November 3rd, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 9th November 2026** at **6:00 pm** in **Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall, Warrenpoint.**

Committee Membership 2026-27

Councillor K Feehan **Chairperson**

Councillor S Murphy **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor T Andrews

Councillor W Clarke

Councillor C Galbraith

Councillor O Hanlon

Councillor G Hanna

Councillor G Kearns

Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Councillor N Lawlor

Councillor A Lewis

Councillor A Quinn

Councillor M Ruane

Councillor J Tinnelly

Councillor H Young

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairpersons Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Meeting held 12 October 2026

Attachment: ERT Action Sheet - October 2026 inc. historic actions.pdf ***Page 1***

For Discussion/Decision

4.0 ERT Business Plan 2026-27 - Mid Year Review

Attachment: ERT Business Plans Mid Year Review 2026-27.pdf ***Page 4***

Attachment: Economy Regeneration and Tourism Mid Year Assessment Business Plan 2026-27.pdf ***Page 6***

5.0 Officers Report on Notice of Motion - Church Hall Funding

Report to follow

6.0 Financial Assistance – St Patrick's Day Fringe Events

Attachment: ERT Report - Finanical Assistance - St Patricks Day Fringe Activities.pdf ***Page 22***

Exempt Appendicies

6.1 Appendix - Financial Assistance – St Patrick's Day Fringe Events

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: Appendix 1 - FA St Patricks Day Fringe Activities.pdf ***Not included***

For Discussion/Decision

7.0 Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows for 2027/28

Attachment: ERT Report - Tourism trade and consumer shows 2027 2028.pdf ***Page 25***

Exempt Appendicies

7.1 Appendix - Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows for 2027/28

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows.pdf ***Not included***

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

8.0 LEP Productivity Growth Programme

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: ERT Report - LEP Productivity Growth Programme.pdf ***Not included***

For Noting

9.0 Historic Environment Policy for NI Consultation Response

Attachment: ERT Report - Historic Environment Policy Consultation.pdf ***Page 29***

Exempt Appendicies

9.1 Appendix -Historic Environment Policy for NI Consultation Response

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Consultation Response - Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland.pdf ***Not included***

For Noting

10.0 Labour Market Partnership Annual Report 2025/26

Attachment: ERT Report - Labour Market Partnership Update.pdf ***Page 32***

Attachment: Appendix 1 - NMD LMP Annual Report 25.26.pdf ***Page 37***

11.0 Museums Quarterly Update Report

Attachment: ERT Report - Museums Quarterly Update.pdf ***Page 72***

12.0 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme Update

Attachment: ERT Report - Rural Business Development Grant Scheme Update.pdf ***Page 75***

ACTION SHEET - ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY 12 OCTOBER 2026

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/098/2026	Action Sheet of ERT Meeting held 14 September 2026	It was agreed to note the action sheet	C Mallon	Noted	Y
ERT/099/2026	BRCD Contracts for Innovation Challenge Fund	It was agreed to approve, subject to securing the necessary approvals from the Belfast Region City Deal, the implementation of the Contracts for Innovation Challenge, including: •The progression of all required legal agreements and procurement activities, including the use of the Competitive Flexible Procurement Procedure, to deliver the Innovation Challenge Fund; and •The award of contracts to eligible and successful SMEs within the approved funding budget.	A Smyth	In progress	Y
ERT/100/2026	Local Growth Funding	It was agreed to note the submission of applications to DfC and approve, subject to Letter of Offer, implementation of the projects outlined in section 2 of the officers' report.	A Smyth	Noted	Y
ERT/101/2026	Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project	It was agreed to approve the business case for the Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project.	A Smyth	In progress	Y

ERT/102/2026	LEP Revive & Reimagine Commercial Property Grant	It was agreed to approve issuing of notification of assessment outcome to applicants, including progressing relevant applicants to Letter of Offer award as per the assessment process outlined in section 2 of the officers' report and to accept and return a Letter of Offer from DfC in respect of Revive and Reimagine Commercial Property Grant, pending final approval from DfC.	A Smyth	In progress	Y
ERT/103/2026	Building Control 6 X Monthly Report	It was agreed to note the report.	J McGilly	Noted	Y
ERT/104/2026	Licensing 6 X Monthly Report	It was agreed to note the report.	J McGilly	Noted	Y
ERT/105/2026	Newry BID Update	It was agreed to note the quarter two update from Newry BID on delivery performance against BID Strategic Priorities 2026-2031.	A Smyth	Noted	Y
ERT/106/2026	PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan	It was agreed to note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership on 24 September 2026 and that officers will now proceed with the procurement and delivery of activities under Strand 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan as detailed in section 2 of the officers' report.	A Smyth	In progress	Y

ERT/107/2026	Regional Balance Bill Public Consultation	It was agreed to note the response to the Regional Balance Bill.	A Smyth	Noted	Y
ERT/108/2026	Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) Outlook NMDDC	It was agreed to note the update on Council's Economic Outlook compiled by Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC).	A Smyth	Noted	Y

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9th November 2026
Subject:	Mid Year Assessment of ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Conor Mallon Director – Economy Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Conor Mallon Director – Economy Regeneration and Tourism

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Directorate Business Plans form an essential part of the Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, which drives and provides assurance that corporate objectives are being delivered.
1.2	Directorate Business Plans demonstrate how planned activity during 2026-27 will contribute to the achievement of strategic outcomes in relation to the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Performance Improvement Plan and other key strategies.
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	A Mid Year Assessment of each Directorate Business Plan has been undertaken in order to provide an overview of progress between April-September 2026. This exercise is an important part of the Council's statutory obligations to strengthen the way performance is monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels across the organisation.
2.2	The Mid Year Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan is outlined at Appendix 1.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To consider and approve: • The Mid Year Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	There are no financial resource implications within this report.
5.0	Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes

	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale: Consultation not required
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. Yes – Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Appendix 1 – Mid Year Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	Directorate Business Plan 2026-27

Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate

Mid-Year Assessment
Business Plan 2026-27

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Introduction

This report provides an overview of progress in delivering the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Business Plan 2026-27 between April-September 2026, across the following service areas:

- Economic Development
- Regeneration
- Tourism Development and Promotion
- Tourism Facilities Management and Development
- Arts and Culture
- Events
- Heritage
- Grants & Funding
- AONB Management
- Planning Development Management and Control
- Local Development Plan
- Building Control
- Licencing
- International Relations

The delivery of the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2026-27 supports the achievement of the following corporate objectives, and performance has been tracked using the legend below.

Support the continued growth and development of our local economy

Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment

Develop and revitalise our district

Deliver sustainable services

Legend

Status	
	Target or objective achieved / on track to be achieved
	Target or objective partially achieved / likely to be achieved / subject to delay
	Target or objective not achieved / unlikely to be achieved

Directorate objectives, supporting actions and measures of success

Key Directorate Objectives

Economy, Growth and Tourism –

- To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.
- To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment.
- To deliver regeneration investments in infrastructure, tourism & cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest.
- To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.

Regeneration –

- A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licencing obligations of Council.
- A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement.
- Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Economy, Growth & Tourism			
ERT1: To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.			
Jobs promoted through business start-up activity (statutory)	Target / **Actual**	Sep 26: 86 / **84.6** * 1	Mar 27: 173 / —
Notes:	**1** Enterprise Action Plans - 36 Business Plans - 105 Total 141*0.6 = 84.6 Please note figures for September 2026 have not been validated.		
Number of existing businesses supported on their growth journey	Target / **Actual**	Sep 26: 94 / **91** * 1	Mar 27: 188 / —
Notes:	**1** 90 via Growth 1 via Scaling		
Number of new start businesses supported on their start up journey	Target / **Actual**	Sep 26: 59 / **79** * 1	Mar 27: 119 / —
Notes:	**1** Please note figures for September 2026 have not been validated.		
Number of participants supported on employment pathway initiatives	Target / **Actual**	Sep 26: 125 / **328** * 1	Mar 27: 250 / —
Notes:	**1** Job Fair was hosted on 3rd June 2026, 328 attendees		
Advance opportunities from Councils strategic location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. (CWB)	Target / **Progress**	Sep 26: **Green** * 1	Mar 27: —

Notes:	**1** NMDDC continues to provide secretariat support for DBEC, including for the following, Directors Steering Group, CEO Steering Group and Political Advisory Group as well as DBEC Industry Advisory Panel. NMDDC perfectly located at the heart of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor to advance opportunities, a recent example of boosting cross border economic opportunities was the publication of the research from Ulster University supporting the retention of the hourly Enterprise Service between Dublin and Belfast with stops in Drogheda, Dundalk, Newry and Portadown. Project funding secured from Peace Plus for €3.6M over three years with DBEC leading on Social Partners and Lifelong Learning element. Project Letter of Offer has been received and returned (note that Belfast City Council are leading on behalf of DBEC, so the Letter of Offer has not been issued to NMDDC). DBEC have produced a Brand Engagement Toolkit which has been distributed to Industry Advisory Partners and Local Authority partners. DBEC have built a stakeholder engagement plan to maximise the positioning of NMDDC in DBEC.

		Sep 26	Mar 27
Deliver against the ambitions and maximise the opportunities from investments arising from Belfast Region City Deal (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** NMDDC is leading on the first Challenge Fund under the BRCD Contracts for Funding programme. This will fund SMEs to develop innovative solutions utilising emerging technologies to solve destination and visitor management across Council/BRCD. Theatre and Conference facility project has moved to onsite works. OBC for Regional and Innovation Hub to be progressed Civil Hub progression remains subject to JR outcome.		
Shape delivery approach and funding mechanism for future delivery of business start-up and growth support	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** NMDDC sits on the procurement working group post 2027 Go Succeed design. NMDDC engages with Belfast PMO and Oversight on finance and delivery models.		
Collaborate with businesses and key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that stimulate economic growth (CPP) (CWB)	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** NMDDC joined Invest NI's Southern Region Office group. Engagement with Enterprise Agencies, Colleges, InterTrade Ireland, Newry Chamber, etc. Engagement continues with DRWG, WBR & Kilkeel Chamber. Investment prospectus provided to Invest NI.		
Delivery of opportunities that improve access to skilled labour appropriate to growth ambitions across the district	Target		
	Progress	Red * 1	—

Notes:	**1** LMP Transport Academy launched August, training commenced in Sept with 22 participants. Due to the uncertainty of funding allocation to LMP, a range of initiatives have not progressed.
Create opportunities to develop awareness of the districts diverse business base, product & service offering and successful entrepreneurs	Target / **Progress** — Sep 26: Green * 1 — Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** Mentoring, workshops and masterclasses delivered via Go Succeed to pre starts, start ups and growth businesses. Support via Innovate Accelerate to 7 growth businesses and digital innovation grants available via DTFF.
Progress innovation and digital transformation opportunities (externally / internally) that will drive forward growth and advance the district as an attractive place to live, visit and do business	Target / **Progress** — Sep 26: Green * 1 — Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** DTFF currently in last funding call having issued 530 Letters of Offer (LoO) to value of £8.4m. In NMDDC this equates to 52 LoO and £894k. NMDDC are also leading the first Challenge Fund under the BRCD Contracts for Innovation Programme with expected launch of Oct/Nov 2026. Funding of £640k for R&D activity towards SME. DTFF calls finished. Project moving to evaluation
Secure external investment, where appropriate, to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target / **Progress** — Sep 26: Green * 1 — Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** Application submitted to DfC for Revive and Reimagine Commercial property grant and Property Facade Grant

ERT2: To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment

Sustain Level of Visitor spend (Baseline: May 2026 NISRA data) (£)	Target / **Actual** — Mar 27: 05/2026 Data — * 1
Notes:	**1** Data not yet available
Sustain number of overnight stays. (Baseline: May 2026 NISRA data)	Target / **Actual** — Mar 27: 05/2026 Data —

