

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Environment and Carbon Footprint Report 2023

Local authorities are in a leading position to demonstrate CO₂ reductions through their activities and behaviour as an example of best practise to residents and local businesses. By calculating their own emissions and making in-house reductions, in addition to increasing awareness and supporting local businesses and residents, carbon emissions can be reduced across each local authority area and therefore across the country as a whole, meeting the government's climate change targets.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and improving environmental performance year on year. This is demonstrated through its accreditation to ISO 14001:2015, the international standard for environmental management.

Council's environment policy can be viewed on the Council website at <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/policies-and-documents/policies/environmental-policy/>

Energy Use

Year	Energy use (Electric gas oil)	tCO ₂ e (LGA Accounting Tool)	No. employees	tCO ₂ e per employee
2022/23	22,840,333 kWh	4,457	830	5.37
2021/22	23,229,518 kWh	4,680	837	5.59
2020/21	17,509,843 kWh	3,714	878	4.23
2019/20	24,552,132 kWh	5,307	880	6.03

Council has reduced its energy consumption by 7% compared to 2019/20 pre-covid baseline year due to energy efficiency measures. The carbon footprint for energy use has reduced by 16% compared to 2019/20 pre-covid year as electricity is generated from more renewable sources.

Transport

Year	Total fuel used by vehicle fleet (litres)	tCO2e (LGA Accounting Tool)	No. employees	tCO2e per employee
2022/23	723,504	1,853	830	2.23
2021/22	766,639	1,926	837	2.30
2020/21	713,089	1,816	878	2.07
2019/20	714,228	1,853	880	2.11

Council's fleet fuel consumption decreased by 6% from previous year due to the operation of Sullatober Transfer station and fuel saving initiatives.

Carbon Footprint

Year	Total tCO2e (LGA Accounting Tool)	tCO2e per employee
2022/23	6,308	7.6
2021/22	6,606	7.9
2020/21	5,530	6.3
2019/20	7,159	8.1

Council has reduced its carbon footprint by 12% compared to 2019/20 pre-covid baseline year due to the introduction of energy efficiency measures and electricity being generated from more renewable sources.

Waste

Year	Waste generated per employee (kg)	% Recycled	tCO2e from waste landfilled	tCO2e from waste landfilled per employee
2022/23	115.3	50.2%	48.9	0.06
2021/22	68.0	68%	19.53	0.02
2020/21	69.0	68.7%	19.32	0.02
2019/20	139.7	73.2%	33.7	0.04

Internal waste has increased on previous year due to staff returning to offices following the covid-19 pandemic. Staff have achieved an internal recycling rate of 50.2%.

Water

Year	Water Consumption (m3)	No. of Employees	Water Consumption per employee (m3)
2022/23	64,003	830	77.1
2021/22	49,897	837	59.6
2020/21	37,870	878	43.1
2019/20	66,764	880	75.9

Water consumption has reduced by 4% in 2022/23 compared to 2019/20 pre-covid baseline year despite three loss events totalling approximately 25,000 m³. An internal desktop audit has been completed to identify historic and possible live water loss events.

Key Achievements 2022/23

Environmental Health - Green Dog Walkers (GDW) Scheme:

- The number of GDW pledges in May 2023 was 1,596. This objective is now delivered is 'business as usual' and will not be reported through the Performance Improvement Plan.
- By January 2023, 18 community groups were participating in the scheme.
- There was a 24% reduction in dog foul complaints in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.
- The initiative continues to be promoted across the borough. Officers continue to engage with local residents and community groups to encourage responsible dog ownership.

