

June 3rd, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 8th June 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 Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Meeting held 11 May 2026

Attachment: ERT Action Sheet - 2026-05-11 inc. historic actions updated.pdf

Page 1

4.0 To Agree Start Times for Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meetings 2026-2027

Attachment: ERT Schedule of Meetings 2026-27.pdf

Page 4

For Discussion/Decision

5.0 ERT Business Plans

Attachment: ERT Report - ERT Directorate Business Plans.pdf

Page 5

Attachment: Appx 1 - ERT Directorate Annual Assessment of Business 2025-26.pdf

Page 8

Attachment: Appx 2 - Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Business Plan 2026-27.pdf

Page 28

6.0 Consumer Trade Shows 2026-27

Attachment: ERT Report - Consumer Tourism Trade Shows 2026 - 2027 .pdf

Page 49

Exempt Appendices

6.1 Appendix - Consumer Trade Shows 2026-27

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: Appx 1 - Consumer Tourism Trade Shows 2026 - 2027.pdf

Not included

For Discussion/Decision

7.0 PEACEPLUS

Attachment: ERT Report - PEACEPLUS.pdf

Page 53

Exempt Appendices

7.1 Appendix - PEACEPLUS

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: Appx 1 - Peace Plus Partnership report 21 May 2026.pdf **Not included**

Attachment: Appx 2 - Peace Plus - Business Case 2.8 Community Justice Interventions.pdf **Not included**

Attachment: Appx 3 - Peace Plus - Business case 3.3 Identity and Language Act 2022.pdf **Not included**

Attachment: Appx 4 - Peace Plus - Business case 3.6 Responsive Peace Building.pdf **Not included**

For Discussion/Decision

8.0 Rural NI Policy Consultation

Attachment: ERT Report - Rural Policy Consultation.pdf **Page 56**

Attachment: Appx 1 - Rural Policy Consultation draft response.pdf **Page 59**

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

9.0 Sustainable Tourism Network

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 - Sustainable Tourism Network Facilitation.pdf **Not included**

Attachment: Appx 1 - Sustainable Tourism Network Bus Case.pdf **Not included**

For Noting

10.0 Crossmaglen Improvement Plan

Attachment: ERT Report - Crossmaglen Improvement Plan.pdf **Page 67**

Attachment: Appx 1 - Crossmaglen Square Improvement Plan.pdf **Page 70**

11.0 LEP Grants Revive and Reimagine

Attachment: ERT Report - LEP Grants Revive and Reimagine.pdf

Page 106

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Mr Caolain Boyd

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Lorraine/Emma Burns/McParland

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Aurla King

Ms Elaine Kirk

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Niall Lawlor

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Jonathan McGilly

Mr Martin McKibbin

Ms Tracie McLoughlin

Sinead Murphy

Cllr Declan Murphy
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Cllr Kate Murphy
.....
Cllr Selina Murphy
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Ms Patricia Murtagh
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Cllr Áine Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Cllr Michael Rice
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Ms Alison Robb
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Ms Maria Rogan
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Mr Conor Sage
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Mrs Amanda Smyth
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Conor Smyth
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
.....
Cllr David Taylor
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Mr David Telford
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Ms Sinead Trainor
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Cllr Jill Truesdale
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Mrs Marie Ward
.....
Cllr Helena Young
.....

ACTION SHEET - ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING –**MONDAY 9 MARCH 2026**

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/025/2026	NMD Labour Market Partnership 2026/27	It was agreed to approve the following, subject to funding, • The business case for implementation of NMD Action Plan for 2026/2027 as outlined in appendix 1 of the officers' report. • Acceptance of a DFC letter of Offer for NMD LMP activities, including administration and operational budget. • Progression of all required procurement and commissioning activity to secure delivery agents for the initiatives detailed in appendix 2 of the officers' report.	A Smyth	In Progress – awaiting LoO	Y

MONDAY 20 APRIL 2026

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/034/2026	Action Sheet ERT Committee Meeting Monday 9 March 2026	It was also agreed to establish a dedicated Events Working Group, comprising representatives from the community, voluntary and business sectors to enhance and develop existing events, including St Patrick's Day celebrations across the Newry, Mourne and Down district, with a view to increasing economic opportunities and strengthening the district's tourism offering. It was further agreed that Council write to Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA, seeking support for St Patrick's Day events across the district in 2027.	C Mallon C Mallon		N N