Retain Blue/Green Flag accreditation for 3 beach's and 4 Forest parks	Target **Actual**	Mar 27 7 Blue/Green Flag accreditations — * 1	
Notes:	**1** Data not yet available		
Grow visitor attendance across 3 x Giant Adventure Events (baseline 25/26 events)	Target **Actual**	Mar 27 34,000 - 3 Giant Adventure Events 37,000 attendees * 1	
Notes:	**1** Eats and Beats 12,500 Wake the Giant 24,500		
Increase footfall across NMD Museums (baseline 25/26)	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 1.5% 53% * 1	Mar 27 3% —
Notes:	**1** NMM increase from 1390 to 4464 DCM increase from 3590 to 4671 Total increase from 5280 to 9135		
Progress investments in major tourism projects that will develop the district as an international visitor destination	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 —
Notes:	**1** The Treetop Walk planning application has been submitted, with associated legal matters continuing to progress. Indicative design work for the ancillary works is also progressing. The Pre-Application Notification (PAN) process was completed on 25 September 2026, with submission of the planning application targeted for 31 October 2026. Council continued to progress the development of a major tourism investment project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). The emerging proposal seeks to connect Kilbroney Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Delamont Country Park, creating a linked visitor experience from Carlingford Lough to Strangford Lough. During the reporting period, work focused on progressing the concept proposals, developing the Outline Business Case and undertaking engagement with tourism businesses and key stakeholders to help inform future investment priorities. The project aims to deliver significant enhancements to visitor infrastructure and experiences across the three parks, strengthening the district's international tourism appeal, encouraging longer stays and supporting sustainable economic growth across the wider destination.		
Progress sustainable projects that promote accessibility to facilities and attractions across the district	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 —

Notes:	**1** During 2026, Council continued its partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation to enhance inclusive access and recreational opportunities at Tyrella Beach. The development of Tyrella as an Inclusive Beach was a key milestone, supported by specialist beach mobility equipment, accessible facilities and inclusive water-based activities, including adapted paddleboarding. The initiative has helped reduce barriers to participation, enabling individuals and families of all abilities to enjoy the beach and coastal environment.		
Investment in assets that will develop the tourism, cultural and heritage offering across the district		Sep 26	Mar 27
	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** Following the successful reopening of the Annesley Walled Garden and Arboretum, Council continued to deliver a programme of heritage, horticultural, educational and community engagement activities. Activities included guided heritage tours highlighting the history and restoration of the gardens, ongoing volunteer gardening sessions, biodiversity and conservation activities, and opportunities for community participation. The programme also supported educational engagement and learning about the significant plant and tree collections. Council also hosted specialist garden tour operators with interests in horticultural and heritage tourism from Europe, the USA and Canada, showcasing the gardens and arboretum to international markets and promoting opportunities for inclusion in future specialist garden tour itineraries. These activities have helped raise the profile of the restored gardens, strengthen community engagement and enhance Castlewellan Forest Park's appeal as a heritage and horticultural visitor destination.		
Development of visitor experiences which focus on outdoor adventure, food and drink, and heritage and culture		Sep 26	Mar 27
	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** Ongoing Development of 3 new experiences working with Hearty's Folk Cottage - Food & Drink and Cultural offering, The Head Gardeners Tour at Annesley Walled Garden and Finnebrogue Woods Canoe Experience		
Delivery and development of a tourism events / festival programme that promotes and enhances the arts, culture and heritage offering across the district		Sep 26	Mar 27
	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** 24,500 attended Wake the Giant 12,500 attended Eats and Beats		
Development and promotion of the district's museums offering that will engage schools, local communities and visitors to the district		Sep 26	Mar 27
	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** 14,842 visitors 335 School children		

Development and promotion of a district wide arts programme that will engage schools, local communities, the arts sector and visitors to the district	Target / Progress	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 –
Notes:	**1** Programme of performances and workshops Down Arts Centre. Artist Bursary Programme delivered. New musician engagement programme Down Arts Centre		
Collaboration with key stakeholders and businesses on the delivery of tourism, arts & culture initiatives, with an annual event for sustainable tourism cluster businesses	Target / Progress	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 –
Notes:	**1** Council continued to progress the development of a Sustainable Tourism Cluster across the Mourne Gullion Strangford destination, aimed at supporting tourism businesses to adopt more sustainable practices, encourage collaboration and strengthen the destination's environmental credentials. During the reporting period, the procurement process for a specialist facilitator was progressed, with a successful provider identified. As part of World Tourism Day in September Council supported tourism businesses across the Mourne Gullion Strangford destination through an AI focused workshop aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of how artificial intelligence can support business development. The workshop focused on the practical application of AI in areas such as digital marketing, content creation, customer engagement and operational efficiencies, helping businesses explore opportunities to improve productivity, competitiveness and the overall visitor experience.		
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target / Progress	Sep 26 Green	Mar 27 –
Notes:	**1** DAERA grant Eats and Beats £14,000		
ERT3: To deliver regeneration investments in infrastructure, tourism & cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest.			
Progress delivery of Council's ambitions under the Belfast Region City Deal tourism, regeneration and digital innovation projects (CPP) (CWB)	Target / Progress	Sep 26 Theatre & Green * 1	Mar 27 New Tourism Green * 2
Notes:	**1** Theatre & Conference Facility on-site - Site protection works completed June - August. Preconstruction works completed, with construction noticed issued September 2026. Demolition works commencing Oct 2026. **2** New Tourism Proposal: OBC Completed **3** Grade A Office Development Letter of Offer Delivered - Grade A Office Development launched and remains open to 20th Nov 26. Engagement underway re new tourism investment concept proposals; OBC drafting underway.		

Collaborate with key stakeholders in order to progress delivery against the Downpatrick Regeneration Living High Streets Toolkit. (CPP) (CWB)	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	1 NMDDC provides a secretariat to DRWG. Council works with key stakeholders on the group including DfC. Enhancement works at Dunleath were complete during this period and launched.		
Commence implementation of Church Street and De-Courcy Place capital investment programme	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	1 Contractor appointed and onsite in August 2026. Trader engagement ongoing.		
Advance regeneration and digital innovation projects, that align to Council priorities	Target / Actual	Sep 26: Yes * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	1 The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Contracts for Innovation (CfI) enables councils to identify significant public service challenges and work collaboratively with businesses and innovators to develop and test novel solutions through a challenge-led procurement model. Council have developed the first proposed innovation challenge under the Contracts for Innovation Programme which has been presented to BRCD for consideration.		

Implementation of Capital - PEACEPLUS Local Community Regeneration and Transformation projects. (CPP) (CWB)	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green	Mar 27: 25 Projects —
	All 25 projects have been procured. 3 projects are completed. The remaining 22 are on site or due to be on site by October 26		
Advance key cultural and heritage projects, and ensure funding opportunities are maximised	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	1 Delivered Heritage Week; Project with musicians in Down Arts Centre; Secured DEARA funding for Eats and Beats		

Sustainable investment in the protection and enhancement of Councils AONB's through implementation of NI Environment Funded action plan	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** Significant progress has been achieved through continued implementation of the AONB Action Plan, supported by NIEA and Council investment. Delivery has included habitat enhancement, citizen science programmes, environmental education, species conservation initiatives, peatland restoration activities and community engagement projects. Partnership working across Council departments and external stakeholders continues to maximise delivery against AONB Management Plan objectives.		
Progress the implementation of the Geo Park Action plan and continued management and investment in Council's geo park assets, and obtaining successful re-validation	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** Significant progress has been achieved in delivering the Geopark Action Plan and implementing the Geopark Strategic Framework. Continued investment has been made in Council-owned Geopark assets, alongside delivery of education, community engagement, sustainable tourism and heritage initiatives. A substantial amount of work was undertaken across the Council and its partners in preparation for the UNESCO revalidation mission. The assessment visit was successfully completed, with the outcome of the revalidation process expected in November 2026. The Geopark continues to demonstrate strong partnership working, effective governance and delivery against UNESCO Global Geopark objectives.		
Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Programme Legacy continues to be delivered successfully and without significant issues. Legacy projects, assets, community networks and volunteer programmes continue to be supported and maintained, ensuring the long-term sustainability of previous investments and project outcomes. The programme remains on track and is planned to continue until 2029, providing ongoing support for heritage conservation, community engagement, volunteering, education and access initiatives across the Ring of Gullion area		
Commence shaping potential regeneration opportunities relevant to new investment areas: Shaping Sustainable Places and DAERA new Rural Policy	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green * 1	Mar 27: —
Notes:	**1** Officers have attended workshops with DfC re SSP and DAERA re Rural Policy and have returned consultations on both programmes.		

To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target / Actual	Sep 26: Yes / Yes *1	Mar 27: —

Notes:	**1** Applications submitted to DfC for funding to support enhancement works at Newry Greenway, Newry Towpath, Downpatrick Property Facade and Commercial Property Scheme. LoO due in October 2026 Funding application has been submitted to BRCD Contracts for Innovation programme.

ERT4: To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.

Number of groups / organisations enabled to submit a financial assistance application	Target / Actual	Sep 26: 175 / 499 *1	Mar 27: 350 / —
Notes:		**1** This is the total applications received for financial assistance across 26/27 calls for capital and revenue projects	
Support Capacity building across community and business sectors in the financial assistance process. (CWB)	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green	Mar 27: —
		17 workshops on completing applications has been delivered to the community and business sectors	
Efficient and effective governance of Council's non-financial assistance initiatives	Target / Progress	Sep 26: Green *1	Mar 27: —
Notes:		**1** Embedding of a consistent approach to the delivery of SLA's and Letters of offer outside of the Financial Assistance online process - There is now one SLA and Letter of offer template being utilised across departments. The application process is also being applied followed by budget holder approval.	
Progress the implementation of the Local Co-designed Peace Plus Action Plans, with 60% delivery against plan in 26/27. (CPP) (CWB)	Target / Actual	Mar 27: 60% delivery% / 63% *1	
Notes:		**1** Up to the end of September	

Regeneration

ERT5: A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and Licensing obligations of Council.			
Engage with regional partners in relation to regulations to ensure continued alignment with emerging requirements (CWB)	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green	Mar 27 –
Delivery of licensing functions of Council with 6 monthly reports to Council on progress and outputs	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 1 report 1 report	Mar 27 2 reports –
Maintain percentage of time for processing domestic building control application within 21 days to 82%	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 82% 85%	Mar 27 82% –
Maintain percentage of time for processing commercial building control application within 35 days to 80%	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 80% 84%	Mar 27 80% –
Maintain percentage of time for processing all application returns within 14 days to 87%	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 87% 95%	Mar 27 87% –
Licencing team process on 375 applications per month	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 2250 2476	Mar 27 4500 –

Pilot and fully implement new software to facilitate on line applications to reduce hard copy files	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 Yes Yes * 1	Mar 27 Yes –
Notes:	**1** Pilot complete and prep for launch of on-line facility underway.		
ERT6: A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement			
Engagement with key stakeholders and partners to develop a collaborative approach to planning improvements (CWB)	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 –
Notes:	**1** ongoing engagment with DFI, Agents and statutory consultees via workshops, HoP etc		

Continued capacity building and mentoring within the planning function (CWB)	Target / Progress	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 —
Notes:	**1** ongoing via Principal planning officer, Seniors group meeting and Prospero Planning external support ongoing 2 days per week with via group meetings and One to one meetings		
Average processing time for local planning applications of 15 weeks	Target / Actual	Sep 26 15 45.8 * 1	Mar 27 15 —
Notes:	**1** Statistic as at 30 June 2026 (Q1 statistics are the latest available)		
Average processing time for major planning applications of 30 weeks	Target / Actual	Sep 26 30 23.4 * 1	Mar 27 30 —
Notes:	**1** as at 30 June 2026 (Q1 statistics are the latest available)		
70% of planning enforcement cases are processing within 39 weeks	Target / Actual	Sep 26 70% 65% * 1	Mar 27 70% —
Notes:	**1** as at 30 June 2026 (Q1 statistics are the latest available)		
Average processing time for validating planning applications of 3 weeks	Target / Actual	Sep 26 3 1	Mar 27 3 —
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for more than 12 months to 170	Target / Actual	Sep 26 170 496 * 1	Mar 27 170 —