Environmental Education:

- We delivered a series of waste management / sustainability comms campaigns annually, in partnership with [WRAP](#). In terms of waste management specifically, we promoted the new DAERA/WRAP designed [My Recycling NI](#) website, which clearly demonstrates end destinations for waste/recycling streams - this provides information and gives confidence to our residents as to the actual end destination of their recycling efforts.
- Council continue to support the **Eco Schools Programme** through online learning to all 77 MEA schools, including Wrigley's Litter Less Campaign, Translink Travel Challenge, Single-Use Plastic Project. Council provided £10,864 to KNIB for 2022/23 academic year to support a new Big Wheelie Bin Challenge to encourage school pupils (and their families) to recycle. Council and Eco Schools - Charlene McKeown (Environmental Education Manager) delivered an Eco Schools Cluster meeting on the 18 October 2022 which brought together over 30 school teachers and delivery partners. The Eco Schools team undertook 25 school visits, delivered FourTowns Fast Fashion workshop, delivered coastal projects to 4 coastal schools, delivered Wheelie Big Challenge to 8 schools, and awarded new Green Flag awards to 8 schools. Ulidia Integrated College secured Ambassador School for the second year. 25% (19) of schools have a current Green Flag. 2022/23 saw 11 new Green Flags being presented. Ulidia College retain the Ambassador Eco Schools Award. 41 schools hold Silver Certificate, 10 schools currently hold Bronze Certificates.
- We continue to keep all MEA schools up to date with funding opportunities including the DAERA Climate Challenge Fund, DAERA School Pollinator Garden Grants, the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme and the DAERA Marine Litter Capital Grant. We also keep schools up to date with training opportunities including DAERA/KNIB Climate Change Programme and Carbon Literacy Programme.
- Council awarded £9,700 to 6 projects across the borough (currently being delivered), through the **Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme** in partnership with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful - projects are to support communities to improve their local area and promote civic pride among residents.

- Officers met with QUB to help develop content for a **new PG Cert in Climate and Sustainability**, which will be made available from September 2024.

Communications:

- We continue to engage with our residents through social media/press releases/website info/Bin-ovation app delivering waste reduction and recycling comms campaigns to help to reach EU recycling targets (50% by 2020 [achieved], 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030).
- In September 2022 we delivered Recycle Week which was very *‘Let’s get real about recycling’* oriented. At the time of the campaign, *“...people are searching for radical transparency in every walk of life. As we get honest about where we can make personal change, we look for it in everyone around us. Citizens are taking no nonsense this year [2022]. And their quest for the truth won’t be over anytime soon”*. We supported this campaign through social media (FB, Twitter, Instagram), press release, Council website update, Bin-ovation app update, as well as ‘sharing’ online posts issued by WRAP.
- Throughout December 2022 we delivered Christmas/New-Year-related comms on reducing waste and encouraging recycling. We also delivered a campaign on the ‘Christmas Toy Container’ project, which encouraged our residents to gift pre-loved/unwanted toys to our recycling centres, which were then provided to local charities to raise funds or were directly gifted to local community groups for families across the borough. We diverted 5.2 tonnes during this campaign in 2022 (2 tonnes in 2021, 2.3 tonnes in 2020 and 1 tonne in 2019).
- In March 2023 we delivered a WRAP supported ‘Food Waste Action Week’ comms campaign aimed at encouraging residents to reduce the amount of excess food shopping, to meal plan, to store food properly and to use up leftovers more effectively. This campaign was linked to the climate crisis, with CO2 emissions equivalent calculated for varying amounts of food wasted.

Recycling:

- Council’s current recycling rate is 51.39% (Year End 2022/23) compared to 51.61% (2020/21). We’ve met the 2020 EU target (50%), but it will be harder to reach 55% by 2025. Proposed expansion into municipal waste collections from businesses etc in borough.
- Sullatober Household Recycling Centre opened in May 2022 - this will see an increase in recycling efficiency of 20%, will divert 1,000 tonnes from landfill and will reduce carbon emissions by 800 tonnes p/annum.
- As part of ISO14001, we introduced recycling services (dry and organic) to our 26 community centres, boosting the recycling performance of the Council.

Litter:

- KNIB Cleanliness Survey: July-Sept 2022 - Council scored 72%, which improved compared to Jul-Sept 2021 (69%).

- Council continues to support all litter picking volunteer groups across the borough, with a lot of focus on the Eco Rangers in Larne and Carrickfergus, County Antrim Countryside Custodians (Ballymena area) who continue to tackle polluting litter, enhancing our borough. We also supported the KNIB 'Big Spring Clean' throughout April and May 2023.