MONDAY 11 MAY 2026

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/052/2026	Action Sheet of ERT Meeting held 20/04/2026	It was agreed to note the action sheet	C Mallon		Y
ERT/053/2026	Arts Outreach Programme 26/27	The following was agreed: - To deliver an Artist Bursary Programme, awarding Letters of Offer for 6 bursaries. - To deliver 2 artist bursaries through a SLA for the John Hewitt International Summer School - To deliver a Theatre Company in residence programme, establishing an SLA for delivery against KPIs - To deliver an artist in residence programme, establishing an SLA for delivery against KPIs	A Smyth		Y
ERT/054/2026	Graphic Design, Artwork and Print Management Services	It was agreed to approve the business case and necessary procurement exercises to appoint a graphic design, artwork and print management services contract for tourism, culture, arts and events.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/055/2026	Local Economic Partnership: Professional Services	It was agreed to approve procurement of professional services required to support the delivery of two capital grant programmes on behalf of the Local Economic Partnership: Revive and Reimagine – Commercial Property Grant and Property Façade Renewal Scheme.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/056/2026	UNESCO Together Project	The following was agreed: - To approve the acceptance of the Letter of Offer for UNESCO Together (PEACEPLUS) and the completion of all necessary legal and administrative requirements to enable project delivery. - To approve the business case and subsequent procurements to enable delivery of the UNESCO Together (PEACEPLUS) Project.	A Smyth		Y

ERT/057/2026	Newry BID	The following was agreed: - To note the update provided against Newry BID successful re-vote for a 3rd BID Term. - That Council sign the renewed "BID Levy Operating Network" and work with Newry BID in ensuring adherence to the conditions contained within.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/058/2026	Food Curator – Tourism Events	It was agreed to establish a SLA with Food NI for delivery of the Food Curator Element of both Wake the Giant and Eats and Beats 2026 festivals.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/059/2026	Hotel Accommodation Scheme	It was agreed to issue Letters of Offer to the applicants recommended for the award of funding under the Hotel Accommodation Scheme and that Pre-Letter of Offer conditions are to be met prior to issue of full Letter of Offer and where conditions are not satisfied, no letter of offer will be issued.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/060/2026	Kilcurry Subcatchment Water Assessment Project	it was agreed to note acceptance of the Letter of Offer for Kilcurry Subcatchment Water Assessment project (DAERA Environment Fund) and the completion of all necessary legal and administrative requirements to enable project delivery.	A Smyth		Y
ERT/061/2026	NMD Museums Quarterly Update	It was agreed to note the update	A Smyth		Y

ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

Date	Time	Location
8 June 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
10 August 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
14 September 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
12 October 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
9 November 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
14 December 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
18 January 2027	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
8 February 2027	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall
8 March 2027	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8 th June 2026
Subject:	Directorate Business Plan
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Mallon Director
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Mallon Director

For decision	X	For noting only	
1.0	Purpose and Background		
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> Directorate Business Plans provide an overview of planned activity for the year ahead, and contribute to the delivery of the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and other key plans and strategies. They form an essential part of the Council's Business Planning and Performance Management Framework, which demonstrates how corporate objectives are cascaded across the organisation and provides assurance that they are being delivered. <u>Background</u> As Directorate Business Plans are directly aligned to the achievement of the Corporate Plan, they remain fairly high level, and do not necessarily capture the core, business as usual activity that is undertaken by individual departments. Alternatively, they provide an insight into the key, overarching objectives, supporting actions and measures of success for each Directorate in the year ahead, whilst setting the context for the development of departmental Service Plans which are operational in nature.		
2.0	Key issues		
2.1	Assessment of Directorate Business Plans 2025-26 In order to improve transparency and accountability, and facilitate a performance led approach to business planning, each Directorate has undertaken an assessment of their Business Plan 2025-26. These assessments provide an overview of the performance of each Directorate and have been used to influence the development of the 2026-27 Business Plans. This exercise is an important part of the Council's statutory responsibility to strengthen the way performance is monitored, reviewed and reported across the organisation. The assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26 is attached at Appendix 1.		