Notes:	**1** as at 30 June 2026 (Q1 statistics are the latest available)

		Sep 26	Mar 27
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months to 870.	Target	870	870
	Actual	953 * 1	—
Notes:	**1** as at 30 June 2026 (Q1 statistics are the latest available)		
Reduce the number of enforcement cases in the system for more than 12 months by 10% from 648	Target	583	580
	Actual	679	—
To determine 120 applications per month	Target	720	1440
	Actual	646	—
Establish and implement an action plan to reduce legacy applications in system	Target		
	Progress	Green * 1	—
Notes:	**1** action plan in place with agreed actions and next steps with key date agreed - to be monitored by Developement Manager and reported to SMT and Committee		
Allocate 90% of valid enforcement cases within 3 days	Target	90%	90%
	Actual	71% * 1	—
Notes:	**1** Work has commenced on monitoring and implementing only after agreement of new Enforcement Strategy		
Site visit 90% of priority 1 enforcement cases in 3 days	Target	90%	90%
	Actual	71%	—
site visit 90% of all priority 2 enforcement cases in 15 days	Target	90%	90%
	Actual	53%	—
site visit 90% of all priority 3 enforcement cases in 15 days	Target	90%	90%
	Actual	33%	—

site visit 90% of all priority 4 enforcement cases in 20 days	Target **Actual**	Sep 26 90% 58% * 1	Mar 27 90% —
Notes:	**1** training ongoing with staff and system adjustments to record the stats		
ERT7: Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP)			
Provide half yearly updates on the Local Development Plan in accordance with the agreed timeframe	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 —
Notes:	**1** ongoing updates to Committee on progress and agreement around key actions		
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Council's key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CWB)	Target **Progress**	Sep 26 Green * 1	Mar 27 —
Notes:	**1** ongoing engagement internally with staff around key Council strategies, and with elected members. Extensive consultation completed on Draft Plan Strategies, followed by focussed and minor changes which will again be consulted on in Q3 2026		
Finalise Plan Strategy for submission to DfI	Target **Actual**	Mar 27 Yes Yes * 1	
Notes:	**1** remains on target with Q3 consultation on final focussed changes and finalisation of strategy as per agreed timetable		

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9 November 2026
Subject:	Financial Assistance: St Patrick's Day Fringe Activities
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Sonya Stephenson – Head of Programmes Natasha Smyth – Project Coordinator

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Purpose To approve the recommendations as set out in section 3 of this report. Background Report sets out the Financial Assistance outcome on the call for St Patrick's day Fringe Activities. A call for financial assistance was managed which fulfilled the following aims: • To support initiatives that positively acknowledge/recognise celebrations for St. Patrick's Day. • For community groups/businesses to engage in St. Patrick's Day and expand the offering and dwell time of visitors, through the delivery of fringe activities in the immediate days prior to St. Patrick's Day or on the day of the parade in Newry or Downpatrick Attached is the assessment report on this theme which provides a breakdown of the number of applications, pass and fail at each stage of the process, geographical spread of the applications received per DEA and a breakdown of the final budget allocations to successful applicants. Outlined in section 2 is a summary of the assessment
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	**Summary of assessment**

Theme & Number Applied	Number applied	Number Awarded & Amount	Number & Amount Scored & Ranked
Call 3			
St Patrick's Day Fringe Activities	3	3 £1,400	0

Some organisations who are delivering St Patricks Day events and activities have already applied to the main Financial Assistance scheme usually under Community Events and Festivals.

Under the budget allocated to St Patrick's Day Fringe Activities, there is a balance of unallocated budget. Due to time constraints delivering another call for financial

	assistance would not be possible. It is therefore recommended this budget is reallocated to the main parade provision to assist with activities which will result in an enhanced visitor experience and community benefit.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	1) To issue Letters of Offer to projects as per Council Policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation for this theme 2) Reallocate the balance of funding to the main St Patricks day parades in Newry and Downpatrick to enhance the visitor experience and community benefit.
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	Funding will be allocated from internal Council budget as agreed by Council.
5.0	Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs
7.0	Appendices

7.1	The below items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – **information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)** and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business. Appendix 1. Panel assessment reports for St Patrick's Day Fringe Activities
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9th November 2026
Subject:	Tourism Trade & Consumer shows for 2027/2028
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Michelle Boyle Head of Tourism Product Development & Visitor Experience

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Purpose To approve recommendations set out at section 3 of this report Background Seeking approval to participate in tourism trade and consumer shows, in collaboration with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, to support the tourism sector and promote the destination. It is important for the Council to participate in consumer and trade events to support the local tourism industry. The Council will attend these events in partnership with Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, with one staff member attending. Engaging directly with tour operators plays a crucial role in boosting overnight stays and promoting the full range of tourism experiences available in our area. As part of the Council's ongoing marketing efforts, the following trade and consumer shows provide valuable opportunities to showcase our district and connect with potential visitors and inbound tour operators. ➢ BENE Workshop – Amsterdam TBC - September 2027 ➢ Flavours of Ireland – London – October 2027 ➢ Golf Ireland Convention – Venue TBC – October 2027 ➢ Irish Golf Tour Operator Association conference – Venue TBC –2027 ➢ World Travel Market – London – November 2027 ➢ Incoming Tour Operators Association workshop – TBC – November 2027 ➢ Dublin holiday World – January 2028 ➢ Celtic Connections – Glasgow – January 2028 ➢ Britain & Ireland Market Place – London – January 2028 ➢ Incoming Tour Operators Association Ireland Workshop Dublin TBC– March 2028 ➢ Nordic Workshop – Copenhagen TBC – March 2028 ➢ TNI Meet the Buyer – Belfast - April 2028 ➢ IAGTO European Convention (IEC) – Venue TBC – May 2028
2.0	**Key Issues**
2.1	**BeNe Workshop** A series of 1-2-1 meetings with key Dutch and Belgian travel trade to encourage travel to the region from Beene. Ideal fit due to the low-cost airlines operating directly from Belfast to Amsterdam.

Flavours of Ireland brings together Irish industry and global travel trade to showcase the Island of Ireland with a of programme of prescheduled 10-minute 1-2-1 meetings.

Golf Ireland Convention bring together the Irish trade to meet with international golf tour operators in prescheduled 1-2-1 meeting to promote golf in the destination

Ireland Golf tour Operator Association Conference brings together award winning golf tour operators who help make Ireland one of the most loved golfing destinations with a programme of prescheduled 1-2-1 meetings.

World Travel Market (WTM) is the leading global event for the travel industry to meet industry professionals and conduct business deals. WTM provides a key opportunity to build business relationships and tour operator engagement. With the Council's emphasis on building experiences of packages, this is a key platform. The Councils exhibit as part of the Tourism Ireland platform, at which Local Authorities will be attending to promote their respective districts. Mourne Gullion Strangford tourism Businesses are invited to join the Council representative on the stand.

Incoming Tour Operators Association (Dublin & Belfast) Workshop is an opportunity to meet Ireland's largest and long-established Tour Operating/Handling Agents/DMC's. This event offers an opportunity to meet and sell our destination experiences to all members of ITOA.

Dublin Holiday World is a key consumer platform in attracting visitors to Newry Mourne and Down from the Republic of Ireland market. With over 41,000 people visiting the show it provides an ideal opportunity to market the districts key product and a captive audience is a close to home market with fabulous connectivity via trains and buses. Attendees are interested in the short break market.

Celtic Connections This event will include a B2B workshop providing an opportunity for approximate 25 Industry partners to engage with 25 GB trade at 10-minute meetings.

BIM (Britain & Ireland Marketplace) is a one full-day B2B workshop for international tour operators and travel buyers that want to meet tourism product from across the UK and Ireland.

Nordic Workshop will provide an opportunity to meet with the Nordics' key travel trade in a B2B workshop in Copenhagen, providing you with an efficient meeting opportunity to do business. Taking part in the event is an excellent opportunity for the industry partners to promote their products and experiences to key travel trade from the Nordic region (Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland).

Tourism Northern Ireland's Meet the Buyer is the biggest tourism networking platform held in NI. This event provides an ideal opportunity for us to sell our destination to a pre-qualified group of international buyers.

IAGTO (Incoming Association of Golf Tour Operators) European Convention - This convention comprises two days of 20-minute meetings, with golf operators all

	of which are pre-scheduled at the delegates' request. This is an excellent way to promote our golf product into European markets.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	To approve participation in the tourism trade and consumer shows outlined in Section 2, in collaboration with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland
4.0	**Resource Implications**
4.1	The annual marketing budget will be used to cover costs associated with attending the tourism consumer/trade platforms. Approximate cost to attend the above is set out in appendix 1.
5.0	**Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations**
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs**
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs

7.0	**Appendices**
7.1	These items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph **3** of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - **Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)** and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of Business. Appendix 1. Tourism Trade & Consumer shows for 27/28 – Budget requirements
8.0	**Background Documents**
8.1	None

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9th November 2026
Subject:	Response to Consultation on the Draft Historic Environment Policy for NI
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director - Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Catriona Regan Head of Culture, Arts, Heritage and Events

Purpose of Report:

For Noting

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Purpose To note recommendation at section 3 of this report Background The Historic Environment Policy will be Northern Ireland's first overarching policy framework for the protection, management and promotion of the historic environment. The consultation sought views on a draft vision statement, 17 proposed policy aims and a range of emerging issues relating to the future management of the historic environment. Given the significant contribution of the historic environment to placemaking, regeneration, tourism, community wellbeing and sustainable development, a coordinated corporate response was informed across a range of service area.
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	The Council's response was developed through collaboration between Culture, Arts, Heritage and Events, Planning, Community Planning, Regeneration and Business Development and AONB and Geopark services. An interdepartmental workshop was held to identify key issues and opportunities arising from the consultation. While the Council strongly supports the overall direction of the policy and its ambition to raise the profile of the historic environment, the response highlights a number of areas where additional clarity and support would strengthen delivery.

	The key themes identified were: • Vision and Strategic Direction - strengthening recognition of the intrinsic value of heritage alongside its wider social, economic and environmental benefits. • Leadership and Ownership - ensuring the policy is championed across government and supported by clear governance arrangements and responsibilities. • Resourcing, Skills and Expertise - addressing the need for increased capacity, specialist conservation expertise and traditional building skills. • Heritage as a Cross-Cutting Priority - embedding heritage considerations within planning, regeneration, tourism, community planning, climate adaptation and placemaking initiatives. • Delivery, Funding and Outcomes - establishing clear implementation mechanisms, aligned funding streams and measurable outcomes to support delivery.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note the consultation response on the Draft Historic Environment Policy for NI
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	N/A
5.0	Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation (N/A) The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:

6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs
7.0	Appendices
7.1	This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph **3** of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - **Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)** and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business Appendix 1 - Consultation response on the Draft Historic Environment Policy for NI
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	none

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9th November 2026
Subject:	NMD Labour Market Partnership Annual Report 25/26
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Aveen McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development Patricia McPolin, Skills and Employability Manager

Purpose of Report:

For Noting

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Purpose To note the update provide and recommendation set out in section 3. Background The annual report for NMD Labour Market Partnership has been completed, setting out detail against the 25/26 Action Plan and delivery of Employability and Skills initiatives. NMD Labour Market Partnership aims to deliver initiatives to assist residents who are unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive, closer to or into employment or self-employment. Council received funding from DfC on 15 May 2025 to implement the operational delivery of the 25/26 LMP Action Plan. Additional funding was secured from DfC on 11 November 2025. Council provides the administrative support and governance for NMD LMP.
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	Operational delivery from the 25/26 Action Plan included:

SP 1 - To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area	
1.1 Effective delivery of the LMP through the appropriate resource, governance, and delivery structures	During the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, NMD LMP delivered: • Convened six NMD LMP meetings • Produced 25/26 Annual Report (Appendix 1) • Retained the Skills and Employability Manager and Officer roles • Completed procurement to award contracts for delivery within 25/26 Action Plan • Continued the Schools and Industry Sub-group, with six meetings convened • Collated and submitted quarterly claims and reports to DfC

1.2 Conduct a Strategic Assessment to inform the 2026/2027 Action Plan	Commissioned Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to undertake a Strategic Assessment and present the findings to NMD LMP members.
SP2 - To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally	
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity	
2.1 Get Work Ready Pre-employment Programme	A total of 68 people enrolled on the Get Work Ready programme during 25/26; 67 completed the programme; and 51 participants progressed to employment, education or training.
2.2 Enterprise Pathway Programme	Specialised, mentoring and business support between 'Go Succeed' participation and establishing and growing a new business, providing more sustainable employment for the participant, including access to financial assistance towards business startup costs. 42 participants from across NMDDC enrolled; 40 of whom commenced trading; and 39 received grant aid.
Theme 2: Unemployment	
2.3 Employability Academies	Delivery of a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment are identified with local employers. Positive marketing and recruitment on all employability academies; resulting in 105 enrolments onto 8 academies; providing 65 qualifications; and employment for 45 participants.
2.4 A Place to Work	Continue to promote NMD as a good place to work by providing improved information on local employers, employment opportunities and career pathways, building on linkages with schools, job seekers and local businesses to promote the district as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities. Initiatives delivered include: • Springboard Takeover Day • Young People's Skills Forum • Construction and Retrofit Employers Engagement Event
Theme 5: Disability	
2.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Masterclass	Engaging with local NMD based employers to provide practical advice and support regarding legislation relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion employment issues, enabling people with physical and non-physical disabilities to gain employment. Delivered in partnership with Equality Commission NI and Warrenpoint Burren and Rostrevor Chamber of Commerce, the Masterclass was

	attended by 10 local employers to discuss key disability and employment issues, providing attendees with the opportunity to hear from both employers and employees with real life experience.
2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	Programme specifically for 10 participants who identify as unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive because of disability or health condition. Overcoming barriers resulted in 9 participants securing employment.
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply	
2.7 Upskilling for Growth	Supporting employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those underemployed or employed and seeking career progress, creating employment vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market. This initiative overachieved targets set and helps support the Government's drive to increase the numbers of adults engaging in lifelong learning: • 113 Enrolled • 90 Completed • 87 Gained a new qualification • 63 Employers engaged
2.7 Skills Conference	Over 150 delegates from across NMDDC attended the second 'NMD Recruitment and Skills Conference' in the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle. Representing business, education, training and policymakers, the delegates heard keynote speakers and panellists discuss the theme of the conference, 'Meeting the District's Workforce Challenge'.
SP3 - To promote and support delivery of Employability NI	
Employability	
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	NMD LMP Job Fair was held in Newry on 19th June 2025 and provided exhibition space to 50 employers and 16 support organisations, attracting 388 attendees with an opportunity to avail of 450 jobs on offer. Attendees, of which 63% were aged 19 to 44, reported 91% very satisfied or satisfied with the event. Exhibitor employers who indicated they had met suitable candidates were 96%; with 100% indicating they were very satisfied or satisfied with the event.
Careers Fairs	Following the success of the 24/25, Careers Fair in the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community, NMD LMP again hosted a Careers Fair in 25/26 with 1122 pupils in attendance; 96% of whom were very satisfied or satisfied. With 50 exhibitors available to meet and promote their opportunities to attendees; 94% were very satisfied or satisfied.

		Lecale and Ballynahinch Careers Fair returned to Down Leisure Centre on 4th February 2026 attracting 707 year 12 and year 13 students who had the opportunity to engage with 45 exhibitors to include employers, universities, colleges and support organisations. Exhibitor responses were collated with 93% being very satisfied or satisfied.
	3.2 Apprenticeship Awareness	In supporting the promotion of Apprenticeships as a viable and alternative pathway to employment, NMP LMP sponsored the SRC Big Apprenticeship Event and SERC Excellence Awards Apprentice of the Year. Combined numbers for both these events were over 973 attendees.
	3.3 Increased Awareness	NMD LMP attended two Community Hub events in the 25/26 financial period to raise the profile of NMD LMP and promote initiatives, with a combined number of 257 attendees present.
	As per the Letter of Offer, operational delivery concluded on 31 March 2026, however permission was sought from DfC to enable 2 initiatives to be extended into 26/27, which are currently still live.	
3.0	Recommendations	
3.1	1) To note the attached Annual Report and update provided on initiatives delivered by NMD Labour Market Partnership against 25/26 Action Plan.	
4.0	Resource Implications	
4.1	NMD LMP Activity is 100% funded by DfC and reflected in Council's budget for 25/26.	
5.0	Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations	
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.	
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation	

	The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. Yes – Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Appendix 1 – NMD LMP Annual Report 25/26
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together

Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

Annual Report April 2025 - March 2026

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Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership Chairperson Foreword



As Chairperson of the Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership, I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report for the 2025/26 financial period. Now entering its fifth year of delivery, the Partnership continues to provide an important local platform for collaboration, bringing together employers, education and training providers, statutory agencies, community partners and local government to respond to the labour market needs of the district.

Throughout 2025/26, NMD LMP has remained focused on helping people in the district to move enter and progress within the world of employment, while also helping local employers to ensure that their workforce has the skills required for their business to grow. The Partnership's work continues to be guided by local labour market intelligence, stakeholder engagement and a shared commitment to improving employability outcomes across the district.

Funding for 2025/2026 was secured from the Department of Communities in May 2025, with additional funding provided in November 2025 to enable programme delivery against the approved Action Plan, which aligned activity to key themes including economic inactivity, unemployment, disability, skilled labour supply, promotion of careers and skills pathways.

This year's delivery has built on the important work of the Partnership in previous years, while continuing to adapt to emerging needs across the district. Through targeted pre-employment support, sector-focused employment academies, upskilling opportunities, enterprise support, careers engagement and community outreach, the Partnership has sought to ensure that support is accessible, relevant and responsive to local people and businesses. New initiatives delivered in 2025/26 included the provision of a pre-employment programme specifically for participants with a disability and a Transport Upskilling Employability Academy, both which resulted in positive outcomes.

Key areas of delivery during the year included:

- Funding of the Skills and Employability Manager and Officer
- Regular partnership meetings to discuss progress and interventions
- Evidence-based planning assisted by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre which undertook a *Strategic Assessment of the Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market*
- Pre-employment support via the "Get Work Ready" programme provided to 68 participants; with 51 individuals securing employment.

- Entrepreneurship and enterprise pathway support provided to 42 local aspiring entrepreneurs through mentoring and grant assistance delivered via local enterprise partners.
- Delivery of employability academies to 105 participants across priority sectors; with 71 completing and 45 securing employment at time of print.
- Delivery of careers engagement activity to promote local employment opportunities and raise awareness of priority sectors including a Construction sector specific event to identify contract opportunities available within the district. A total of 291 participants attended 3 separate events.
- Support for 10 local employers to understand inclusive employment practices, including activity focused on equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Specific programme to support 10 people with a disability or health condition to progress towards employment, resulting in 9 participants securing a job.
- Upskilling for Growth activity supporting 113 employees and 63 employers to address current and future skills needs, 87 of whom obtained a qualification.
- Strategic Skills Conference held at the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle in October with 150 stakeholders engaged to support collaboration between education, business, training providers and government.
- Employment pathway events connecting residents and jobseekers with vacancies; employers; and support organisations attended by 388 people and 65 local and cross border businesses.
- Two Careers fairs and schools engagement activity delivered in partnership with Area Learning Communities attended by 1829 students and 96 businesses.
- SERC and SRC sponsored events to promote apprenticeships and alternative pathways as valuable routes into employment attended by 973 individuals.
- Community outreach and awareness activity delivered to promote NMD LMP programmes and wider employability support to 257 attendees.

The achievements and progress outlined in this report have been made possible through the continued support of the Department for Communities, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Partnership members, delivery partners and the many employers, schools, colleges and community organisations who have contributed to delivery throughout the year.

Looking ahead, the Newry Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership remains committed to strengthening collaboration between local stakeholders and central government, reducing barriers to employment, supporting progression and upskilling, and helping to build a resilient and inclusive labour market for the district.

As we move forward, Newry Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership will continue to focus on practical, evidence-led interventions that improve opportunities for residents, respond to employer needs and support the district's wider economic resilience. I would like to thank all members and partners for their continued commitment and contribution to this important work.

Dr Conor Patterson
Chairperson, Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership

Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership (NMD LMP) was established in February 2021, building on existing collaborative structures within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, including the Employability and Skills Working Group and the Economic Forum. By drawing on the knowledge, experience and established relationships of these groups, Council was able to respond quickly and effectively to the introduction of the local Labour Market Partnership model.

In 2021/22, NMD LMP focused on developing a suite of programmes designed to improve access to employment, support upskilling and promote Newry, Mourne and Down as an attractive place to live and work. A Chairperson and two Vice Chairpersons were appointed in February 2021, providing leadership and direction for the Partnership. NMD LMP has continued to develop and deliver activity across subsequent years, including 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Governance and Funding

The NMD LMP 2025/26 Action Plan was approved with a total budget of £665,590, funded by the Department for Communities and administered by the NMD Skills and Employability Manager and Officer. The Chief Executive of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is the Accounting Officer for this funding. Reporting for NMD LMP is through the Council's Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee, which meets monthly and receives progress updates and decision reports as required.

Accountability

NMD LMP applies an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach to measure impact, strengthen accountability and support continuous improvement. Progress against the Action Plan is monitored using agreed indicators and performance measures, with Key Performance Indicators reported quarterly for each initiative. This ensures that delivery remains focused on measurable impact and that projects continue to respond to the needs identified within the Action Plan.

NMD LMP Goals

- To support those unemployed or economically inactive to move closer to or into the labour market
- To support those underemployed to upskill and access meaningful employment
- To upskill and reskill those in employment to meet the current and future skills needs of our employers
- To showcase the district as a great place to live and work
- To collate and distribute local labour market intelligence to inform local labour growth requirements
- To improve linkages between job seekers and local industry employers
- To improve business to school engagement in order to expand local industry knowledge and opportunities among students and the future labour market

NMD Labour Market Partnership – 2025/2026 Membership

	Organisation
Business Stakeholders	Finnebrogue
	First Derivates
	MJM Marine
	National Trust
	Norbrook
	King Communications
	Southern Trust Health and Social Care NI
Strategic Stakeholders	Invest Northern Ireland
	Down Business Centre
	Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency
	Newry Chamber of Commerce
	Disability Action
	DfC NISSA & Jobs and Benefits
	Careers Service NI
Training / Education stakeholders	Area Learning Co-ordinators
	Education Authority
	South Eastern Regional College
	Southern Regional College
	Clanrye Group

Action Plan Report

This Annual Report covers the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, although some projects may continue into Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2026/2027 due to additional funding being secured in November 2025.

During the reporting period, NMD LMP implemented delivery of the Action Plan for 2025/2026, informed by the 2025–2027 Action Plan and focused on the following strategic priorities:

- **Strategic Priority 1**: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area
- **Strategic Priority 2**: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally
- **Strategic Priority 3:** To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally

SP 1 - To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area	
LMP Delivery & Development	
Initiative	**Key Outcomes**

1.1 Effective delivery of the LMP through the appropriate resource, governance, and delivery structures	During the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, NMD LMP delivered the following key outputs:
	• Convened six NMD LMP meetings:
	  ○ 4th June 2025
	  ○ 30th July 2025
	  ○ 24th September 2025
	  ○ 27th November 2025
	  ○ 28th January 2026
	  ○ 25th March 2026
	• Produced the 2024/25 Annual Report
	• Retained the Skills and Employability Manager and Officer posts
	• Completed procurement and awarded delivery contracts for initiatives within the 2025/26 Action Plan
	• Continued the Schools and Industry Sub Group, with six meetings held
	• Collated and submitted quarterly claims and reports to the Department for Communities.