Environment:

- Council maintained 'Platinum' level at the 2022 Business in the Community NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey.
- ISO14001 - Council continue to be accredited to ISO 14001:2015 International Environmental Management Standard across all services, with 8 new sites being audited in August 2022.
- Under ISO14001, we have delivered the following:
- **Energy** - six sites approved for solar PV installation in 2022/23 and LED lights fitted across 13 sites through Council's invest to save fund. New contractual arrangements have been established to ensure actual monthly reads on gas. A newly appointed Data Officer to collate, analyse and report on energy data and capture actual monthly reads on electricity metering. Climate and Sustainability Lunchtime Seminars delivered in March including Energy Efficiency advice
- **Water** - Now formalised that Monitoring Officers will carry out monthly meter reading for water. Internal desktop audit has been completed to identify historic and possible live water loss events. Joint on-site water audits with the Consumer Council to investigate further opportunities to reduce waste. Water efficiency looked at showers, toilets, urinals, taps & heating to identify and propose control measures to reduce waste. Further review is ongoing to identify additional cost saving measures, allowance optimisation, supply size, unused connections etc. A new water database has been developed that report on consumption trends on a daily average from a dataset of 8 years meter reads. Data Officer will produce monthly, quarterly, YTD and YOY reports to better inform decision making.
- **Fleet** - Route Optimisation routes will go live using the in-cab units approx. May. The new tactical routes - 30 October 2023. The cost to implement hydrogen is approximately £50,000 per vehicle - budget currently unavailable but will be a future consideration. All new vehicles are 'Euro 6' which reduce emissions considerably, compared to the Euro 4 & 5 we have been using historically. Launch of new Fleet Strategy for Council.
- EVs - ORCS project progressing, 12 chargepoint locations proposed: <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/policies-and-documents/climate-change-sustainability/car-charge-point-map>
- **Responsible Plastic Management** - Baseline data being collated for 2 areas: cleansing and stationery - Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 complete. Research of alternatives to plastic or plastic-based products previously purchased.
- **Climate & Sustainability Action Plan 2023-27** - Climate & Sustainability Action Plan developed. Heads of Service and key officer input. Development Workshop - January 2023. Presented to Elected Members DSC meeting March 2023 - approved. Internal document live from April 2023. Official public launch in June 2023.
- **MEA community climate engagement** - Climate Change Top Tips video created and available to share online. Climate Roadshow Event delivered in

Ballymena / Larne / Carrick in July 2022. Refresh of Climate & Sustainability on Council website.

- **Becoming a Sustainable Food Place - 2023** - 2 meetings of the Sustainable Food Partnership to allow us to plan for Bronze Award Status in Autumn 2023. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council recently rolled out a successful 'Plot to Plate' programme thanks to funding from the Northern Health Living Partnership. The sustainable food education programme was held at Greenisland Football Club, Carrickfergus, over eight weeks. Up to 30 local residents attended the free sessions which focussed on cookery skills, nutrition, physical activities and life skills. The 'Plot to Plate' programme also encouraged sustainability. All participants received fresh produce, a grow your own herb kit, energy efficient supplies, refill water bottles, recipe books and slow cookers to enable them to put into practice at home what they had learnt.
- **Oyster Restoration Project** - Oysters from Scotland will be in the marina in early April with plans to install the bolt at the end of March 2023. Over 800 native oyster nurseries installed at Glenarm Marina in 30 purpose-built cages under the marina pontoon providing biodiversity and water quality improvements along with educational resource. June 2023 - a photocall is planned to launch the project and links with the local primary school.
- **MEA Community Centres recycling provision** - All MEA community centres now have recycling provision (dry and organic recycling). Service being delivered well.
- **Scope 3 emissions - business and commuter miles** - Analysis of baseline data initiated. 2019/20 - Baseline business miles now calculated and being calculated annually. 2019/20 - Baseline commuter miles now calculated. 2023/24 calculations will begin from 1 April. Ongoing discussion with Agile Working team to review hot-desking / home working approaches as well as building/assets review.
- **Scope 3 emissions - suppliers** - MEA borough is now a Fairtrade Borough. Env KPIs provided to Capital Projects Team. Climate Action Plan includes actions for Capital/Regen team to adopt sustainable practices within all projects. Implementation of new Procurement Policy which includes responsible procurement including sustainability and social value considerations. Procurement - appointment of new Social Value Officer in Council which will drive this aspect forward.
- **National Compost Awareness Week** - Council provided free compost to residents during this week in 2022.
- Environmental charity Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is working in collaboration with Mid & East Antrim Borough Council to provide dedicated **cigarette butt bins** in the Council area. Installed in October 2022, the bins are sited in four locations: Springwell Road Car Park Ballymena; Town Hall and Main Street Larne and the Marine Car Park in Carrickfergus. The project, which is funded by the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA), is to helping the Council deliver on its environmental policy and strategy.

