured from the base year."

CLIMATE RISK

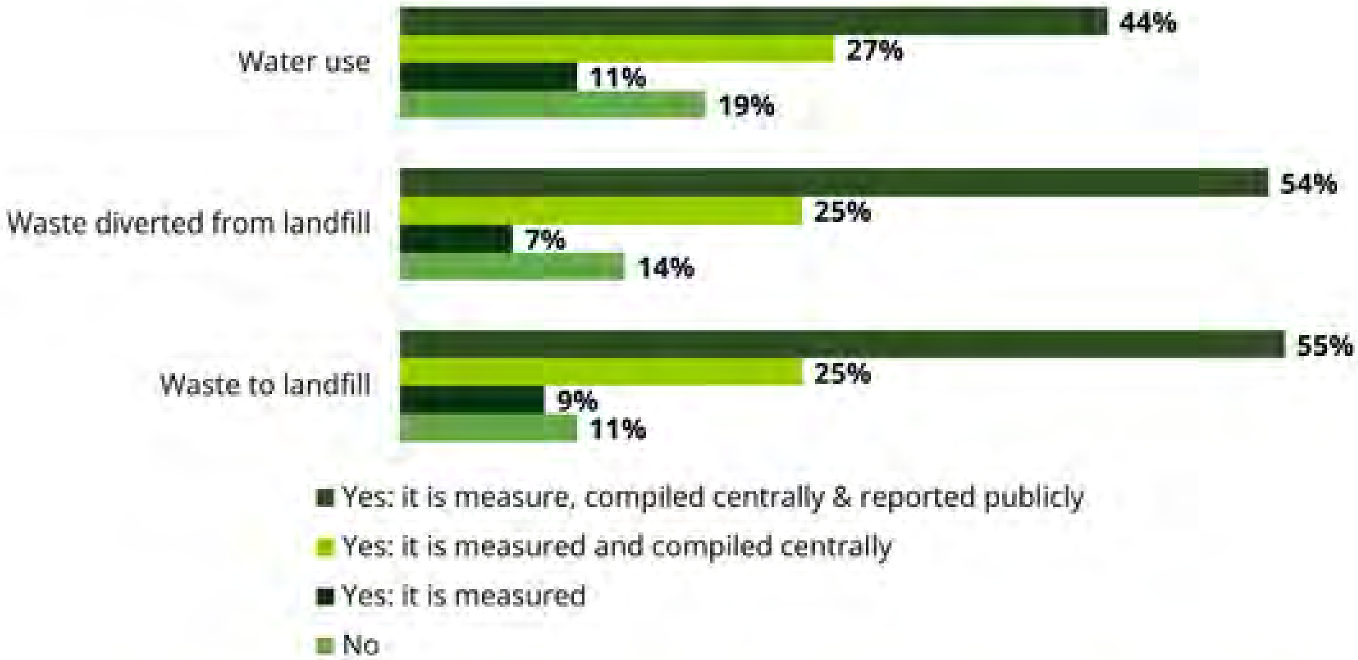
HAVE YOU IDENTIFIED THE POTENTIAL DIRECT AND INDIRECT RISKS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

INSIGHTS

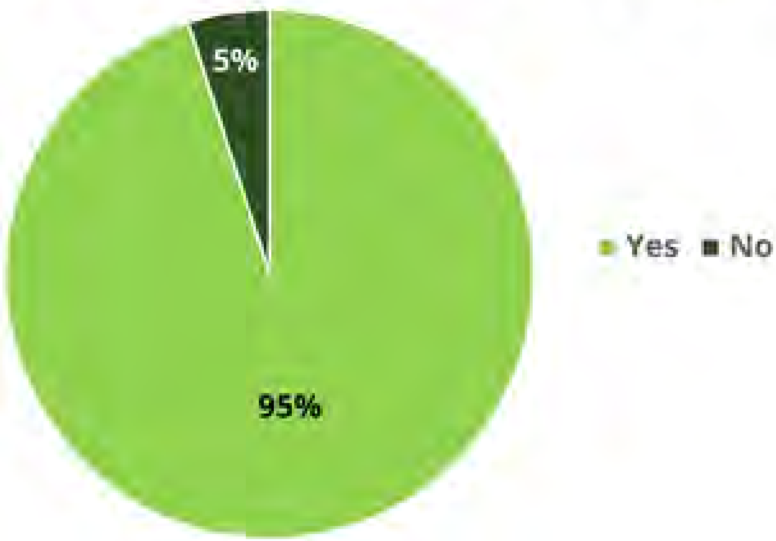
RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Waste and Water

DO YOU MEASURE AND MONITOR YOUR CONSUMPTION/USAGE ACROSS THE FOLLOWING IMPACT AREAS?



IS YOUR ORGANISATION CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING ANY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS TO REDUCE WASTE PRODUCTION? (EG THROUGH PREVENTION, REUSE, REPAIR, RECYCLING, DIVERTING WASTE FROM LANDFILL)?



Examples of waste reduction projects:

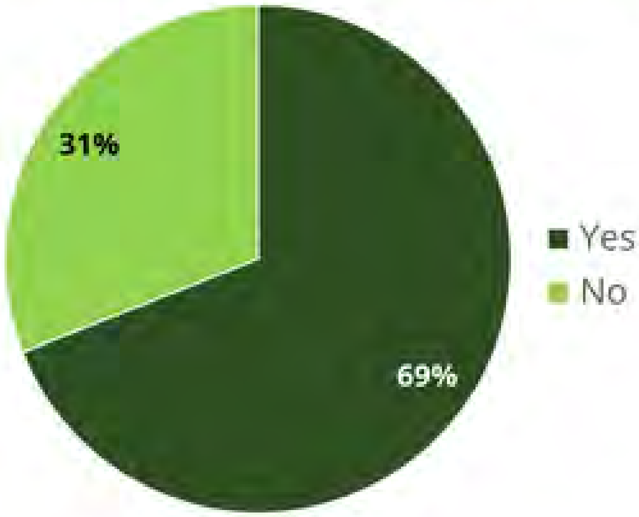
- Preventing items of furniture going to land fill by repairing and reusing and donating items in lost property to charity
- Working with suppliers to operate 'take back' schemes on excessive and damaged material or packaging
- Reviewing the use of raw material efficiency on a weekly basis and allocating corrective actions where needed

INSIGHTS

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Waste and Water

IS YOUR ORGANISATION CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING ANY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS TO REDUCE WATER CONSUMPTION?



Examples of water reduction projects:

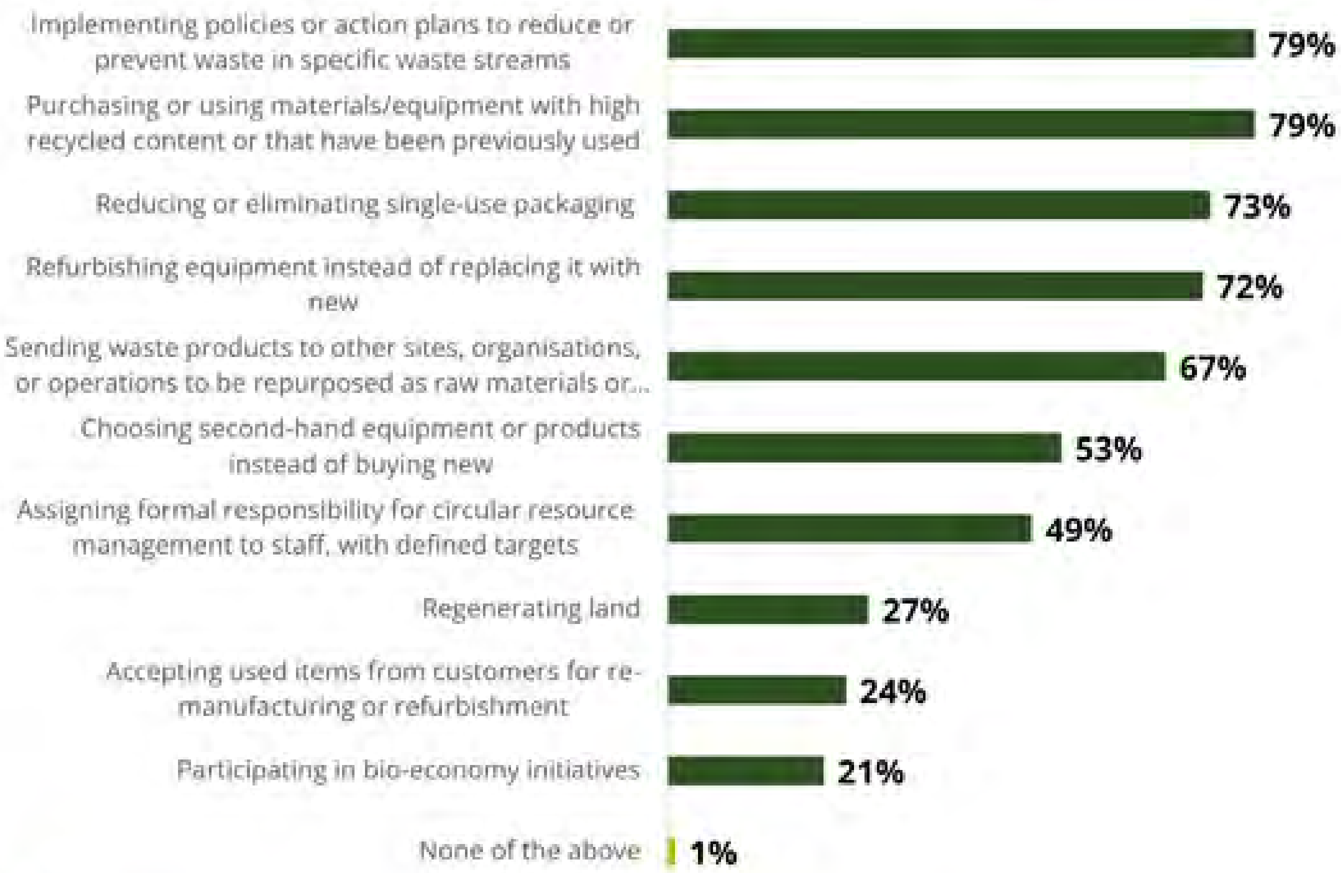
- Conversion to smart water metering for real time visibility of consumption and automatic targeting/alerts etc
- Aerated taps fitted to reduce water use when washing dishes etc, and dual flush toilets to reduce water waste
- Rain water storage tanks for site water use
- Installation of waterless urinals in the office block

INSIGHTS

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Circular Economy

HOW IS YOUR ORGANISATION REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF ITS PRODUCTS OR SERVICES?



Participants reported:

"We implement targeted policies and action plans to reduce and prevent waste across key waste streams. This includes regular waste audits, lean manufacturing practices, and investment in process improvements to minimise scrap and off-spec materials."

"We have an agreement with a local coffee shop to take some of their ground coffee beans for our well being garden."

"We have ensured that our employees have access to kitchen utensils, reusable mugs, glasses etc. to eliminate single use plastics within our offices."

"We buy second hand computers for certain areas within the business and also we purchase second hand mobile phones/ipads for our teams."

INSIGHTS

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE
BASELINE YEAR V CURRENT YEAR

65%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE A REDUCTION IN GHG EMISSIONS

49%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE A REDUCTION IN WASTE GENERATED

45%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE A REDUCTION IN WATER USAGE

70%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE AN IMPROVEMENT IN WASTE DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL

56%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR ADDITIONAL IMPACT AREA

21%
OF RESPONDENTS CAN DEMONSTRATE AN IMPROVEMENT ACROSS ALL IMPACT AREAS

Business in the Community stands for responsible business. Set up in Northern Ireland in 1989, we now have over 270+ members and are the largest business-led coalition dedicated to corporate responsibility.

www.bitcni.org.uk
E: environment@bitcni.org.uk

BELFAST
Bridge House
Paulett Avenue
Belfast, BT5 4HD
T (028) 9046 0606
E: info@bitcni.org.uk

NORTH WEST OFFICE
BEAM Centre
INVISTA House
Third Street, Maydown
Derry/Londonderry
BT47 6TH
E: info@bitcni.org.uk

Registered Details
137 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7RQ.
Registered Charity No: 297716. Company Limited by Guarantee No: 1619253

2025 Northern Ireland environmental BENCHMARKING survey

GAP ANALYSIS

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Gap Analysis Report Overview

The Survey

Since 1998, the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey (NIEBS) has pushed the environmental agenda to the fore, assessing the extent to which environmental business practices have been embedded within the corporate strategies and operations of local organisations.

To download the 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey Results Report, click here.

This Report

This NIEBS Gap Analysis Report presents the results of your organisation's participation in the 2025 Survey and provides information feedback on its score in each section, enabling you to identify areas where action can be taken to improve your environmental impacts and increase your score in subsequent Surveys.

Several changes were introduced to both scored and unscored Survey questions this year to continue driving improvement among participants. These included enhancements to existing multiple-choice questions, adding response options that challenge participants to demonstrate higher levels of action, as well as new questions within the Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy section.

A total of 150 organisations participated in the 2025 Survey. The average score was 77%, which equates to the silver band.

Results Overview

This table summarises your organisation's performance across each section of the Survey.

	Corporate Strategy	Environmental Management	Environmental Performance & Improvement	Overall Score	Bonus *(Bring a Business initiative)*	Banding
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	18%	10%	60%	88%	0%	Gold
Marks available	18%	10%	72%	100%	3%	

In the 2025 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey, you placed 3rd in your sector.

SECTION 1: CORPORATE STRATEGY

1. STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING

Has your organisation integrated environmental issues into its commercial decision-making and business-planning process?
Yes, for operational decisions (eg waste management, procurement) for long-term strategic decisions (eg Research & Development, market opportunities) AND our organisation delivers training on climate related issues to employees involved in strategic and financial decision making

Full marks achieved

2. LEADERSHIP

2a. Leadership Responsibilities

At what level of seniority have you allocated specific responsibility for the environment?
A board member or other top-level manager has specific responsibility for environment

Full marks achieved

2b. Board-Level Discussion

Are environmental reports provided regularly for discussion at senior level (eg, senior management team/board level)?
Yes, at least quarterly

Full marks achieved.

2c. Public Reporting

Apart from taking part in the NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey, does your organisation publicly report its environmental impacts and performance, e.g., via your website or via publications, such as environmental or sustainability reports?
Yes, we publish our strategy, details of key initiatives AND our objectives, detailing progress against quantified targets AND we report in line with The Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures; Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting; Carbon Disclosure Project; or Global Reporting Initiative or a similar framework.

Full marks achieved

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3a. Employee Engagement

What does your organisation do to engage with employees?

Promotes environmental awareness amongst employees (e.g. through inductions and internal campaigns)	Yes
Assigns specific environmental responsibilities to employees	Yes
Provides relevant training on key environmental issues (e.g. recycling)	Yes
Seeks input and opinions from employees on environmental issues or initiatives	Yes
Manages land or environmental areas where employees have direct responsibility	Yes
Allocates staff volunteer days for environmental initiatives (e.g., conservation projects, tree planting, or working at local nature sites)	Yes
Embeds environmental issues into the organisational culture, contributing to continuous business improvement through structured policies and initiatives	Yes
We don't engage with employees on environmental issues	Not Answered

Full marks achieved.

3b. Customer Engagement

How does your organisation engage with customers?

Raising customers' awareness of environmental issues (e.g., informing customers of your key impacts and how you are managing them strategically)	Yes
Advising customers on how to reduce environmental impacts associated with use of your products or services	Yes
Working directly with customers to reduce environmental impacts (eg through recovering used or end of life materials from customers	Yes
We don't engage with customers on environmental issues	N/A

Full marks achieved.

3c. Supplier Engagement

Does your organisation have any of the following in place?

Does your organisation have a procurement policy that . . . specifically includes environmental criteria (or an environment policy that specifically covers supply-chain issues) is approved by the board/senior management is reviewed at least annually	Yes
Does your organisation have a procurement policy that meets the previous criteria and is in the public domain?	Yes
Does your organisation have a risk/opportunity assessment process to prioritise key suppliers/contractors, or the products/services procured, based on environmental criteria	Yes
Does your organisation have a requirement for prioritised suppliers/contractors to provide information on how they manage their environmental impacts (eg provision of environmental policies and reports, completion of a supplier survey, etc)	Yes
Does your organisation have a procurement decision-making process that incorporates a weighting for environmental factors?	Yes
Does your organisation have regular environmental audits of prioritised suppliers, whether conducted independently or shared with others?	Yes
Ongoing and meaningful support for prioritised suppliers/contractors to improve their environmental performance (e.g., partnering to eliminate waste, optimise resources, reduce GHG emissions).	Yes
A strategy or process to assess and improve supplier resilience to environmental risks, such as severe weather events, natural disasters, or international market shocks	Yes

Full marks achieved.

3d. Regulator Engagement

Does your organisation engage with regulatory bodies on environmental issues?
Yes, we engage in response to requests AND we engage proactively (eg to develop best practice, to go beyond compliance, etc).

Full marks achieved.

SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

4. EMS

Does your organisation have an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place?

We have an EMS in place, which has been externally certified to ISO 14001 (or EMAS, BS8555 or equivalent standard – please specify)

By having a certified Environmental Management System you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

5. Policy

Does your organisation have a formal environmental policy?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

6. Issues

How does your organisation determine its environmental issues?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

7. Register

Does your organisation have a formal register of relevant environmental legislation?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

8. Legislation

Does your organisation have a formal system to identify emerging legislation that affects your business?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

9. Objectives

Does your organisation have environmental objectives?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

10. Targets

Has your organisation set environmental targets that relate to the objectives covered in question 9?
Not Answered

By having a certified Environmental Management System, you have automatically received full marks for Section 2: Environmental Management.

SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

11. Climate Emergency

11a. Measuring and reporting

Do you measure your Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions?	
No, we do not measure scope 1, 2 or 3 GHG emissions	No
Yes, scope 1 emissions only (direct emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels like natural gas)	No
Yes, scope 2 emissions only (indirect emissions from the use of purchased electricity)	No
Yes, both scope 1 & 2 GHG emissions	No
Yes, we measure scope 1, 2 & 3 GHG emissions	Yes

Full marks achieved.

Do you publicly report on your GHG emissions?	
No, we do not publicly report	No
Yes, we publicly report on scope 1 OR 2 GHG emissions	No
Yes, we publicly report on both scope 1 AND 2 GHG emissions	No
Yes, we publicly report on scope 1, 2 and 3 GHG emissions	Yes

Full marks achieved.

Has your organisation aligned GHG reporting with reputable external initiatives?

No	No
Currently working towards alignment with external initiatives	No
Yes, (eg BITC's Climate Action Pledge, Race to Zero, Science-Based Targets Initiative, TCFD)	Yes

Full marks achieved.

11b. Scope and boundaries

What GHG emissions data do you collect?

Purchase of products and services (scope 3)	N/A
Capital goods (scope 3)	N/A
Fuel- and energy-related activities (scope 3)	N/A
Upstream transportation & distribution (scope 3)	N/A
Downstream transportation & distribution (scope 3)	N/A
Waste generated in operations (scope 3)	Yes
Business travel (scope 3)	Yes
Employee commuting (scope 3)	Yes
Upstream leased assets (scope 3)	N/A
Downstream leased assets (scope 3)	N/A
Processing of sold products (scope 3)	N/A
Use of sold products (scope 3)	N/A
End of life treatment of sold products (scope 3)	N/A
Franchises (scope 3)	N/A
Investments (scope 3)	N/A
None	N/A

To achieve further points in this question, collect data on at least five of the scope 3 areas.

Do you have targets to reduce Scope 3 emissions?

Yes

Full marks achieved.

11c. Data quality

Describe the quality of GHG data you collect
All verifiable data which has been independently reviewed and checked

Full marks achieved.

11d. Taking action

Does your organisation have any current GHG emission reduction projects underway?
Yes

Full marks achieved.

11e. Renewable energy

Does your organisation use renewable energy?
Please indicate what percentage of your overall energy consumption is provided by this source
>95%

Full marks achieved.

11f. Climate risks

Have you identified the potential risks from climate change for your organisation?
Yes, we have quantified the risk and have developed a risk mitigation plan that has been approved at a senior level and has been implemented

Full marks achieved.

If you answered yes to the above, are these climate-related risks on your organisation's risk register?
Yes

Full marks achieved.

12. Circular Economy and Resource Use

12a. Measuring and reporting

Do you measure and monitor your consumption/usage across the following impact areas:.

Waste to landfill	Yes: it's measured, compiled centrally & reported publicly	*Full marks achieved.*
Waste diverted from landfill	Yes: it's measured, compiled centrally & reported publicly	*Full marks achieved.*
Water use	Yes: it's measured, compiled centrally & reported publicly	*Full marks achieved.*

12b. Scope and boundaries

How much of your business operations in Northern Ireland does your performance data cover?

Waste to landfill	>75%	*Full marks achieved.*
Waste diverted from landfill	>75%	*Full marks achieved.*
Water use	>75%	*Full marks achieved.*

12c. Data quality

Describe the quality of environmental data you collect.

Waste to landfill	All verifiable data, which has been independently reviewed and checked	*Full marks achieved.*
Waste diverted from landfill	All verifiable data, which has been independently reviewed and checked	*Full marks achieved.*
Water use	All verifiable data, which has been independently reviewed and checked	*Full marks achieved.*

12d. Taking action

Is your organisation currently undertaking any improvement projects to reduce waste production? (e.g. through prevention, reuse, and recycling, diverting waste from landfill)

No	
Yes	*Full marks achieved.*

Is your organisation currently undertaking any improvement projects to reduce water consumption?

No	
Yes	*Full marks achieved.*

Do you separate your recyclable waste? (e.g., glass, cardboard, paper, plastics, tins, food, etc.)? (unscored)

No	
Yes	*Separating recyclable waste is a positive step that supports responsible waste management and reduces the amount of waste sent to landfill. This practice contributes to improved recycling rates and demonstrates commitment to environmental responsibility. Maintaining and regularly reviewing separation practices can help ensure continued effectiveness.*

12e. Recycling

What proportion of your waste generated is recycled? (Waste recycled does not include waste that is incinerated and/or sent for energy recovery)

50-74%

You're recycling 50-74% of your waste, which shows that you are measuring and recycling a very good proportion of your waste. To achieve a higher score for this question, consider ways to increase this amount. You could do this by working with your waste contractor to assess options for diverting more waste to recycling, working with colleagues to more effectively segregate waste streams, or work with your suppliers to encourage them to provide you with more recyclable packaging and materials.

12e. Recycling (continued)

What are the current barriers to increasing your recycling rate?

Recycling infrastructure or vendors are not widely available at our sites	Yes
A significant proportion of the materials in our waste streams are not currently recyclable (e.g. composite materials, contaminated materials or hazardous waste)	Yes
Challenges with training our people to recycle	N/A
Increased costs of recycling	N/A
Lack of understanding of recyclability and availability	N/A
Challenges with separating waste streams (e.g. lack of space, or complex processes required to separate)	N/A

12f. Circular economy

How is your organisation addressing the environmental impacts of its products or services?

Select all that apply.

Purchasing or producing materials/equipment that have a high recycled content, and/or have been previously used	Yes
Purchasing previously used equipment or products rather than buying new	Yes
Reducing or eliminating single-use packaging	Yes
Sending waste products to other sites, organisations, or operations to be used as a raw material or input for other products or processes (NB: this does not include recycling or sending waste for incineration), for example, industrial symbiosis/resourcing matching	Yes
Refurbishing equipment instead of replacing with new	Yes
Policies or action plans in place to reduce or prevent waste from specific waste streams	Yes
Responsibility for circular resources is formally assigned to member(s) of staff along with generic targets	Yes
None of the above	N/A

Full marks achieved.

13. Additional Impact

13. Additional Impact

Please select your additional impact area from the list below. (Please select one)

Biodiversity initiatives

13a. Measuring and reporting

Do you measure and monitor your consumption/usage across this impact area?

No	
Yes: measured	
Yes: measured and compiled centrally	
Yes: measured, compiled centrally, and reported publicly	**Full marks achieved.**

13b. Scope and boundaries

How much of your business operations in Northern Ireland does your performance data for this impact area cover?

0%	
1–25%	
26–50%	**Collecting environmental data helps your organisation monitor and improve performance, and identify problem areas and opportunities. Increasing the percentage of operations covered by your data will improve your score and provide a more accurate picture of overall performance. Ensuring data collection covers as much of the organisation as possible is essential for effective monitoring and decision-making.**
51–75%	
>75%	

13c. Data quality

Describe the quality of environmental data you collect for this impact area:

Mainly estimates	
Based on a combination of estimates and verifiable data (approx. 50:50%)	
Mostly based on verifiable data (accounting for >75% of the total)	
All verifiable data, which has been independently reviewed and checked	**Full marks achieved.**
No data collected	

13d. Taking action

Does your organisation have a current environmental improvement project underway that addresses this impact area?

Yes

Full marks achieved.

14. Nature and Biodiversity

14a. Strategic Planning & Objectives

Has your organisation included Nature and Biodiversity in your its strategic planning and policies?

Nature and Biodiversity is not included within our organisations planning and policies	*No*
Nature and Biodiversity is mentioned within policies which are available to staff	*No*
We have a separate Nature and Biodiversity policy within our organisation which is available to all staff	*Yes*
We have a strategic plan, supported by relevant policies and a budget in place, and staff are informed/trained on Nature and Biodiversity	*No*

Continuous reviewing and updating of your Nature and Biodiversity Policy should be carried out to keep the policy relevant, along with highlighting the importance of Nature and Biodiversity within your organisations strategic plan. Consider conducting staff training/awareness on Nature and Biodiversity, and the introduction of a budget allocation for this. This ensures resilience against *environmental risks, enhances reputation, fosters innovation, generates cost savings, and preserves ecosystem services crucial for human wellbeing. Actions that promote Nature and Biodiversity align with ethical values, regulatory compliance and future-proofing strategies, securing a sustainable future for both your business and the planet.*

14b. Activities and Engagements

Has your organisation taken any actions to identify/reduce its impact on Nature and Biodiversity within the organisation and/or across its value chain (suppliers and consumers)?

No	*No*
Not yet, but it is in our plans	*No*
Yes, we have identified impacts but not taken any actions yet	*No*
Yes, we have identified the impacts and have taken steps within our organisation to reduce the impacts	*No*
Yes, we have identified the impacts and have taken steps within our organisation and across our value chain to reduce impacts	*Yes*

Full marks achieved.

14c. Measuring and Reporting

Does your organisation measure and report on Nature and Biodiversity?

No, no measuring or reporting on Nature and Biodiversity is currently carried out in our organisation	*No*
Informal measuring or reporting on Nature and Biodiversity is currently carried out internally in our organisation	*No*
Formalised measuring and reporting on Nature and Biodiversity is currently carried out internally and/or externally	*Yes*
Our organisation measures and reports publicly on Nature and Biodiversity in line with external initiatives (e.g. BITC's Business and Biodiversity Charter, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, TNFD, GRI Biodiversity Standard)	*No*

Consider measuring and reporting on Nature and Biodiversity, in line with external initiatives (e.g. BITC's Business and Biodiversity Charter, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, TNFD, GRI Biodiversity Standard)

BITC's Business and Biodiversity Charter offers assistance, guidance, and recognition to organisations that adhere to the following principles:
-Providing a framework for organisations of all sizes to address their impact on biodiversity, not only in terms of land-holding management but also in relation to their activities, products and services
-Providing a mechanism for third-party recognition of an organisations' biodiversity management
-Giving employees the capacity to undertake biodiversity-related actions at home and in their communities, outside of work
-Enabling employees to gain the health and wellbeing benefits associated with green space/biodiversity activities
-Foster links between environmental organisations, business and the community

15. Environmental performance and improvement

Can you demonstrate performance improvement in each of the impact areas?

Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions	*As GHG emissions have decreased by more than 10% since the baseline year, full marks have been awarded for this question.*
Waste generated	*As your organisation was unable to demonstrate a reduction in waste generated of more than 2.5% compared to the baseline year, no marks have been awarded for this question.*
% waste diverted from landfill	*You provided evidence of ≥50% to <75% waste diverted from landfill. Further waste diversion will lead to more marks, with 95% or more receiving full marks.*
Water	*As your organisation was unable to demonstrate a reduction in water usage of more than 2.5% compared to the baseline year, no marks have been awarded for this question.*
Additional impact	*As your chosen additional impact area has improved by more than 10% since the baseline year, full marks have been awarded for this question.*

Please provide Unit values across the following headings e.g. kWh, miles travelled per employee, waste tonnage per product, water consumption per unit produced.