1.2 Conduct a Strategic Assessment to inform the 2026/2027 Action Plan	Ulster University Economic Policy Centre was commissioned to undertake a Strategic Assessment and present the findings to NMD LMP members, improving understanding of local economic challenges and supporting the Partnership's ongoing work.

SP2 - To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally

Theme 1: Economic Inactivity

Aim	Key Outcomes
2.1 Get Work Ready Pre-employment Programme	A total of 68 people enrolled on the Get Work Ready programme during 2025/26. At time of print, 48 participants had progressed into employment, education or training. • 68 Enrolled • 67 Completed • 51 into employment

Graphics used to promote the Get Work Ready programme:





2.2 Enterprise Pathway Programme	Specialised, mentoring and business support between 'Go Succeed' participation and establishing and growing a new business providing more sustainable employment for

	the participant, including access to financial assistance towards business startup costs. 42 participants from across the Newry, Mourne and Down District enrolled on the programme, 40 of whom commenced trading and to date 39 of those received grant aid. • 42 Enrolled • 40 Completed • 40 into self-employment
Theme 2: Unemployment	
Aim	**Key Outcomes**
2.3 Employability Academies:	Delivery of a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment are identified with local employers. Positive marketing and recruitment on all employability academies; resulting in enrolments of 105 participants onto 8 academies providing employment for 45 participants, to include: • Warehousing & Forklift Academy • Transport Academy • Childminding Assistant Academy • Digital Skills Academy • Hospitality Academy • Construction & Scaffolding Academy • Health Academy • Classroom Assistant Academy
Warehousing & Forklift Academy 	• 15 Enrolled • 4 Completed • 4 Qualifications awarded • 4 into employment

Transport Academy 	• 32 Enrolled • 25 Completed • 25 Qualifications awarded • 21 into employment at time of print
Childminding Assistant Academy 	• 12 Enrolled • 11 Completed • 8 into employment at time of print
Digital Skills Academy 	• 12 Enrolled • 9 Completed • 5 Qualifications awarded • 3 into employment at time of print

Hospitality Academy 	• 5 Enrolled • 5 Completed • 7 Qualifications awarded • 0 into employment at time of print
Construction and Scaffolding Academy 	• 9 Enrolled • 9 Completed • 9 Qualifications awarded • 7 into employment at time of print
Health Academy 	• 8 Enrolled • 4 Completed • 2 into employment at time of print

Classroom Assistant Academy  	• 12 Enrolled • 4 Completed at time of print • 4 Qualifications awarded • Into employment TBC
2.4 A Place to Work:	Continue to promote NMD as a good place to work by providing improved information on local employers, employment opportunities and career pathways, building on linkages with schools / job seekers and local businesses to promote the district as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities. Initiatives delivered include: • Springboard Takeover Day • Young People's Skills Forum • Construction and Retrofit Employers Engagement Event
Springboard Takeover Day	Facilitate a hospitality, leisure and tourism takeover day in Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle to promote potential careers and opportunities within these industries, providing participants to sample and partake in key tasks such as mocktail mixing and blind taste testing. • 60 participants • 6 post-primary/regional colleges involved • 4 Employers engaged

Images from Springboard Takeover Day:









Young Persons Skills Forum	Provide an opportunity for year 10 students to attend the Forum to hear from local Newry, Mourne and Down District Council based employers to highlight the various vocational and academic options open to young people after they have taken their GCSE's and A-Levels. • 197 participants • 13 Post primary schools involved • 9 Local employers

Images from Young Persons Skills Forum





Construction and Retrofit Employers Engagement Event	Providing an opportunity for micro and small construction contractors to engage with NIHE; CITB; local colleges; and Go Succeed to identify potential support, funding and contract opportunities. • 34 participants • 5 Local employers
Images from Construction and Retrofit Employers Engagement Event  	
Theme 5: Disability	
2.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Masterclass	Engaging with local NMDDC based employers to provide practical advice and support regarding legislation relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion employment issues, enabling people with physical and non-physical disabilities to gain employment. In partnership with Equality Commission NI, the Masterclass discussed key disability and employment issues, providing attendees with the opportunity to hear from both employers and employees with real life experience. • 10 participants/local employers

Images from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Masterclass:	
	
2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	Programme specifically for participants who identify as unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive as a result of disability or health condition. Participants examined their aspirations and worked towards overcoming barriers to securing employment with a suitable employer while focusing on improving employability outcomes. • 10 Enrolled • 10 Completed • 9 into employment at time of print
Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply	
Aim	**Key Outcomes**
2.7 Upskilling for Growth	Supporting employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those underemployed or employed and seeking career progress, creating employment vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market. This initiative overachieved targets set and will help support the Government's drive to increase the numbers of adults engaging in lifelong learning. • 113 Enrolled • 90 Completed • 87 Gained a new qualification • 63 Employers engaged

Graphics used to promote a sample of the Upskilling for Growth programmes:







2.7 Skills Conference	Over 150 delegates from across the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Area attended the second 'NMD Recruitment and Skills Conference' hosted by the Broadcaster and Journalist, Mark Simpson in the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle. Representing business, education, training and policymakers, the delegates heard keynote speakers and panellists discuss the theme of the conference, 'Meeting the District's Workforce Challenge'. Ulster University Economic Policy Centre provided context to the current and future labour market, followed by an address by the Director of Labour Market Policy and Delivery at the Department of Communities. Three panel discussions covered key topics including; Promoting Economic Inclusion & Championing Diversity in the Workplace; The Pathway to a Career & The NI Curriculum; and Attracting & Developing Talent via Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental Social & Governance (ESG).

Images from 25/26 Skills Conference:













SP3 - To promote and support delivery of Employability NI	
Employability	
Aim	**Key Outcomes**
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	NMD LMP Job Fair was held in Newry on 19th June 2025 and provided exhibition space to 50 employers and 16 support organisations, attracting 388 attendees with an opportunity to avail of 450 jobs on offer. Attendees, of which 63% were aged 19 to 44, reported 91% very satisfied or satisfied with

	the event. Exhibitor employers who indicated they had met suitable candidates were 96%; with 100% indicating they were very satisfied or satisfied with the event.

Job Fair images:













Careers Fairs	Following the success of the 24/25, Careers Fair in the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community, NMD LMP again hosted a Careers Fair in 25/26 with 1122 pupils in attendance; 96% of whom were very satisfied or satisfied.

	With 50 exhibitors available to meet and promote their opportunities to attendees; 94% were very satisfied or satisfied. Feedback from attendees included: *"I liked the way there is loads of different things to look into and learn about".* *"I really enjoyed the face-to-face interactions"; and* *"There was a wide variety of careers advertised inclusive of those pursuing either A-levels or SRC pathways or neither".*

Newry and Mourne Careers Fair images:













	Lecale and Ballynahinch Careers Fair returned to Down Leisure Centre on 4th February 2026 attracting 707 year 12 and year 13 students who had the opportunity to engage with 45 exhibitors to include employers, universities, colleges and support organisations. Exhibitor responses were collated with 93% being very satisfied or satisfied. Feedback from attendees included: *"I liked that there was a careers advisor and that there was universities from elsewhere not just NI";* *"I enjoyed learning about the opportunities through further education whether it is university or post A-level.";* *"I liked knowing my options for university outside of NI and what i can do after A level";*

Ballynahinch and Lecale Careers Fair images:









<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"> </td></tr>
<tr><td>3.2 Apprenticeship Awareness</td><td>In supporting the promotion of Apprenticeships as a viable and alternative pathway to employment, NMP LMP sponsored the SRC Big Apprenticeship Event and SERC Excellence Awards Apprentice of the Year. Combined numbers for both these events were over 973 attendees.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Images of Apprenticeship Awareness support:


</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.3 Increased Awareness</td><td>NMD LMP attended two Community Hub events in the 25/26 financial period to raise the profile of NMD LMP and promote initiatives, with a combined number of 257 attendees present.</td></tr>
</table>

Summary of outcomes

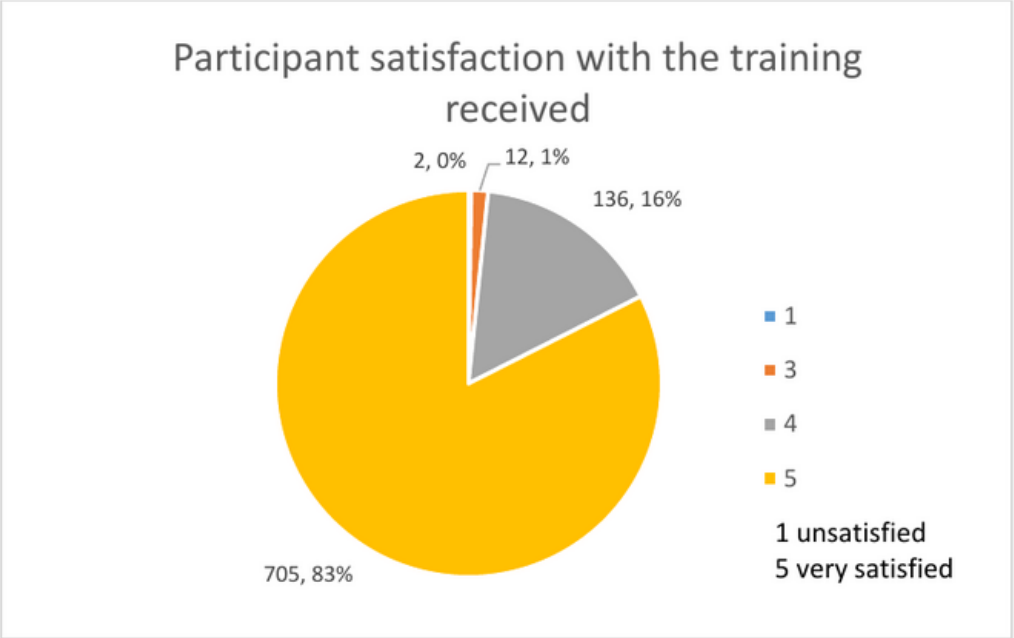
The following table provides a summary of the principal outcomes achieved to date through the delivery of the 2025/2026 Action Plan initiatives.