Looking forward to 2023/24:

- Establishing new ISO14001 2023/24 environmental objectives/targets energy (10 LED project, 3 solar projects, energy efficiency (education programme), water

(desktop review of consumption), fleet (Eco Driver training, Route Optimization, estate review, waste management (shredding contract, reuse event), ECOS sustainability hub, Climate Canopy Project, Bronze SFP, sustainability screening of new and reviewed policies and further digital transformation projects.

Climate:

- Council has developed a new Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2023-27 which commits Council to achieve net zero by 2040 and support the Borough to net zero by 2050. It involved extensive collaboration across all service areas and includes six key themes: Good Governance and Community Leadership, Economy, Transport, Resource Management, Protecting the Environment and Buildings & Energy. The Plan will deliver key actions to help deliver climate mitigation (including carbon reduction targets) and climate resilience, ensuring both Council services and communities are prepared for the impacts of climate change.
- Decision Time - tracking of key actions 6 monthly/annually across all services.
- Working with new Net Zero Initiatives Manager to develop business engagement for carbon reduction.
- Council has developed a new Fleet Strategy which focus on reducing fleet emissions, drive efficacies to ensure a cost and effective fleet and continue to ensure a safe and complaint fleet.
- Council has adopted a 'cradle to grave' (sustainable) tyre management system with Michelin. Headline figures for 2022 include 2.3 tonne reduction of waste, 4,964 litres reduction of fuel and 20.7 tonnes of CO2e savings. Tyres are re-grooved and re-used and eventually recycled in road making materials. Council is using less tyres and the longevity reduces particulate air pollution.
- *Climate Mitigation:*
 - Populating Climate Essentials toolkit to review carbon emissions by service/buildings etc - strategic decision making tool
 - Supporting new agile working (incl. space utilization review)
 - Supporting cleantech and green hydrogen developments with Economic Development
- *Climate Adaptation:*
 - Complete Step 4 & 5 of the Climate NI: NI Adapts Climate Adaption Cycle - Climate Adaptation Plan with Climate NI.
 - Working with Community Development on roll out of Climate Adaptation Toolkit.
- Parks and Open Spaces Sustainability Officer, Vanessa Postle, line-managed a student from QUB who has mapped out the potential for carbon capture across our Council assets, in order to understand how we as a collective borough can act as a carbon sink, in the combat against climate change.
- **Training** - We continue to promote the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Carbon Literacy Training to local community groups, schools, Elected Members and Council staff throughout 2022.