GHG Emissions	tCO2e
Waste generated	tonnes
% waste diverted from landfill	%
Water	m3
Additional impact	Ha

Have you provided Absolute data?

GHG Emissions	Yes
Waste generated	Yes
% waste diverted from landfill	Yes
Water	Yes
Additional impact	Yes

16. Assurance

This question requires you to provide assurance that management processes are in place within your organisation. This ensures that environmental information provided is accurate and of an acceptable quality. We also ask that any information supplied be reviewed and 'signed-off' by a senior manager within the organisation.

Do you have a management process to provide you with assurance that your environmental information is accurate, relevant, and reliable?
Yes, our organisation has established clear reporting requirements and has systems in place. This has been reviewed and approved by a person with appropriate authority.

Full marks achieved.

17. Leadership – Advocating commitment

Have you successfully encouraged other organisations to take part in the 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey (ie taking part in the 'Bring a Business' initiative), with at least one having taken part in the 2025 Survey for the first time?
No

Consider encouraging and supporting one of your key suppliers or contractors to take part in the 2026 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey to help them get started on their environmental improvement journey.

Contact Details

For more information, please contact:
The Environment Team
Bridge House, Paulett Avenue
Belfast, BT5 4HD
Email: environment@bitcni.org.uk
Website: www.bitcni.org.uk

ENJOYED THIS CONTENT?

You might also like to:

- find out more about our [illegible]
- explore our helpful [illegible], to help you make further progress on your climate action journey.
- [illegible]

[illegible] to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further and to drive lasting global change.

2025 Northern Ireland environmental BENCHMARKING survey

SPONSORED BY

Coca-Cola HBC Ireland & Northern Ireland

CONGRATULATIONS

Your organisation has achieved Gold Level in the 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey.

The Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey and Small Business Survey benchmark organisations against sector peers and leading Northern Ireland organisations based on environmental management and performance in key areas, as well as the extent to which environmental business practices have been embedded within corporate strategies. Both versions of the Survey are recognised as positive influencers and help organisations to publicly demonstrate their commitment to better environmental practice.

Your participation in the Survey is something for your organisation to be proud of, and so, we hope that you will use the images and copy contained in this pack to bring attention to your Gold Level achievement. In this Comms Pack, we have included some resources to help you to share the news with your stakeholders and inspire others to get involved in the Survey in the future.

Thank you.

COMMUNICATIONS PACK

KEY MESSAGES

- Your organisation is proud to have achieved Gold Level in the 2025 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey.
- Download the 2025 Survey Report from www.bitcni.org.uk/niebs
- Participating in the Survey demonstrates your organisation's commitment to improving its environmental impact and performance.
- Business has an important part to play in ensuring that we can achieve a sustainable future.

COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

Please click on the links below to access the templates and resources

- PNG Recognition Mark to be used on website and email signatures
- Social media assets to share on your channels
- Case study template, to share your environment-related case studies with us. These will be added to the Business in the Community website. Please use the template provided here, or send your press releases to environment@bitcni.org.uk
- Personalised certificates – these will be sent via email to your organisation's Survey contact
- Draft copy for social media – see below
- Template press release

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSET

- A version of the below has been sized for Linked In, X, Facebook and Instagram

Example copy for X, please feel free to amend this for your own communications channels. You may wish to also take and share a photograph of your 2025 NIEBS trophy or certificate.

"[Your organisation] is proud to have achieved Gold Level in the 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey and is committed to improving its environmental impacts. Find out more and download the report at www.bitcni.org.uk/niebs #NIGreenBusiness"

RECOGNITION MARK

Please feel free to use this recognition mark on your website and email signature.

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2025

Gold

Back to Agenda

TENDERING PROCESS

Consider including information about your Survey achievement in calls for and responses to tenders.

- **Call for tenders example:** [Your organisation] is proud to have achieved Gold Level in the Business in the Community NI 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey and is committed to improving its environmental impacts. Please demonstrate how, as a supplier, you will help us to continue and/or improve our work to achieve a sustainable future. Find out more at www.bitcni.org.uk/niebs.

- **Response to tenders example:** [Your organisation] is proud to have achieved Gold Level in the Business in the Community 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey and is committed to improving its environmental impacts. As a supplier, we can help you to meet your own environmental targets. Find out more at www.bitcni.org.uk/niebs

ACCOUNTS AND HASHTAGS

Please tag Business in the Community NI where possible.

X	Facebook	LinkedIn	Hashtags
@BITCNI	@BusinessintheCommunityNI	@Business-in-the-Community-northern-ireland	#NIGreenBusiness

ABOUT BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Business in the Community is the network for responsible business. A registered charity and membership organisation, we exist to support and challenge business to be a force for good in society. We have a presence in all parts of the UK and a sister organisation in the Republic of Ireland.

We are led by business and in Northern Ireland our 270+ members employ more than 40% of the working population.

Our network is comprised of companies of all sizes and from all sectors and our ability to convene business is one of our greatest strengths. We use that power to encourage collaboration to tackle key societal and environmental issues.

Thank you for being part of our network.

A free Gap Analysis Report, to help you identify areas of improvement for the 2026 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey, will be sent. If you have any questions, please email environment@bitcni.org.uk.

Meeting Date: 3 December 2025 - Via Microsoft Teams

Climate Change Sub-Committee

Attendees: Ald A Wilson (Chair) (AW), Cllr B Thompson (BT), Ald R Logan (RL), Cllr R Glover (RG), Cllr R Beggs (RB), Matthew McCallion (MMcC), Luke Irwon (LI), Anne Hardy (AH), Joseph Jordan (JJ), Catherine Hunter (CH), Chris Allen (Translink) (CA).

Apologies: Ald W McCaughey, Cllr G McKeen, Cllr J Gibson, Cllr M Collins, Shaun Morley, Lindsay Houston, Alison Penny, Shelley Whitbread.

Notes: Catherine Hunter

No	Action	By	Notes
1	**WELCOME & APOLOGIES**		
	Apologies: Ald W McCaughey, Cllr G McKeen, Cllr J Gibson, Cllr M Collins, Shaun Morley, Lindsay Houston, Alison Penny, Shelley Whitbread	CH	
2	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**		
	Ald Wilson noted he attends the All-Party Group on Climate Action through membership via his day job.	CH	
3	**INFORMATION & NOTING**		
3.1	**Climate Change Sub-Committee Meeting Notes** - 6 August 2025 - circulated - all agreed.	CH	
3.2	**Minutes of the All-Party Working Group (APG)** - 12 November 2025 - circulated - all agreed.	CH	
4	**KEY MATTERS ARISING**		
4.1	**Climate Mitigation: Translink (Case Study), Chris Allen, ESG Lead,** Translink - presentation circulated. Chris provided an overview of Translink's decarbonisation journey, to date, covering: • Scale of the challenge for Translink • Greenhouse gas emissions baseline from 2018/19 • Climate change adaptation and mitigation goals and strategies • Climate action as a business objective • Reporting progress • 2024/25 boundary and emissions inventory	CH	

No	Action	By	Notes
	Cllr Beggs asked for clarification on Translink's term 'Climate Positive'. Chris elaborated and including examples including tree planting - Translink have planted pockets of trees along their tracks with the Woodland Trust; he noted one particular site in Lisburn. Cllr Beggs asked if all Translink's trains and infrastructure will be electrified. Chris responded that they will be. He added that access to hydrogen as an alternate fuel source has its issues - currently there is 'brown' hydrogen available (expensive), but we'd need to move to 'green' hydrogen (from renewable sources). Translink also looked at options for traction power in their Fleet Strategy, but it was determined overhead electrical system is the only viable option for trains. Belfast-Bangor line - Translink are considering a bi-model (battery/electric) as this length of line is suitable. The line to e.g. Antrim wouldn't work, as its uphill. Ald Wilson - Tree planting is a positive development; however, he noted ringfencing funding has its challenges. The 3-year budget cycle may help financially. He queries the 87m passenger journeys in 2018/19 which is now down to 81m - why this decrease? Chris responded that since covid, many people continue to work at home. Ald Wilson - suggested it may be the next decade before we're back to 2018/19 level of passenger journeys. He queried the target is achieve 50% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 and identified this as a very big challenge. He asked whether Translink have any projections up to 2050? Chris responded that they haven't yet calculated projections up to 2050, but this is a task to complete. Ald Wilson - noted the cost implications with electrifying the train network. He asked in terms of carbon reporting if the Larne-Belfast line is a hot spot for emissions. Chris responded that buses are stationed as fuel stored in these areas. Ald Wilson - queried if there are plans to monitor air quality, particularly with buses now or in future? Chris responded Translink do not monitor air quality on the public road. Some is undertaken at the new Grand Central Station. Diesel buses are rapidly improving. Euro 4 engines are the oldest in their fleet, however they are upgrading. Using an enhanced vehicle management system means engines are cleaner in terms of NOx and Sox and particulate emissions. There will continue to be some emissions from braking systems, tyres etc. Translink have however contributed to Air Quality		

No	Action	By	Notes
	Management Plans with Belfast City Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. They could do similar with MEABC. He concluded buses are <1% of total traffic flow on roads. Ald Logan - noted that Ballylumford 2X project could solve the hydrogen availability issue - plans are to store hydrogen in two of the seven gas caverns in this area. Hydrogen created at the two power stations in the borough could be stored there. He added there is considerable ongoing opposition to the project. Chris responded that Translink would welcome the opportunity for more sustainable and economic hydrogen. It will become a focus in the future. Battery storage technology is not great due to charging restrictions. Hydrogen refuelling can be completed in 10 minutes. He concluded there may be improvements in the future. CH asked if Translink have considered using HVO low-carbon fuel in their buses. Chris responded that they completed an initial study on this. Conclusion was that they'd need all the current provision of HVO fuel in the whole of Ireland. Also, there are financial constraints. Electrification can be scaled.		
5	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**		
	n/a.	CH	
6	Proposed dates of next meetings		
	24 March 2026 @ 3pm via Microsoft Teams.	CH	

Meeting ended: 15:57

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment and Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**MEA Portglenone Community Toilet Scheme**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

1.1. This report is to inform Elected Members of a proposed new Community Toilet Scheme in Portglenone and to seek approval to deliver it over 2026 and 2027.

2. Background

2.1 Historically, Portglenone village had one Council-owned toilet block, located at 66 Main Street. Due to the poor structural integrity of the building (also not DDA compliant) and health and safety concerns Council closed these facilities in October 2025.

2.2. Council operates toilet facilities at Portglenone Marina, located approx. 400m off Main Street – these facilities are open seven days per week.

2.3. Council has been approached by a number of local residents to request ongoing provision of toilet facilities along Main Street in the village. Officers have worked to find an agreeable solution.

2.4. Upon research, it was noted that Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) have successfully run a Community Toilet Scheme over the past two years, allowing for Council-owned toilet facility closures and reducing costs. Discussions were held with DCSDC in December to understand the scheme and its deliverables.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. The Community Toilet Scheme will be a partnership between Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and a number of local businesses (est. 5 – 6 businesses) along Main Street in Portglenone village, which allows members of the public to use their toilet facilities for free during normal opening hours, without having to make a purchase.

3.2. The initiative ensures that clean, safe and easily accessible toilets are available to the public at no cost. Participating businesses will be paid an annual fee (proposed £500 p/annum) by Council, based on the facilities they have available.

3.3. Whilst businesses must make their toilet facilities available to members of the public, they retain the right to refuse entry to any person(s) who would normally be refused entry to the premises.

3.4. Businesses in the scheme are required to display a window sticker, provided by Council, indicating that they are participating in the scheme and the level of facilities available. Stickers will be colour-coded to indicate type of facility available i.e. male/female/wheelchair accessible/changing places. Businesses must also have Public Liability Insurance.

3.5. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been prepared (Appendix 1) which is a formal agreement between Council and the participating businesses. It outlines expectations, terms and conditions.

3.6. Initial scoping with businesses was undertaken in December 2025 to gauge interest – we had a positive response and would expect a good uptake, should the scheme be approved. A review of the scheme will be undertaken at the end of year one.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. ***Financial Implications*** – the new scheme will cost ~£3,000 per/annum, dependent on numbers engaged.

4.2. ***Human Resources*** – one officer will manage this scheme – once established, it is anticipated there will be minimum time required to manage.

4.3. ***Equality Screening*** – the scheme will ensure all members of the public have access to toilet facilities (male/female/wheelchair accessible and changing places (if available).

4.4. ***Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan*** – the scheme will meet objectives set out in our Corporate Plan ('People' pillar).

4.5. ***Reputation*** – this scheme demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing clean, safe and accessible services to the public.

4.6. ***Legal*** - Northern Ireland Councils are not legally obliged to provide public toilets; it's an optional service; however, we recognise there is a need

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

4.7. ***Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact*** – this scheme will ensure the public can access toilet facilities in what is a very rural setting. Participating businesses already have toilet provision, so there will be no additional environmental impact; the scheme is a very sustainable solution.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. It is proposed to Elected Members approve the delivery of the MEA Portglenone Community Toilet Scheme for 2026 and 2027.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended Elected Members approve the delivery of the MEA Portglenone Community Toilet Scheme for 2026 and 2027.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 Service Level Agreement – Council and Portglenone businesses.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME

An Agreement between Mid and East Antrim Borough Council ("The Council") and [insert business].

Terms and Conditions

1. [Insert business] agrees to become a participant in the Community Toilet Scheme ('the Scheme'), subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement.
2. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council will pay [insert business] an annual fee of [insert £amount] in respect of the use of its toilet facilities by members of the public within the terms of this agreement.
3. [Insert business] will invoice "The Council" for the said amount (plus VAT, if applicable) within 6 months of the date of the signing of this agreement and thereafter on an annual basis.
4. [Insert business] agrees to participate in the Scheme for an initial period of 12 months but, at any time within that 12-month period, either "The Council" or [insert business] may terminate this agreement by giving to the other no less than 1 month's written notice.
5. "The Council" will include the name and address and any other relevant details of [insert business] in any promotional material (including website, leaflets etc) produced by "The Council" relating to the Scheme. "The Council" will provide with relevant signage which [insert business] agrees to display in a prominent position at their premises throughout the period of its participation in the Scheme.
6. While participating in the Scheme, [insert business] shall allow members of the public, regardless of whether a customer or not, unrestricted access to their toilet facilities at their premises, as stated above, during its normal opening hours. Use of the toilet facilities will be free of charge.
7. Whilst [insert business] agrees that its toilet facilities will be available for use by all members of the public, it reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to refuse a member of the public admission to the premises and/or its toilet facilities if it reasonably believes that it is in its own or in the public's interest to do so.
8. [Insert business] shall maintain its toilet facilities in a clean and hygienic condition at all times, shall ensure that the toilet facilities are provided with an adequate supply of all necessary products/services (including handwashing and hand drying facilities etc), shall comply with all relevant health and safety and any other legislation pertaining to the use of the premises and its toilet facilities, and shall ensure that in all other ways the toilet facilities are safe and satisfactory for use by the general public. To ensure compliance with these requirements, [insert business] shall ensure that a programme of frequent and regular inspections of its toilet facilities is in operation.

9. A duly authorised Officer of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council shall have the right to carry out unannounced inspections of the toilet facilities during the normal opening hours of the premises. [Insert business] acknowledges, however, that "The Council" is under no obligation whatsoever to make any such inspection(s) and therefore [insert business] is solely responsible for ensuring that its toilet facilities meet the Scheme requirements, as set out in this agreement.
10. [Insert business] agrees that it is solely responsible for all matters concerning the safety and wellbeing of members of the public who visit the premises to make use of the toilet facilities under the Scheme, and shall ensure that under no circumstances will "The Council" be responsible for any damages or costs that might arise because of any claim being made by a member of the public using or attempting to use the toilet facilities at the premises.
11. Before the end of the initial 12-month period, "The Council" may write to seeking to renew this agreement for a further period of 12 months. In such event, this agreement shall continue for the said further period, unless [insert business] writes to "The Council" to withdraw from the Scheme.
12. Participation in the Scheme is personal to [insert business] whose rights under this agreement may not be assigned or otherwise transferred to any other person/organisation.
13. [Insert business] must have adequate Public Liability Insurance and a copy of a valid Insurance Certificate will be required.
14. On the termination of [insert business] participation in the Scheme (howsoever caused) they will immediately cease to display any Scheme signage and will make no further claim or representation that it is a participant in the Scheme. Following such termination, "The Council" will remove the name of [insert business], from any list of Scheme participants produced by it.
15. The Scheme will be subject to an overall review after its initial 12-month period.

On behalf of [insert business], I agree to the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme as set out above.

Signed .... On behalf of [insert business].

Date: ....

Signed .... On behalf of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Date : ....

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics Annual Report 2024/25**
Publication Status:	Open
Author: **Approver:**	Donna Carey, Waste Contracts Manager Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the annual NI Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics 2024/25 issued on 11 December 2025 attached in Appendix 1.

2. Background

2.1 Under the Landfill Regulations (NI) 2003, Council is required to submit waste data returns to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). These are completed every quarter throughout the year and are used by the NIEA to calculate Council's recycling rate and compliance with the relevant legislation.

2.2. The new legislative targets for Council under the Circular Economy Package are:

- Recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035;
- Interim targets of 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 60% by 2030;
- Maximum of 10% of municipal waste to be landfilled by 2035.

2.3. The annual waste data submission for 2024-25 has been verified and sets out Council's performance for the year for both Household and Municipal Waste.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1 At a NI level, 51% of waste collected by Councils was sent for reuse, dry recycling and composting during 2024/25. Energy recovery accounted for 34.9% whilst 13.8% was sent to landfill. The recycling rate is similar to the 51.1% reported in 2023/24.

3.2. In Mid and East Antrim, 50.8% of waste collected was sent for reuse, dry recycling and composting during 2024/25. Energy recovery accounted for

Back to Agenda

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

14.8% whilst 34.4% was sent to landfill. This is similar to the 50.7% of waste sent for reuse, dry recycling and composting in 2023/24. See Appendix 2.

3.3. Mid and East Antrim Council are in 5th place out of the 11 Councils in the Northern Ireland household waste recycling league table.

Authority	Household waste preparing for reuse, dry recycling and composting rates 2023/24
Mid Ulster	59.3%
Antrim & Newtownabbey	56.9%
Ards & North Down	56.1%
Armagh City, Banbridge& Craigavon	54.6%
Mid and East Antrim	**50.8%**
Causeway Coast & Glens	50.4%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	50.4%
Newry, Mourne & Down	48.7%
Derry & Strabane	48.4%
Fermanagh & Omagh	47.7%
Belfast	42.4%
Arc21	**49.9%**
NWRWMG	**49.4%**
Northern Ireland	**51.0%**

A summary of the recently published results for Council for 2024/25 together with the results from 2023/24 are set out below.

MEA	**2023/24**		**2024/25**	
	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%
Total Household Waste Arisings	65,862		66,579	1.37 increase
Household Waste Arisings to Recycling	33,375	50.7	33,792	50.8
Household Waste Arisings to Recovery	7,228	10.9	9,886	14.8
Household Waste Arisings to Landfill	25,259	38.4	22,901	34.4
Total Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Arisings	74,842		75,880	1.39 increase
Municipal Waste Arisings to Recycling	36,759	49.1	37,296	49.2
Municipal Waste Arisings to Recovery	7,918	10.6	10,910	14.4

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Municipal Waste Arisings to Landfill	30,026	40.1	27,446	36.2

3.4. The latest official Municipal Waste Statistics report presents further evidence that performance in relation to waste management in Mid and East Antrim has stalled and remains similar to last year. Mid and East Antrim recorded the lowest dry recycling rate in NI at 18.2%. Derry & Strabane recorded the highest dry recycling rate at 29.3%.

3.5. There are a number of legislative, strategic and financial drivers that will shape future waste management arrangements. DAERA continues to develop its policies on Common Collections Guidance for NI Councils, and a final timetable for any proposed Guidance is awaited.

3.6. A Waste Harmonisation Sub-Committee was established to explore the future direction of recycling and waste management within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. On 3 April 2025 elected members approved the recommendation to adopt a fully comingled approach for the future collection and processing of dry recycling waste collected from households within the Borough.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Financial implications – Waste Contracts in place to help meet targets were subject to inflationary pressures and fuel increases during 2024/25.

4.2. Legal and Environmental Implications - The legislative targets for Council under the Circular Economy Package are: Recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035; Interim targets of 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 60% by 2030; Maximum of 10% of municipal waste to be landfilled by 2035. The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 sets a 70% recycling target by 2030 as well as requiring the waste sector to contribute to reducing emissions.

4.3. The household waste recycling rate at 50.8% continues to meet the current NI Waste Management Strategy target to recycle 50% of household waste by 2020.

4.4. Good Relations – Consideration must be given to the reputational impact on Council should they fail to meet statutory recycling targets.

5. Recommendation or Decision

5.1 Elected Members are asked to note the report.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

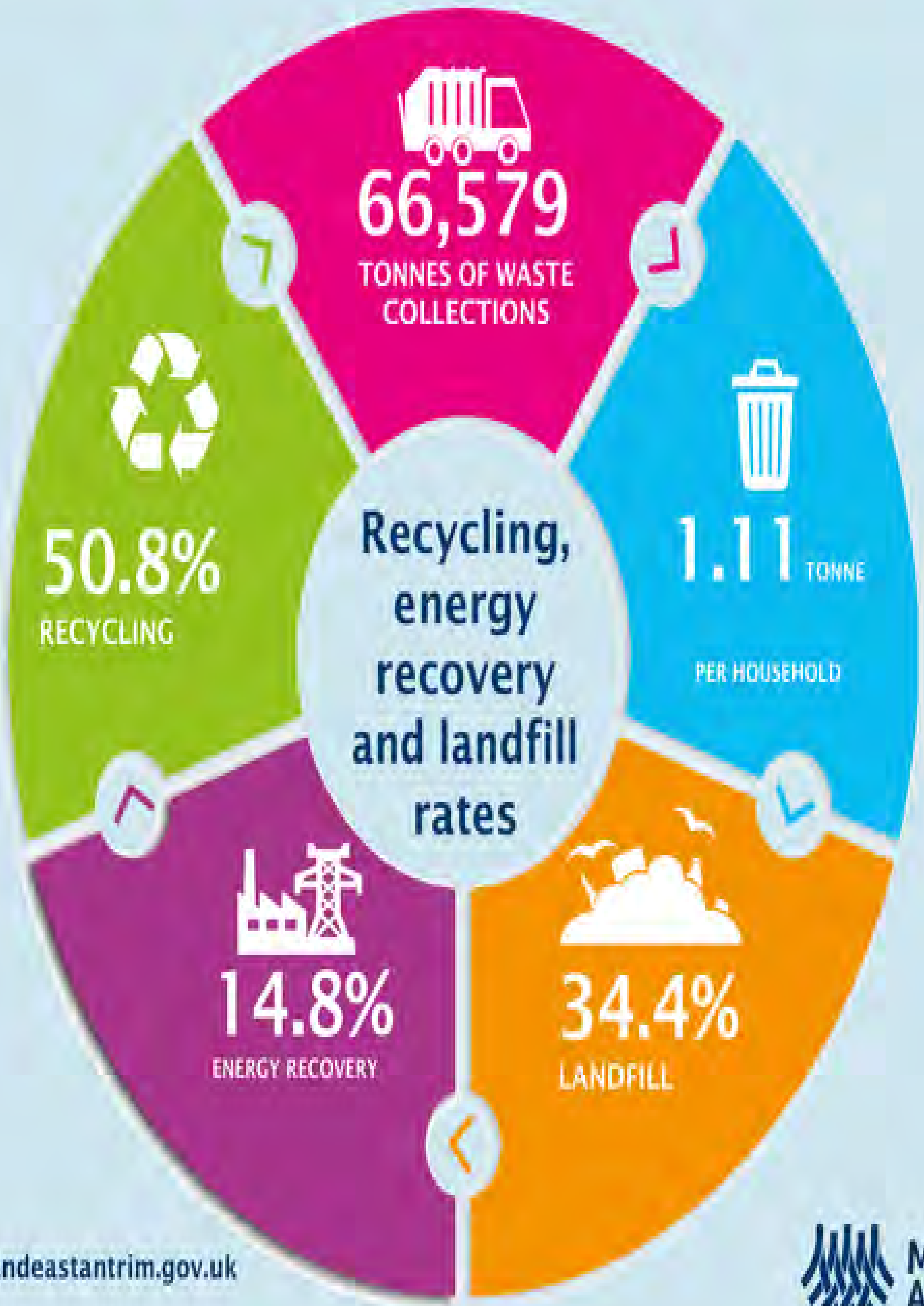
6. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 Infographic - Mid and East Antrim Council Waste Collected 2024/25

Link 1:
Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics 2024-25 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

What happens to our waste?

Mid and East Antrim, 2024/2025



www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment and Economy**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Soil Association Forest Management Certification Stakeholder Consultation in relation to Forest Service NI**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Lisa Kirkwood, Acting Parks and Open Spaces Development Manager
Approver:	John McVeigh, Acting Director of Community

1. Purpose

1.1. This report is to inform Elected Members of Council's proposed response to the Soil Association's Forest Management Certification Stakeholder Consultation. (**Appendix 1**).

1.2. Elected Members are also asked to approve of the draft response at **Appendix 2**.

2. Background

2.1 Soil Association Certification are an independent certification body, accredited to audit and administer forestry certification on behalf of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

2.2. Forest Management (FM) certification assesses forestry operations to ensure they meet international standards for responsible forest management. Following a successful assessment, products originating from the forest, such as timber, can carry a label demonstrating to consumers that the products are from a well-managed forest.

2.3. This consultation is to make sure the Forest Service NI (FSNI) are complying the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards for managing their sites and operating procedures.

2.4. Council has a partnership with FSNI and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017 to work together to develop recreational facilities on FSNI lands.

2.5. Any development within FSNI is included in assessment by the Soil Association. FSNI have strict requirements because of their FSC accreditation.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. This consultation relates to the working relationship Council has with the FSNI.

3.2. Council have had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FSNI since 2017. This MOU is to develop recreation within forest sites in partnership.

3.3. To date Council has developed a 2.5km walking trail in Bracknamuckley Forest, Portglenone, which is one of FSNI's sites, with Forest Site Masterplans for Glenarm, Portglenone and Woodburn having been completed. The overall cost being £198,183 with 40.6% being funded under DAERA's Environment Fund.

3.4. When Council takes on an agreement with FSNI it takes on full responsibility for any trees that may impact on the path networks developed. Council becomes responsible for the maintenance of the path and bin collection of the site. All liability of the path network falls to Council.

3.5. As part of Council's ongoing commitment to improve residents' health and wellbeing, by providing more opportunities to access outdoor spaces, there is potential for future partnership work with FSNI, should funding become available.

3.6. However, with the increase in storms and the impact this has on forests Council may be reluctant to take on full financial burden of the ongoing maintenance and further engagement is needed to make sure Council's proposed forest site developments are feasible.

3.7. While FSNI continue to meet recognised standards for responsible forest management through FSC accreditation, Council experience on existing forest sites indicates that additional improvements could be made. In particular, there is scope for FSNI to increase community engagement around forest management activities, support enhancements to visitor experience through greater investment in site maintenance and explore opportunities to improve biodiversity within the forests.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact – as most of the FSNI sites are in rural areas any development in partnership with FSNI would be of benefit to the rural communities of the Borough. All work Council carries out in FSNI sites is put through a full Environmental Impact Assessment during the planning process.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. It is proposed to seek approval of the draft response at **Appendix 2** to this consultation and submit it to DAERA prior to the deadline of 2 February 2026.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members;

(i) Note the Soil Associations Consultation Document (**Appendix 1**).

(ii) Approve the draft response (**Appendix 2**) to this consultation that in principal Council concur that FSNI are meeting their requirements in relation to producing timber at their sites. However, Council feel that more could be done to engage with the community, improve the visitor experience by investing more in maintenance of their sites and make their sites to be more biodiverse.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 Consultation Document

Appendix 2 MEA Draft Response

Link to consultation: Stakeholder consultation guidance | Soil Association Certification

Stakeholder consultation guidance

Before visiting forest sites, we contact a range of individuals and organisations that may wish to comment on a forest manager's activities.