2.2	Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 outline the key objectives, supporting actions and measures of success each Directorate will work towards, which are aligned to the strategic objectives within the Corporate Plan 2024-27. Directorate Business Plans 2026-27 are also now aligned to the new organisational structure following completion of the planning for the future process. The ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27 is attached at Appendix 2.
2.3	It should be noted that further improvements to the business planning process are underway across the Council, particularly in relation to cascading corporate objectives in a meaningful way to employees through the introduction and roll-out of Service Plans and People Perform Grow. This process seeks to improve the use of performance measures at all levels of the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework and create a clear 'line of sight' between the work of individuals, teams and departments, and how they contribute to the achievement of Directorate Business Plans and the Corporate Plan.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To approve the assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26
3.2	To approve the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	There are no financial resources implications within this report.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐

	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☒ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☒
7.0	Appendices - Appendix 1 – Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26 - Appendix 2 – ERT Directorate Business Plan 2026-27
8.0	Background Documents
	Directorate Business Plans 2025-26

Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate

Annual Assessment Business Plan 2025-26



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 2025-26 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 2025-26 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

Develop and revitalise our district

Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future

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

Deliver sustainable services

Empower communities to play an active part in civic life

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

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 licensing 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).

Alignment to the Corporate Plan

ALIGNMENT TO THE CORPORATE PLAN	
Directorate Objective	Corporate Plan Objective
To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy
To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment.	Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment
To deliver regeneration investments in infrastructure, tourism & cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest.	Develop and revitalise our District
To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.	Empower communities to play an active part in civic life
A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licensing obligations of Council.	- Develop and revitalise our District - Deliver Sustainable Services
A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement.	- Develop and revitalise our District - Deliver Sustainable Services
Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP).	- Develop and revitalise our District - Deliver Sustainable Services

Assessment of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2025-26

Economy, Regeneration and 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 25 86 113 8.1	Mar 26 173 238.2 8.7
Notes:		1 Business Plans 158 Enterprise Action Plans 31 multiplier 0.6 = 113 2 311 Business Plans / 86 Enterprise Action plans produces 238.2 jobs promoted.	
Number of existing businesses supported on their growth journey	Target Actual	Sep 25 80 195 8.1	Mar 26 220 298 8.7
Notes:		1 Foundation 49, Growth 146 2 Foundation: 32 Growth 69. Scaling 2 - Subject to verification	
Number of new start businesses supported on their start up journey	Target Actual	Sep 25 80 81 8.1	Mar 26 107 107 8.7
Notes:		1 81 Apr - Sept 2 107 Oct - Mar	
Delivery of 2025 – 2030 Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy	Target Progress	Sep 25 Amber 8.1	Mar 26 Green 8.7
Notes:		1 Procurement process was undertaken, no one was appointed. Specification was revisited and procurement will be issued in Q3 2025. 2 Specification has been revisited to appoint a consultant to undertake a strategy only. RFQ will be issued in 26/27.	
Advance opportunities from Councils strategic location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.1	Mar 26 Green 8.7

	Notes:	1 DBEC continues to explore cross border economic opportunities and has led on three cross border bids for funding. A proposal developing cross border tourism opportunities is currently being assessed, a decision on the outcome is expected in Q3 2025. The final application exploring circular economy is still in development and planning stage. DBEC is partnering on an application to SEUPB (PeacePlus) that will target cross-border labour market access and mobility of workers across the border. The project will also explore cross border skills equivalence of qualifications. DBEC has continued to develop an Industry Advisory Board, a Terms of Reference for this board has been created and approved, with the first meeting of the board due in Q3 2025. 2 Funding applications submitted included a cross-border innovation bid to InterTradelreland (unsuccessful), a cross-border tourism strategy with a food and drink focus to PeacePlus (unsuccessful), and a circular economy / Industrial Symbiosis bid to InterTradelreland, which is in development, with a decision expected in May 2026. Key programme activity has continued through Innovate+ (PEACEPLUS, ATU-led) €10million, with DBEC supporting SME engagement across the corridor in partnership with ATU, Catalyst, Queen's University Belfast, and Ulster University. The programme targets 955 SMEs, with 715 progressing into implementation, focusing on AI, ESG, sustainability, digital transformation, RegTech, and leadership development. The Innovation Support Network bid was also unsuccessful.		
Deliver against the ambitions and maximise the opportunities from investments arising from Belfast Region City Deal (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Amber 8 1	Mar 26 Green 8 7
	Notes:	1 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol MMGP Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative proposal Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September Regional Innovation Hub Potential partnership opportunities being explored that could support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City 2 NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Permission Secured Civic Hub Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Theatre & Conference - Contractor appointed and predevelopment works underway Concept for a new Tourism project has been approved by BCRD Exc Board, NMDDC, DfE and TNI, following withdrawal of MMGP as a BRCD project. Concept will be progressed to OBC. £1 Million development grant for Hotel Accommodation underway with 4 applications submitted. £3 Million development grant for Grade A Office Accommodation was launched, however with nil applications received. Development grant will be reopened in Q1 2026/27. Progression of concept for Regional Innovation Hub continues, with potential partnership opportunities being explored.		
Collaborate with key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that stimulate economic growth for the district. (CPP) (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8 1	Mar 26 Green 8 7