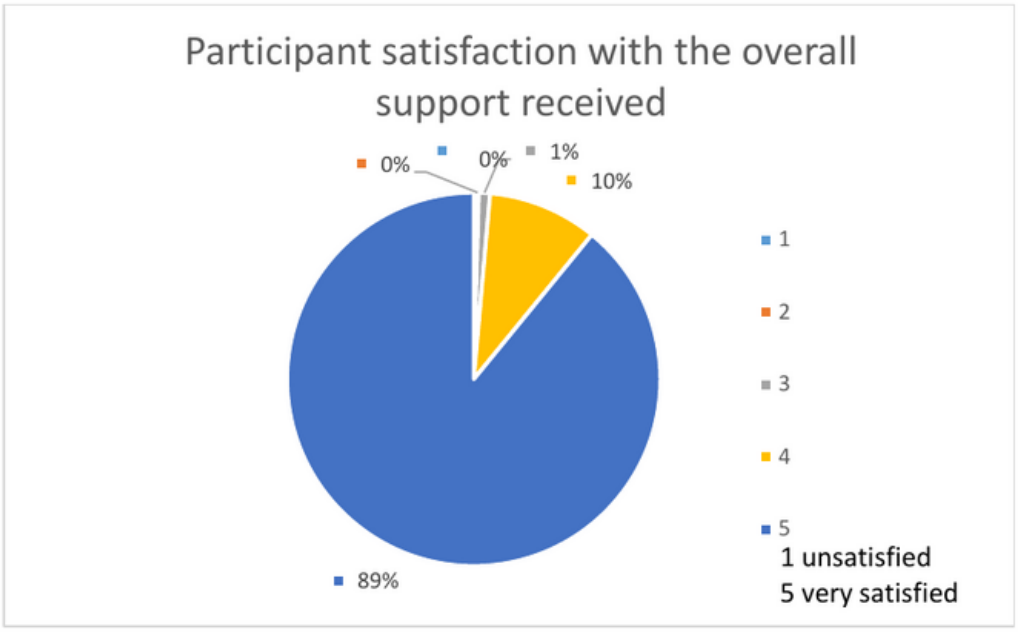
Outputs - Upper Budget	Target	Participants	Completers	Qualifications	Employers	Events	Into employment	Grants	Comments
Strategic Priority 2 Increased Awareness									
Theme 1: Economic Inactivity (Access to Work)									
2.1 Get Work Ready	68	68	67	n/a	n/a	n/a	51	n/a	Programme complete
2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	42	42	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	40	39	Programme complete
Theme 2: Skilled Labour Supply (Skills for Work)									
2.3 Employability Academies	110	105	71	89	n/a	n/a	45	n/a	Programme complete; outcomes likely to increase; delivery agent update due end of Q2
2.4 A Place to Work	250	291	n/a	n/a	19	3	n/a	n/a	Complete - 1x Hospitality and Tourism Sector event; 1x NMD future opportunities event; 1x Construction Sector Employer Engagement event
Theme 3: Disability									
2.5 Employer Disability Advice Workshop	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	1	n/a	n/a	EDI Masterclass in partnership with Warrenpoint, Burren & Rostrevor Chamber of Commerce
2.6 Disability Employment Programme	10	10	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	n/a	Programme complete
Theme 4: Skills									
2.7 Upskilling for Growth	110	113	90	87	65	n/a	n/a	n/a	Outcomes likely to increase as Transport Academy due to complete end Q2
2.8 Skills Conference	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	150	1	n/a	n/a	Complete
Strategic Priority 3 Increased Awareness									
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	2500	2217	n/a	n/a	161	3	n/a	n/a	1x Job Fair; 2x Careers Fairs complete
3.2 Promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	500	978	n/a	n/a	40	2	n/a	n/a	Sponsorship of 1x SRC Big Apprenticeship Event; 1x SERC Excellence Awards & Apprentice of the Year
3.3 Increased awareness	100	257	n/a	n/a	76	2	n/a	n/a	2x Community Hub Events
TOTALS	3900	4076	278	176	519	12	145	39	

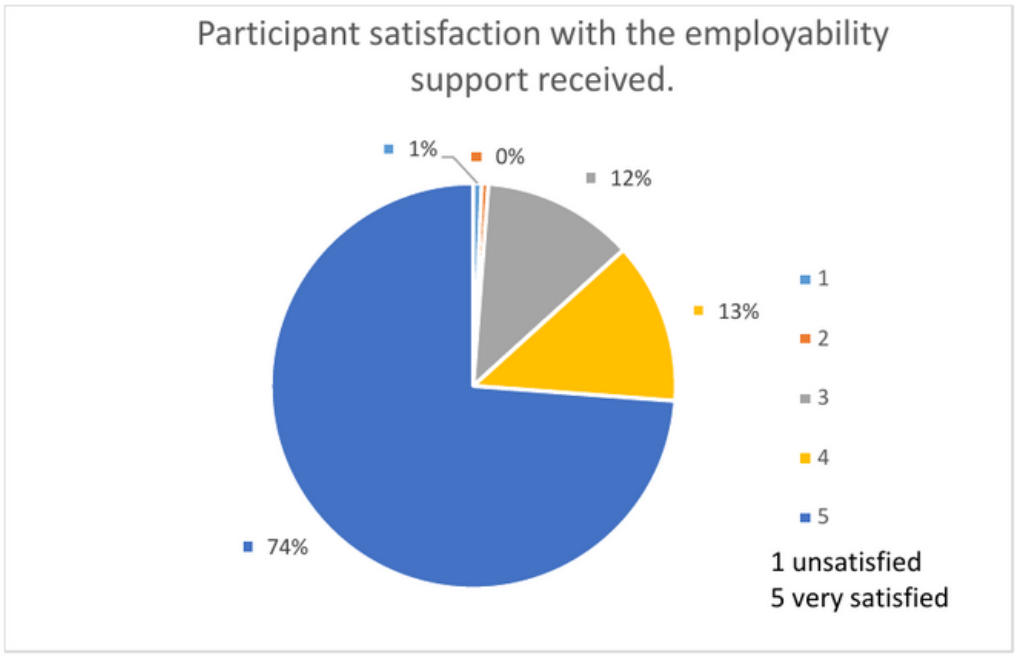
Satisfaction Results

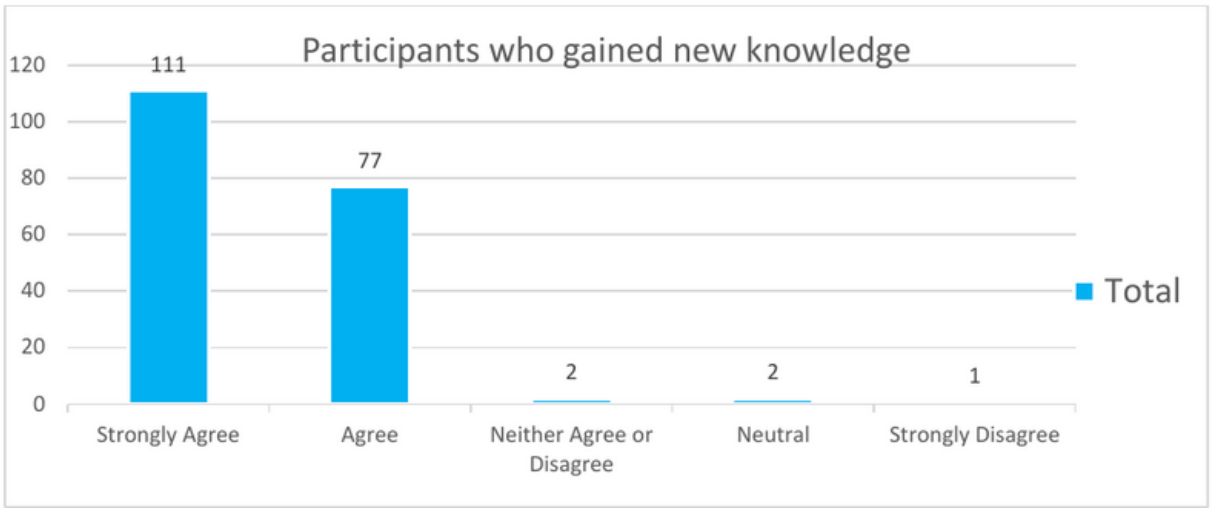
Satisfaction results are shown on the table below based on post project surveys from the following initiatives:

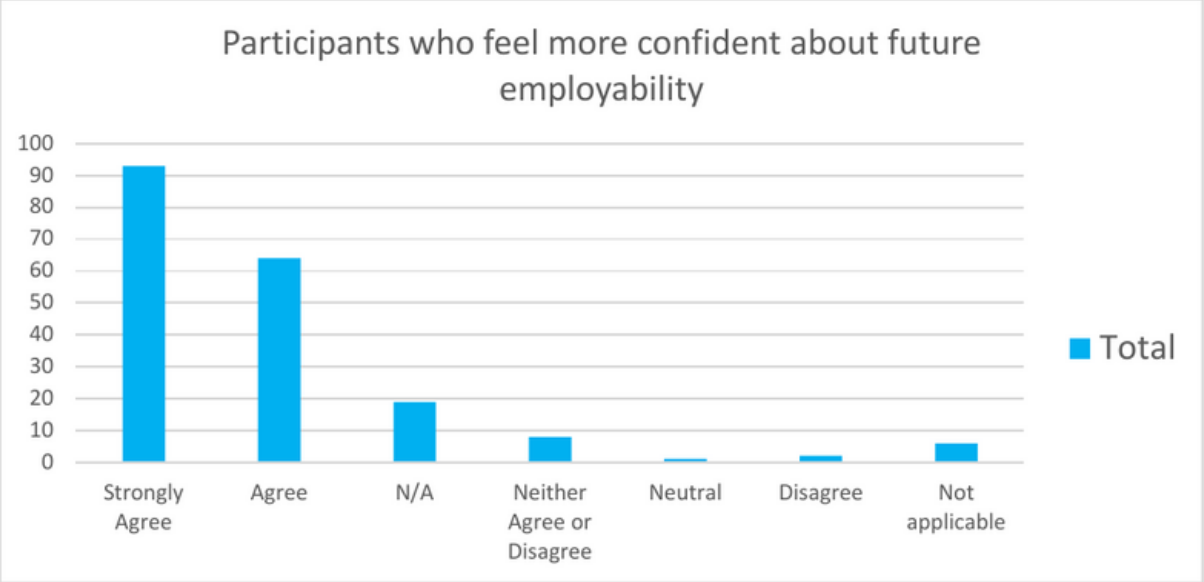
- Get Work Ready
- Get Work ready – Bolt on
- Enterprise Pathway Programme
- Warehouse and Forklift Academy
- Digital Skills Academy
- Hospitality Academy
- Construction and Scaffolding Academy
- Health & Social Care Academy
- Upskilling for Growth Academies




Participant satisfaction with the overall support received
0%
0%
1%
10%
89%
1
2
3
4
5
1 unsatisfied
5 very satisfied


Participant satisfaction with the employability support received.
1%
0%
12%
13%
74%
1
2
3
4
5
1 unsatisfied
5 very satisfied


Participants who gained new knowledge
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
111
77
2
2
1
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree or Disagree
Neutral
Strongly Disagree
Total

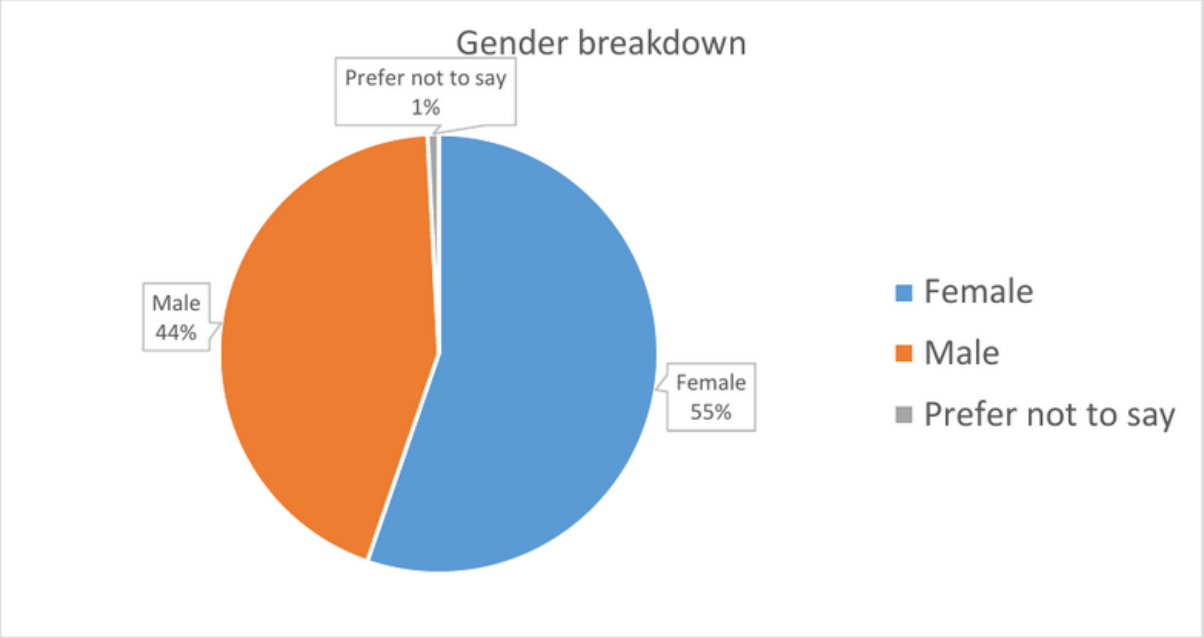

Participants who feel more confident about future employability
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Strongly Agree
Agree
N/A
Neither Agree or Disagree
Neutral
Disagree
Not applicable
Total