Our consultation with you should not replace any communication which may normally take place between yourself and the forest manager – you should raise your concerns with the forest manager first, as issues can often be resolved if forest managers are aware of them. If you are unable to do this please let us know your rationale. Positive feedback from stakeholders is always welcome.

A summary of issues raised and how they have been addressed will be included in our audit report (all reference to specific consultees will be excluded from the report and comments may be in confidence if so specified).

All reports will be publicly available on the FSC® online database (http://info.fsc.org) or on the Soil Association Certification Forestry website (/certification/forestry/).

within three months of a certification decision (with the exception of reports from Pre-Assessments).

What are we interested in?

Individuals and organisations

Are you aware of any of the following?

- Problems with existing permissive or traditional forest uses
- Unreasonable refusal of access
- Problems regarding hunting
- Outstanding disputes over the conversion of forest land
- Evidence that legal or customary tenure, or use rights of local communities, are not sustained
- Lack of reasonable effort to employ and train workers from local communities
- Cases when employees have been deterred from joining unions or negotiating collectively
- Indigenous or traditional peoples living in or near the forest area
- Local communities who rely on the forest for subsistence needs

Statutory bodies

Are you aware of any of the following?

- Outstanding claims of legal non-compliance, or evidence that the relevant codes of practice, guidelines and agreements are not being followed
- Problems with consultation on revisions to management plans

- Inadequate consultation regarding sites and features of special cultural significance
- Significant negative environmental impact resulting from forest management

We do...

- Proactively engage with key stakeholders to contribute to consultation
- Treat stakeholder comments in confidence
- Clarify the objectives and limits of the certification process to ensure expectations on all sides are realistic
- Use comments to inform the audit process and objectively evaluate those comments against the relevant FSC standard
- Ask for the forest managers perspective on issues raised (treating comments in confidence)
- Acknowledge stakeholder feedback and comments
- Include comments received and explain how they were evaluated in the public audit report
- Inform stakeholders when and where the public audit report will be made available.

We do not...

- Act as a mediator between the applicant/certificate holder & stakeholders in resolving potential and on-going issues
- Engage with issues that have been assessed as being beyond the scope of the certification standard – we can record them for information, but our role is to assess against FSC standards
- Take sides: our role is to carry out an objective evaluation to determine whether or not the forest management meets FSC standard requirements

Submit your comments

Forest details

Name of forest management organisation or forest *

Please fill in this required field

Forest certificate number

If we have emailed you directly then this code can be found in the email

Next

Your contact details

Your name *

Please fill in this required field

Email *

Email is required to process this form

Required for contacting you for future consultations

Organisation/affiliation

If you represent an organisation

Phone number

If outside the United Kingdom then please include the country code

Address

Postcode

Zip code

Country

Next

Your comments

Are your comments specific to a particular site?

Which site do your comments refer to?

Do you have any positive comments about this organisation's forest management? *

Do you have any negative comments about this

Back to Agenda

organisation's forest management?

Are there any unresolved conflicts between the forest manager and yourself or another individual / organisation? *

Do you have any suggested modifications which you would like to be considered in the next revision of the FSC Standard?

Are there any individuals or organisations we should consult who we may not have contacted already?

Next

Feedback

Would you like to meet or speak with an auditor?

Would you like to receive a direct written response?

Do you want us to keep your comments confidential?

Do you wish to be consulted in the future about this organisation's Forest Management audits?

Next

Documents

If you have any documents or images to accompany your comments you can upload them here

Choose files...

Total size of uploaded files should be less than 30MB

Maximum file size is 30Mb

Description of files uploaded

Please tell us a bit about how this file support comments

The Soil Association Certification Policy for Stakeholder Engagement (IP-FM-006) is available below. We always try to operate in an open and effective way and will do our best to address any concerns as quickly as possible. However, if you wish to make use of our complaints and dispute resolution system, please follow our guidance policy, Dispute Resolution Procedures (IP-GEN-004).

which can be found here (/media/21666/ip-gen-004-10a-appeal-and-complaint-resolution-procedure.pdf). If you are not satisfied with action taken through this system, you can take your concern to FSC (http://www.fsc.org) or PEFC (http://www.pefc.org) for their consideration.

For more information on how we use and store your data, please refer to our privacy policy (/who-we-are/policies-and-procedures/privacy-policy/).

Back to Agenda

Appendix 2 – Draft Response to Soil Associations Stakeholder Consultation into FSNI practices.

1. Which site do your comments refer to?
   Mid and East Antrim Borough Council have a long standing Memorandum of Understanding with FSNI. This MOU relates to sites within the Borough, these include Portglenone Forest, Bracknamuckley Wood, Ballyboley Forest, Woodburn Forest, Glenarm Forest, and some smaller sites not utilised for recreation.

2. Do you have any positive comments about this organisation's forest management?
   FSNI does meet its Agency Framework in the supply of timber. It does try to work with partners to deliver public services, but this is usually that other stakeholders deliver recreation projects within FSNI sites.

3. Do you have any negative comments about this organisation's forest management? *
   The FSNI managed sites within Mid and East Antrim Borough are predominantly monoculture, planted specifically for the timber industry. As a result, the managed sites would not be as biodiverse as a plantation of native species would. There is evidence of priority species within these sites, but Council have concerns regarding the accuracy of some of the surveys FSNI work with, some of which appear outdated. This could have a negative impact on these priority species should felling be carried out. If Council take on sites then DAERA's Natural Environment Division ask Council to carry out robust surveys before and during works. This does not appear to be the case for FSNI sites. FSNI does not appear to prioritise managing their sites for the local community and outdoor recreation, despite having a strategy for this. This is seen with deterioration of trails, steps and non-removal of fallen trees.

4. Are there any unresolved conflicts between the forest manager and yourself or another individual / organisation? *
   NO

5. Do you have any suggested modifications which you would like to be considered in the next revision of the FSC Standard?
   NO

6. Are there any individuals or organisations we should consult who we may not have contacted already?

Glenarm Estates and Northern Ireland Water, both are landowners who lease their lands to FSNI at Glenarm Forest, Woodburn and Ballyboley.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee: **Environment and Economy**
Date: 26 January 2026

Report Title: **Greenisland Regeneration Elected Members Working Group Update**
Publication Status: Open

Author: Keith Hamilton, Regeneration Officer
Approver: John McVeigh, Acting Director of Community

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the workings of the Greenisland Regeneration Elected Members Working Group and to seek approval from the Environment and Economy Committee for:

- The creation of a Greenisland Regeneration Working Group consisting of the five elected members from the Knockagh DEA, local community leaders and statutory sector representatives.

- That the working group is supported by Council Officers from the Community Directorate whose role and will include a review of the Greenisland Development Framework (2015) Action Plan.

- A commitment to access additional resources to update the Greenisland Development Framework (2015).

2. Background

A. Overview of the Greenisland Location

2.1. Greenisland is a small village located in Mid and East Antrim, Northern Ireland, nestled between Belfast and Carrickfergus along the shore of Belfast Lough. The village includes a range of local facilities including a primary school, shops, youth centre, library and community centre.

2.2. Greenisland is identified as a small pocket of social deprivation and receives support funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) and Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to employ a part-time community worker, administered through the Carrickfergus Community Forum.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

B. History of the Greenisland Regeneration Group

2.3. Greenisland Regeneration Group was established in 2015, bringing together a membership of local Elected Members, statutory agencies and community organisations to support the regeneration of the Greenisland village and community. The groups Memorandum of Understanding is contained in **Appendix 1**

2.4. In May 2015, a consultant team supported the creation of the Greenisland Development Framework, attached as **Appendix 2**. This non-statutory masterplan, commissioned by DfC, set out a 10–15 year regeneration strategy addressing physical, social, economic, and community development in Greenisland.

2.5. Supported by the Greenisland Development Framework document, (2015) investment by MEABC during the 10 years has included £800,000 invested in a new 3G Football pitch, an investment of £200,000 in the Greenisland Community Centre and ongoing feasibility work to support investment in the Greenisland Greenway and Greenisland foreshore public access. Details area attached in **Appendix 3**.

2.6. The Greenisland Regeneration Elected Members Working Group is made up of the five Knockagh Councillors who meet periodically to review current developments and identify opportunities to further support the regeneration of the Greenisland community.

C. Secretarial Support

2.7. In 2017, the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) commissioned an independent review of Service Level Agreements and other third-party arrangements. This review recommended that Greenisland Regeneration Group would conduct its own secretarial function previously supported by staff from the economic development team.

3 Key Issues for Consideration

A. Current Status

3.1 The Greenisland Regeneration Group has continued to meet 4 times per year since its establishment in 2015 bringing together locally elected members from the Knockagh Ward, statutory agencies and community organisations to support the regeneration of the Greenisland area.

3.2 The Greenisland Regeneration group currently operates under a Memorandum of Understanding detailed in item 2.3 with a voluntary secretariate.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

3.3. Representatives from the Greenisland Regeneration Elected Members Working Group have approached Council officers seeking additional assistance to support access to additional resources and improve collaboration with the Council.

B. Proposed Support

3.4. That a group be established called the Greenisland Regeneration Working Group to include the 5 Elected Members from the Knockagh DEA, community leaders and statutory sector representatives.

3.5. The proposed working group will not be constituted as a council sub-committee.

3.6. It is recommended that Council staff from the Community Directorate support the development of the Greenisland Regeneration Working Group to include a review of the Action Plan contained within the Greenisland Development Framework (2015).

3.7. That Council officers engage with the Greenisland Regeneration Working Group to update the Greenisland Development Framework (2015) and explore opportunities to secure additional resources to support the long-term regeneration of Greenisland.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Financial Implications – It is proposed that funding for the support will be met from existing budgets.

4.2. Equality Screening – The review of the framework document forms part of the Council's ongoing programme to update and refine regeneration strategies across all small towns and villages within the Borough.

4.3. Assets – The proposal compliments the sustainable use of current Council Assets including the Greenisland community centre, and the facilities owned by the Council including the area leased to Greenisland Football Club.

4.4. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan – The proposal aligns with the strategic objectives outlined in the MEABC Corporate Plan, particularly in relation to economic growth and regeneration, tourism development, and connectivity.

4.5. Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact – The review of the Greenisland Development Framework includes several objectives that support environmental sustainability. Among these is a strategy to secure funding for the development of the Greenisland Greenway.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Council Officers will formally establish the Greenisland Regeneration Working Group working with the Greenisland Regeneration Group, Greenisland Elected Members Working Group, community organisations and statutory agencies.

5.2. Council Officers will work with the Greenisland Regeneration Working Group to support a review of the Greenisland Development Framework (2015).

5.3. Council officers will update the Greenisland Development Framework (2015) to identify opportunities to secure additional funding to support local development and the long-term regeneration of Greenisland.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve:

(i) The creation of a Greenisland Regeneration Working Group consisting of the five elected members from the Knockagh DEA, local community leaders and statutory sector representatives.
(ii) That the working group is supported by Council Officers from the Community Directorate whose role and will include a review of the Greenisland Development Framework (2015) Action Plan, and
(iii) A commitment to access additional resources to update the Greenisland Development Framework (2015).

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 Greenisland Regeneration Group MoU
Appendix 2 The Greenisland Development Framework (2015)
Appendix 3 Statutory Investment into Greenisland over 10 Years

Appendix 2

Greenisland Regeneration Group
Memorandum of Understanding

1. Name

The name of the Group shall be Greenisland Regeneration Group (hereinafter called 'the Partnership').

2. Objectives

(a)The Partnership is established for the benefit of the inhabitants of Greenisland (hereinafter described as 'the area of benefit') without distinction of age, sex, race, disability, political, religious or other opinion, by associating the Statutory Authorities, Private Sector, Voluntary and Community Organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to progress the delivery of the Development Framework with the objective of increasing the vitality and prosperity of Greenisland through a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to redevelopment.

(b)In furtherance of the above objectives, the Partnership may:

i) promote and market the Greenisland Development Framework

ii) establish and monitor project teams who will be responsible to action and implement individual projects

iii) lobby for the provision of public sector funding, mobilize the resources of all partners and stakeholders and act as a catalyst for private investment

iv) encourage wide participation throughout the local community

v) ensure continuous formal and informal consultation with all stakeholders and promote and carry out, or assist in promoting and carrying out research and surveys and publish useful results

vi) organise or assist in organising meetings and exhibitions, and publish or assist in publishing reports or other documents or information.

vii) do all such other lawful things as may be necessary in the attainment of the above objectives

viii) any employment, contractual or liability issues pertaining to the staffing or associated procurement of projects will be the responsibility of the lead partner of that project

3. Membership

(a) The Partnership shall consist of 12 persons with full membership and voting rights, with 5 persons being nominated by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council and 7 persons representing the private or community sector, all of whom who are aged eighteen years or over and who subscribe to the objectives of the Partnership.

(b) The work of the Partnership shall be non-political and non-sectarian in character.

(c) The Partnership shall have power to terminate the membership of any person for reasons appearing to them good and sufficient provided that any member so affected shall have the right to appeal that decision.

(d) Provision shall be made for a number of Statutory Agency and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council officers and staff members to attend meetings in an observer/advisory role but not having voting rights.

4. Partnership Operation

a. Except as provided otherwise in this memorandum of understanding, the Partnership shall have direct policy and general management of affairs and shall meet not less than 4 times a year.

b. The Partnership shall have the power to co-opt members to fill vacancies. Co-opted Members shall have similar voting rights to those of nominated Members.

c. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be the Honorary Officers of the Partnership and shall be elected annually by and from the members of the partnership at the Annual General Meeting.

d. The period of notification for Partnership meetings shall be 7 days prior to the meeting.

e. The Partnership may make such regulations, as they consider appropriate for the efficient conduct of their business.

f. The Partnership may appoint to such Project Teams, Advisory Panels or Task Groups its own members and other persons necessary for the carrying out of their work, and may determine their terms of reference, duration and composition. All such Project Teams, Advisory Panels or Task Groups so appointed shall report directly to the Partnership on all aspects of their work.

5. **Chairmanship of Meetings**

All meetings of the Partnership shall be presided over by its Chairperson or in their absence its Vice Chairperson, if one has been appointed. If both the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are absent, those present may elect another Member to preside. The person presiding at any meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

6. **Reporting**

The Partnership shall inform the public of the Partnerships' work through press releases/ promotional material or public meeting.

7. **Rules of Procedure at all Meetings**

(a) **Voting**

The Partnership is committed to the principle of gaining consensus between members.

However, should a vote be required, subject to the provision of Clause 8 hereof all questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote thereat. This is subject to Chairperson's second or casting vote at Section 5 and to quorum arrangements at Section 7c.

The mode of voting at meetings of the Partnership, sub-committees, advisory groups or task groups shall, except as otherwise resolved by those present and voting, be by show of hands. If half of those present so choose, a 'secret ballot' may be introduced to alleviate any possible intimidatory factors, real or otherwise.

(b) **Minutes**

Minutes keeping a record of all proceedings and resolutions shall be kept by the Partnership and all other sub-groups and shall be available for inspection by Members.

(c) **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted at a meeting of the Partnership unless 4 members at any time are present including one office bearer.

8. **Alterations to the Memorandum of Understanding**

Any alterations to the Memorandum of Understanding shall receive the assent of not less than two thirds of the members of the Partnership present at that meeting PROVIDED THAT notice of any such alteration shall have been sent to each member of the Partnership in writing at least 21 clear days before the meeting at which the alteration is to be brought forward.

9. <u>Dissolution</u>

If the Partnership by a simple majority of its Members wishes dissolution, provided there has been support from at least one third of Members; they shall call a meeting of all members of the Partnership who have a right to vote. Not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the Resolution to be proposed thereat) shall be given. If such decisions shall be confirmed by a simple majority of those present and voting at such a meeting, the Partnership shall be dissolved.

SIGNED: ______________________________ **Chairperson**

______________________________ **Vice Chairperson**

Date agreed:
Date revised:

Greenisland

Development Framework

Greenisland

Development Framework

March 2015

Carrickfergus Borough

Department for Social Development

URS

Table of Contents

Greenisland Development Framework Compendium of Appendices (see www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk)	
Appendix A	Stage 1 Baseline Report
Appendix B	Land Use Survey
Appendix C	Planning History Analysis
Appendix D	Built and Natural Heritage Analysis
Appendix E	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
Appendix F	Consultation Record
Appendix G	Indicative Costings

1. Purpose & Organisational Structure

1.1 Introduction

Carrickfergus Borough Council (CBC) and their funding partner, the Department of Social Development (DSD) appointed URS (now trading as AECOM) in June 2014 to prepare a Development Framework for the settlement of Greenisland. The Development Framework is a non-statutory masterplan and will provide an outline for the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration, physical, social, economic and community development initiatives in the settlement over the next 10-15 years.

The settlement of Greenisland has many physical and natural assets yet there are issues requiring attention. Its situation strikes the balance between being within a 20 minute train journey to Belfast City Centre yet is on the periphery of the Belfast urban area and nestled between the stunning Knockagh Escarpment and Belfast Lough. Despite the advantages that Greenisland has there are considerable challenges that need to be addressed: areas of deprivation, physical and socio-economic severance between the railway and the lack of an identifiable heart. The aim of this study is to identify projects which will ensure the economic and social viability of the settlement for generations to come. Normally, urban regeneration, community development and tourism initiatives are developed through a Town Centre Masterplan however considering Greenisland's unique status as a small settlement without an identifiable Town Centre or core, a Development Framework approach was selected as the appropriate means of exploring the regeneration potential of the area and identifying a core.

1.2 Project Structure and Team

The project commenced in June 2014 and the final report was presented on 2nd February 2015. The project has been overseen by the Greenisland Regeneration Steering Group (GRSG). It consisted of the following representatives:

- The Mayor
- Elected members
- Council officers
- Statutory bodies including DOE Planning, DSD, Transport NI, NI Housing Executive, NI Library Service etc
- Local community representatives
- Consultants from URS.

The GRSG has met on the following occasions throughout the course of the project:

- 24th June 2014
- 21st August 2014
- 29th September 2014
- 17th November 2014
- 20th January 2015

There were also various operational meetings with Carrickfergus Borough Council and DSD throughout the course of the project.

The consultancy team comprised the following organisations:

Organisation		Role
URS	URS	Lead consultants, town planning and design
Roderick MacLean Associates	Roderick MacLean Associates Ltd Retail Planning & Development Consultancy	Survey analysis
NEMS	NEMS market research	Telephone surveying
Lisbane Consultants	LisbaneConsultants Consulting Civil & Traffic Engineers	Transport consultants
McConnell Chartered Surveyors	M McCONNELL	Property consultants


Members of the Greenisland Regeneration Steering Group engaged in discussions during a workshop

2. Context

2.1 The Study Area - Geographical Context

Greenisland is fortunate to be blessed with a superb geographical setting. The Knockagh Escarpment runs adjacent to the Upper Road and provides a dramatic backdrop to the settlement. The south of Greenisland borders Belfast Lough along the A2 which is part of the Causeway Coastal Route, renowned as one of the most scenic driving routes in Europe. Belfast Lough also provides access to a public beach via "The Gut" at low tide. Landscape wedges separate Greenisland from its neighbouring urban areas (Jordanstown and Carrickfergus) creating enough separation for Greenisland to have a distinctive character and classification in its own right. However the lack of an identifiable centre or heart is a constraining feature of Greenisland.

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 defines the settlement as:

"Greenisland is a popular residential location due to its attractive setting on the Lough Shore and its proximity to Belfast. It is a dormitory commuter settlement for Belfast, with a focus of local retail activity in the small shopping parade at Glassillan Court complemented by a number of local shops dispersed throughout the settlement."

Strategically, the town is accessed mainly by the A2 which is currently being upgraded. The enhanced A2 will provide excellent vehicular and cycling links to Belfast City Centre and Carrickfergus/Larne. Greenisland Railway Station in situated in the centre of the settlement and is an invaluable public transport asset which provides regular links to Belfast City Centre with journey times of 20 minutes and to Carrickfergus in 9 minutes.

Aerial image of the study area

2.2 Historical Context

Although today Greenisland is an extended suburb of Belfast, its origins lie with its ties to Carrickfergus. In the 1600s, the West Division of Carrickfergus was established to allocate lands for agricultural purposes west of the town extending to Greenisland. In the 1800s the area along the Shore Road became a popular destination for wealthy merchants to construct summer lodges and bathing houses. It was around this period when the name Greenisland was introduced, due to a mossy islet being exposed at low tide along this stretch of coastline.

In 1845 the railway line was developed in the area. The Belfast to Ballymena line was diverted via a turntable at Greenisland because of the steep gradient at Whiteabbey. The intersection was initially known as Carrickfergus junction however this was changed to Greenisland in 1893 with the construction of a new station.

The improved transport connections led to the development of modest semi-detached dwellings springing up around the station. The increase in local population required improved access to facilities and so churches and schools began to open in the area. The 9-hole golf course was originally opened in 1894 and the Knockagh monument was erected in memorial of the people of County Antrim lost during the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

After the wars, Greenisland's population was on the increase due to local employment opportunities at the Courtaulds factory and the ease of travel in general to Belfast and Carrickfergus. The "upper estate" was proposed in response to these needs by the Northern Ireland Housing Trust. Initially, 900 new homes were planned to be built by government funds between 1957 and 1958. In 1963 the large ICI factory in the vicinity was opened and in response to demand the lower estate was then developed.

The area is therefore an unusual mix of historic and 20th century (1921 - see below) built development and with that combination there are also socio-economic differences.

2.3 Socio-Economic Context

Greenisland is made up of three wards, Gortalee, Knockagh and Greenisland. Knockagh and Greenisland wards extend further than the extent of the study area for this project (which is the settlement development limits designated by draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan), however the 2011 Census data provides a wide range of information and illustrates the contrasting socio economic profile of various areas of Greenisland.

Knockagh Ward Boundary

Greenisland Ward Boundary

Gortalee Ward Boundary

Multiple Deprivation Measures

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 provides information on seven types of deprivation and an overall measure of multiple deprivation for small areas.

Wards are ordered from most deprived to least deprived on each type of deprivation measure and then assigned a rank. The most deprived ward is ranked 1, and as there are 582 wards, the least deprived ward has a rank of 582. The deprivation rankings for the Greenisland wards are given in the table below.

Multiple Deprivation Measure	Gortalee	Knockagh	Greenisland
Multiple Deprivation Measure	152	566	508
Income Deprivation	152	543	486
Employment Deprivation	144	553	491
Health Deprivation and Disability Deprivation	196	543	475
Education Skills and Training Disability	82	569	405
Proximity to Services Deprivation	464	320	370
Crime and Disorder	283	390	326
Living Environment	140	518	464

The following key points can be highlighted:

- Significant contrasts between the 3 wards
- Knockagh ward is ranked very highly and as such is almost one of the least deprived areas in Northern Ireland
- In comparison, Gortalee is very low on the multiple deprivation measures indicating that it is one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland
- This can be highlighted by the difference in educational performance between the wards, with Gortalee having only 13.29% of people with a degree or higher education qualifications compared to almost 40% for Knockagh.

2.4 Population Statistics

Greenisland as a settlement had an estimated population of 5,498 during the 2008 settlement development limit estimate. The population of the settlement is rising from early 1980's, illustrated by the graph below. This rise in population may place increasing need on public service provisions within the settlement and pressure on development lands and sites to provide housing and services to cater for the new residents in the longer term.

2.5 Policy Context and Reform of Local Government

2.5.1 Planning Policy Context

A comprehensive review of planning policy at a local and strategic level was undertaken as part of the baseline study for Greenisland. The findings of this can be found in the Stage 1 Baseline Report, which is attached as Appendix A in a separate compendium. The following planning documents were analysed:

- **Carrickfergus Area Plan**

The former area plan for Greenisland. It is now superseded by BMAP 2015

- **Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015**

BMAP 2015 is the current statutory local development plan for the settlement of Greenisland.

- **PAC Report on draft BMAP 2015**

The report details the PAC's recommendations to DOE on objections raised during the consultation period - which include those relating to Greenisland.

- **Regional Development Strategy 2035**

The RDS provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. It does not redefine other Department's strategies but complements and guides them from a spatial perspective.

- **Living Places Urban Stewardship Design Guide (DOE)**

This design guide aims to raise the standards of place making across NI. The management of our towns and places has previously been addressed separately from the planning and design process. Living Places provides strategic guidance to public and private sector developers.

2.5.2 Carrickfergus Borough Council Policy Context

Various documents and policies issued by Carrickfergus Borough Council were reviewed as part of the information gathering stage. The findings of this can be found in the separate compendium of appendices.

- Carrickfergus Town Centre Masterplan
- CBC Sustainable Development Audit and Action Plan
- CBC Play Strategy
- CBC Health and Well Being Strategy and Action Plan
- Whitehead Village Masterplan.

2.5.3 Reform of Public Administration

Reform of Public Administration (RPA) is a process that aims to reduce the amount of local councils in Northern Ireland from 26 to 11. The aim is to have stronger and more efficient local councils that deliver a wider range of services such as planning, community planning, economic development and regeneration.

Greenisland will see some major changes due to a review of administrative boundaries in terms of electoral wards and local council boundaries. The settlement of Greenisland currently consists of 3 electoral wards, Knockagh, Greenisland and Gortalee (these are examined in more detail in the socio-economic profiling chapter). The RPA proposals would see the settlement consist of 2 wards. Knockagh ward is proposed to be abolished and replaced with an extension of Gortalee and Greenisland wards. The Greenisland ward will now extend between the Upper Road and Belfast Lough to the edge of Carrickfergus settlement. Gortalee has claimed land from Greenisland along the Shore Road and also most of the Farm Lodge development north of the railway line under the reform proposals.

Greenisland currently exists within the extent of Carrickfergus Borough Council's jurisdiction. Under the proposed changes, a portion of the settlement to the south east (Hartley Hall development) would be contained within the Antrim and Newtownabbey Council whereas the rest of Greenisland would be within the new Mid and East Antrim Council.

Mid and East Antrim New Ward Boundaries

3. Analysis

3.1 Introduction

A wide range of information gathering and survey methods have been used as part of the analysis stage of the Greenisland study. The mechanisms have ranged from field surveys through to desktop analysis and telephone surveys. The variety of methods used has enabled us to build a detailed profile of how Greenisland is operating today and assists in informing decisions on future proposals.