- **Training** - Carbon Literacy Training being delivered to 60 key staff in March 2023 and a further 30 in May 2023 by Giraffe Associates, with remainder of staff and Elected Members in September 2023.
- **Workshops** - Over 350 secondary school students have been inspired to consider careers in science and engineering after attending the prestigious ‘**Science Summer School**’ event in Ballymena in November 2022. The project, which was co-founded by Professor Brian Cox CBE, saw pupils with an interest in STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) descend on The Braid in Ballymena for an enjoyable and challenging daytime programme of activities including interactive workshops, and TED presentations. Hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, this is the first time this event has been held in Northern Ireland. Keynote speakers included Professor Brian Cox CBE plus a raft of other industry and academic leaders including Andrew Smyth, former GBBO contestant and engineer for Rolls Royce; Dr. Erin Higgins, Astrophysicist at the Armagh Observatory & Planetarium; and Professor Ultan Power, Professor of Molecular Virology, Queen’s University Belfast to name but a few:
www.sciencesummerschool.org.uk
- **Events** - Council delivered a COP27 event in November 2022 entitled “Helping the agri and business sector on the journey to net zero” to help raise awareness of COP27 and to educate local businesses and stakeholders on how they can help on the journey to net zero. This event outlined research and funding opportunities within the agri and business sector and carbon offsetting opportunities using nature-based solutions. Recording of the webinar is available at:
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kp6y2q4xak7n5hhytdjj3/h?dl=0&rlkey=kzu5pq4f3uiw260lz4z8a15cx>
- Hosted Live Here Love Here (LHLH) Community Event in The Showgrounds where LHLH will inform community groups / Elected Members about their range of programmes, funding opportunities.
- **MEABC/DCSDC Community Resilience Pilot** - toolkit now ready and can be tested with local community groups.
- **Student Projects** - Council hosting x2 QUB MSc students in 2023 - one will complete a review project on the UN SDGs and how Council is delivering on these (now complete). The second project will be delivering in-house education/awareness lunchtime seminars on energy consumption, water consumption, fuel, biodiversity, waste/recycling etc (now complete).
- **Awards** - APSE Annual Service Awards - we won the Best Collaborative Working category for a range of collaborative projects we delivered over 2021/22 e.g. Christmas Toy Container, School Uniform Scheme, CIRCUS Programme etc.
- **Awards** - Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has been named UK Council of the Year 2023 at the Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise (iESE) Public Sector Transformation Awards for the Hydrogen Academy and Green Public Services delivery.
- **NI Offsetting Study** - Anthesis were commissioned to provide an assessment for the opportunity for local carbon offsetting in Northern Ireland by Belfast City Council as well as partners representing Derry City and Strabane District Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. It covered an evaluation of emissions from different industrial & commercial sectors and a financial estimate for the current and potential size of a voluntary offset market. Organisations were surveyed to gather insight into their current approaches and attitudes towards offsetting.

- Council has responded to multiple consultations requests from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), including:
 - Energy One Stop Shop (Nov 2022)
 - Draft Circular Economy Strategy for NI (February 2023)
 - Climate Regulations for Northern Ireland (June 2023).

Sustainability:

- **MEA Sustainable Food Place** - work continues to make MEA a Sustainable Food Place with partnership meeting every other month and application for bronze status in progress.
- **New Social Supermarket** - serving the entire Borough and helping those most in need during the current cost of living crisis. Based at the newly established MEA Community Hub in Ballymena, the 'Mid and East Antrim Affordable Food Club' was established in October 2022, thanks to funding from the Department for Communities, distributed through Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. The Affordable Food Club offers a membership scheme, which gives members access to food at a reduced cost alongside a wraparound service to enable them to address any challenges that contribute to their food insecurity. This is the first '**Affordable Food Club**' in Northern Ireland. Since October, membership has been growing steadily with over 200 members. Membership covers the entire Mid and East Antrim Borough. For those members across the Borough that cannot shop in person, they can access the Club online and avail of the service through the project's click & collect service. This is assisting the Club in growing their membership across every part of MEA.
- **Delivery of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Lunchtime Seminars** - series of 3 seminars focussing on energy, nature-based solutions to climate change, climate resilience and waste/recycling. Delivery to MEA staff - well attended (recording available).
- **Capital Works: St. Patrick's Barracks** - Capital Works asking us re: BREEAM - movement towards consideration of sustainability in design and operation of major development in Ballymena. Project design progressing well.
- **Funding** - Council secured funding to develop a new 'Community RePaint' project whereby residents can drop off un-used/partially used paint tins to our five Household Recycling Centres where it will be provided to local community groups and schools for projects. This project supports the waste hierarchy by promoting reuse.
- **Funding** - Council secured funding from Keep Britain Tidy's Chewing Gum Task Force Grant to purchase two new mobile power washers to tackle gum staining across the borough. The funding also provided anti-gum staining signage to promote positive behavioural change.