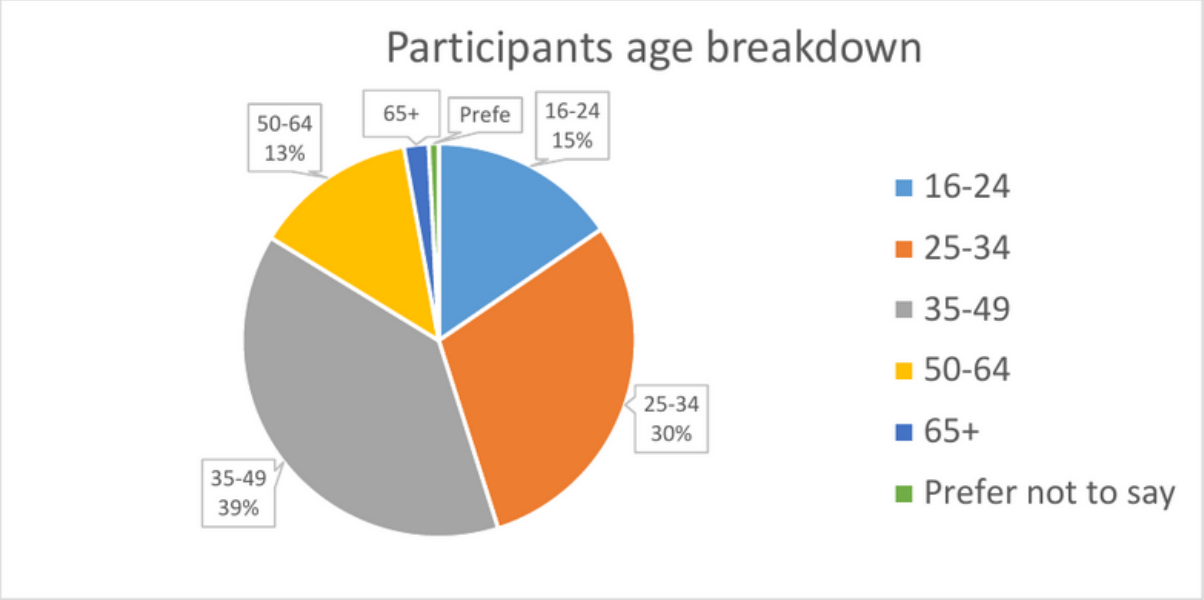

Participants who feel their general confidence levels increased
100
80
60
40
20
0
92
86
8
4
2
1
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree or Disagree
Neutral
Not applicable
Strongly Disagree
Total

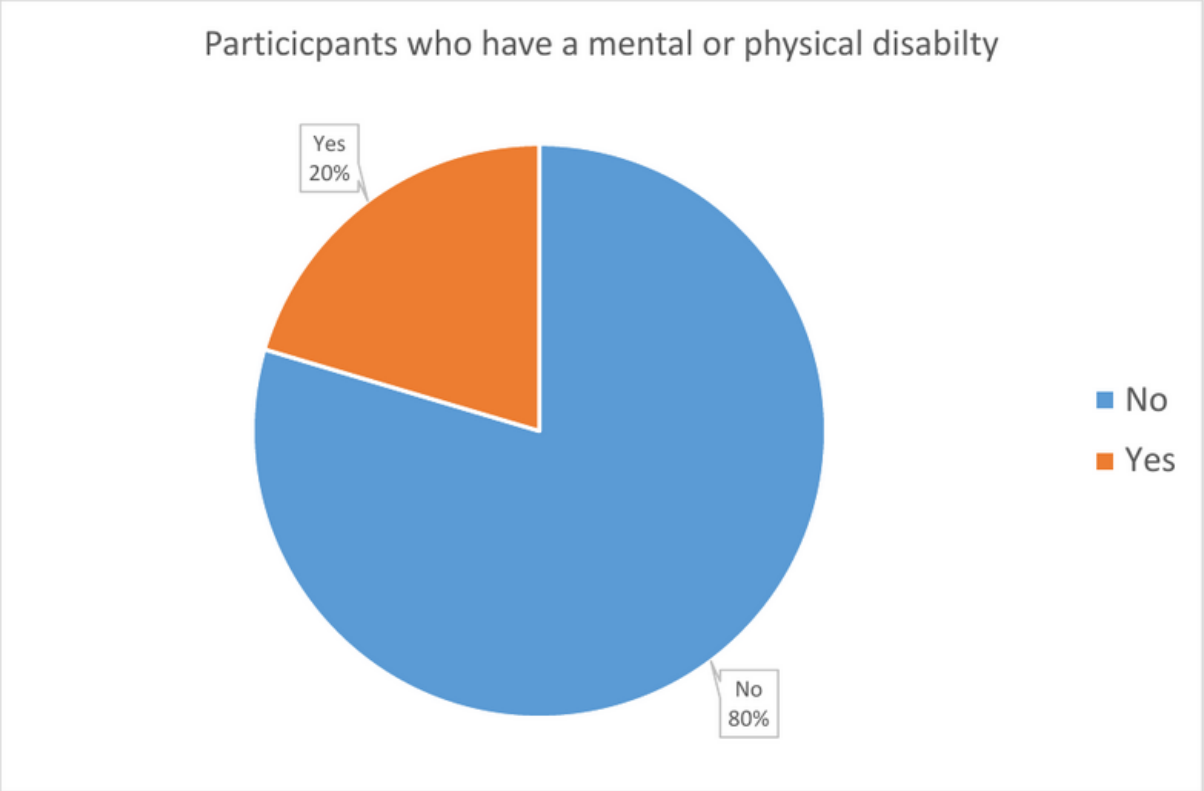
Demographics

Pre-project surveys have enabled the analysis of participants across a range of initiatives to include the following, as shown in the tables below:

- Get Work Ready
- Get Work ready – Bolt on
- Enterprise Pathway Programme
- Warehouse and Forklift Academy
- Digital Skills Academy
- Hospitality Academy
- Construction and Scaffolding Academy
- Health & Social Care Academy
- Upskilling for Growth Academies
- Upskilling for Growth Transport Academy
- Classroom Assistance Academy




Participants age breakdown
50-64
13%
65+
Prefe
16-24
15%
25-34
30%
35-49
39%
16-24
25-34
35-49
50-64
65+
Prefer not to say


Particicpants who have a mental or physical disabilty
Yes
20%
No
80%
No
Yes

Distribution of NMD LMP initiatives

In the 2025/2026 delivery period NMD LMP initiatives were delivered to participants across the seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs), providing accessibility and spread.

Figure 1 below shows the number of participants per in-district DEA, providing a balanced spread of participation taking into account population size and demographics per DEA. Findings based on participant postcodes highlight regional trends, potential gaps, and opportunities to strengthen local labour market support across the NMD district.

District Electoral Area (DEA)	Number of LMP Participants	% of Total
Crotlieve	38	12.7%
Downpatrick	34	11.4%
Newry	50	16.7%
Rowallane	35	11.7%
Slieve Croob	38	12.7%
Slieve Gullion	37	12.4%
The Mournes	67	22.4%
Grand Total (In-District)	**299**	**100%**

The Mournes recorded the highest number of participants of any single DEA (67), representing 22.4% of all in-district registrations. Newry followed with 50 participants (16.7%), while Crotlieve and Slieve Croob were joint third with 38 each. Slieve Gullion (37) and Rowallane (35) showed strong engagement, while Downpatrick (34) was the lowest performing DEA within the district.

Key trends and observations for 2025/26 include:

- Get Work Ready remained the single most popular programme overall, with 68 registrations across the district.
- Transport Academy (32 participants) continues to be an important provision, particularly in rural DEAs such as Crotlieve and Slieve Gullion.
- SRC Upskilling for Growth initiatives were high across several DEAs (48 total), most notably in The Mournes (15).
- Construction & Scaffolding Academy uptake was concentrated in Slieve Gullion (6 out of 9 total)

Schools to Industry Working Group

The *Schools to Industry Working Group* brings together key stakeholders to strengthen collaboration between the education and business sectors across the Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD) District. Building on the foundations established in 2022–2023, the group continued its strategic efforts throughout the 2025–2026 period under the guidance of the NMD Labour Market Partnership (LMP).

Membership

The group comprises Area Learning Coordinators representing 25 post-primary schools across the Newry, Down and Down District, alongside representatives from the local business community, regional colleges, and enterprise agencies. This diverse membership ensures a broad and inclusive approach to aligning education with evolving industry needs.



Vision and Purpose

The core aim of the Working Group is to connect schools with successful local businesses, offering students, parents, and educators' insights into career pathways that exist within the District. This work supports the long-term goal of retaining and nurturing homegrown talent, thereby driving sustained economic growth and prosperity within the NMD area.

Key Activities and Achievements in 2025–2026

Over the past financial year, the group delivered a range of initiatives designed to foster engagement and create real-world connections between education and employment sectors, including:

- **Development of a Strategic Action Plan for 2025–2026**
- **Working Group Meetings** held on:
  - 24 June 2025
  - 30 September 2025
  - 25 November 2025
  - 27 January 2025
  - 24 February 2026
  - 31 March 2026
- **Economic Briefings** from Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, presented during the Skills Conference in October 2025
- **Hospitality Takeover Day** at Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle with 60 participants involved
- **Young Persons Skills Forum** with nearly 200 year 10 students from Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community
- **2025 Skills Conference** with participation from business leaders, educators, training organisations, and policymakers
- **Employment Pathway Events**, including:
  - Lecale & Ballynahinch Area Learning Community Careers Fair
  - Newry & Mourne Area Learning Community Careers Fair
- **Promotion of Apprenticeships**, including:
  - SERC Excellence Awards – Apprentice of the Year
  - SRC Big Apprenticeship Event

Communications

In 2025/26, NMD Labour Market Partnership communications focused on promoting live programmes, supporting recruitment, engaging employers and increasing the visibility of partnership-led delivery across the district. Communications were embedded within individual initiatives to ensure residents, employers, schools, colleges, delivery partners and community organisations received timely information on available support and opportunities.

Messaging was tailored to key programmes including Get Work Ready, Employability Academies, Upskilling for Growth, careers engagement, apprenticeship promotion and inclusion-focused support. This enabled NMD LMP to provide clear calls to action, highlight the benefits of participation and promote outcomes delivered through the 2025/26 Action Plan.

Communications activity was delivered through Council website and social media channels, the NMD Business e-zine, local press, partner newsletters, stakeholder networks and in-person engagement to support participation and strengthen recognition of NMD LMP's role in responding to local labour market needs.

Communication priorities for 2025/26:

- Promote 2025/26 programmes with clear information on eligibility, benefits and how to take part.
- Support recruitment, attendance and engagement across employability, skills, careers and employer-focused activity.
- Share evidence of delivery, including participation, employer involvement, event reach and outcomes.
- Extend reach through Council and Department for Communities channels, delivery partners, employers, colleges, Jobs and Benefits offices and community networks.
- Position NMD LMP as a locally responsive partnership connecting people with work, skills and progression opportunities.

Monitoring and learning:

- Communications performance was reviewed alongside programme delivery using:
    - Programme enquiries, expressions of interest, applications and event registrations.
    - Digital reach and engagement, including impressions, reactions, comments, shares and click-through activity.
    - Feedback from participants, employers, partners and stakeholders.
    - Local media coverage, partner amplification and stakeholder sharing.