3.2 Land Use Surveys

A detailed survey of the land uses in Greenisland has been undertaken to gain an understanding of the existing conditions of the settlement. A more detailed version of the land use plan can be found in the separate compendium of appendices. The following observations on land use can be made:

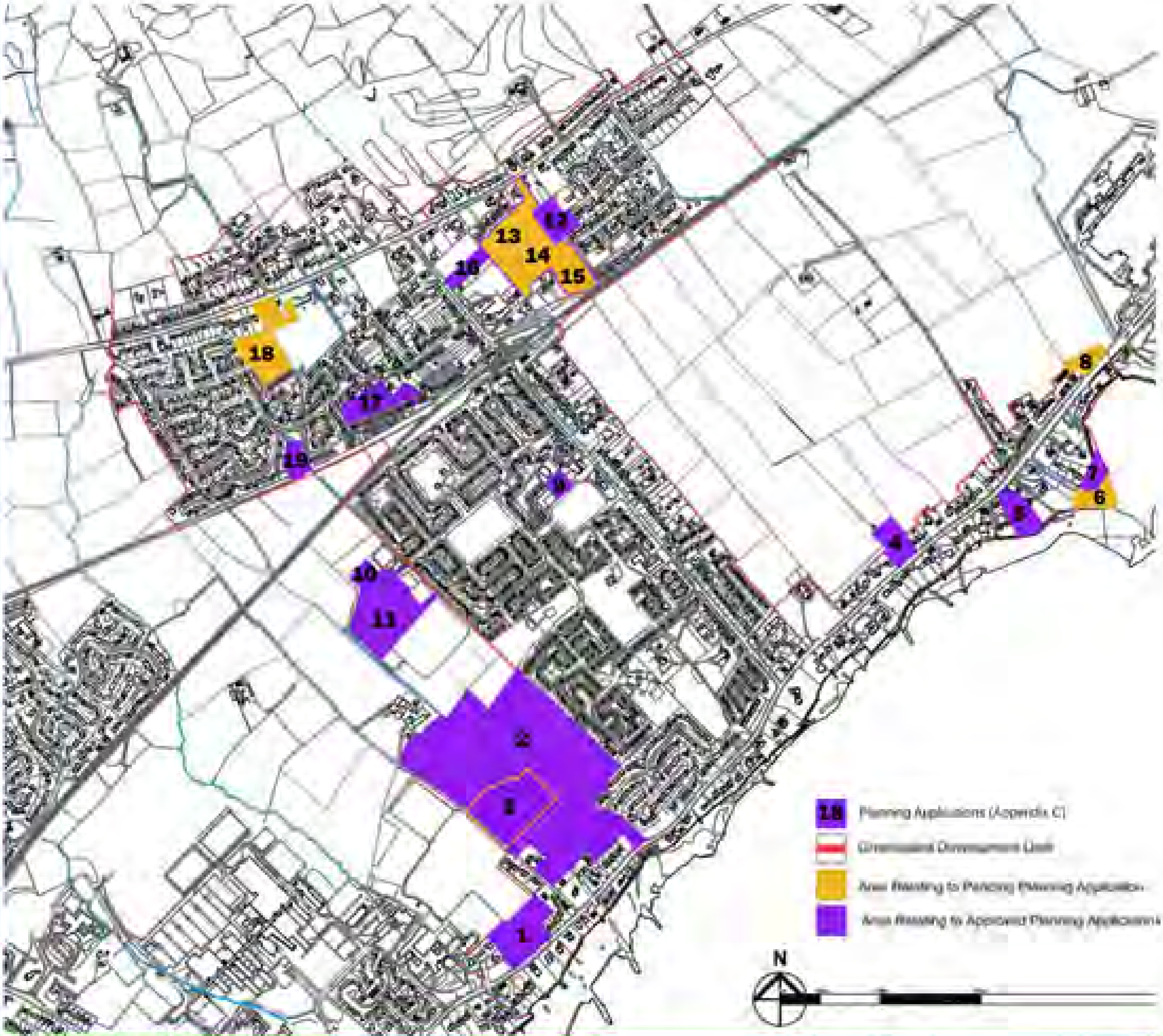
- The majority of land use in Greenisland is for residential purposes.
- It is clearly visible that there are a large proportion of community based land uses present (churches, community buildings, schools, clubs) considering the size of the settlement.
- There is an absence of a clearly defined settlement / commercial core. Retailing is dispersed in small pockets throughout the settlement but low in quantity.
- The Gortalee area (middle estate) has a large proportion of land used as public open space. It is arguable that there is an imbalance of the provision as the area to the north of the railway line has limited open space within its residential areas. In regard to the large development opportunity sites identified for housing, many have witnessed a commencement of development.

Greenisland land use survey results

3.3 Significant Planning Approvals

A detailed review of relevant planning decisions has been undertaken. The map below shows locations of approvals deemed to be of significance to the wider development. A more detailed version of the drawing can be found in the separate compendium of appendices. The following observations can be made:

- The majority of the approvals are for residential developments consisting of detached and semi-detached dwellings and apartment buildings.
- Most of the approvals are within sites that were zoned for residential use within the area plan.
- Other major approvals of note are at Greenisland FC where a new 3G facility has been approved and an application by the Baptist Church to construct a new place of worship at Glassillan.
- There is a lack of commercial or retail development activity over the past 10 years. This is reflective of the primary residential function of the settlement.



Planning Application Analysis

3.4 Built and Natural Heritage

A detailed analysis of the built and natural heritage assets has been undertaken (Appendix D). There are a range of assets: listed buildings, scheduled monuments, historic parks, RAMSAR, SPA and ASSI designations - see compendium of appendices. The following observations can be made:

- Taking the historical context of Greenisland into consideration, it is a relatively new settlement. This is reflected in the low levels of listed structures within the settlement boundary. Most of the listed buildings of significance are located on the Shore Road and were developed as houses for rich merchants from Belfast during the industrial revolution e.g. Seapark House and Ballynascreen House.
- The area surrounding Greenisland has a rich heritage of scheduled structures. Many of these date from the early Christian period through to medieval defensive fortifications.
- There is an opportunity to make more of the heritage assets of the settlement.

Natural heritage designations


Belfast Lough


Castle Lug

3.5 Community Infrastructure and Facilities Audit

A key element of the baseline survey of the Greenisland Development Framework involved a review of existing facilities, building upon the area profile.

Community Asset	Services and Activities Offered
Greenisland Football Club - Clubhouse, football pitches, astro pitch, changing room	Football coaching for children (6-16), Senior football - 2 teams for over 18s, Gym classes, Community fun days, Karate classes, Computer courses, Digital camera classes
Existing public right of ways	Walks, Method of keeping fit and socialising
Greenisland Golf Club - Golf course, bar, restaurant	Golfing for members only. Cheap membership for children
Greenisland Community Centre	Irish Dancing lessons and competitions, Office for community worker, Host Baptist Church events
Greenisland Youth Centre	Youth facilities
Jubilee Hall - Main hall, committee room	Arts and crafts workshops, Pride of Greenisland Flute Band, Pensioners dinners and group, Orange Lodge, Birthday parties and other local bookings, Training and fun days
Church of Ireland - Church, parish centre and car park	African Child Ministries stall, Sunday worship, Choir and worship groups, Youth groups, Sewing group, Childrens ministries, Toddlers group
Greenisland Baptist Church - Church building, Glassilan Green	Mango Tree Coffee Shop on a Saturday, Mothers and toddlers on Friday, Hosts the citizens advice bureau, Christians against poverty food bank, Kids clubs, Elderly persons ministry
St Coleman's Catholic Church Greenisland - Church building, hall and car park	Badminton club and parish related activities
Greenisland Methodist Church - Multi-purpose church complex for worship and activities	Community activities for all ages, Lunch club, Bowling club, Recreation club
Church of the Nazarene	Church Hall - Scouts
Greenisland Presbyterian Church	Variety of programmes and outreach activities
Greenisland War Memorial Sports Club	Various sports and social facilities
Greenisland Primary School	Educational provision
Silverstream Primary School	Educational provision
The Old School Surgery	Medical facilities
Medicare Pharmacy	Medical facilities
Greenisland Dental Practice	Medical facilities
Greenisland Working Men's Club	Social facility

3.6 Conclusion

The above table demonstrates that Greenisland is a well-served community in regard to the number of facilities given its pro rata population. From our surveys it has become apparent however that interaction and communication between the various groups and associations could be greatly enhanced. It is recommended that a community initiative of sharing information should be explored. This is reflected in the proposals section.

3.7 Property Assessments

3.7.1 Opportunities for Growth in the Residential Sector

The recession and consequent collapse of the housing market across Northern Ireland effectively led to the mothballing of the majority of residential developments, and it was only very recently that we began to see the beginnings of a recovery to the extent that the construction of new schemes once again became economically viable and could go ahead (e.g. The Cairn).

There is no doubt that there is pent up demand in the residential market, particularly for starter homes and properties at the lower end of the price scale, and this appears to be starting to wash through into middle market residential as well. The completion of the A2 Shore Road Project in summer 2015 will greatly improve the accessibility of Greenisland as a commuter village.

New roundabouts off the widened dual-carriageway at both Shorelands and Station Road will present an opportunity to join up the western and eastern sides of the settlement, with the largest residential opportunity site within the study area, which runs from Shorelands up to the southern boundary of the football pitches, potentially being brought into play.

A further site zoned for housing and accessed from Bates Park should become viable as a natural extension to the existing fairly modern development.

MCCONNELL
CHARTERED SURVEYORS & PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

The site adjacent to the doctor's surgery might be a more desirable location for elderly or sheltered housing development long term. In Upper Greenisland the most recent development, The Cairn, which is partly completed and occupied and partly still under construction, is testament to the recent improvement in the residential market. The configuration of this development appears to leave access to a further large zoned housing site, and it would seem reasonable to expect that development will spread naturally into this adjacent land.

A further extensive area of zoned residential land at Gorman Close remains undeveloped, however the existing road access to this part of the settlement from the Upper Road is poor, and one might assume that substantial road improvements may be required before this site could be developed.

Any settlement needs the ability to grow and the longer term needs of Greenisland will require more detailed analysis when the new statutory area and community plans are being prepared.

3.7.2 Opportunities for Growth in the Commercial Sector

Greenisland does not compete with its neighbouring towns in attracting mainstream retail outlets, and it would be unrealistic to suggest that it ever will. However, given the particularly modest level of current commercial activity in the settlement, we would consider that some increase, particularly in the retail offer, may be seen as desirable. Whether any further retail development would be economically sustainable is another matter. The Net Annual Values of the limited number or retail outlets in Greenisland published on the LPS database range from c.£3,000 to c.£6,500 pa. These rateable value figures suggest that rental values in the area are almost certainly low, and most likely below the threshold that would make new development commercially viable at present. Enhanced subsidy may be required.

Consideration might be given to encouraging an increase in the café / coffee shop / restaurant provision and possibly further convenience or small speciality retail, however in view of the strength of offer in the neighbouring towns, it is difficult to see anything other than very modest expansion being sustainable.
The potential for developing the large site between Shorelands and the football club, which is currently zoned for housing, could present an opportunity for additional retail provision in addition to new residential development if the zoning were to be reviewed long term.
An increase in population through further residential development will of course assist in the viability of further commercial provision.

It is difficult to see where any expansion of commercial activity could be accommodated in the Upper Greenisland area. With the possible exception of a zoned housing site adjacent to Berkeley Deane, there are no opportunity sites within this part of the study area which would appear suitable for commercial use (further review).
The focus therefore, it is suggested, should be at Glassillan Green to supplement the existing retail/ commercial offer present and to provide employment opportunities in the longer term.

3.8 Transport Assessment

LisbaneConsultants
Consulting Civil & Traffic Engineers

- The construction of the upgraded A2 Shore Road will improve traffic progression along this important link, as well as improving pedestrian and cycling facilities.
- However, the sub-standard alignment of Station Road, where it passes under the railway bridge, together with the lack of a footway or cycling facilities at this location, has the effect of severing Greenisland into two parts.
- Public transport facilities are generally considered good. However, the lack of penetration of the existing social housing developments accessed off Station Road is a disincentive to the use of public transport.
- The lack of cycling facilities along Upper Road is also a concern and a disincentive to the use of cycling as a mode of transport.
- The proposals in regard to opening up the disused railway line, enhancing facilities around the station and upgrading the Station Road itself will provide a quality environment and improve accessibility to public transport.

4. Consultation

4.1 Methodology

Consultation has been the cornerstone of the Greenisland Development Framework. The consultant team has communicated with as many local stakeholders and members of the public as possible within the project timescale. This process was invaluable for two reasons. Firstly, it enabled the team to establish an open and honest understanding of what Greenisland has to offer and what Greenisland needs to function better as a place to live and visit. Secondly, it assisted in developing a shared vision and concept for Greenisland. This ensured that any projects or proposals emanated from within the community and therefore were positively received once incorporated into the Development Framework.

A stakeholder engagement strategy document was prepared to manage and record the consultation process with interested groups and individuals. A final version of this document is included in the compendium of appendices. It records all the consultation details from each engagement.

A broad spectrum of consultation methods were engaged and ranged from:

- Site walkabout - June 2014
- Project steering group meetings (4 in total)
- Client meetings (5 in total)
- Individual meetings with key stakeholders (approx. 40 meetings)
- Householder telephone surveys (sample of 200)
- Opinion surveys administered through 5 local churches (36 written responses)
- Workshops held with various sectors within Greenisland e.g. sports organisations, community organisations, churches (3 in total)
- Open house launch event, 3rd October 2014 (approx. 50 attendants)
- Public consultation for 12 weeks (46 written responses).

Consultation should continue to provide the basis on which the Development Framework will be implemented as the new council arrangements come in place in April 2015. The draft proposals were displayed at a number of venues in Greenisland from 3rd October 2014 for a 12 week period up to Christmas 2014. There was a formal launch to the consultation process and every household within Greenisland was invited to attend a Public Open House Event on 3rd October. There was opportunity to engage over the 12 weeks the proposal boards were on display. The draft Public Consultation leaflet is also included within the compendium of appendices.

Final council presentations took place on 19th January and 2nd February 2015 and received full support for the recommendations.

4.2 Who was Consulted

The following groups and organisations were consulted. A comprehensive record can be found in the final Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

Government Bodies

Organisation	
Elected representatives from CBC	
CBC officers and Chief Executive	
Department for Social Development	
Transport NI	
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	
North Eastern Education and Library Board	
Libraries NI	
Planning NI	
Northern Ireland Environment Agency	
Translink	
PSNI	
University of Ulster	

In addition to the statutory stakeholders, detailed discussions took place with the following groups:

Health and Education

Organisation
University of Ulster
Greenisland Primary School
Silverstream Primary and Nursery School
Rocking Horse Nursery and Play Station After School Club
Alphabet Nursery
Old School Surgery

Local Businesses

Organisation
Knockagh Lodge
Glassillan Green (Mace)
Greenisland Shop
Russell's Shop 4 U

Churches

Organisation
Church of the Holy Name
Ebenezer Church of the Nazarene
Greenisland Baptist Church
Greenisland Methodist Church
Greenisland Presbyterian Church
St. Colman's Catholic Church

Charities/Community

Organisation
Carrickfergus Community Forum
Sustrans
Greenisland Youth Centre
Greenisland Environment and Heritage Group
GRASP Changing Tracks
Greenisland Community Council
Greenisland Community Association
Greenisland Community Centre

Sports Clubs and Societies

Organisation
Greenisland Golf Club
Greenisland Bowling Club
War Memorial Sports Club
Greenisland Ladies Hockey Club
Greenisland Boys FC
Knockagh Wrestling Club
Knockagh School of Dance
Pride of Greenisland Flute Band
Greenisland Working Men's Club

4.3 Results of the Public Consultation Survey – Exhibition

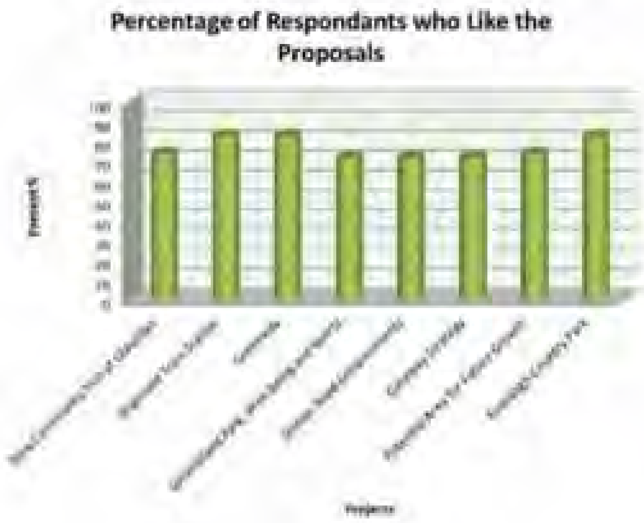
The formal exhibition was one element of the overall engagement strategy and an important one. The results received were generally positive in response to the proposals presented which demonstrated that the degree of pre-engagement and planning prior to developing options was invaluable. From the very extensive list of individuals and groups consulted the following key points can be stated:

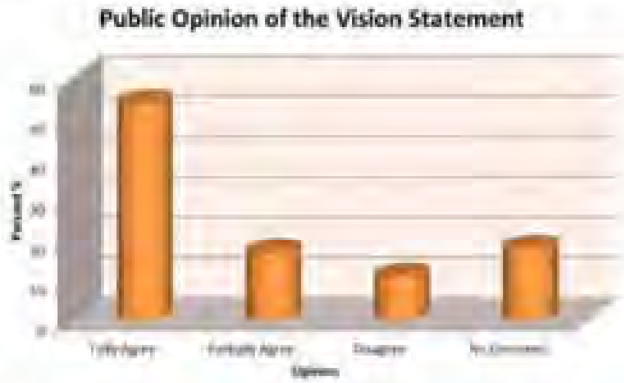
- 46 members of the public contributed to the process
- Respondents were asked if they were in agreement with the shared vision statement for Greenisland: "By 2030, Greenisland will have become a fully integrated community which has retained its own sense of character and identity. There will be a strong community network of activities and services that are based around the new civic, commercial and community hub. The hub will be supported by the improved walking, cycling and vehicular connections throughout Greenisland and its neighbouring settlements. Greenisland will have taken advantage of its surrounding natural assets to attract more visitors through the implementation of a first class network of parks, recreation and sporting and wellbeing facilities."
- 71% of respondents either fully or partially agreed with the

Community Workshop - August 2014

statement.

- All of the proposals presented received at least a 70% "like" rate from the public
- The most "liked" projects were the Greenisland Train Station Improvements (83% liked), The Greenway (83% liked) and Knockagh Country Park (83% liked).
- None of the proposals were disliked by more than 10% of the respondents. This fact in combination with the high rate of "liked" projects demonstrates that the proposals presented were broadly accepted by the public respondents.
- Respondents were asked to prioritise each scheme in terms of its importance to regenerating Greenisland. The projects deemed highest priority by respondents are the Hub at Glassillan (1st), Environmental Improvements to the Train Station (2nd) and Knockagh Country Park (3rd).
- The proposal deemed to be of least priority was the Potential Area for Future Growth.



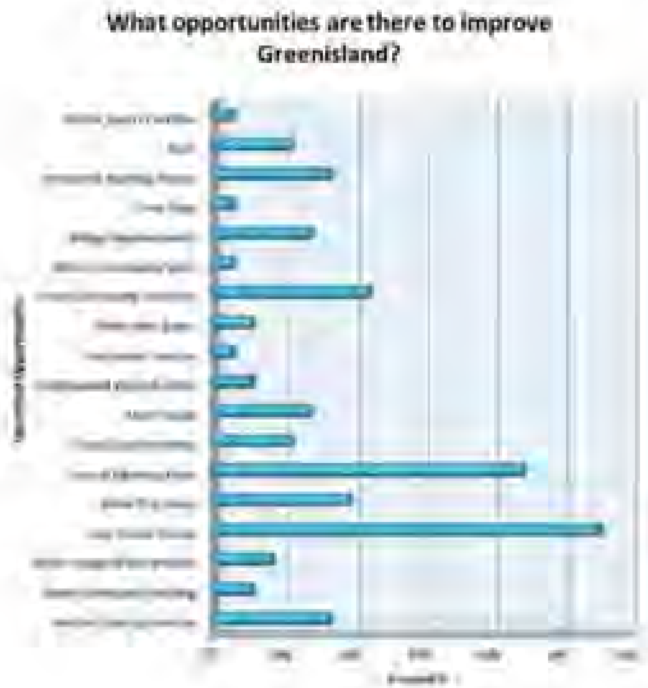


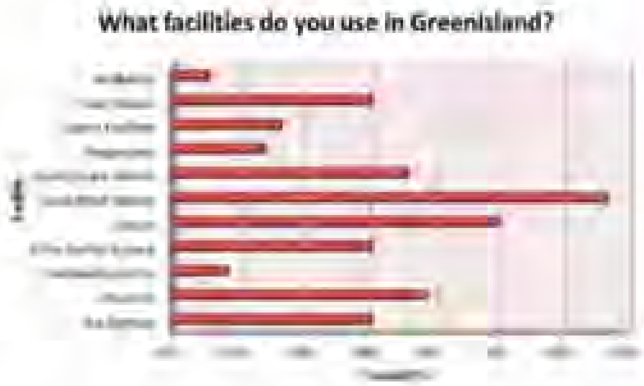
Public open house event - 3rd October 2014

4.4 Results of the Churches Survey

The Churches in Greenisland during the consultation workshop kindly volunteered to contribute further to the project by circulating an opinion survey throughout their Parishes on behalf of the consultant team. The objective of the Churches' survey was to gain an understanding of what facilities are currently well used in Greenisland and what opportunities there were for potential improvements. The key points from the Churches' survey are as follows:

- A total of 36 members from local churches responded. The churches who kindly took part in the survey were: Greenisland Baptist Church, Greenisland Presbyterian Church, St. Colman's Roman Catholic Church, Greenisland Church of the Holy Name Church of Ireland and Greenisland Methodist Church.
- The most commonly used facilities were the Local Retail Outlets (67%), Greenisland Library (50%) and Local Churches (39%).
- Some existing Carrickfergus Borough Council facilities were infrequently used such as Walkways/Right of Ways (6%), Greenisland Community Centre (8%) and Playgrounds (14%).
- Respondents were asked in an open ended fashion what opportunities they believe there are to improve Greenisland. The most commonly identified opportunities were less speed ramps along Station Road and the Estate (56%), a central meeting point or hub (44%) and more cross community activities (22%).





4.5 Results of the Householder Telephone Survey

The telephone interview survey by NEMS Market Research covered a randomly selected sample of 200 households in Greenisland, using a structured questionnaire seeking the public's views on a range of community issues in the settlement. The survey was conducted in August 2014. The survey also sought to reveal any differences in the perceptions between residents north and south of the railway line which runs through Greenisland. Thus, the sample was split into quotas of 63 interviews north of the railway line (31%) and 137 interviews south of the railway line (69%), in proportion to the number of residential addresses. The key points are below:

- Despite the perceptions, the majority of housing south of the railway line is privately owned.
- North of the railway, most people make the commute to Belfast whereas south of the railway people are likely to work locally e.g. Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey.
- The most commonly used facility in Greenisland was the library and this was widely used by people from north and south of the railway. This is highly significant in regard to drawing people into the Estate from all over Greenisland.
- A stark statistic was that on average 50% of respondents did not use any community facilities in Greenisland.


Community Workshop - August 2014

4.6 Summary

A summary of the consultation process is recorded in the sperate appendices document. The proposals that form the basis of the action plan all stem from our public engagement and stakeholder consultation. This is very much a plan from the people.

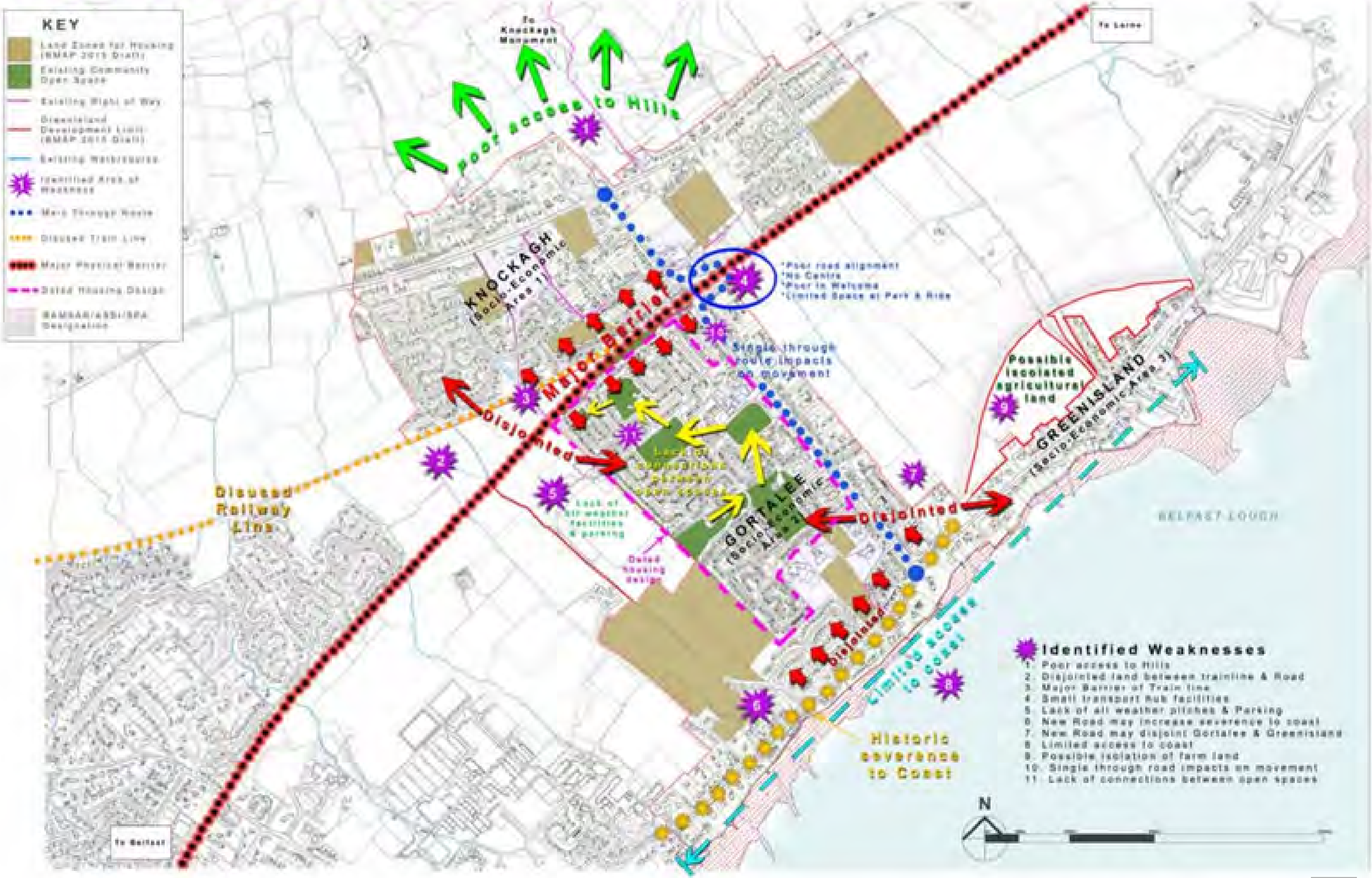
From the varied methods of consultation used a significant range of comments were made and summarised in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis, outlined in the following pages.

Following the detailed analysis and consultation we have identified two hubs within the settlement. The primary hub is the area around Glassillan Green (defined in section 6.2). The seconday hub is the area around Greenisland Train Station (defined in section 6.3).