Circular Economy Initiatives:

- **Dry recycling collection** service to 58k households - processor [Bryson Recycling](#) - [link](#) to end destinations.
 - 2022/23: 11,945 tonnes recycle from MEA
- **Organic recycling collection** service to 58k households - processor [Natural World Products](#) - converted into [compost](#) and sold on market, and also provided back to Council for use in parks and open spaces, as well as provision to local community groups and schools for environmental improvement projects. NWP also support the annual National Compost Awareness Week which Council promotes.
 - 2022/23: 21,200 tonnes recycled from MEA
- **Household Recycling Centres (x5) and Bring Centres (32)** - collect a range of [HRC materials](#) and [Bring Bank materials](#). Materials transferred to local processors (and onto re-processors, in some instances). Processors are tendered each year to establish one year contracts.
 - **Example** - mattresses processed by [USEL](#) - a NI social enterprise who is the Leading Provider in Helping People with Disabilities or Health Conditions Gain Employment. Recycle all components of mattresses - produce new mattresses, provide bedding to equine sector.
 - **Example** - DIY materials and furniture items collected by [Habitat for Humanity](#) - ReStore Shop - The low-cost, do-it-yourself stores sell donated new and used building supplies and home improvement materials at 50 percent to 75 percent of the normal retail price. As well as raising funds for our work, the stores enable local people to improve their homes for less cost, provides opportunities for volunteers from different abilities and backgrounds, and diverts tons of reusable waste from landfill.
 - **Example** - *new* RePaint Community - providing half to ¾ full paint tins to local community and school projects. Reducing landfill and supporting local projects.
- [CIRCUS - Circular Economy Social Enterprise Programme](#) - is supporting local communities to develop new revenue streams using the circular economy, building a social co-operative of like-minded social enterprises. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council worked with Workwest Ltd. (Programme Facilitators), Queen's University, Ballymena Business Centre and Ulster Supported Employment and Learning (Knowledge Partner) to co-design and develop the CIRCUS Programme to stimulate and support the creation of three Circular Economy Social Enterprises. Diversion of materials from our HRCs to support this programme.
- [Redevelopment of Sullatober HRC](#) - As well as increasing the amount of waste segregation by over 20%, the new facility will help Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to divert over 1,000 tonnes of waste from landfill each year. The new site will also result in more efficient waste compaction and haulage, with new material streams for recycling and a reduction in carbon emissions.
- **Projects - MEA Christmas Toy Container Project** - Council officers realised the huge potential for diverting pre-loved and unwanted toys from landfill, especially on the run up to Christmas, when families are planning to purchase new toys. The Mid and East Antrim Christmas Toy Container project will be running this year for the second year. Partners: local charities, local community centres, MEA waste team, comms team.
 - 2019 (pilot year) - 1 tonne of toys diverted
 - 2020 - 2 tonnes of toys diverted
 - 2021 - 2.3 tonnes of toys diverted
 - 2022 - 5.2 tonnes of toys diverted
- **Projects - MEA School Uniform Scheme** - Mid and East Antrim's Community Planning Partnership and Waste Management team teamed up with Mid and East Antrim Community Advice Services (MEACAS) and Volunteer Now to help provide

families with good quality, clean and pre-worn school uniforms. MEA Poverty Action Group (PAG) are also involved. This project has been running since 2019.

- 2021 - uniforms gifted to 1,200 individuals, savings c. £24,000
- 2022 - uniforms gifted 2,000 individuals, saving c. £40,000
- There are other projects ongoing which also support the circular economy, e.g. Belfast Regional City Deal (BRCD) projects which will embed sustainable practices in their design, construction and operation. Specifically look at waste management in these developments, sourcing local products, re-using and recycling materials, where possible.
- The above 'Environment' and 'Climate' updates have cross-cutting themes with sustainability.