	Notes:	1 Council established a Local Economic Partnership in Q1 2024/2025. The Partnership developed a range of Regeneration and Economic development programmes to increase productivity across the district. SLA with Newry Chamber to support 3 conferences. Delivery of Innovate Accelerate export programme and NMD Social Enterprise programmes. 2 Local Economic Partnership secured £4.5 Million Letter of Offer to support delivery against Regional Balance until March 2028. Go Succeed supported 486 businesses on their growth journey. DTFF has delivered successful letters of offer to 32 applicants in the district to the value of £583,433.
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Collaborate with key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that improve access to skilled labour appropriate to growth ambitions across the district (CPP) (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.1	Mar 26 Green 8.7
Notes:	1 LoO for LMP £522,963.29, initiatives are underway. Progress to date includes: • Get Work Ready preemployment programme launched with 27 participants enrolled. • HGV Employment Academy launched with 32 participants enrolled. • Employment Pathway Job Fair event on 19th June with 50 employers; 16 support organisations; and 388 attendees, over 450 jobs were on offer and 63% of attendees were aged 19-44. 2 Approval from DfC for additional funding of £142,626.36 • Labour Market Partnership meetings conducted x 4 • Get Work Ready pre-employment programme concluded with 67 participants completing of 68 enrolled • Enterprise Pathway Programme concluded with 40 completers of 41 enrolments • Employability Academies concluded with 40 completers of 70 enrolments • Three “Place to Work” events held with 276 attendees • Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Masterclass held with 10 local employers • Disability Employment Programme delivered to 10 participants • Upskilling for Growth initiatives delivered to 113 participants • Employment Pathway events delivered to 2217 attendees • Apprenticeship events held with 973 attendees • Promotion of Employability and Skills Events delivered to 150 attendees • To date a total of 96 participants have gained employment as a result of participating in an NMD LMP initiative. Skills conference hosted with 150 people in attendance.		
Create opportunities to develop awareness of the districts diverse business base, product & service offering and successful entrepreneurs	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.1	Mar 26 Green 8.7
Notes:	1 Delivery of Go Succeed and DTFF to entrepreneurs across the district. Engagement with Invest NI, Chambers, Colleges and business rep groups to create and promote opportunities. 2 Delivery of Go Succeed to entrepreneurs across the district. Engagement with Invest NI, Chambers, Colleges and business rep groups to create and promote opportunities. Artisan markets and Make it Local Campaign seeks to create a platform for the district retail and artisan offering. NMDDC as lead Council for the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund has managed and delivered this programme across all Councils in Northern Ireland. To date the programme has issued over 503 Letters of Offer to the value of £8.2m.		

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 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
Notes:	1 Funding awarded from Belfast Innovation Region funding programme for the installation of advanced technology that will enable the creation of a SMART Forest at Castlewella 2 Pilot project being progressed for smart technology to be installed in Castlewella Forest Park to manage visitor and environmental data. Digital Innovation and Regeneration team now operational with remit to identify and progress opportunities. The Digital Innovation Team in NMDDC has successfully developed and coordinated Digital Champions under the Mobile Action Plan for Northern Ireland across each of the 11 Council areas in line with the DSIT wireless infrastructure strategy. This ensures that the deployment of fibre and mobile connectivity will continue to support digital and innovation projects whilst ensuring economic growth across the district.		
Secure external investment, where appropriate, to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green

Notes:	1 Go Succeed funding for 25/26 was approved by UK Government. NMDDC's allocation for 25/26 is £1,071,861.92, Council contributes £167,263. The funding is secure until 31 March 2026. Council has been allocated £4.5 million for the delivery of LEP. 2 Go Succeed - £1,071,861.92 (UKSPF) Go Succeed grants: £145,765.40 LEP - £4.5 million for the delivery of LEP. LMP: £522,963.29 plus an additional £142,626.36 Rural Development Grants: £641,178 The Grove €74,130.00		
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ERT2: To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment

Level of Visitor spend (NISRA) (£)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
Notes:	1 The visitor spend achieved in 2024 was £73.3million 2 The visitor spend achieved in 2025 was £60.8		
Number of overnight stays. (NISRA)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
Notes:	1 The number of overnight stays is 1.24 million 2 The number of overnight stays is 1.2 million		