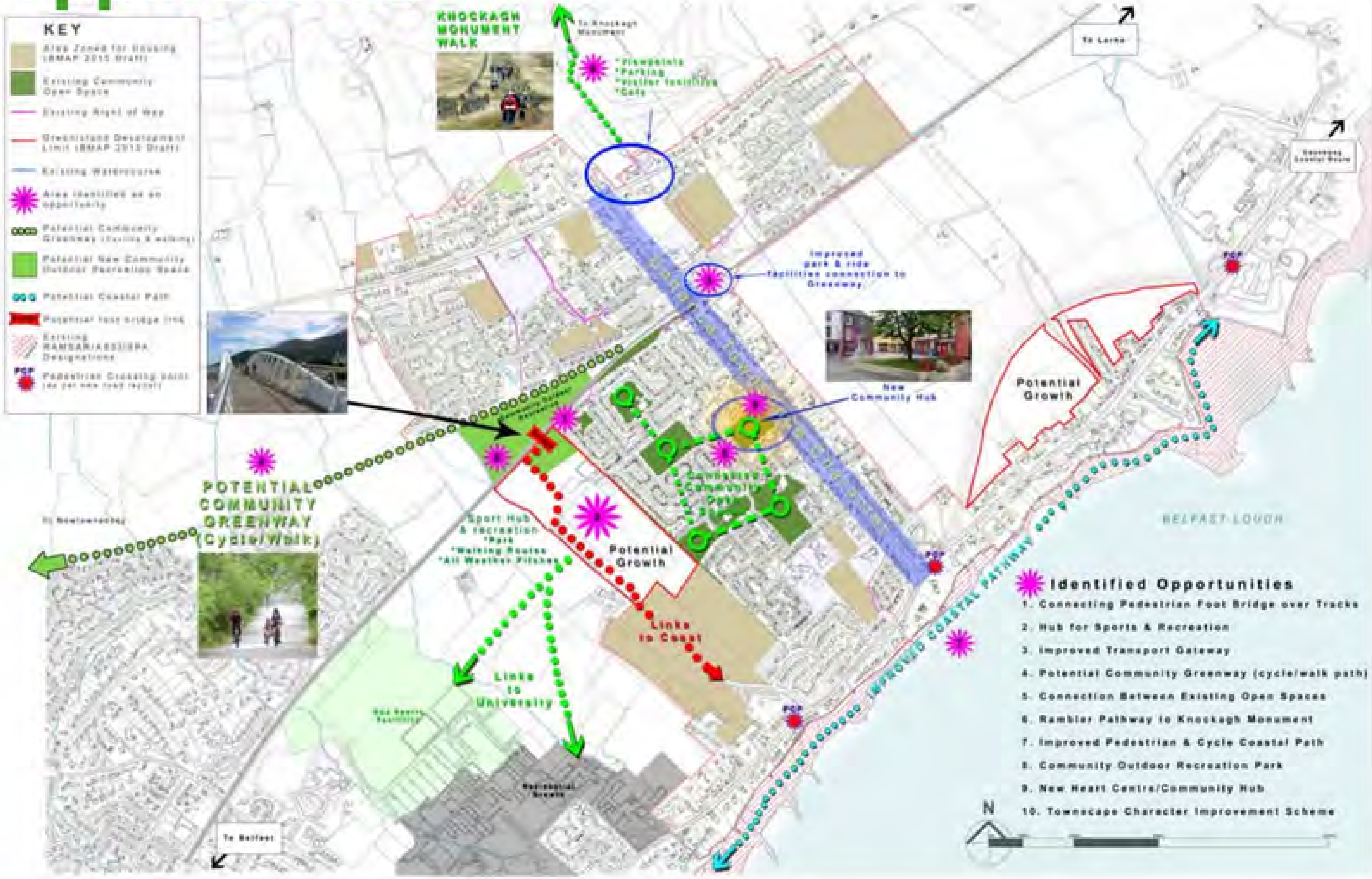
Strengths


PANORAMIC VIEWS
GOOD TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS
SENSE OF COMMUNITY
PROXIMITY TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUS
POTENTIAL GREENWAY ROUTE
COASTAL SETTING
TREE LINED AVENUE
BELFAST LOUGH
Identified Strengths
KEY

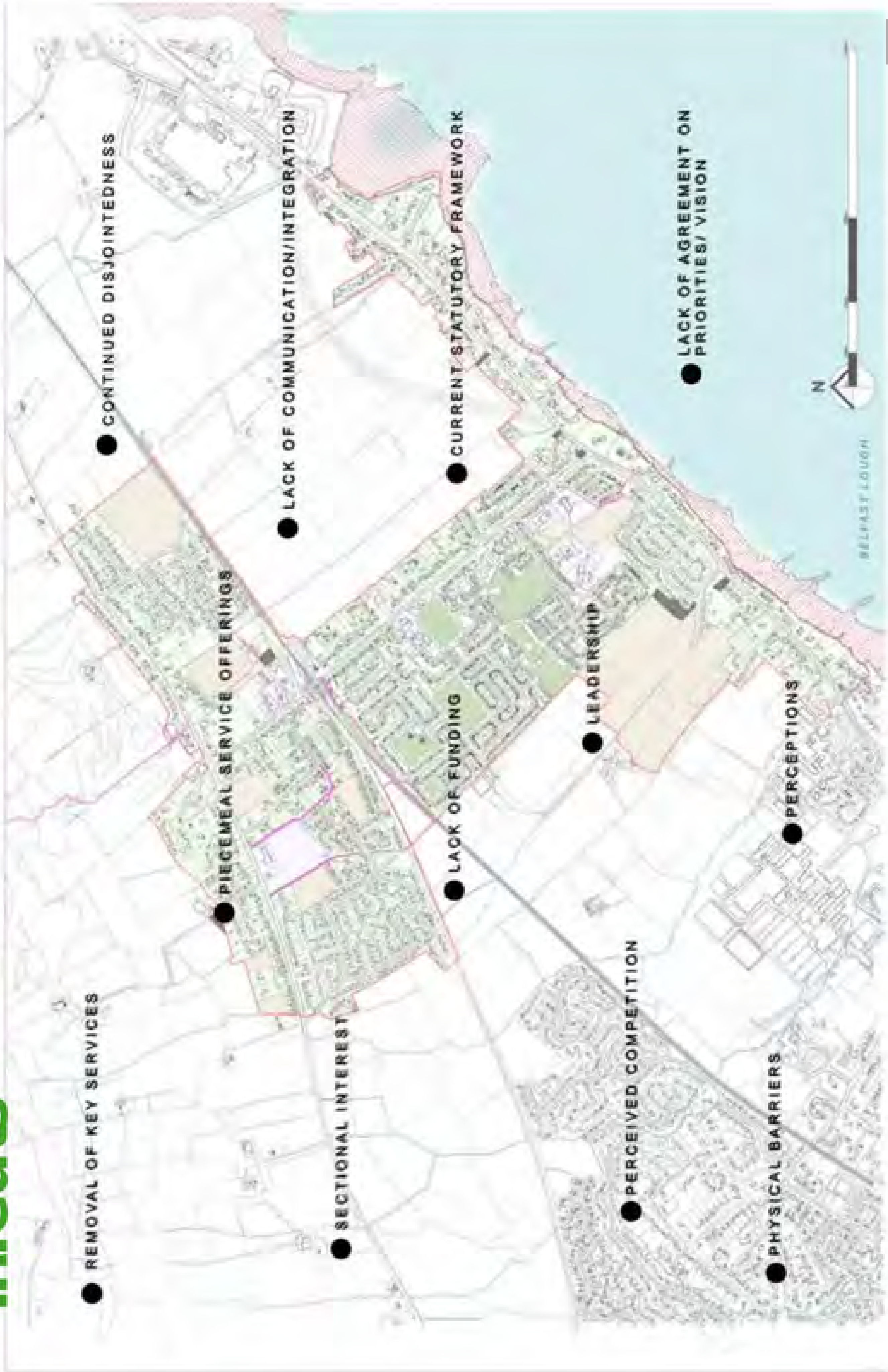
Weaknesses


KEY
Land Zoned for Housing (BMAP 2015 Draft)
Existing Community Open Space
Existing Right of Way
Greenisland Development Limit (BMAP 2015 Draft)
Existing Watercourse
Identified Area of Weakness
Main Through Route
Disused Train Line
Major Physical Barrier
Dated Housing Design
RAMSAR/ASSI/SPA Designation
To Knockagh Monument
Poor access to Hills
To Larne
KNOCKAGH (Socio-Economic Area 1)
*Poor road alignment
*No Centre
*Poor in Welcome
*Limited Space at Park & Ride
Single through route impacts on movement
Major Barrier
Disjointed
Lack of connections between open spaces
Lack of all weather facilities & parking
Dated housing design
Disused Railway Line
GORTALEE (Socio-Economic Area 2)
Possible isolated agricultural land
GREENISLAND (Socio-Economic Area 3)
BELFAST LOUGH
Disjointed
Limited access to coast
Historic severence to Coast
Identified Weaknesses
1. Poor access to Hills
2. Disjointed land between trainline & Road
3. Major Barrier of Train line
4. Small transport hub facilities
5. Lack of all weather pitches & Parking
6. New Road may increase severence to coast
7. New Road may disjoint Gortalee & Greenisland
8. Limited access to coast
9. Possible isolation of farm land
10. Single through road impacts on movement
11. Lack of connections between open spaces
N
To Belfast

Opportunities



Threats

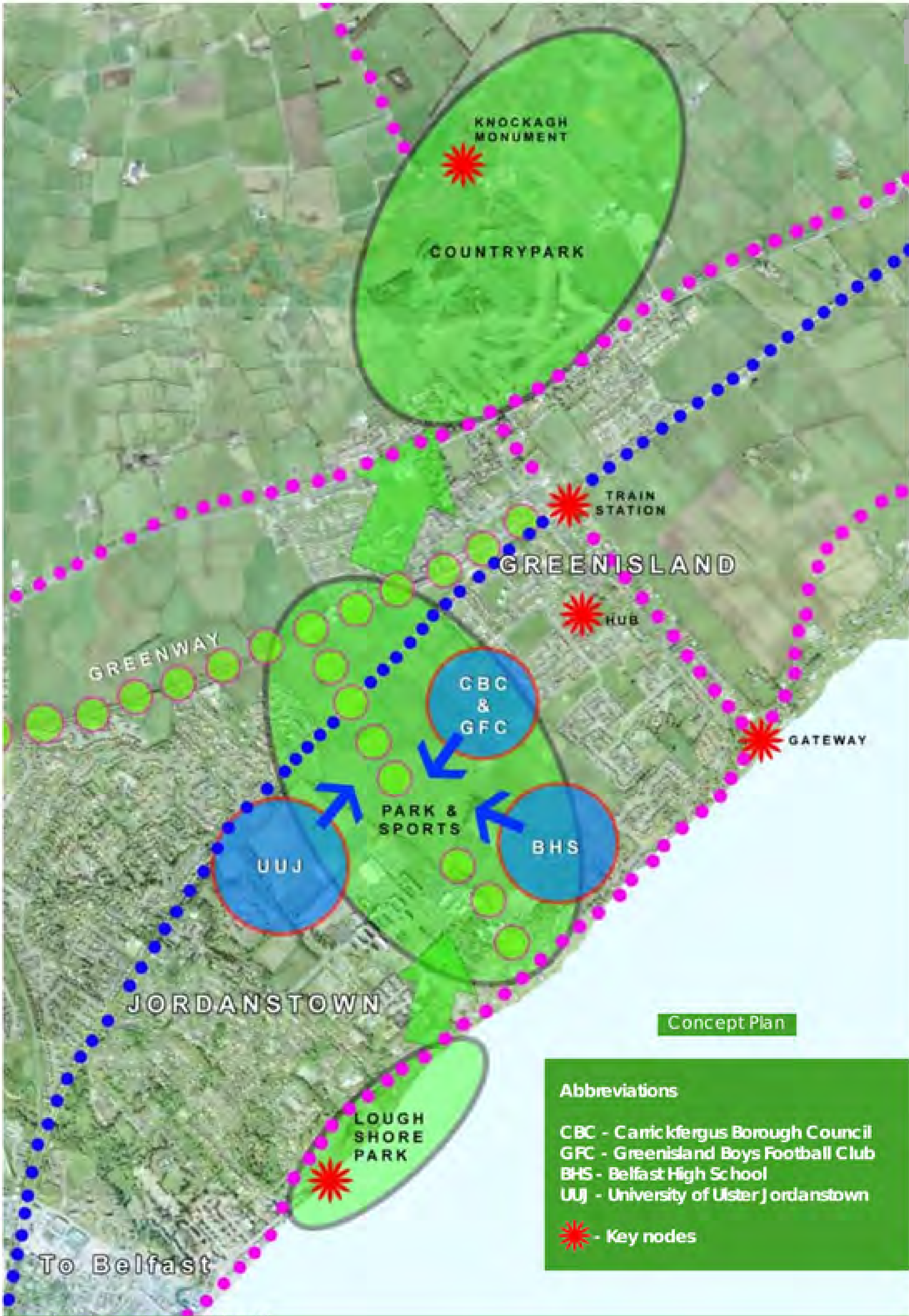

CONTINUED DISJOINTEDNESS
LACK OF COMMUNICATION/INTEGRATION
CURRENT STATUTORY FRAMEWORK
LACK OF AGREEMENT ON PRIORITIES/ VISION
PIECEMEAL SERVICE OFFERINGS
LACK OF FUNDING
LEADERSHIP
PERCEPTIONS
REMOVAL OF KEY SERVICES
SECTIONAL INTEREST
PERCEIVED COMPETITION
PHYSICAL BARRIERS
N
BELFAST LOUGH

5. Visioning & Objectives

5.1 The Concept

The concept plan for Greenisland is the primary step in achieving the goals of the Development Framework by establishing broad brush themes which individual projects can deliver to fulfil the over arching masterplan.

The key theme is "From the Lough to Knockagh". This denotes the process of drawing people from the shores of Belfast Lough into Greenisland and providing the residents of Greenisland the opportunity to better connect and interact from "The Lough to Knockagh", through a network of open spaces, recreational areas, pathways and bridges. Presently, thousands of people travel past Greenisland on a daily basis without the need to visit. Indeed many local people do not avail of the existing natural assets of the area. The concept aims to address this dual problem.



"From the Lough to Knockagh"

5.2 Vision

The vision was developed through the consultation stage of the project and agreed with the Steering Group.

"By 2030, Greenisland will have become a fully integrated community which has retained its own sense of character and identity. There will be a strong community network of activities and services that are based around the a new civic, commercial and community hub. This hub will be supported by the improved walking, cycling and vehicular connections throughout Greenisland and its neighbouring settlements. Greenisland will have taken advantage of its surrounding natural assets to attract more visitors through the implementation of a first class network of parks, recreation, sporting and wellbeing facilities."

5.3 Regeneration Objectives

In order to achieve the vision it is important to set out the core objectives which can act as targets to measure success over the next 15 years. The core regeneration objectives which were agreed and identified through consultation are highlighted below and form the foundations of the development framework:

Regeneration Objectives	
A	To improve the physical and social connection within Greenisland and also to its neighbouring settlements
B	The creation of a civic, commercial and community hub that is welcoming and accessible to the entire population of Greenisland
C	Continual improvement of Greenisland as a centre of sport & outdoor recreation excellence and as a focus for recreation and leisure well-being for the wider region
D	Fully utilise and exploit the existing physical assets that Greenisland has in abundance (Belfast Lough, Knockagh Escarpment and the surrounding areas of natural green space).

6. Proposals

6.1 Overview of the Plan

The development framework proposals were established through detailed analysis of the settlement, comprehensive stakeholder engagement and consultation in agreement with the project steering group.

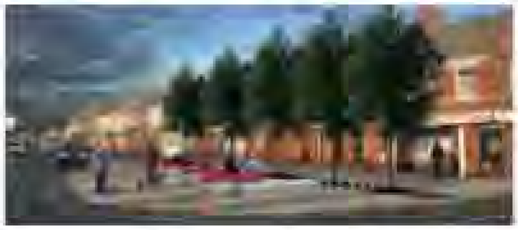
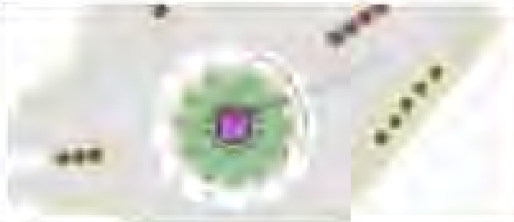
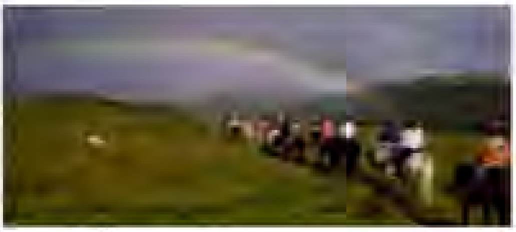
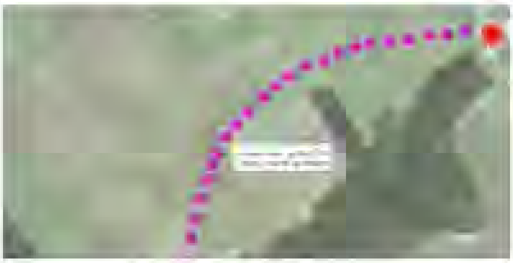
The projects and proposals aim to be realistic and deliverable in the current economic climate without sacrificing the aspirations of the development framework. Regeneration of the key sites in Greenisland shall hopefully be the kick start of further private investments into the area.

Implementation of the projects will seek to realise the agreed vision and concept for Greenisland.

Each of the 8 key projects will be explained in the remainder of this chapter through text, plans and indicative images. Each project contains separate individual components which are detailed in the action plan along with indicative costs, priority status and phasing. The plan overleaf shows the 8 key projects in their geographical context which ties back to the concept plan.

Artist's Impression of the Greenway

The Development Framework Plan for Greenisland - 8 Key Projects

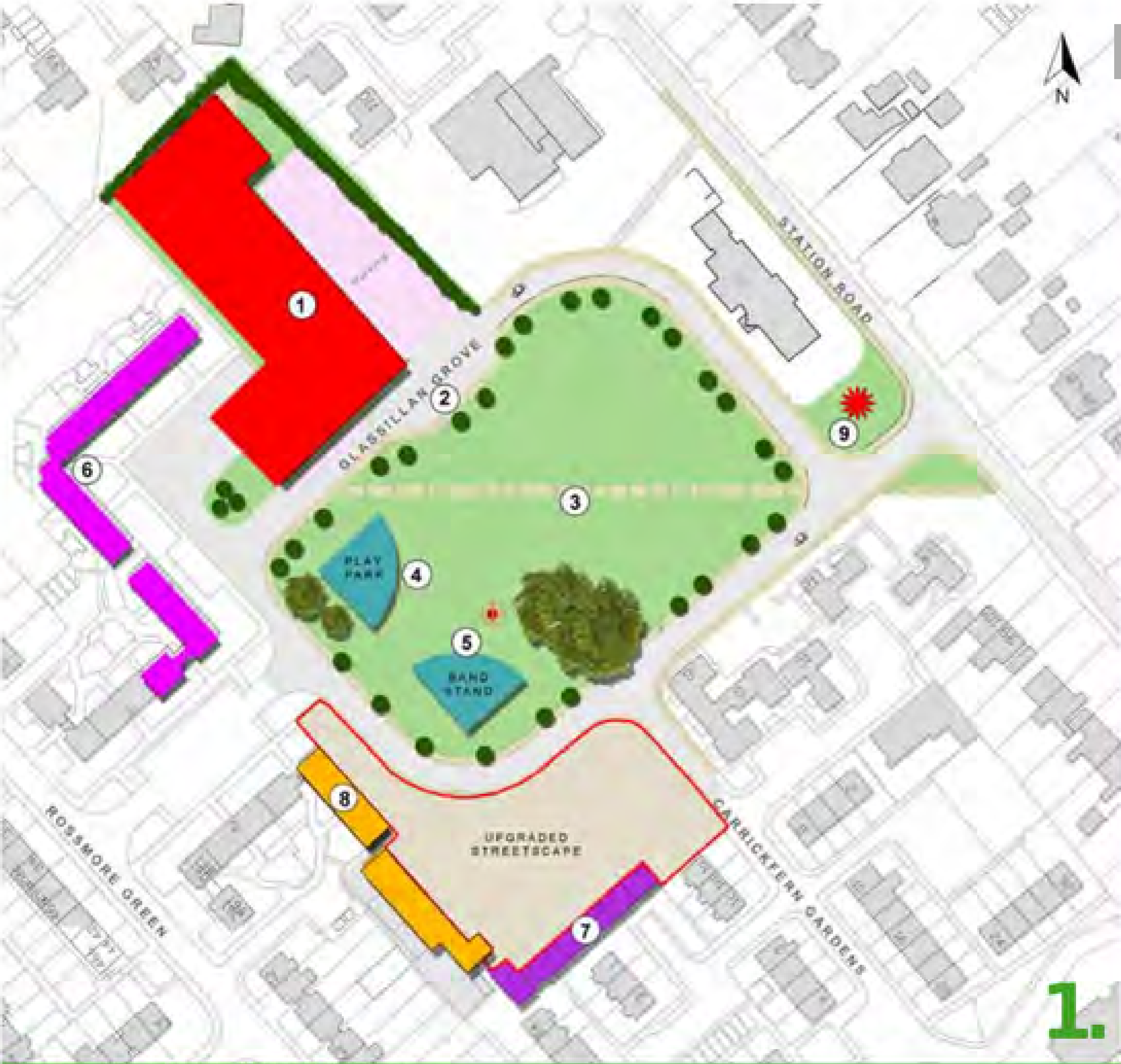
Key		
1	**Community Hub - Glassillan** • New Community Centre and civic building • Environmental improvements to the Green • Shop frontage improvement scheme • Residential improvement scheme • New commercial/retail space	
2	**Improved layout of Train Station Access** • New mixed use station/commercial building • Widened tunnel and new plazas • Linkage to Greenway and cycling facilities • Potential improvements to station parking facilities	
3	**Greenway** • Development of the disused railway for use as a car free cycling and walking route linking Greenisland with Monkstown	
4	**Greenisland Park and Sportsplex** • New shared sporting facilities - 3G pitch • Natural landscaped parkland • Rationalised allotment area • New pedestrian/cycle footbridge to connect with the Greenway	
5	**Station Road Upgrades** • Public realm upgrades along the length of Station Road • To connect to the improved Train Station area	
6	**Gateway Strategy** • Use of artwork as part of a wider branding strategy for Greenisland • Installations proposed for Shore Road, Upper Road and the Train Station	
7	**Knockagh Viewpoint and Country Park** • Full access to a new viewpoint at Knockagh Monument • Wide range of recreational facilities • New parking and visitor facilities	
8	**Potential area for Future Growth** • Long term reserve of land for use as required	

6.2 The Community Hub - Glassillan Green (1)

The existing facilities of Glassillan Grove are in fairly good condition with the positive benefit of having a potentially beautiful green complete with mature trees as an existing asset that can be upgraded. By utilising the strong open space and strengthening the sense of enclosure and by regenerating the surrounding buildings in the area, we are creating a new and vibrant heart for Greenisland.

The artist's impression below shows a potential image of how the proposals may look - subject to ownership and funding agreements.

- Community Hub - regenerated Glassillan Grove central green and surrounding buildings. The Hub will include the following components:
- A new community and civic building incorporating a range of uses such as the Library, Youth Centre, Baptist Church and Community Centre etc.
- An environmental enhancement scheme on the central green including a new state of the art Childrens' Play facility, a bandstand and multi-functional space for community events and festivals and a re-instatement of an historic pathway
- A shop improvement scheme to enhance the existing row of shops and provide for a superior retail experience
- Provision of new retail and commercial space including start up units providing for employment opportunities
- Upgrading of residential properties overlooking the green
- Improved access from Station Road and associated entrance feature providing stronger visibility of the green and new Hub
- New bus stop on northern edge of open green opposite the new Community and Civic building.



Concept Plan for the Hub at Glassillan

KEY

1. New Community Building - Mixed use - Youth Centre, Library, Meeting Rooms Baptist Church, Well being Service.
2. Bus Stop/ Drop off - Pick up Point
3. Historical pathway
4. Play Facility
5. Band Stand and Festival Space
6. Refurbished Residential/Re-Imaging Scheme
7. Shop Frontage Improvement Scheme - Refurbished commercial units
8. New Commercial/Retail Units and upgraded
9. New Entrance/ Gateway Feature - widened access

- Proposed Grass Area
- Paving Scheme/ Footpath Improvement
- New Community Building
- Refurbished Commercial Unit
- New Commercial / Retail Units
- Refurbished residential/ Re-Imaging Scheme
- Gateway Feature
- Existing Tree
- Proposed Tree
- Paved Parking Space
- Existing Building
- Location of Artist's Impression Image

Artist's Impression of the Hub and Green - revitalised Glassillan Green and the Hub in the background.

Precedent Images of Environmental Improvement schemes - Suitable for Glassillan Green.

Precedent Images of Community Hub Buildings - Newlands Community Centre (Top), Gorebridge Community Hub, Gorebridge, Scotland (Bottom)

6.3 Improvements to Greenisland Train Station and adjacent Commercial Node (2)

Upgraded Train Station and provision of new Plaza - new station building incorporating commercial units, widened pedestrian tunnel with feature lighting and entrance plaza at lower level, commercial building and associated parking together with linkage to new Greenway at upper level.

Proposed environmental improvements at the Train Station are intended to improve the connectivity of Greenisland that has been separated due to safety improvements to the railway lines over time.

Improving access across the railway line is a priority. The Train Station was traditionally the historical centre of Greenisland and is the key area for connection to Belfast and Carrickfergus. It currently bisects the settlement.

Precedent Images for the Commercial Plaza Area

Precedent Images for the Lighting Strategy

Precedent Images for the Commercial Plaza Area

Precedent Images for the Lighting Strategy

Concept Plan for Greenisland Train Station and the Local Environment

Key

1. New Station Building - Mixed use - Cafe/Restaurant/Shop
2. Bus Stop/ Drop off - Pick up Point
3. Mixed use commercial units
4. Multi-storey car parking
5. New upgraded tunnel with feature lighting
6. New Station entrance layout
7. Bicycle Park
8. Sculptural focal point
9. Plaza / Outdoor seating area at lower level
10. Greenway connection/ cyclepath
11. Townscape Character Improvements to Station Road

- Paving Scheme/ Footpath Improvement
- New Building (as noted)
- Existing building
- Proposed Tree
- Proposed greenway connecting cycle route
- Pedestrain access to cinder path
- Proposed sculptural focal point
- Road surface
- Existing grass embankment

6.4 Greenisland – Monkstown Greenway (3)

The proposal consists of the development of the disused railway line for a combined pedestrian and cycling path. Access shall be gained directly from the train station along the new Greenway to Monkstown and Newtownabbey.

A Greenway linking to Newtownabbey via the disused railway line is proposed to allow users to connect with the station. A plaza, commercial centre and improved access to the station will help create a welcoming environment. The reuse of the line however must be achieved without prejudice to the long term aspiration of Translink to re-instate the rail line if ever needed. Options should be examined that allow for such. Images sourced from nigreenways.com.

The proposed route of the Greenway from Greenisland to Monkstown

Precedent Images of the Greenway

Artists Impression of the Greenway

6.5 Greenisland Sportsplex and Parkland (4)

Building on the existing playing pitches and providing a new synthetic 3G pitch together with circuit walks linking into a newly created wider recreational wellbeing zone is the core of the proposed Sportsplex and associated parkland. A new pedestrian footbridge to the north over the existing rail line and linkage to the allotments area to the south providing connection through to the UUJ and Belfast High School sporting facilities through a formalised park area is a key component. A new network of pathways to be developed throughout the entire area linking the Shore to the Knockagh Monument.

Connectivity north and south linking the shore to Knockagh and east and west from Greenisland to the University of Ulster Jordanstown lands is equally important.

The Greenisland Sportsplex could be a perfect example of how joined up thinking and co-ordination could potentially result in the development of a top class facility for all parties involved. This facility could also act as a bridge between the proposed residential development at the UU and the proposed Hub development at Glassillan. The increase in footfall would help to increase viability for commercial developments in Glassillan.

Precedent Images of the Sportsplex Facility

Precedent Image of 3rd Generation Pitch

Precedent Image of Cycle/Pedestrian Bridge

6.6 Station Road Enhancements (5)

Implementation of a public realm and streetscape enhancement scheme along the entire length of Station Road, the main spine of Greenisland. Station Road has the opportunity to provide a landscape amenity spine to the entire settlement.

This scheme may include the following components:

- Resurfacing pavements
- Rationalised traffic management schemes
- Tree planting
- Street furniture suite
- Feature artwork
- Resurfacing the road
- Cycling route upgrade
- Improved crossing points

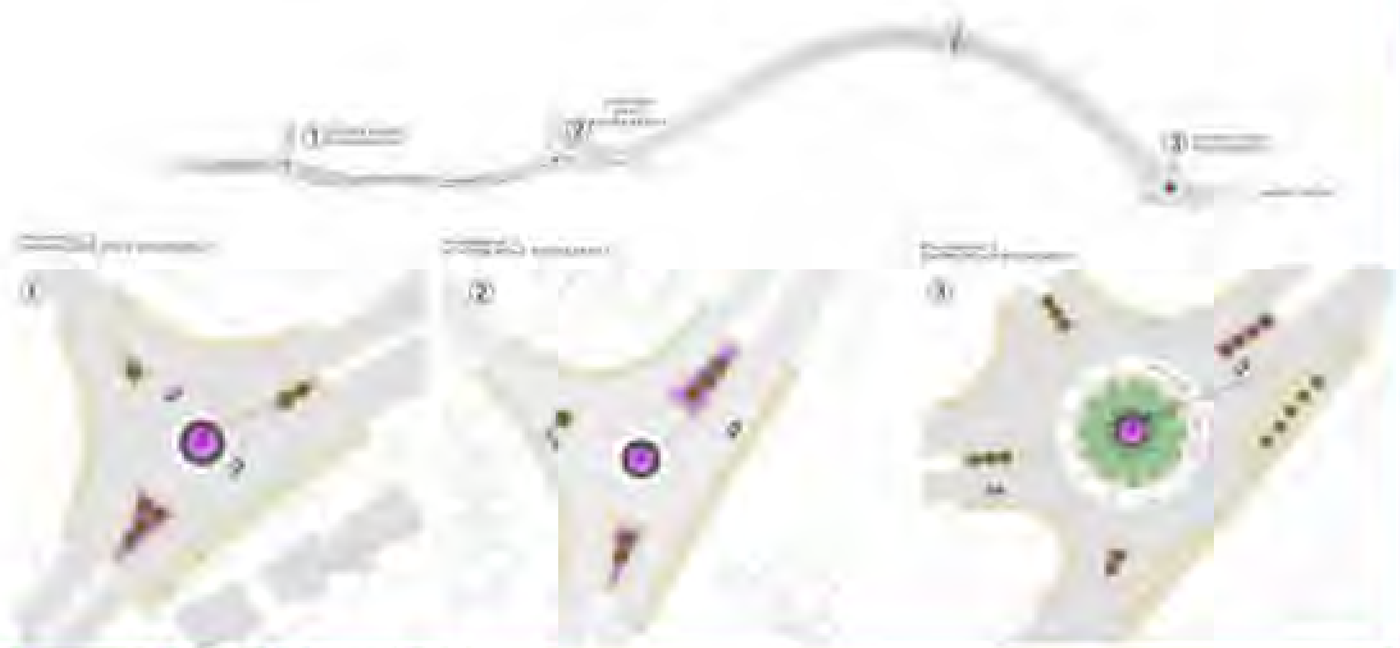
Precedent Images of Potential Public Realm Enhancements to Station Road

6.7 Gateway Strategy (6)

Gateway features will be located at Shore Road, Upper Road and the Train station providing identity and legibility to the area. Use of art and sculpture as part of wider signage strategy will help in identifying Greenisland as its own identity.