Economic Development / Capital Works:

- Industry representatives from across Northern Ireland gathered at Ballymena's Ecos Hub recently for the inaugural HyTech NI Industry Steering Board meeting and workshop - an initiative aimed at supporting the development of Northern Ireland's burgeoning hydrogen economy. HyTech NI is a joint project between Queen's University Belfast, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) and Ulster University and industry underpinned by £15million in funding from the NI Complementary Funding to support investment in the hydrogen economy. The project will extend the capabilities of two planned Belfast Region City Deal projects, the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) and i4C Innovation Centre, to support industry to take advantage of opportunities in the cleantech sector.
- 1 Pilot Hydrogen Training Academy established and delivered with 70 participants skilled/reskilled Hydrogen Level 5 against a target of 30 and 47 companies availing of the training facilities against a target of 5.
- Plans to regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town of Carrickfergus have moved a step closer after a funding agreement was sealed for the rollout of the £42m project. A key strand within the Belfast Region City Deal under the 'Tourism and Regeneration' pillar, the Carrickfergus Regeneration is one of three projects in Mid and East Antrim that will collectively benefit from more than £80m investment as part of the City Deal. The Carrickfergus project will firmly place the town on the map as an authentic, heritage-led, tourism hub, and a 'must-visit' starting point to the internationally acclaimed Causeway Coastal Route. This project will be delivered to BREAAAM 'Excellent' standard for sustainability.
- **Over £6million has been allocated to Carnfunnock Country Park** from the UK government's Levelling Up Fund. Levelling up is a UK government regional development plan. It is aimed at improving economic performance outside the south-east of England. The scheme is most closely associated with the north of England but is funding projects throughout the UK. The key components of the project will include construction of a new visitor centre which will house a retail shop, café, meeting rooms and bathroom facilities, overlooking the coastline.

Biodiversity/Community:

- Phase II of Keeran Moss peatland restoration project completed March 2023, 70k funded by DAERA, included extensive mowing, creation of paths reestablishment of ponds, installation of welfare unit, fencing, hedge, spoil removal and ecological surveying.
- 38,500 trees planting over 25ha across the borough 2022/23.
- Support for red squirrel conservation programmes along the coast continues (Ballygally & District Biodiversity Group, Glens Red Squirrel Group).
- Fairtrade status for the Borough retained
- Total of 4 community fridges with 2 further community fridges opened at Greenisland and Larne to add to the 2 x Community fridges opened at Eden Allotment Gardens & Islandmagee community garden 21/22. 712 tonne of CO2 emissions saved. 223 tonne of food collected and redistributed in the community, 598,000 meals distributed.
- 3 x Green Flag awards retained (Eden Allotments Gardens, Carnfunnock Country Park, Ecos Nature Park).
- 1 x Green Flag community award retained for Shellinghill Park & Millennium Walk in Cullybackey.
- 3 x Seaside awards retained (Carnlough, Ballygally, Browns Bay).
- 7 x awards won at 2022 'Ulster in Bloom' competition.
- Cullybackey secured Gold Award and category winner awards at 2022 'Britain in Bloom' competition. In addition, 2 Cullybackey volunteers secured Community Champions Awards and Cullybackey also secured Certificate of Achievement in the Horticultural Excellence Award.
- 128 x individuals, community groups, schools and businesses participated in the Mid & East Antrim in Bloom community competitions, judging criteria focusing on biodiversity and sustainable gardening practices.
- 3 x schools completed Forest School programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged).
- 3 x schools completed Schools Growing Club programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged).
- 50+ x parks events delivered including foraging walks, nature walks, biodiversity university.
- The Embrace programme funded by The Executive Officer saw 1010 participants attending 33 events/workshop through the winter season ranging from family sessions in the forest, foraging opportunities and guided walks, Friends of Groups, Forest Bathing sessions and an event to celebrate the Lunar New Year

- Over 800 native oyster nursery installed at Glenarm Marina in 30 purpose built cages under the marina pontoon providing biodiversity and water quality improvements along with educational resource.
- 218 active allotment holders
- 400 'Grow your own' at home kits distributed to residents.
- Seven new official bathing water sites have been identified following a public review by DAERA, meaning they must meet stringent water quality standards.

They are:

1. Brompton Bay, Bangor
2. Cushendall
3. Donaghadee Harbour
4. **Drain's Bay, Larne**
5. **Portmuck, Islandmagee (Larne)**
6. Rea's Wood, Antrim, Lough Neagh
7. Warrenpoint, Sandy Bottom