Financial Statement 25/26

Statement of Income & Expenditure

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership
Statement of Income & Expenditure
Year to 31 March 2026

Overall Funding

	Total Funding	Expenditure Charged	Expenditure Accrued	Total Expenditure
Funding	£	£	£	£
Funding from DfC	665,589.65	469,187.48	196,402.17	665,589.65
Funding from DE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contribution from Council	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contributions from (Other Please state)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
				0.00
Contributions from (Other Please state)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Overall Funding	**665,589.65**	**469,187.48**	**196,402.17**	**665,589.65**

Certificate of Chief Financial Officer

Subject to the central charges shown above properly reflecting actual costs Incurred by the Council on 'behalf of' the Labour Market Partnership. I am satisfied that the expenditure shown has been wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred by the Council on the Labour Market Partnership and that the grant receivable is in accordance with the regulations and conditions applicable.

Marie Ward — 24.04.2026

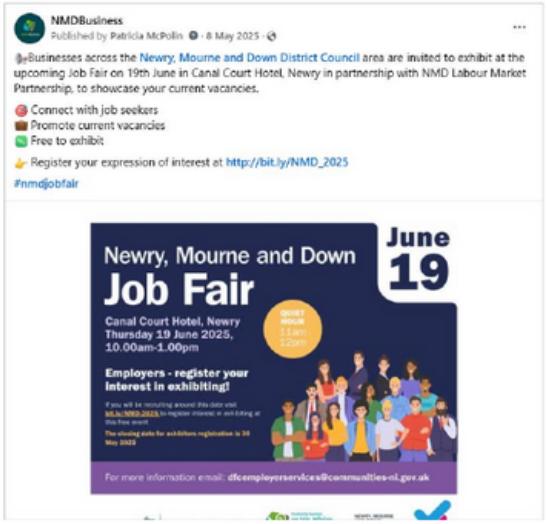
Chief Financial Officer — Date

Appendix One – Social Media/Digital Stats

NMD LMP SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ACCORDING TO PLATFORM Q1 2025-2026		
Q1	SPONSORED AD IMPRESSIONS	**515743**
	TOTAL QUARTERLY IMPRESSIONS	**44112**
NMD LMP SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ACCORDING TO PLATFORM Q2 2025-2026		
Q2	TOTAL QUARTERLY IMPRESSIONS	**52,326**
NMD LMP SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ACCORDING TO PLATFORM Q3 2025-2026		
Q3	TOTAL QUARTERLY IMPRESSIONS	**24,319**
NMD LMP SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ACCORDING TO PLATFORM Q4 2025-2026		
Q4	TOTAL QUARTERLY IMPRESSIONS	**135,679**
	OVERALL TOTAL IMPRESSIONS 25/26	**772,179**

Appendix two – Sample Social Media Posts







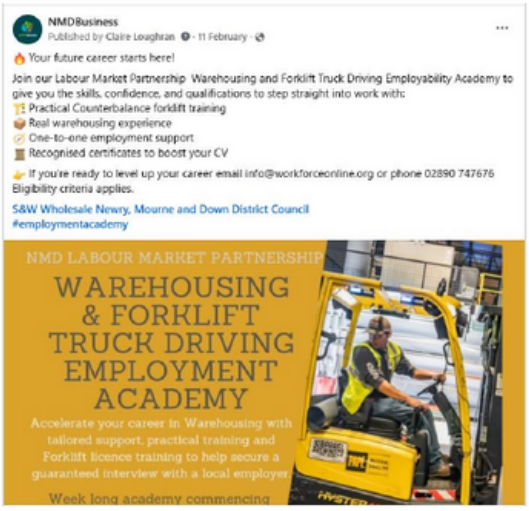


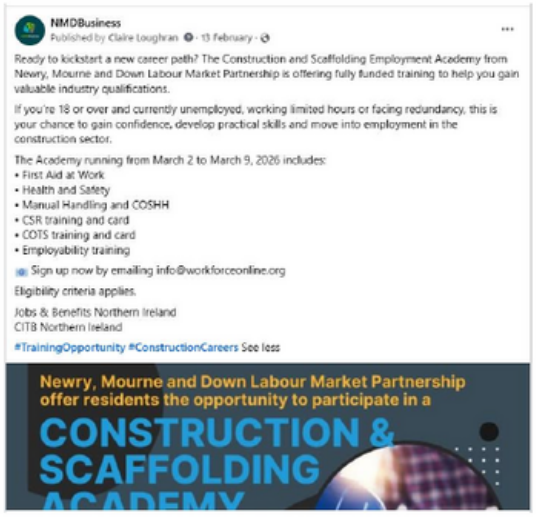



NMDBusiness
Published by Louise McVeigh · 13 December 2025 ·
Looking for more flexibility and a better work–life balance?
Become a childminder or home-based childcarer with the Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership's Childminding Academy, delivered by NICMA – The Childminding Association.
Gain everything you need to get started, including:
Training
Advice
Support
Resources
Take the first step toward becoming a self-employed childminder today!
Eligibility criteria applies
Take the next step by contacting:
enquiries@nicma.org
028 91811015
Labour Market Partnerships
Childminding Academy


NMDBusiness
Published by Louise McVeigh · 14 December 2025 ·
Digital Marketing Academy is now OPEN for registrations
Newry Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership in association with SERC are offering fully funded places for individuals to achieve an OCN Level 4 Award in Social Media and Digital Marketing.
Eligibility:
Participants must be a resident of the NMDDC area
Participants must be unemployed, economically inactive, underemployed (typically working less than 16 hours a week) or at risk of redundancy
Be committed and available to complete all required aspects of the academy
Be able to take up employment upon completion of the academy
Limited places available. Register now at Digital Academy - SERC
DIGITAL ACADEMY
Gain a OCN Level 4 Award in Social Media and Digital Marketing
Start date: 13 January 2026
For further information please contact


NMDBusiness
Published by Patricia McPolin · 16 January ·
Local employers can now register to upskill employees for either a HGV Class 1 or 2 licence or PCV licence to drive their career towards a higher paid position.
Limited number of places available and only a maximum number of employees per business can participate, subject to funding.
Supported by Newry Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership, employers are invited to register via email to: info@workforceonline.org
#upskilling #hgvtraining #hgvdriver #pcvtraining #pcvdriver #transport
TRANSPORT UPSKILLING ACADEMY
CURRENT EMPLOYEES CAN GAIN A HGV CLASS 1 OR 2, OR A PCV LICENCE TO UPSKILL AND PROGRESS THEIR TRANSPORT INDUSTRY CAREER
Limited places available per NMD based business
Email your employer details to: info@workforceonline.org


NMDBusiness
Published by Claire Loughran · 11 February ·
Your future career starts here!
Join our Labour Market Partnership Warehousing and Forklift Truck Driving Employability Academy to give you the skills, confidence, and qualifications to step straight into work with:
Practical Counterbalance forklift training
Real warehousing experience
One-to-one employment support
Recognised certificates to boost your CV
If you're ready to level up your career email info@workforceonline.org or phone 02890 747676
Eligibility criteria applies.
S&W Wholesale Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
#employmentacademy
NMD LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP
WAREHOUSING & FORKLIFT TRUCK DRIVING EMPLOYMENT ACADEMY
Accelerate your career in Warehousing with tailored support, practical training and Forklift licence training to help secure a guaranteed interview with a local employer
Week long academy commencing


NMDBusiness
Published by Claire Loughran · 13 February ·
Ready to kickstart a new career path? The Construction and Scaffolding Employment Academy from Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership is offering fully funded training to help you gain valuable industry qualifications.
If you're 18 or over and currently unemployed, working limited hours or facing redundancy, this is your chance to gain confidence, develop practical skills and move into employment in the construction sector.
The Academy running from March 2 to March 9, 2026 includes:
• First Aid at Work
• Health and Safety
• Manual Handling and COSHH
• CSR training and card
• CDTS training and card
• Employability training
Sign up now by emailing info@workforceonline.org
Eligibility criteria applies.
Jobs & Benefits Northern Ireland
CITB Northern Ireland
#TrainingOpportunity #ConstructionCareers See less
Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership offer residents the opportunity to participate in a
CONSTRUCTION & SCAFFOLDING


NMDBusiness
Published by Louise McVeigh · 4 March ·
Calling employers in the Newry, Mourne and Down area!
Join Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Labour Market Partnership, WBR Chamber of commerce and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Masterclass designed to support inclusive hiring, provide practical workplace advice and suggest employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments.
Tuesday 10 March
Whistledown Hotel, Warrenpoint
Free to attend
Register via https://bit.ly/47akwGt
#DisabilityAwareness #InclusiveWorkplace #NMDDC
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Masterclass
Employers, Managers & HR Professionals are invited to explore practical advice, positive impacts of inclusive employment, and legal obligations

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9th November 2026
Subject:	Quarterly Museums Report (Q2 26/27 July-Sept)
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Alan Freeburn, Museum and Heritage Services Manager
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Alan Freeburn, Museum and Heritage Services Manager

Purpose of Report:

For Noting

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Purpose To note the content of the report Background Report sets out a regular update on the activities, programming and achievements of NMD Museums. NMD Museums consists of Down County Museum, Downpatrick and Newry and Mourne Museum, Newry. Together they provide a museum service for the whole of NMDDC
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	**Newry and Mourne Museum (NMM)** Exhibitions • Refresh of artwork around Museum including works moved from Newry Town Hall • Installation of Lupton Mill stone and Newry boundary marker Notable Donations/Acquisitions • Chair and cake stand made by Joseph Moore, cabinet maker from Newry along with archival material • Archival material from Newry Technical School • Archival material relating to Newry Railway station Visitor Nos

Schools	0
Other Groups/Events	268
Outreach	295
Museum Visitors	3901*
Total	**4464**

*this figure includes those visiting Bagenal's Castle for Registration Services. This figure will be counted separately in the Q3 report.

Events
- Summer Scheme
- Iur Cinn Fleadh

- European Heritage Open Days

Down County Museum (DCM)

Exhibitions

- *F.E. McWilliam: A County Down Legacy*
- *Under the Sweeping Beam: A Celebration of St John's Point Lighthouse*
- *A Tricky Man: Pat Coogan Retrospective*

Notable Donations/Acquisitions

- *Royal Oak Rowing Boat* de-accessioned from the River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames and transported to Down County Museum

Visitor Nos

Schools	0
Other Groups/Events	770
Outreach	175
General Visitors	3726
Total	**4671**

Events

- Downtime Summerfest
- European Heritage Open Days
- *Queen James: Passion, Politics and Plantations at the Heart of the Monarchy* by historian Gareth Russell

NMD Museums Misc

- NMD Museums attended the Heritage Market at Castlewellan Forest Park
- Historical research blogs continue to be published on the NMD website and articles are published in the local press

3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note the quarterly update provided on activity across NMD Museums
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	As per agreed budgets
5.0	Due Regard to equality of oportunity and regard to good relations
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision

	No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. Choose an item.
7.0	Appendices
7.1	none
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	none

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 9 November 2026
Subject:	Rural Business Development Grant Scheme Update
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Sonya Stephenson – Head of Programmes Paul Jordan – Project Coordinator

Purpose of Report:

For Noting

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	Purpose To note the update regarding the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. Background To provide an update regarding the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, which is delivered in partnership with DAERA, is aimed at providing support towards the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses (less than 10 full-time equivalent employees). The scheme provides small capital grants of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a maximum of £7,500.
2.0	**Key Issues**
2.1	The 2026/27 Scheme opened on the 29th June 2026. Following a series of workshops a total of 473 applications were received by the 30th July 2026 deadline. This is an increase from the 193 applications received from 2025/2026. Following the completion of basic eligibility checks and full assessments, a total of 252 Letters of Offer were issued to the value of up to £1,208,287. With no projects scored and ranked. This represents an increase of an additional 124 Letters of Offer issued. Council staff will be working with successful applicants over the coming quarter to process their final claims ahead of the December submission deadline as set by DAERA.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	1) To note the update on delivery of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme
4.0	**Resource Implications**
4.1	An administration fee has been confirmed by DAERA for NMDDC operation of the scheme
5.0	**Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations**

5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs**
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs
7.0	**Appendices**
7.1	None
8.0	**Background Documents**
8.1	None