Greenisland Roundabout Strategy Proposals

- Demarkates arrival in Greenisland for visitors
- Defines Greenisland's boundary therefore seperates Greenisland as a specific and individual place in it's own right
- Provides notification to motorists, pedestrians and cyclists that they are at an access point to Greenisland
- Provides a stylish, welcoming and high quality entrance and first impression
- Provides a contemporary journey to Knockagh Monument and other tourist activity
- Provides an improved aesthetic along the Causeway Coastal Route
- Acknowledges Greenisland's unique historic and cultural heritage



Gateway Strategy for Greenisland

6.8 Knockagh Country Park (7)

Utilising the stunning views over Belfast Lough, access path up to the monument and provision for wide range of recreational activities including pony trekking, rambling, bike trail and linkage to tourism potential of Greenisland Golf Club and Equestrian Centre. Knockagh Country Park may consist as the following components: The first step is to create a visitors parking area and formalised route for visitors to access the Knockagh Monument from a designated point in Greenisland. Once this has been established it may be possible to create a network of walking routes and trails through the Knockagh Escarpment. This could consist of a range of walking, mountain biking and horse trekking routes.

Precedent Images of Potential Activities within the Country Park

6.9 Area of Potential Future Growth

Lands set aside for future growth south of the newly created Shore Road infrastructure. This shall allow for enhanced growth but should be subject to the normal scrutiny of an area plan and community planning process.

7. Action Plan

Projects are required to commence within the timeframe

		Proposal	Description	Obj	Priority	Commencement	Cost
GLASSILLAN HUB	1a	Construction of a new mixed use community/civic building	The Hub building will serve as the youth and community centre, library, meeting space, Baptist Church and associated civic/community services	B	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£8m
	1b	Environmental improvements to Glassillan Green	To include play park, band stand, upgraded paths, additional tree planting together with relocation of the bus stop and a new gateway entrance	C	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£1.8m
	1c	Residential re-imaging scheme	Exterior rebranding of residential buildings	B	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£1.3m
	1d	Shop frontage improvement scheme	Exterior rebranding of shops to include streetscape and parking upgrades	B	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£1.3m
	1e	New commercial units	Conversion of some residential units to retail use subject to future demand and consultation	B	LOW	5-10 YEARS	£700k
TRAIN STATION IMPROVEMENTS	2a	Relocation of railway station building	Existing building to be relocated south of the line. Construction of new mixed use building to consist of a mix of station office, retailing and services such as a shop, a coffee shop or a small restaurant	A	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£1.4m
	2b	Construction of new commercial units	Small retail/service node to replace and add to existing offering	A	MEDIUM	5-10 YEARS	£2m
	2c	Tunnel upgrade and park and ride extension	Widening of existing tunnel and improvements to include feature lighting. Extension of car park to include area of existing station building. Consideration to be given to multi-storey option	A	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£900k
	2d	Reconfigured station entrances and access arrangements	Redesign of station entrances by high quality public realm design. Access and improvements to the cinder path and cycling provision	A	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£400k
	2e	Creation of Station Plaza	Feature entrance to the station and tunnel	A	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£500k
GREEN WAY	3a	Implementation of the 'greenway' between Greenisland and Monkstown	The railway line between Greenisland and Monkstown is no longer in use. An innovative way of using this asset would be to construct a cycling and walking network between the two settlements (without prejudice to the line's possible future re-instatement)	A	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£600k
SPORTS-PLEX	4a	Implementation of a shared Sportsplex and natural parkland within the landscape wedge between Greenisland and Jordanstown	Construction of pathways and a new combined pedestrian/cycle bridge linking to the park	C	MEDIUM	10-15 YEARS	£650k
	4b	Cater for a 3G pitch at Greenisland Boys Football Club	Enhancement of existing facilities with provision of 3G facility for all weather activities	C	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£500k
	4c	Creation of new linkages and access points to the park for pedestrians and cyclists	New access arrangements to be identified and built with agreement of landowners and local communities	C	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£200k
STATION ROAD	5a	Public realm / environmental improvement scheme	The entire length of Station Road should be improved aesthetically through high quality public realm treatments and tree planting. Consideration should be given to re-examining the traffic calming measures	A	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	£1.7m
GATEWAYS	6a	Roundabouts strategy	The A2 upgrade has provided an opportunity to provide artwork or sculptural pieces which could act as a gateway for Greenisland. There are 3no. roundabouts highlighted where this may become possible	A	LOW	5-10 YEARS	£1m
	6b	Greenway and Upper Road strategy	Artwork or sculptural pieces installed to denote the start of the greenway at the train station and at the Upper Road	A	LOW	5-10 YEARS	£150k
KNOCKAGH PARK	7a	Construction of visitor car parking off the Upper Road	Creation of a visitor car park which would act as a gateway to Knockagh Country Park and the viewpoint and walking routes	D	MEDIUM	0-5 YEARS	£250k
	7b	Restoration of the public right of ways	Improve the accessibility of the existing right of ways from Upper Road to Knockagh via the golf club	D	HIGH	0-5 YEARS	N/A
	7c	Installation of recreational trails	Various recreational trails can be created which would cater for walkers, horse trekking or biking	D	MEDIUM	5-10 YEARS	£150k
	7d	Creation of a viewpoint facility	From Knockagh Monument, provision should be made for a temporary café/information point	D	MEDIUM	5-10 YEARS	£160k
GROWTH AREA	8a	Lands dedicated for future growth	This land has been designated for future growth if an identifiable need arises in the long term. The A2 upgrade provides a natural boundary to the development site. This would be subject to due process	D	LOW	10-15 YEARS	N/A

* Subject to land ownership, funding, partnership agreements and appropriate phasing. Projects will start within the allocated priority timescales.

8. Delivery

8.1 Funding

The Development Framework sets out a comprehensive programme of proposals and enhancements that aim to regenerate Greenisland over the next 15 years. Funding from a variety of sources including public sector interventions and private sector investments are essential to deliver the high quality developments that will fulfil the Development Framework in its entirety.

Through the Development Framework and Action Plan, delivery agencies will have clearly identifiable steps on how Greenisland can be revitalised as a place to live and a more attractive place for private investors. This section highlights various funding streams considered at the time of publication of this report however the list is not exhaustive and further research will be essential to the delivery of any given project. Research has also been obtained from NI Government Funding Database (https://govfundingpublic.nics.gov.uk).

A number of the funding programmes are entering new phases and may have differing criteria in their updated formats.

8.1.1 Local Council Funding Opportunities

The new Council arrangements will have their own budgets and priorities. Additional funding streams should be available from local councils once regeneration powers and budgets transfer to local councils in 2016. This funding stream may focus on the hub and train station enhancements with other proposals also benefitting depending on the categorisation of the project.

8.1.2 DARD Funding Opportunities

DARD Rural Development Programme

The last round of funding ran until the end of 2014. There is every indication it will reopen in Spring 2015. The grant provides funding for projects that focus on rural development. Certain projects listed on the action plan may benefit from this scheme due to being outside the settlement limits of Greenisland e.g. Knockagh Country Park or the Greenway. This source is likely to be most relevant to the Knockagh Park development.

8.1.3 DCAL Funding Opportunities

Sports NI / Libraries NI

The Active Clubs and Community Capital funds could contribute to shared sporting facilities such as the Greenisland Sportsplex however both schemes are currently closed for 2014, with no announcement on 2015 funding to date. The next round of funding needs to be investigated. The 3G pitch at the GBFC could also benefit from sports funding sources. Future grant from Libraries NI to be sought for the redevelopment of the library.

8.1.4 DETI Funding Opportunities

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

The Built Heritage Programme aims to provide capital assistance towards the development of visitor attractions in NI. The Tourism Development Scheme aims to provide financial assistance to improve visitor attractions in NI. There are a range of grant sizes available and it runs to 2015. Examples of schemes which may benefit from such funding are the Knockagh Country Park/ Monument and the Greenway as well as place making and signage proposals for Greenisland in general.

8.1.5 DRD Funding Opportunities

Cycling Unit Funding

DRD Cycling Unit offers funding on a yearly basis to projects which encourage the use of cycling. The Greenway proposal is an obvious potential beneficiary of this scheme. Sustrans would be a key consultee in regard to other funding sources for the 'Greenway'.

Translink

Translink operate the "Routes to Stations" scheme which also could benefit the Greenway proposals as it ties directly into Greenisland train station. The land is also owned by Translink who would benefit directly from interventions. Whilst there is no current programme identified for upgrading the station, future contributions should be examined from Translink.

8.1.6 DSD Funding Opportunities

DSD have various live schemes which could benefit programmes in Greenisland all of which have the remit of funding regeneration schemes which tackle community and social issues. Comprehensive Development funding may be available towards the design, implementation and maintenance of regeneration schemes. Given the delay in transferring powers to Councils there remains a central budget within DSD that could be examined for the 'Hub' and Train Station nodes in particular.

Responsibility for operational delivery of local urban regeneration, tackling deprivation and community development will transfer from the Department for Social Development to the new councils in April 2016 and the relevant budgets are to be allocated and transferred to the new councils. Some financial assistance may be available from DSD up until the period of when the transfer of functions occurs. This will be particularly crucial in regard to establishing a number of quick wins.

8.1.7 Funding from other Government Departments

Unfortunately there are currently no applicable open schemes operated through the following government departments:

- Department of Education
- Department of Employment and Learning
- Department of Health, Social

Services and Public Safety
- Department of Environment
- Department of Justice
- Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Funding streams from these departments may open in future and should be reconsidered prior to progression of any schemes.

8.1.8 Charitable and Voluntary Sector Funding Opportunities

Biffa Waste Tax

Biffa Award was established in 1997 under the Landfill Communities Fund and through the Fund they are able to support a wide range of community and environmental projects across the UK. Biffa Group Limited has supported this initiative by contributing over £150m since they were established, which to date has been used to help more than 3200 projects. Funding is available of between £10,000 and £50,000. This scheme may be relevant to the Knockagh Country Park or Greenway project.

Ulster Garden Villages

Ulster Garden Villages Limited was established under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts (Northern Ireland) in 1946. In 1983 the Committee of Management of Ulster Garden Villages took the necessary steps to convert the Society into a charity and under its amended regulations empowered it to transfer from reserves to a common fund such amounts to be available for distribution for general charitable purposes, as the Committee shall from time to time determine. Ulster Garden Villages generally fund projects which benefit the following areas: Health, disadvantaged sections of our society, young people, culture & heritage and environment. This scheme may be relevant to a number of the projects in Greenisland which can demonstrate conformance with the above criteria.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is in partnership with MOREwoods and the Forest Service to contribute towards landowners who wish to plant 5 hectares. This may be relevant in due course to the proposed parkland between Greenisland and Jordanstown.

Lottery

Small grants can be awarded through the Awards for All grants which may cover elements of schemes. The Space and Place scheme has future potential to provide funding for community spaces such as the Glassillan "Hub" if reallocated in future.

EU Peace IV

Significant funds will be available through the EU Peace IV fund administered by the Special EU Programmes Body. Consultation was held in 2014 to inform the content of the programmes from 2014-2020. Eligibility of the schemes should be assessed once the final programme is announced.

INTERREG IV

Significant funds will be available through the INTERREG programme administered by the Special EU Programmes Body. Consultation was held in 2014 to inform the content of the programmes from 2014-2020. Eligibility of the schemes should be assessed once the final programme is announced.

8.2 Phasing

Timescales for developing all aspects of the Development Framework will extend up to 15 years. Certain elements within the report will be suitable for short and medium term completion whereas others are longer term aspirations.
Phasing and prioritising of schemes needs to be examined on a scheme by scheme basis at the time of programming and by the appointed project partnership board. Factors which may influence phasing are:

- Funding
- Land availability
- Temporary arrangements if proposals are co-incident
- Parking, traffic and access
- Local support will be vital

It will be essential that the community see demonstrable change in the early stages even if those projects are limited in scale.

8.3 Potential Quick Wins

The following projects could begin work immediately once funding has been secured:

- Environmental improvements to Glassillan Green
- Shop front improvements at Glassillan
- 3G pitch at Council playing fields
- Tunnel upgrade and park and ride extension
- Implementation of the Greenway between Greenisland and Monkstown

8.4 Delivery Mechanisms

The impending RPA is the first major examination in decades of how public services in Northern Ireland will be organised and delivered. Under the reforms, Mid and East Antrim Council will become the statutory local authority responsible for the Greenisland area. The reforms will also transfer central government powers such as planning, economic development and urban regeneration. The new council will therefore have a greater ability to effect change in Greenisland through these additional powers and resources.

An advisory steering group or partnership board should be formed with the remit of delivering the Development Framework and Action Plan for Greenisland. The implementation group should have a clear governance structure. The steering group should consist of a similar mix of individuals as the incumbent group that have overseen the consultation and evolution of the Development Framework up to its draft final stage. Some elements of the Development Framework fall within the newly formed Antrim and

Newtownabbey Council area (west of Hartley Hall). Liaison between the two Councils is important to achieve delivery of some trans-boundary schemes.

This report recommends that the primary delivery agent and key driver for this plan shall be established under the new Mid and East Antrim Council. Carrickfergus Borough Council officials have sought the permission of the new Mid and East Antrim Council to establishing a Greenisland Regeneration steering group to drive forward the Development Framework.

8.4.1 Key Stakeholders

The following key stakeholders will have important roles in delivering the Development Framework:

Greenisland Project Delivery Team/ Steering Group

The team responsible for driving forward the Development Framework. Team composition is to be confirmed by the new council.

Mid and East Antrim Council

The new Council will become responsible for Greenisland on the 1st April 2015. The new Greenisland regeneration group will be taken forward by Mid and East Antrim Council.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Council

As a neighbouring local council which has similar responsibility for schemes outside of Mid and East Antrim Council's jurisdiction - but are currently part of the Development Framework

Local Community

Given the significant role the local community played in the formulation of the Development Framework, it is anticipated that they will be one of the key stakeholders in taking it forward.

Transport NI

Transport NI is the authority responsible for roads throughout Northern Ireland. Transport NI manage, maintain and development the road network. Enhancements are recommended in the plan which Transport NI will be required to support.

Translink - NI Railways

As landowners of significant lands within Greenisland, Translink will be required to support many of the schemes such as the Greenway and Station Improvements.

Other statutory authorities such as Libraries NI etc.

Private Developers and Landowners

The Council, project steering group and government bodies should encourage and work with private developers, investors and landowners to ensure implementation of the Development Framework.

8.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the consultancy team would like to thank the project steering group and all the individuals and groups that have assisted in the production of the Development Framework. In the context of a changing world with the transferring of powers back to local government and the emphasis on community planning, the Greenisland Development Framework offers a very real opportunity to realise the vision of a fully regenerated and integrated community which has retained its own sense of character and identity.

It is important that momentum is not lost and that early wins are clearly identified and that the local community is fully engaged to achieve the vision for Greenisland.

Carrickfergus Borough

Department for Social Development

URS

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Appendix 3.

Table of Statutory Investment into Greenisland during the past 10 Years.

Project	Investment	Year	Details
Allotment Gardens, Community & Environmental Investment	£10,000	N/A	Enhanced allotment gardens with compostable toilet, polytunnel, storage, and food-growing programmes.
Greenisland Community Centre Refurbishment	£200,000	2020	Upgrades including accessibility, facade, roof, hall floor, toilets, storage, and energy-efficient lighting.
Sports Hub & 3G Football Pitch	£800,000	2019	New 3G pitch and outdoor gym for Greenisland FC and residents.
Greenisland Greenway Active Travel Planning	£25,000	2017	Feasibility study and design for 2.7 km greenway from Monkstown to Greenisland.
Greenisland Foreshore and Public Access Consultation	N/A	2025	Public consultation on pedestrian access to foreshore .
Ongoing Community Facility Investments	N/A	Ongoing	Management of community centre and allotment services with rental options and concessions.
NIHE 2024/25 Small Pockets of Deprivation (SPOD Programme) 2017-2025	£41,000 annually	2017-	Supporting a small area of social deprivation administered through Carrickfergus Community Forum
MEABC Capital investment	£220,000	2024	Extension of the carpark at Greenisland Football Club
Greenisland House Supported Housing Facility	£3.5 million	2019	Development of supported housing programme supported by DfC, Choice Housing Ireland, HSC Trust & Housing Executive.
Greenisland Greenway Feasibility Study		2017	Study to support community connection and utilisation of green spaces in the local area.

Mid & East Antrim
Borough Council

Back to Agenda

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Committee:	**Environment and Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Naming of residential development at Old Park Road, Ballymena**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Drew Kyle, Senior Building Control Officer
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Elected Members decision on the naming of a new residential development at Old Park Road, Ballymena

2. Background

2.1. Allure Home Developments Ltd. is developing the site for residential use and is proposing to construct a total of potentially 6 no. new detached homes on land outlined in red on the attached site plan.

2.2. Building Regulations applications have been received for sites 1, 3, 4 and 6.

2.3. Allure Home Developments Ltd. have submitted a request to name the entire development. The following names have been presented for consideration in order of preference:

1. **The Parks** – The name is derived from townland name of 'Galgorm Parks'.
2. **Park Heights** – The name is derived from the fact that the site is located off the Old Park Road.
3. **Park Avenue** – The name is derived from the fact that the site is located off the Old Park Road.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. The naming of any new development is of social benefit to provide a suitable descriptor which geographically and historically meets the conventions Council set out for naming new roads/streets. A suitably named road/street can provide a sense of place for those living/working/travelling on the same.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Council has a responsibility to name and erect street signage on new streets/developments as set out within Article 11 of the Local Government

(Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. Costs for erecting these signs are borne by Council. The only future cost to Council (after initial erection of new signage) would be the replacement or repair of any defective signs.

4.2. Approval of a suitable development name can accelerate the availability of properties, provide employment in the construction of the new homes, contribute to the housing needs in the borough and provide a sense of civic pride for the residents of the new properties.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Following a decision on the proposal, the report author's next step will be to communicate the outcome to the proposer and request Council's Maintenance and Facilities team to erect signage at appropriate locations when the new roads have been constructed to a standard that these can be fitted to remain permanent.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve the proposed development name of The Parks or consider the alternative options as below:

1. **The Parks (preferred option)**
2. Park Heights
3. Park Avenue

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 Application to name a street from Allure Home Developments Ltd.
Appendix 2 Location map

APPENDIX 1

Application to Name a Street

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPTIALS

Please refer to the guidance notes overleaf or for further assistance, please contact your local Building Control office

One copy of this form with the required accompanying information should be sent to the appropriate Building Control Office Ballymena ☐ Carrickfergus ☐

Applicant's name and address		Agent's name and address (if applicable)	
Name:	AUBREY CRAWFORD	Name	
Company Name:	ALLURE HOME DEVELOPMENTS LTD	Company Name:	
Address:	1 DORSET CLOSE	Address:	
	BALLYMENA		
Postcode:	BT42 1QP	Postcode:	
Tel:	[redacted]	Tel:	
Email:	hello@allurehomedevelopments.co.uk	Email:	

Location of new street	46 OLD PARK ROAD
Number of units in this phase	5
Number of units in entire development	5
Building Regulations application ref. (if applicable)	FP/2022/1373

Street Name Suggestions (preferred choice and two alternatives required)	
1. (preferred choice)	THE PARKS
Rationale	BELIEVE THIS TO BE A SUITABLE NAME CHOICE FOR THE TOWNLAND THAT THE HOUSES ARE SITUATED IN

2. (alternative)	PARK HEIGHTS
Rationale	

RECEIVED
MID & EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL
10 NOV 2025
BUILDING CONTROL DEPT. BALLYMENA

3. (alternative)	PARK AVENUE
Rationale	

Signed:	[redacted]	Applicant/Agent
Dated:	4/11/2025	

Guidance Notes

Applicant and Agent Details
• Full details of the applicant and agent should be completed. The agent can be the persons/s who are acting on behalf of the applicant with regards to the street naming proposal.

Street Name and Suggestion Rationale
• Those making the application should take into account the names of other street names/places within the borough when suggesting a name for a new street. Careful consideration should be taken to avoid the use of a similar sounding name to an existing street/name within the borough. • Street name suggestions should be chosen after research of the physical and/or historical features of the site and nearby surrounding area. The names of individuals (living or passed away) should be avoided. • If more than one street is to be included in your proposal, each street should be clearly highlighted on a site plan and additional sheets (making reference to the annotated site plan) attached with the preferred choice, alternatives and rationales set out for each street and as per layout on this form.

Attachments
The applicant/agent should fully complete the form overleaf and return to your local Building Control office. The completed form should be accompanied by the following • A location map to scale 1:1250 or 1:2500 with the entire development outlined in red. • A site plan indicating all units and streets to scale 1:500 with the entire development outlined in red and the street to be named clearly highlighted.

Timescales
When all relevant information has been received by Building Control, a report is prepared and forwarded to the relevant Council Committee where a provisional street name is proposed and seconded. Applicants should be aware that elected representatives may not necessarily choose a name suggested on this form and may instead propose an alternative. This preliminary decision by committee is then presented to full Council the following month for ratification. Applicants should be aware that assignment of street names may take 2 - 3 months depending on seasonal timetables for committee/full council.

Building Control Contact Addresses:

Ballymena Office
4 Wellington Court
Ballymena
BT43 6EQ
Tel: 028 2563 3346

Carrickfergus Office
Museum & Civic Centre
11 Antrim Street
Carrickfergus
BT38 7DG
Tel: 028 9335 8347

Data Protection

You are providing your personal data to a Council, a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. We are processing your information under the lawful basis of the publics task, in exercising our obligations under The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (as amended), The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (as amended) and The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

Information collected may be shared with other Council sections eg: Environmental Health and Planning, and Government agencies eg: Land and Property Services and Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. Information will not be transferred to countries outside the EEA. The Council may also process the information for research purposes carried out in the public interest. All information will be held in accordance with the Council's retention and disposal schedule and will be disposed of securely when no longer required.

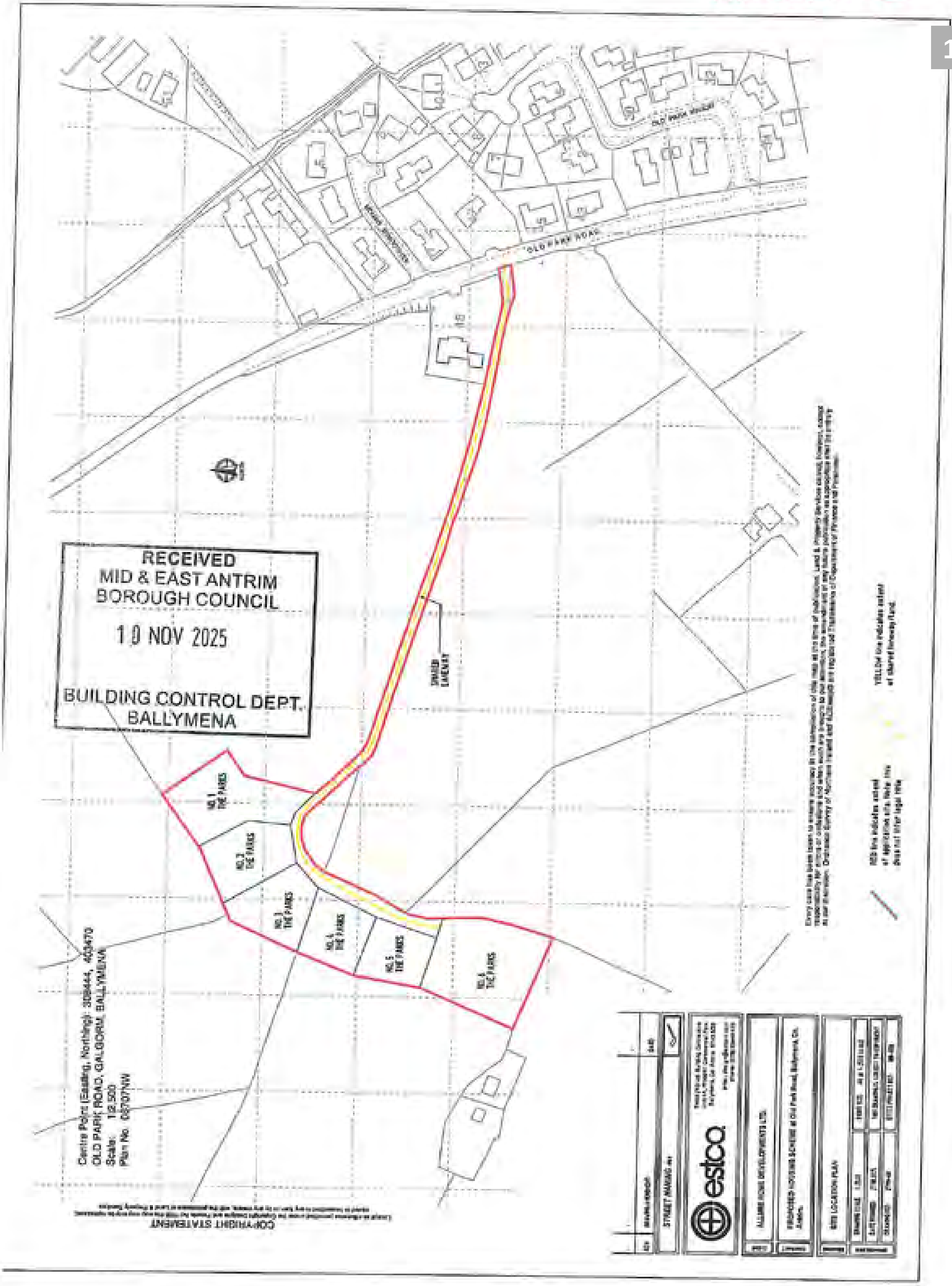
For more information about how your data will be used, you can access the Council's Privacy Notice at https://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/privacy-notice.

You have a number of rights with regard to data we hold on you - for further information see the Information Commissioner's website https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/

If at any point you believe the information on you that we process is incorrect, you can request to see this information and have it corrected or deleted. If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.

If you are not satisfied with our response, or believe we are not processing your personal in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

APPENDIX 2


OLD PARK ROAD
RECEIVED
MID & EAST ANTRIM
BOROUGH COUNCIL
10 NOV 2025
BUILDING CONTROL DEPT.
BALLYMENA
OLD PARK ROAD, GALGORM, BALLYMENA
Scale: 1:2500
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT
estca

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Economic Development Activity Report**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

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

3.1. 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	PEACEPLUS Measure 1:1 Co-Designed Local Action Plan has been approved. The PEACEPLUS Letter of Offer for funding of up to €5,848,008 including data sharing agreement was reviewed by Councils Legal Team. These documents were signed and returned to SEUPB on 5 August 2025. The last PEACEPLUS Partnership Board Meeting took place on 24 September 2025 at Carrickfergus Town Hall with the next meeting taking place on 27 January 2026 at Ballymena North. The official launch of the PEACEPLUS Programme will take place on Tuesday 10 March 2026 at Ballygally Castle Hotel.

Rural Development Programme Update	Under the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 85 applications were received. As reported to December's Economic Environment Committee 3 were ineligible and 10 applications didn't meet the required threshold. 72 remaining applicants were issued with a Letter of Offer from DAERA on 15 December 2025. The total value of the Letters of offer were £313,007.48. As of 13 January 2026, 5 applicants have submitted their claims which are currently being checked by Officers. The closing date for all claims to be submitted is midnight on 23 March 2026. 1 applicant has withdrawn their application.
Skills and Entrepreneurship	
Do It Yourself	Two cohorts of the Council-funded DIY programme commenced on 1 October 2025 in Carnlough and Carrickfergus with a total of 23 participants. The 12-week programme is ongoing. Each participant completed a Level 1 Numeracy and Level 2 Vocational Skills qualification and a Celebration Event will be held to present the certificates once received. A Go Succeed session will be held for participants who have expressed an interest in starting their own business. A further cohort of 10 participants funded by Labour Market Partnership (LMP) commenced in Kells on 1 December 2025. The participants are interested in construction skills with placements arranged with joiners and electricians. 8 will complete CSR Card training in January 2026. A cohort of 10 participants will be recruited for delivery in Portglenone once procurement is completed and a delivery agent appointed.
Sewing and Design Programme	Recruitment for this programme has been completed for two cohorts of participants for Ballymena and Carrickfergus, 16 in total, who will complete a 7-week course commencing January 2026. The course will develop practical skills and theoretical knowledge in creative industries through a range of hands-on activities/assignments and inspire sessions in fashion and costume design from industry experts incorporating a numeracy element. Following the receipt of 60 Expressions of Interest, the LMP has provided funding for an additional cohort of 8 participants in Larne.
Labour Market Partnership – Programmes currently recruiting	**Hospitality Taster Programme** - The Hospitality Taster will provide 10 participants with the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge to gain employment and/or move on to further study in the hospitality sector across all roles within the industry. Participants will complete a mixture of core employability and personal development training and can undertake work tasters and placements. Recruitment will commence mid-January. **Transport Academy** - 15 Participants will receive mandatory theory and practical training with the objective of securing a

	Category C (HGV Class 2) or Category D (PSV Bus / Coach) license and securing employment within the Transport sector. Currently accepting Expressions of Interest. **Propel** - This initiative will equip care leavers within Mid and East Antrim with essential career skills, boost their confidence, and provide much-needed respite through recreational activities. The programme is designed to address the unique barriers faced by young care leavers in accessing education, training, and employment. **Security Industry Authority (SIA) Training** - MEA LMP are offering residents who are interested in a career in the Security Industry the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge within the sector by participating in our SIA Door Supervision Training. Recruitment is currently open. **Forklift** – 20 participants will have the opportunity to complete the industry recognised training. All training is carried out to BRITTOP 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. Recruitment will commence late January 2026. **CSR** (Construction Skills Register) Card is an essential requirement for anyone working in construction in Northern Ireland. To date 9 participants have completed the training. A further 10 places will be available January – March 2026.
Events	Recent statistics published in July 2025 show that 32% of 50–60 year-olds in MEA are not in employment, 2.5% are unemployed and 29.7% are economically inactive. As a result, the LMP will be hosting an **'Over 50's Job Fair'** to support residents who are seeking to move back into employment or are wanting to explore volunteering and training opportunities. The event will take place in the Braid, Ballymena on 28 January 2026 from 10am-12 noon.
Placement Insights Programme with Castle Tower School	A six-week project working alongside participants in Castle Tower, exploring bitesize practical activities, education and employability support through engagement with local employers. This programme aims to introduce the world of work to our young people and help them develop pragmatic, transferrable skills. This programme is due to commence in January/February 2026. School engagement is ongoing.
Activate Your Curiosity	The flagship event took place in The Braid on Tues 20th January and was attended by over 400 Year 10 Students from 22 schools including two SEN schools in MEA. As part of the event, students

	had the opportunity to take part in a variety of 12 workshops and 8 Presentation talks. The event was sponsored by eight local companies (namely Sant Gobain, Michelin, Moore Concrete, Terumo, Teva, Caterpillar, EPUKI (Kilroot) and Phoenix) with companies and other external partners providing their time in kind to deliver the activities. School visits to companies, in-school workshops and STEAM events are in the planning stage from January to June 2026.
Creative Industries Week 16-22 February 2025	Creative Industries Week commences on 16 February with an exciting programme of free events designed to inspire creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation, including songwriting, camera phone photography, jewellery making, lino print making, floriography and creating engaging social media reels. School events include a behind-the-scenes tour of a real working music studio and a theatre workshop led by Peter Corry.
Investment and Place	
Making The Future - MTF Network	The final MTF Steering Team meeting of 2025 was held on 18 December and included a review of the year, an update on 2026 priorities and a 'fireside chat' between MTF Chair, David Watson and three MTF members Wilbert Moore, Moore Concrete, Joanne Liddle, IPC Mouldings, and JB Dobbin, demanu, which provided attendees with insight into their entrepreneurial business journeys. It was announced in the New Year Honours list, MTF member Joanne Liddle, MD of IPC Mouldings in Carrickfergus was awarded an MBE for services to the aerospace sector in Northern Ireland. Officers are continuing to engage with colleagues from Invest Northern Ireland, GEMX and MEGA advanced manufacturing clusters to develop a feasibility report for Northern Ireland's advanced manufacturing super cluster. Recruitment is underway for the fifth cohort of the FutureMakers Manufacturing Academy funded by The Gallaher Trust and delivered by NRC which has seen some 25 participants, half of the intake to-date, securing a full-time permanent job with MTF manufacturers based in Ballymena.
i4C Innovation and CleanTech Project	The approval process for the BRCD-funded i4C Project is ongoing with a 'value engineering' review underway to scale the project due to construction cost inflation. The Post Project Operating Entity (PPOE) with responsibility for managing the i4C Centre, Oxford Innovation has been appointed, and regular planning meetings are taking place with them in the pre-operations phase before i4C officially opens. An integral part of the i4C Centre will be an iLAB facility where businesses can access equipment and specialist expertise to help

	support business growth and innovation levels. Plans for a pilot iLAB facility are being submitted for co-funding under the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) programme to initiate this project in advance of i4C commencing.
HyTech NI Project	The appraisal of the Outline Business Case for the £20m HyTech NI project is ongoing with discussions taking place with Invest NI and key project stakeholders on the potential grant funding rates for the three Demonstrator projects. The Demonstrator projects are led by Council, Wrightbus, and Kinecx and B9 Energy. Discussions are ongoing with the funders to agree the Letters of Offer Format and structure and project governance arrangements. A casework approval meeting is planned for early 2026, which could see Letters of Offer issued and the project commencing by Spring 2026.
Investment Opportunities	The Mayor, accompanied by an Officer attended the official launch of the Isle of Man Steam Ferry's announcement of a three-times weekly service to Larne from April 2026. The event was held at the Holiday World Expo in the ICC in Belfast on 9th January. This enhanced schedule is expected to boost tourism and passenger travel and support economic and tourism links between Larne and the Isle of Man.
(BCRPP) Belfast City and Region Place Partnership	As partner Council in the Belfast Region City Deal, Council are continuing to sponsor the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) programme throughout 2026. An Officer attended the first BCRPP taskforce meeting of 2026 on Monday 19 January. This meeting was led by the new BCRPP Chair Marie Doyle, Partner at Deloitte, who led the mapping out of partnership priorities for the year ahead. The key event and opportunity identified as part of the sponsorship programme is the UK investment conference UKREiiF Leeds, from 19 – 21 May 2026. Officers will engage with the BRCPP team on our involvement in the programme and will provide further updates to Members when information becomes available.
ECOS Hub	The Ecos Hub continues to operate at full occupancy. Income from the meeting rooms and conference facilities has increased by 2.5% on last year's figures. A new social media campaign is increasing awareness of the Ecos Hub offerings and generating room and conference bookings from new customers.
Business Growth	
Augmenting Business' Growth potential via Stakeholder Supports	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. Officers will continue to further develop relationships and gain an understanding of new and emerging initiatives as well

	as identifying and meeting new stakeholders as we look to ensure our local business base is accessing as much relevant support as possible.
Invest NI Partnership Working *Update on Council's local level partnership work to increase the pipeline of businesses capable of access Invest NI financial assistance.*	**Ambition to Grow** call opened on Monday, 12th January and closes 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. Council's Business Client Managers are working closely with Invest NI to promote the opportunity, support any potential applicants and partnered to host two drop-in information sessions on Wednesday 7th January in LEDCOM, Larne and Carrickfergus Enterprise.
Balmoral Show (13-16 May)	Expressions of Interest have been open since Monday 1st December 2025 and close on Friday 30th January 2026. Following the closing date Officers will review submissions for eligibility/fit with the criteria set by Food NI and bring and update in due course to Committee.
Town Centre Development	
Footfall	The total number of visitors for the year to date in Larne is up + 0.3% on the previous year for the same reporting period. The total number of visitors for the year to date in Ballymena is down on the previous year – 2.5% The total number of visitors in Carrickfergus is slightly down on the previous year -0.4%.
Carrickfergus Artisan Market	The November Artisan Market took place on Saturday 1 November 2025 in Carrickfergus Town Hall, the market has now moved indoors during the Autumn/winter months. There was a full market of 15 traders confirmed to attend the market. The market was well attended with high footfall throughout the day. The next market will take place on Saturday 7 February 2025 in Carrickfergus Town Hall with a full market of 14 traders expected to attend.
Business Support	There is ongoing business engagement via the Town Centre Newsletter, this e-zine is disseminated to the Town Centre businesses at the beginning of each month. Each newsletter is bespoke to each Town Centre and includes upcoming events, updates and opportunities from stakeholders and Council Departments.

	The Food Safety Training and Health & Safety at work accredited training has now been completed in the 3 Towns with over 50 staff taking part. Businesses in Ballymena were offered to attend a 'Using AI to Make Your Business More Efficient' workshop in the Braid on Tuesday 13 January. This workshop had been rolled out in Carrickfergus and Larne previously. Further training opportunities will be rolled out to businesses before the end of March. Daily support for town centre issues, point of contact for all three towns continues to be provided.
Town Centre Activity	A full programme of Autumn/Winter activity has now been completed. - Principal sponsor of Ballymena Business Excellence Awards 23 October - Fun & Fright Carnival in Broadway, Larne on Thursday 30 October from 1-3pm - Halloween silent Disco in Carrickfergus Town Hall on Thursday 30 October from 12-3pm - The Christmas Market in Carrickfergus took place as part of the Switch on Activity on Saturday 22 November from 1-5.30pm with 15 traders in attendance. Footfall was high throughout the duration with traders selling out of items and reporting high sales. - Christmas Community & Craft Village with 7 wooden huts situated in Wellington Court, Ballymena from Wednesday 3 – Monday 8 December. The huts were filled with artisan crafters and open from 11am –4pm each day (excluding Sunday). Given the location and weather, footfall was low for the Ballymena event. - Christmas Community & Craft Village with 9 wooden huts situated in Broadway, Larne from Wednesday 10 – Monday 15 December. The huts were filled with artisan crafters and open from 11am –4pm each day (excluding Sunday). Feedback was very positive, and traders reported good sales each day. -
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. The Grant can cover 80% of the cost of eligible items or works up to a maximum of £7,500 per business.

	Grant assessments are currently taking place and businesses will be issued with their Letters of Offer in due course.
Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant	A separate report has been tabled at this Committee.
Pavement Cafe Support	11 hospitality businesses have availed of outdoor furniture including, tables, chairs and hedging.
Revitalise Steering Group	Officers from the Town Centre and the Regeneration team 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 and new public realm schemes.
Encouraging Footfall	Cross-departmental development work is ongoing to identify opportunities to encourage footfall and rejuvenate the Town Centres.
Sound System for Carrickfergus & Ballymena	The sound system has now been installed in Carrickfergus and Ballymena and played music throughout the festive period.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. No implications relating to this update report.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. The report is presented to Elected Members for noting only.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1 Elected Members are asked to note the updated Economic Development Activity report.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Ballymena Business Improvement District Update**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the result of the Ballymena Business Improvement District (BID) re-ballot.

2. Background

2.1. Elected Members were presented with a report at Council on 24 November 2025 that provided an update on the Ballymena Business Improvement District re-ballot.

2.2. The report outlined the re- ballot process and the governance arrangements associated with a BID in which a levy is charged on all business ratepayers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects that will benefit businesses in the local area.

2.3. A successful vote is one that has a simple majority both in votes cast and in rateable value of votes cast. The vote demands 25% turnout of the total number of businesses within the defined BID area along with 25% of the total rateable value. Once this is achieved, the majority vote is announced.

2.4. Council has six listed properties (including three car parks) within the Ballymena Business Improvement District boundary that equate to a levy of approx £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

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

2.5. It was noted within the report that the ballot would run during November and conclude on 27 November 2025; the results would then be announced the following day.

2.6. At a meeting of the Environment & Economy committee on the 4 August 2025 Elected Members gave delegated authority to the Interim Chief Executive to act on Council's behalf as Returning Officer in relation to any decision or actions required in accordance with the Business Improvement Districts (Northern Ireland) Act 2013 and the Business Improvement Districts (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

2.7. At Council on 24 November 2025, Elected Members voted in favour of supporting the BID and subsequently submitted their yes vote before the deadline of 27 November 2025.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. The Interim Chief Executive, as the formal Returning Officer, had previously given permission to Civica Electoral Services (CES) to carry out the ballot.

3.2. The Ballot results released by the independent scrutineer, Civica Electoral Services, on 28 November 2025, revealed that 78% of all those who voted are in favour of the BID progressing. For the BID to be successful, a second trigger 'majority by rateable value' was also required, and this was achieved with 89% of those who voted. In Northern Ireland, it is necessary to have a minimum turnout level of 25% by number and rateable value, which has also been achieved.

3.3. The new BID term (term 3) will commence from 01 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 £1m plus will be generated to be spent in the BID area.

3.4. Council has been supportive of the Ballymena BID since its formation in 2015 and the Yes vote is welcomed. Council, as a levy payer, will continue to work in partnership with Ballymena BID and will continue to support initiatives that promote town centre recovery and economic growth.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. **Financial** - As Council properties are within the Ballymena BID boundary Council will be required to continue to pay the BID levy which is estimated at £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. Quarterly updates on the work of Ballymena BID will continue to be presented to the Environment & Economy committee

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members note the success of the Ballymena BID re-ballot.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Local Economic Partnership Update**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the ongoing work of Mid & East Antrim Local Economic Partnership (LEP).

2. Background

2.1. Members were previously advised in October 2022 that, following a review of Invest NI, DfE and Invest NI commenced development of a Sub-Regional Economic Plan for NI in late 2023 in partnership with key economic stakeholders.

2.2. The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched by the then Minister for Economy, Conor Murphy, on 1 October 2024. The Plan outlined how the Department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholders to establish LEPs with an allocation of £45 million available over 3 years across Northern Ireland, with £1.503 million per annum available to Mid & East Antrim.

2.3. Ten meetings of the Mid & East Antrim LEP have taken place to date, 29 January 2025 at Ecos Hub, Ballymena, 19 February 2025 in Larne Town Hall, 20 March 2025 in Carrickfergus Town Hall, 2 April 2025 in Ecos Hub, Ballymena, 7 May 2025 in LEDCOM, Larne, 3 June 2025 online via Teams, 9 September 2025 in Carrickfergus Town Hall, 7 October 2025 in Ecos Hub, Ballymena, 20 November 2025 in LEDCOM and 16 December 2025 online via Teams.

2.4. Six further meetings of Task and Finish Working Groups took place by thematic area as follows:

- Workspace Development and Enterprise & Growth: 22 & 30 September 2025.
- Innovation & Productivity and Alignment with City Deal: 18 September & 1 October 2025.
- Community Wealth Building & Town Centres: 26 September & 2 October 2025.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

These meetings focused on further project discussions to inform the narrative for the working draft action plan, and consensus was reached on projects that should be merged and projects which could be ruled out, resulting in a working draft action plan of 13 projects under the agreed high-level strategic priorities.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. At the meeting on 20 November 2025, LEP members agreed that Council should procure an independent consultant to support the final stage of development of the action plan. The role of the independent consultant will provide strategic analysis on the current working draft action plan. Consideration of the wider context and alignment with spend objectives, regional balance and outputs of the fund to inform development of a final action plan will also be a key focus.

3.2. At the meeting on 16 December 2025, the details from the draft terms of reference were shared with LEP members. LEP members had the opportunity to suggest at the meeting or via email any further information they felt it would be important to include within the terms of reference. All recommendations were taken on board and included within the final terms of reference.

3.3. As advised in the 8 December 2025, Committee update report, Officers would devise a draft project scoring matrix for circulation to LEP Members for feedback. The draft project scoring matrix was developed and LEP members were advised on 16 December 2025, that this would be shared with the independent consultant who would then work with the LEP to refine and agree.

3.4. The terms of reference were issued on 7 January 2026, inviting suitably qualified independent consultants to quote by the closing date of 19 January 2026.

3.5. The successful contractor will attend the next LEP meeting on 28 January 2026 as the first step in the process.

3.6. The consultant will be expected to complete the following deliverables by 27 February 2026.

- Finalise the project scoring criteria/matrix in agreement with the LEP.
- Conduct a strategic assessment of the current working draft action plan and run LEP ideation and project development workshops as required, which will include the opportunity to review learning points from other Council's LEP action plans.
- Conduct a final project assessment against the agreed criteria

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

- Conduct a workshop with LEP members and Elected Members.
- Submit a final report and action plan for approval by the Environmental and Economy Committee on 2 March 2026.

3.7. The appointed consultant will present the final action plan at the Environment and Economy Committee on 2 March 2026, for which Committee approval will be sought, to enable submission to DfE for approval and secure a Letter of Offer to enable delivery to commence.

3.8. DfE organised a session for Council Officers on 21 January 2026, delivered by the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth. This session provided advice on assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies on an ongoing basis, with tools and advice on thinking strategically about impact. The learning looked at policies being adopted by councils and Local Economic Partnerships for the Regional Balance Fund. Information from this session will be utilised with the appointed independent consultant as part of the learning points review to be conducted with the LEP.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. **Financial** – The budget had been previously confirmed as £1.503m per annum over a 3-year period, although Council have been made aware that delays by DfE in establishing LEPs may result in funding for Year 1 2025/26 not being able to be carried forward. Officers through SOLACE Economic Development group are working with DfE to scope alternative approaches to ensure no funding is lost to the programme. A draft Memorandum of Understanding and a draft Letter of Offer with Annex has been received. A final Letter of Offer is awaited following submission of the Mid & East Antrim LEP Action Plan.

4.2. **Human Resources** – SMT have approved the recruitment of two dedicated full-time posts, fixed term up to 31 March 2028. The posts are 100% funded via DfE. It is essential that these posts are recruited as soon as possible to progress all aspects of the MEA LEP.

4.3. **Timeframes** – DfE have noted to LEP members the time remaining under the fund to utilise the allocated budget. It is imperative to reach a consensus on the final action plan as soon as possible to spend within the timeframe.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. The appointed independent consultant will work with Council and the LEP to deliver the required outputs and produce a final report and action by 27 February for presentation to Elected Members at Environment & Economy Committee on 2 March.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. Elected Members are asked to:
(i) Note the updates and ongoing work of LEP to reach a final action plan.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Small Business Rates Relief Consultation Response**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a draft consultation response to the Department of Finance's consultation paper 'Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) options', included at Appendix 1

2. Background

2.1. The Department of Finance is currently undertaking a systematic review of all rates to include change for small businesses, change that tackles high levels of vacancies in town centres, change that supports new businesses and change that helps accelerate business growth. The Minister of Finance has indicated that all rates support will be reviewed by the end of the 2027-28 rating year.

2.2. On the 18 November 2025, the Minister of Finance announced that he intended to bring about change that will see enhanced support for small businesses outlining his view that the SBRR scheme currently provides vital support for small businesses. The Minister acknowledged that the support delivered under the SBRR scheme has remained unchanged since 2012.

2.3. The Minister noted that he planned to consult before the New Year to give businesses and stakeholders the chance to share final views before any policy proposals are put to Ministerial colleagues on any future enhancement to the support. As this is a targeted consultation aimed at facilitating policy changes for April 2026 it will run for a period of 8 weeks and the consultation will close for responses on 29 January 2026.

2.4. The scheme was first introduced on 1 April 2010 and was implemented as a downturn measure following the 2008 economic crash. The scheme provides different levels of rate relief based on the Net Annual Value (NAV) of a business property. The NAV reflects the rental value of a property for rating purposes at the common valuation date determined by the Department (known as the "antecedent valuation date", currently 1 October 2021). There are currently 3 levels of rate relief under the scheme;

- 50% relief: for business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less;
- 25% relief: for business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000;
- 20% relief: for business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000.

No relief is currently available for properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 under this scheme, a threshold that has remained the same since 2012.

2.5. The Small Business Rate Relief scheme currently provides vital support for operating costs for around 30,000 small business properties and Post offices at a cost of £22.5 million for the 2025/26 year. (Note £499,146 pertaining to post office support). The table below presents the cost of the rate support for the current percentage tiers of SBRR (rounding applied):

NAV band	% discount	Properties	Cost
NAV of 2000 or less	50	4,500	£2M
NAV of more than £2,000	25	11,200	£6M
Nav of more than £5000 - £15,000	20	13,450	£14M

2.6. Qualifying businesses and Post Offices across NI receive the rate relief automatically on their annual bill. There is no need to apply for SBRR and this is a key feature of reducing the administrative burden on businesses identified within prior Regulatory Impact Assessment work. Generally businesses are unable to receive any other rate reliefs when they are in receipt of SBRR support.

2.7 Mid & East Antrim Council currently has a total of 2036 businesses availing of support equating to £1,593,727.

2.8. Officers have requested a breakdown of businesses across the NAV bands and this information is currently awaited.

2.9. SBRR is fully funded by NI Executive and administered automatically by Land and Property Services (LPS). As a result, there is no financial impact on administering the scheme by local councils.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1 The Consultation Paper sets out options to enhance the Small Business Rate Relief scheme using two distinct methods:

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

- <u>Increasing percentage reductions</u> – current relief levels of 20%, 25%, and 50% have remained unchanged since 2012. The Minister has indicated (where funding allows) adjusting the percentage reduction tiers to deliver greater impact.
- <u>Updating valuation thresholds</u> – these have not been reviewed since 2012. The Minister has again indicated the need for these to be adjusted to reflect modern rental values, particularly as Reval 2026 marks the fourth revaluation in 11 years – delivering on a prior request from business groups for more frequent valuations to reflect changes in the market.

3.2 Four options have been presented within the consultation paper, tables detailing the additional cost of each package are included within Appendix 1 (page 19 – 21)

- **Option 1 (£10.68M)** will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

  To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under Option 1 so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would fall within a new reduction tier under the scheme of 20%, and business properties with an NAV of more than £17,500 but not more than £20,000 seeing a reduction of 10%. These new bands will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

- **Option 2 (£10.48M)** will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

  To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under Option 2 so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £20,000 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 15%. This new band will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

- **Option 3 (£7.53M)** will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under Option 3 so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 10%. This new band will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

- **Option 4 (£8.35M)** will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

  To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under Option 4 so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 15%. This new bands will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

3.3 Councils stakeholders, including the Local Enterprise Agencies, Ballymena BID, Ballymena Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Larne Business Forum have been made aware of the consultation exercise and have been encouraged to respond.

The Enterprise Agencies have advised that Enterprise NI will be forwarding commentary on the SBRR consultation, and the options outlined in the consultation with the Enterprise NI Network.

Larne Business Forum has spent considerable time reviewing the consultation paper and has shared a strong comprehensive response with Council Officers. The views of the business partners have been beneficial in reviewing the options presented by the Department. Larne Business Forum will submit their response to the consultation separately.

3.4 A draft Council response as detailed below has been prepared to the Policy questions contained within the consultation paper.

Do you view SBRR as an effective use of public money and should it be continued?

Council strongly recommends that SBRR continues, this scheme provides vital support to sustain our micro businesses whilst boosting economic

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

growth. Over two thousand businesses in the borough are currently availing of this support that directly lowers the cost of operating a small business by reducing business rates bills. Additionally, the support can aid smaller businesses to manage costs enabling them to invest and grow. Non - domestic rates are one of the biggest pressing financial overheads that small businesses face, Council therefore welcomes the continuation of SBRR.

Larne Business Forum (LBF), a key partner of Councils has echoed their support for SBRR as an effective use of public money in that it supports growth and resilience for a crucial element of the NI economy. LBF has alluded to research carried out by the Oxford Centre for Business Taxation in 2021 into the Tax and Occupancy of Business Properties into the impact of commercial property taxation on vacancy rates in the UK noting the findings reinforce the value of SBRR.

Should automatic awards of SBRR continue?

Yes, this eliminates the administration burden for small businesses, however as noted by Larne Business Forum landlords of vacant premises should be required to apply for the relevant discount rather than an automatic award and provide evidence that the property is in a fit and proper state to be let to tenants.

Should an application-based system be adopted instead of automatic awards to allow targeting of the scheme, either by sector or by other criteria such as profitability, turnover, etc?

Council has indicated that automatic awards should remain noting the comment above for vacant premises. Council welcomes the view of the Minister that we want to encourage business startups of any type and do what we can by lowering operating costs for businesses in that category

Do you favour sectoral support or sector neutral support?

Council agrees with Minister O'Dowd on taking a sector neutral approach to any enhancement for Small Business Rates support. Most of the eligible businesses will be located within the town centres and rural villages of Mid & East Antrim, these towns and villages are made up of several sectors, all of which face similar challenges of rising costs and overheads. Small businesses are crucial to the economy by driving employment, fostering innovation, generating local spending and overall economic output, Council therefore believes that support should be made available to all small businesses regardless of sector.

Council's partners have noted that additional sectoral support should sit outside the SBRR scheme with priority focus on the Retail, Hospitality and

Leisure sectors, particularly to support the vibrancy and sustainability of town centres.

In addition, Council's Local Economic Partnership have been considering the concept of a Pilot Business Empowerment Zone (BEZ) as proposed by the Department of Finance in its consultation on a review of business rates in 2016.

The BEZ concept was designed and developed to provide targeted financial assistance to a range of businesses in a specific geographical area to support a specific policy objective which was to determine whether the rating system could be used to help regenerate areas that were suffering from disadvantage and decline. It was an imaginative proposal designed to create a "test bed" for potential changes to the wider rating system and the extent to which targeted support could encourage economic regeneration. Council would encourage the Department to reconsider this approach and ensure that necessary changes to facilitate a BEZ approach should be progressed.

What Policy Option do you favour?

Council and its partners welcome the options presented noting a core requirement that funding made available following changes to the review of rates supports are channeled into an enhanced SBRR scheme.

Council notes that all options present an increase in percentage reductions for the businesses with an NAV between £2,000 and £15,000. Council is also encouraged that the options presented detail support for businesses that fall into the next NAV band, with options 1 & 2 providing support for businesses with an NAV up to £20,000. Council is mindful that the rates reval could potentially impact on those that are currently in receipt of SBRR so updating NAV valuation thresholds under SBRR would be very timely.

Council has sought further detail from Land Property Services on the number of Mid & East Antrim businesses that fall within each NAV band. This would give a clearer indication on the number of businesses that would potentially benefit if the valuation thresholds changed.

In the absence of this specific information for Mid & East Antrim it is considered that Option 1 or Option 2 offers the greatest flexibility and support to our small businesses across all sectors.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

How should additional support be funded?

Council welcomes the rating policy review and is mindful of the limited resources to bring about change and make improvements to the system. The latest public consultation regarding increasing the Maximum Capital Value and reducing the Early Payment Discount has revealed a potential saving of £9 million. Similarly, the vacant rating review could potentially unlock further funds. Consideration needs to be given to the rating of derelict non-domestic properties, particularly in the town centres, the rating of gap sites/land in these areas also requires further consideration.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Financial Implications - SBRR is fully funded by NI Executive and administered automatically by LPS.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Council's draft response including any additional comments from members to be submitted to the Department of Finance before the consultation deadline.

6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to note Councils draft response to Department of Finance's consultation paper Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR)

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 - Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) consultation paper

Land & Property Services
Seirbhísí Talún agus Maoine

Department of Finance
An Roinn Airgeadais
www.finance-ni.gov.uk

Consultation Paper

SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF (SBRR) Options

December 2025

Contents

Foreword
Minister of Finance

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy.

Supporting them means supporting growth, resilience and opportunity for everyone.

I want to deliver positive and progressive changes to the rating system.

I want to see extra help going to those businesses that provide employment supporting workers, families, and communities.
The Small Business Rate Relief scheme currently provides vital support for operating costs for around 30,000 small business properties at a cost of £22.5 million for the 2025/26 year.
I want to create a fair environment for all businesses, where entrepreneurship thrives, where vacant properties become vibrant spaces, and where small businesses can flourish.

This consultation sets out options to enhance the Small Business Rate Relief scheme using two distinct methods:

Increasing percentage reductions – current relief levels of 20%, 25%, and 50% have remained unchanged since 2012. Where funding allows, I want to adjust the percentage reduction tiers to deliver greater impact.

Updating valuation thresholds – these have not been reviewed since 2012 and, in my view, there is a need for these to be adjusted to reflect modern rental values, particularly as Reval 2026 marks the fourth revaluation in 11 years – delivering on a prior request from business groups for more frequent valuations to reflect changes in the market.

Scalability and affordability are central to the proposals within this paper.

In addition, the consultation paper does not propose enhancing Small Business Rate Relief through sector-specific targeting. In my view, such an approach would introduce additional cost and complexity to the delivery of support. This preference also reflects the reality that labour and property markets are constantly evolving, and businesses increasingly operate across multiple sectors. However, I am keen to hear your views on this matter as part of the consultation.

The timing of this consultation reflects my desire to secure Executive agreement and facilitate legislative change in time for the 2026/27 rating year to deliver for our small businesses.

It is no secret that the Executive's finances are under significant pressure at present. I have brought proposals forward already on two policy areas in the domestic rating system that would raise £9m.

My aim in doing so is to secure savings in parts of the rating system and redirect resources to provide additional support to those businesses that need it most.

Delivering on this positive change will require buy-in and partnership working from my Executive colleagues and the Assembly.

The proposals in this consultation is our chance to deliver local solutions to local challenges.
I invite and welcome your views on these proposals.

John O'Dowd
Finance Minister

BACKGROUND TO RATING SYSTEM

Background to the Rating System

The rating system here is a devolved tax with no direct links to similar taxation systems in England, Scotland or Wales. There are two different rates levied here: a domestic rate for residential properties and a non-domestic rate for businesses.

The total amount of revenue collected through both domestic and non-domestic rates locally is now over £1.6 billion, with just under 55% of this being funded by non-domestic rating. This is used to pay for both local district council services as well as regional services delivered by the Executive such as education, health and roads. Regional Rate revenue alone provides approximately 4% of the Executive's public spending power.

Land & Property Services (LPS), within the Department of Finance, administers the rates system and has little discretion in doing so as everything is governed by legislation or case law. Rates paid by households and businesses make a vital contribution to funding the local public services delivered by the Executive and District Councils.

The systems of reliefs and exemptions that apply within the rating system are a key feature of the devolved tax. Reliefs, allowances, and exemptions are perceived as the main means through which the rating system can be used as a tool of social, economic and environmental policy. Differences have developed over many years because of different policies and priorities set by Westminster and the Executive at various points in time.

Providing any rate relief means either foregoing revenue or charging other ratepayers more. An exemption or relief is often viewed from the perspective of who it benefits, but there is a real cost, as every pound raised through the rating system stays here as a resource to help pay for hospitals, schools, and other essential regional services.

CONTEXT TO CONSULTATION

Announcement of Strategic Review of Small Business Rate Relief

On 9 December 2024 the then Minister of Finance outlined a Strategic Roadmap for the Rating system to the Assembly to build a progressive rates system for both households and businesses. This process was to be based on the principles of fairness and equity, and to ensure that the rates system aligned with the Executive's policy objectives, stimulates the local economy and supports the growth of the rating taxbase, while providing appropriate support for those who need it.

It was also announced that following engagement with the business community and after listening to the challenges posed by the cost of doing business crisis, post-Covid period and in light of the added impact of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget in 2024, that the Department of Finance would prioritise the policy area of the Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) Scheme as part of the 2025/26 phase of policy reviews.

Process for Review

The following work was undertaken within the Department as part of the Strategic Review work that has underpinned the policy direction for the SBRR scheme contained within this paper:-

- the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Review of SBRR was formally published on 2 June 2025;
- the Finance Committee was briefed on the process to be undertaken on 25 June 2025;
- formal review meetings with external stakeholder groups were held during June, July and August 2025;
- a supplementary survey was issued to those stakeholder groups on 20 August and closed on 15 September 2025 to allow individual businesses to provide a view;
- meetings were held with SOLACE and NILGA to highlight the engagement with the business sector to date and to discuss funding options;
- desk research on policy models elsewhere and taxbase analysis was completed and updated to take account of the publication by Treasury of their interim report on Transforming Business Rates which was published in mid-September.
- briefing on the Review process undertaken was provided to the Finance Committee on 15 October 2025.
- the Finance Minister made an Oral Statement on next steps on 18 November 2025 in which the intention to take forward this consultation was announced.

Transforming Business Rates

The announcement on the Strategic Review of SBRR broadly coincided with a parallel announcement at Westminster on the Autumn Budget 2024. That announcement also highlighted the British Government's proposed changes for the business rates system in England.

Transforming Business Rates | GOV.UK

In mid-September 2025 Treasury published an interim report on those changes planned for April 2026.

Transforming Business Rates Interim Report | GOV.UK

The core proposal within Transforming Business Rates, now confirmed by the British Chancellor in the Autumn Budget statement of 26 November 2025, is to lower the poundage multiplier rate in England for certain retail, hospitality and leisure properties paid for by charging large businesses (those valued at over £500,000) more.

Budget 2025 | GOV.UK

Our local business rates system

Due to the nature of our local rating system we are unable to replicate these proposals. This is because we do not have a system that applies a Uniform Business Rate. Instead we levy two different business rate poundages locally, a district rate (to fund councils) and a regional rate (to fund central government), through the one business rates assessment.

This means we have 11 different business rate poundages for the 11 district council areas. This is because each local council here sets poundages to meet their own specific and local expenditure decisions.

In addition, and as noted by those who contributed to the Strategic Review process over the summer, our local taxbase simply does not possess the same depth of high-value commercial property to sustain such a cross-subsidy on the scale being applied in England. Our local rate base is dominated by small and mid-sized properties, with only a limited number of very large properties, many of which are public sector or utility assets. As a result, any equivalent scheme to that being progressed in England would represent a direct and ongoing revenue loss to the Executive rather than a fiscally neutral rebalancing within the system.

During the Strategic Review process, although strong views were put forward at a sectoral level from those who would benefit from an approach similar to that being adopted in England, equally strong views were put forward for a sector neutral approach on rates support generally, and small business property support in particular.

That latter approach is consistent with any policy aim to grow the overall number of business properties paying rates regardless of sector, and has directly informed the approach that has now been adopted within the options put forward within this paper.

Announcement on Consultation

On 18 November 2025, the Minister of Finance announced that he intended to bring about change that will see enhanced support for small businesses outlining his view that the SBRR scheme currently provides vital support for small businesses. The Minister's full statement can be accessed below:-

Finance Minister Oral Statement - Rating Policy Update on Strategic Road Map

The Minister acknowledged that the support delivered under the SBRR scheme has remained unchanged since 2012. In that context the Minister noted that he planned to consult before the New Year to give businesses and stakeholders the chance to share final views before any policy proposals are put to Ministerial colleagues on any future enhancement to the support.

This paper lays out 4 potential policy options to inform the final design of any revised SBRR provision.

ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION

Who can respond to this consultation?

The Department of Finance is seeking views on the policy options in this paper from all interested parties, individuals and groups, on the matters covered by this consultation.

Purpose of this consultation

The policy options set out here will have a direct impact on businesses and individuals. The Department of Finance recognises the need to keep the public informed on such important matters and to allow people the opportunity to comment on the policy proposals. This consultation therefore invites people to answer a number of questions in relation to the proposed changes. The questions are posed at the end of this document.

Scope of the consultation

The consultation applies to all, whether a member of the public, a business, organisations or professional bodies.

Duration of the consultation

As this is a targeted consultation aimed at facilitating policy changes for April 2026 it will run for a period of 8 weeks and the consultation will close for responses on 29 January 2026 without exception.

How to respond to this consultation

You can respond to this consultation online through the link to Citizen Space provided at the end of this document. This is the Department's preferred mode for consultation responses.

You can also send your consultation responses by e-mail to:
ratingpolicy@finance-ni.gov.uk

When responding, please state whether you are doing so as an individual, or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled. We will acknowledge your response.

The consultation document will be available in other formats upon request. You can email any queries to: **ratingpolicy@finance-ni.gov.uk**

Draft impact screening assessments have also been made available on the consultation website. Related papers can also be obtained in hardcopy on request, using the contact details above.

Consultation principles

- consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;
- the proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;
- consultation is only part of a process of engagement;
- adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and
- government responses should be published in a timely fashion.

Confidentiality

Under Data Protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it;
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data;
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing;
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased';
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability; and
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

DoF Privacy Notice

The DoF Privacy Notice, explaining how we use your personal data, can be viewed at: **Department of Finance Privacy Notice | Department of Finance**.

HOW THE SCHEME OPERATES

How the SBRR scheme operates

SBRR was an initiative originally introduced to support the growth and sustainability of small business property occupiers by reducing their business rates burden.

The scheme was first introduced on 1 April 2010 and was implemented as a downturn measure following the 2008 economic crash. The scheme provides different levels of rate relief based on the Net Annual Value (NAV) of a business property. The NAV reflects the rental value of a property for rating purposes at the common valuation date determined by the Department (known as the "antecedent valuation date", currently 1 October 2021).

There are currently three levels of rate relief;

- 50% relief: for business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less;
- 25% relief: for business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000;
- 20% relief: for business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000.

No relief is currently available for properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 under this scheme, a threshold that has remained the same since 2012. Likewise no relief is available for those who own 3 or more businesses.

That latter exclusion from relief operates as a result of what is known as the "multiples" exclusion. This means that SBRR will not apply to any property where a person occupying an otherwise qualifying property for the SBRR scheme occupies more than three hereditaments which are, or would fall to be, shown in the non-domestic valuation list. The policy intent of this is to exclude large multi-national business chains.

Breakdown of current support by threshold

SBRR		
Threshold	**Properties**	**Support**
50% (NAV of 2000 or less)	4,548	£1,842,933
25% (NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000)	11,224	£5,923,630
20% (NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000)	13,450	£14,276,240
Totals	**29,222**	**£22,042,804**

How it currently works: key features of SBRR

Automatic award: Qualifying businesses receive the rate relief automatically on their annual bill. There is no need to apply for SBRR and this is a key feature of reducing the administrative burden on businesses identified within prior Regulatory Impact Assessment work.

Calculation: In basic terms business rates are calculated by multiplying the valuation of the property (Net Annual Value or NAV) by the non-domestic rate poundage (which includes regional and district rates). The SBRR relief is then applied to that amount in order to reduce the liability within the calculated rates bill.

Annual extension: The scheme requires new legislation to extend it annually and it was most recently extended for the 2025-26 rating year.

Interaction with other reliefs: In broad terms businesses are unable to receive any other rate reliefs when they are in receipt of SBRR support.

How SBRR is currently distributed throughout our councils

The table below outlines the distribution of support currently provided to businesses within the 11 District Council areas:

SBRR		
District Council	**Number of Properties**	**Support Provided**
Antrim and Newtownabbey	1,743	£1,267,752
Ards and North Down	2,105	£1,570,341
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	3,176	£2,337,158
Belfast	5,533	£4,623,020
Causeway Coast and Glens	2,540	£1,757,038
Derry and Strabane	2,279	£1,973,286
Fermanagh and Omagh	2,448	£1,570,765
Lisburn & Castlereagh	1,840	£1,423,399
Mid & East Antrim	2,036	£1,593,727
Mid Ulster	2,569	£1,749,951
Newry, Mourne and Down	2,953	£2,176,363
Total	29,222	£22,042,804

Support for Post Offices

The SBRR scheme in Northern Ireland also provides enhanced rate relief specifically for small Post Offices. This initiative aims to help maintain vital services, particularly in disadvantaged areas, by supporting smaller, independent Post Offices.

The support provided by this scheme enhancement is outlined in the table below:

SBRR		
District Council	**Number of Properties**	**Support Provided**
100%	131	£360,474
Enhanced 50%	43	£138,671
	174	£499,146

The eligibility for SBRR for Post Offices is also determined by the NAV of the property, which is an assessment of the annual rental value the property could reasonably be let for on the open market.

There are three distinct tiers of relief detailed in the table below:

Net Annual Value (NAV)	Relief Percentage
£9,000 or less	100% Relief
More than £9,000 but not more than £12,000	50% Relief
More than £12,000 but not more than £15,000	20% Relief (Post Offices with an NAV of over £12,000 then fall within the standard SBRR scheme cohort).

Automatic Award: Similar to the SBRR scheme, there is generally no application procedure for this enhancement. If a Post Office qualifies, the relief will be applied automatically to the business rates bill in the same manner as the general SBRR support.

Policy options for future SBRR support

As noted earlier in this paper at present the cost of the rate support for the current percentage tiers of SBRR is as follows (rounding applied):

NAV band	% discount	Properties	Cost
NAV of 2000 or less	50%	4,500	£2M
NAV of more than £2,000	25%	11,200	£6M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	20%	13,450	£14M
Total	-	29,200	£22M

The cost of any uplift, presented at a scalable level for each 5% increase in the current percentage discount level structure, would be as follows.

NAV band	% discount	Properties	Cost
NAV of 2000 or less	50%	4,500	£0.2M
NAV of more than £2,000	25%	11,200	£1.2M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	20%	13,450	£3.5M
Total	-	29,200	

In terms of any potential increase in support there is then the issue of establishing a rational basis for the quantum of any increase in provision for the purposes of modelling options within this consultation.

This consultation document proposes retaining the 50% level for the smallest business premises. That is on the basis that support is already covering half of any rating liability associated with a property (which equates to the current vacant rating liability for business premises).

The other proposed percentage discounts have been elevated by the aggregated effect of CPI increases (as measured at 1 April each year since Covid in 2020). That uplift has been applied to the baseline percentage reduction levels within the SBRR tiers. This elevation is proposed as a one off step to elevate the percentage reduction to reflect the specific combination of issues hitting business operating costs since the pandemic.

Taking that approach would see percentage reduction levels within the scheme (rounded to the nearest percentage point) increase as follows:

NAV band	% discount	Properties	Additional Costs
NAV of £2,000 or less	50%	4,500	£0
NAV of more than £2,000	32%	11,200	£1.68M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	26%	13,450	£4.2M
Total	-	29,200	£22M

To smooth the resultant increased "cliff edge" associated with an elevated upper tier however, and to take account of the impact of the revaluation exercises since 2015 which have seen respective valuation list growth of 8% (Reval 2015), 6.37% (Reval 2020) and 0% (Reval 2023) the Department has also modelled additional NAV band(s) as consequential adjustments and to smooth any potential cliff edge in support.

If those growth levels are applied to the NAV threshold in place within the scheme since 2012 then this would see a new upper threshold of around £17,500. Some of the sub-options modelled also apply a tier up to £20,000 to adjust the tapering off further.

Options 1 to 4 (tables below) have thus been developed by the Department as potential policy options for uplifting the current rate provision to reflect elevated operating costs for small businesses experienced since the pandemic.

A note is provided at the end of this section on the considerations associated with costing related to the timing of this consultation. As noted earlier in the paper, consultation is required at this time to facilitate any policy change for the 2026/27 rating year.

It is proposed that Post Offices with a valuation above £15,000 would be included within the additional NAV tiers within each of the options below.

Option 1

Option 1 will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under **Option 1** so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would fall within a new reduction tier under the scheme of 20%, and business properties with an NAV of more than £17,500 but not more than £20,000 seeing a reduction of 10%. These new bands will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

NAV band	% discount	Properties on current valuation list	Estimated Additional Cost
NAV of £2,000 or less	50%	4,500	N/A
NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000	32%	11,200	£1.68M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	26%	13,450	£4.2M
NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500	20%	1,800 (estimated)	£3.3M (estimated)
NAV of more than £17,500 but not more than £20,000	10%	1,350 (estimated)	£1.5M (estimated)
Total additional cost of package			£10.68M

Option 2

Option 2 will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under **Option 2** so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £20,000 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 15%. This new band will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

NAV band	% discount	Properties on current valuation list	Estimated Additional Cost
NAV of £2,000 or less	50%	4,500	N/A
NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000	32%	11,200	£1.68M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	26%	13,450	£4.2M
NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £20,000	15%	3,150 (estimated)	£4.6M (estimated)
Total additional cost of package			£10.48M

Option 3

Option 3 will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under Option 3 so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 10%. This new band will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

NAV band	% discount	Properties on current valuation list	Estimated Additional Cost
NAV of £2,000 or less	50%	4,500	N/A
NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000	32%	11,200	£1.68M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	26%	13,450	£4.2M
NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500	10%	1,800 (estimated)	£1.65M (estimated)
Total additional cost of package			£7.53M

Option 4

Option 4 will retain a small business rate reduction of 50% for those business properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less. Under this option business properties with an NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000 will see their reduction go from the current level of 25% to 32%, while business properties with an NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000 would see their reduction go from the current level of 20% to 26%.

To smooth cliff edges, support is then tapered under **Option 4** so that business properties with an NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500 would see a new reduction under the scheme of 15%. This new bands will be available to post offices under existing eligibility criteria.

NAV band	% discount	Properties on current valuation list	Estimated Additional Cost
NAV of £2,000 or less	50%	4,500	N/A
NAV of more than £2,000 but not more than £5,000	32%	11,200	£1.68M
NAV of more than £5,000 but not more than £15,000	26%	13,450	£4.2M
NAV of more than £15,000 but not more than £17,500	15%	1,800 (estimated)	£2.48M (estimated)
Total additional cost of package			**£8.35M**

Note on the financial modelling and cost estimates within Options 1 to 4

The costing of Options 1 to 4 above are predicated upon the current distribution of the SBRR scheme and current valuation of properties just above the current SBRR NAV thresholds. April 2026 will see a new non domestic valuation list go live and therefore this will alter that distribution of SBRR which will have an effect on final costings.

Likewise, the figures provided in Options 1 to 4 for properties in excess of the current NAV threshold may include so called "multiples". As noted earlier in this document multiples are excluded from the remit of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme and as a result the cost estimates provided for the proposed additional tiers are likely to be higher than the final costs.

Options 1 and 2 provide two different cost estimate models which reflect different approaches to how "steep" the taper that applies to any new tier should be. Options 3 and 4 then show cost estimated models that can apply to a smaller funding envelope. The scalability costing at the start of this section will allow consultees to assess other potential adjustments of existing SBRR tiers when considering the proposals.

All factors noted above, in conjunction with the views provided through the consultation process, will inform any final policy decisions by the Department.

POLICY QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTEES

1. Do you view SBRR as an effective use of public money and should it be continued?
2. Do you currently receive SBRR?
3. Should automatic awards of SBRR continue?
4. Should an application-based system be adopted instead of automatic awards to allow targeting of the scheme, either by sector or by other criteria such as profitability, turnover, etc?
5. Do you favour sectoral support or sector neutral support?
6. What Policy Option do you favour?
7. How should additional support be funded?
8. Do you have any other views on the policy you wish to submit as part of this consultation?

Click to answer the questions above

Impact screening

New Draft Impact Assessment screening exercises have been conducted on this proposal. That screening documentation has been published alongside this consultation document. Evidence from consultees is also sought on this area to inform this work.

Land & Property Services
Seirbhísí Talún agus Maoine

Department of Finance
An Roinn Airgeadais
www.finance-ni.gov.uk

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**NI Apprenticeship Week 2026**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on activities being delivered by Council during NI Apprenticeship Week 2026.

2. Background

2.1. The Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership Action Plan includes provision for events and activities during NI Apprenticeship Week (#NIAW2026) from the 2-6 February 2026. The campaign aims to raise the profile of apprenticeships, showcase opportunities and demonstrate benefits for individuals and businesses.

2.2. Whilst NI Apprenticeship Week is coordinated regionally by the Department for the Economy, the delivery of activities at local level depends on collaboration between relevant local stakeholders including councils, employers, schools, colleges and sector bodies.

2.3. The theme of #NIAW2026 is 'Invest in Talent – Your Future Business'.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1. Officers liaised with all secondary schools in the borough to find out if they were interested in taking part in Apprenticeship Week and what events they would like to see as part of the programme. They also meet regularly with NRC, training providers and DfE to coordinate activities. The planned local activities are shown in the table below.

Date	Activities	Details
Thurs 29 Jan	**Ballymena Academy visit to Plot Box**	16 Year 14 students from Ballymena Academy will visit Plot Box to learn about career opportunities and pathways with the company and to see behind the scenes.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

		Note this event takes place the week prior to NIAW due to the Career Fair taking place the following week which the school intend to attend.
Mon 2 Feb	**Higher Level Apprenticeship Event NRC Ballymena Campus 17.00 – 19.00**	Opportunity for employers to engage directly with potential apprentices and showcase Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) pathways within their business. All welcome.
Tues 3 Feb	**Built Heritage and Construction Day Carrickfergus Civic Centre 9.30 – 14.45**	Up to 80 Year 10 pupils will explore a variety of construction related careers from bricklaying and joinery to building surveying and architecture. The students will engage in practical challenges and gain insights from professionals involved in preserving Carrickfergus's built heritage and experts from Department for Communities Historic Environment Division. Event coordinated by Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership working in collaboration with colleagues in Carrickfergus Museum, Construction Industry Training Board NI and supported by Clanmill Housing.
Wed 4 Feb	**St Patrick's visit to Saint Gobain**	30 Year 14 students from St. Patrick's College will visit Saint Gobain Exterior Solutions to learn about career opportunities and pathways with the company and to see firsthand behind the scenes.
Thurs 5 Feb	**Ballymena Learning Together Career's Fair at Cambridge House.** **St. Killian's Careers Fair**	This 'Ballymena Learning Together' event will take place in Cambridge House. All nine member schools of the Ballymena Learning Together groups are scheduled to attend. This includes - Cambridge House, Cullybackey College, Castle Tower School, St. Benedict's (Randalstown), Slemish College, Ballymena Academy, St. Louis' Grammar School, Dunclug College and St. Patrick's College. There are 43 companies/FE/Universities due to attend. Requested specifically from St Killian's College Careers Department, an Apprenticeship Careers Fair will be hosted

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

		within the school for Key Stage 4 and Post-16 students. The event will include Workplus to talk about Higher Level Apprenticeships and local employers who will provide information on the type of roles available, and qualifications required. Employers include Terumo, Caterpillar, Clarke, EPUKI, GES Group, Moore Concrete, Teva, Wrightbus, Haughey Electrical, Careers Service NI, NIE Networks, CAFRE, Abbey Autoline and PSNI.
Fri 6 Feb	**Caterpillar Open Day 9.00 – 12.00**	Caterpillar, Larne, will be hosting an Apprenticeship Open Day on Friday 6th Feb from 9am to 12noon. This event has been promoted to all schools in the Council area and on the Caterpillar webpage. The event is open to school groups as well as students to attend with parents to learn more about the opportunities with the company which include Fabricator/Welder, Mechanical Fitter and Electrician Roles which are now open for applications. To date, Larne High School plan to bring a group of 12 Year 14 students to the event.
Wed 18 Feb	**Larne High School Career Fair**	Larne High School will be hosting the first Career Fair to be held at the school on Wed 18 February. The event will be open to schools in the surrounding area including Larne, Ballymena, Ballyclare, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus and Carnlough.
Wed 25 Feb	**Larne Grammar visit to Wrightbus**	30 Year 13 students from Larne Grammar will visit Wrightbus to learn about career opportunities and pathways with the company and to see firsthand behind the scenes. *Note this event takes place after NIAW due to other commitments with the school and company.*
Tues 10 March	**Carrickfergus Career Fair**	This event will take place in Carrickfergus Amphitheatre for the 4th consecutive year. Attended by Carrickfergus Grammar, Carrickfergus Academy and Ulidia Integrated

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

		College, the event will include approx. 60 companies/FE/Universities.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. A contribution of £1,700 towards the two Career Fairs has been budgeted under the Economic Development budget. The other activities are funded via the Labour Market Partnership and through Activate Your Curiosity private sector sponsorship.

4.2. The NI Apprenticeship Week Activities align with Council Corporate Plan 2024-28 which commits to:

- Work in partnership with employers and stakeholders to support those seeking employment, provide upskilling support, improve access to the labour market for those with disabilities, and promote skills pathways.
- Promote the benefits of offering apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to enhance skills development and bridge the gap between education and employment.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Officers will roll out the programme of activities as outlined in the table on previous page and will provide an update on activity as part of future Labour Market Partnership reporting.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the proposed programme of activity for NI Apprenticeship Week 2026.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Council/Committee:	**Environment & Economy Committee**
Date:	26 January 2026
Report Title:	**Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant**
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Elected Members for additional funds towards the delivery of the Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant.

2. Background

2.1. At the Environment & Economy Committee held on the 15 September 2025 Elected Members approved £40,000 to deliver a Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant that would be rolled out from January to March 2026.

2.2. The aim of the Revamp Refresh Grant was to support the town centre businesses who are currently facing challenges that have been widely publicised in the press including, high rates, unaffordable rent, competition from the growth of online retailing, rising staff costs and increased operational costs.

2.3. The grant support can be used for purchasing equipment that will help boost sales, including internal improvements such as painting, shelving, and merchandising stands. Equipment can also be purchased to allow business owners to diversify and expand their business offering. In addition, branding to include marketing materials, uniforms and internal signage could also be considered as an eligible activity.

2.4. Whilst the shop front grant scheme was open to both landlords and businesses the Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant was open for applications from Town Centre businesses currently trading. Businesses who have received support under other Council programmes were still eligible to apply.

2.5. A maximum grant of £1,000 per business was available with 20% match funding required from the applicant. It was envisaged that a minimum of 40 Town Centre businesses would avail of the opportunity, totalling a maximum budget request of £40,000.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

2.6. It was noted within the report that if the demand for the scheme exceeded the total budget allocated a further report would be presented to committee seeking further funds.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

3.1 Town Centre Businesses were made aware of the upcoming Town Centre Revamp Refresh Grant at the Revitalise Shop Front grant information sessions that took place in early October 2025 across all three towns. Subsequent ezines disseminated to the town centre database also detailed the new grant support that would be opening for applications in January 2026. The opportunity was also promoted on Councils social media channels.

3.2 The scheme opened for applications on the Councils grants portal on the 5 January 2026 and closed on the 20 January 2026.

3.3 There has been a significant demand for the grant with a total of 98 applications received requesting a total of £80,265. This is a clear reflection of the challenges that the town centre businesses are facing and the need for additional support.

3.4 The 98 applications were received across the following areas:

- Ballymena 47 applications
- Carrickfergus 28 applications
- Larne 22 applications

3.5 Council Officers are currently carrying out the verification checks prior to each application being assessed. The applications are being assessed using the following criteria:

- Required documentation uploaded onto grants portal including bank account details, public liability insurance.
- Quote for items included.
- 4 questions answered relating to project detail, project need and benefit to the business.

3.6 Applicants were advised that funding would be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, providing the applicant had met the eligibility criteria supplied the relevant documentation and scored a minimum of 60%.

3.7 Due to overwhelming demand, the scheme is now oversubscribed by approx. £40,000 therefore in the absence of additional funds approx. 45 businesses will not be able to be supported.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

3.8 A reprofiling exercise of the budget held within the Economic Development Department has taken place to identify funding programmes that have been underspent and could potentially be reallocated to support this pilot grant scheme.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. Financial implications - A maximum additional budget of up to £40,000 is required to fund all the applications received before the closing date. This budget is available within Economic Development budget.

4.2. Human Resources – The project will be managed and delivered by the Town Centre Team with staff working in partnership with the Councils Grants Officer.

4.3. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan – the corporate plan prioritises the need to help grow, support and sustain new and existing businesses in the Borough.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. Officers to issue Letters of Offer to successful applicants

5.2. An evaluation of the Revamp & Refresh Programme will be carried out, and a report will be presented at a future meeting of the Environment & Economy committee.

6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to approve an additional budget of up to a maximum of £40,000 to meet the demand under the Town Centre Revamp Refresh Small Grant Programme across the three Towns in Mid & East Antrim to ensure businesses eligible under the scheme are supported.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Draft Forward Plan – Environment & Economy Committee (Jan v22)

1. Planned Agenda Items Next meeting

	Items	Purpose
02 March 2026	• Sustainable NI 2026-27 Membership • Eco Schools 2026-27 Financial Support • Live Here Love Here Programme 2026-27 Financial Support • DfC Shaping Sustainable Places Programme Development Update •	• Report for Noting • Report for Noting • Report for Noting • Report for Noting

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