Development of visitor experiences which focus on outdoor adventure, food and drink, and heritage and culture.	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.7	Mar 26 Green 8.7
Notes:	1 2 new experiences have been developed. A new food and drink event in Warrenpoint and a mindfulness experience in forest parks. Development of a new series of summer events "The Garden Sessions" in Slieve Gullion. Introduction of "Restaurant Week" in Newcastle associated with the Eats and Beats Festival. 2 2 new outdoor mindfulness relaxation experiences have been developed. 2 existing experiences have been reviewed and revised.		
Progress investments in major tourism projects that will develop the district as an international visitor destination	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.7	Mar 26 Green 8.7
Notes:	1 The development of the Treetops Castlewellan project will transform the district into a compelling international visitor destination by anchoring Northern Ireland's first treetop walk within Castlewellan Forest Park. With an investment of around £6.8 million already approved by Council and £5million from EAK. Works are progressing on the lease and legal agreements. At Delamont Country Park investing an estimated £5million into key enhancements at Delamont Country Park, including upgraded infrastructure, interpretive facilities, improved access and amenities, the project will reposition Delamont as a premier nature-based tourism hub, capable of drawing international visitors. Council have committed to progress the project to RIBA Stage 3 and work is progressing on developing the tender documents to appoint and ICT Team 2 The Treetop Mourne project has completed public consultation as part of the Planning process. EAK are continuing to undertake a wide range of survey to facilitate the Planning process. Council are continuing to engage with FS to finalise legal arrangements. Council have completed the procurement to appoint an ICT team and have the appointed have commenced work on preparing designs and planning permission required for ancillary services. At Delamont Country Park the procurement documents have been completed for issuing through the BCC Framework to appoint an ICT Team to develop up the detailed designs.		
Collaborate with key stakeholders to progress sustainable active travel projects that promote accessibility to facilities and attractions across the district	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.7	Mar 26 Green 8.7

Notes:	1 Works is continuing with key stakeholders — including the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), local communities, and heritage bodies — to advance sustainable active travel projects that connect people, places, and attractions across the district. Through initiatives such seeking funding for the enhancement of the Newry Canal Towpath and feasibility work on future routes like the Newcastle to Downpatrick/Comber Greenway. To help protect the future of the towpath for accessible travel a tender has been issued to undertake repairs to Lock. 6 Engagement is ongoing with the DfI's who are engaging a Consultant/Design team to consider development of the linkage between the towpath and Carlingford Lough Greenway through Newry City Centre further promoting active travel opportunities. 2 DfI have now engaged a consultancy team to consider the linkages project between the Towpath and Greenway through Newry City. In terms of Lock 6 a Scheduled Application has been submitted for approval Council secured funding to progress feasibility studies for 3 projects: Newry Canal Towpath route from Newry City to Poyntzpass, forming part of the wider Newry to Portadown Greenway and two key branches of the Newcastle to Comber via Downpatrick Greenway - the Downpatrick to Ardglass route and the Ballynahinch Spur between Saintfield and Ballynahinch. The funding will support feasibility studies and design work on three priority Greenway routes identified within the Council's 10-year Active Travel Masterplan. A Feasibility study has been completed on potential active travel routes in Newcastle, and a funding application has been submitted to DfI for implementation of an identified project.		
Investment in assets that will develop the tourism, cultural and heritage offering across the district	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.3	Mar 26 Green 8.3
Notes:	1 Investment in a range of interpretative improvement as part of the Mourne Gullion Strangford geopark is currently at audit phase to prioritise investments for this financial year. 2 A range of new and improved interpretation panels and entrance signage has been developed. A Visual survey has been completed on the Scheduled Monument at Newry Canal focusing on 5 no. locks Visitor improvement works completed at Tyrella Beach Amenity Building with Mae Murray Accessible Beach operational. OBC approved at Council for investment in Tree Tops at Castlewellan and progress underway regarding ancillary works necessary to accommodate investment. Investment of £2,815,822 by NLHF in Castlewellan Forest Park has facilitated the opening of Annesley Arboretum & Garden and works at the Grange Yard near completion.		
Delivery and development of a tourism events and festival programme that promotes and enhances the arts, culture and heritage offering across the district	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 8.3	Mar 26 Green 8.3

	Notes: 1Wake the Giant Festival - delivered June 2025 Eats and Beats Festival - delivered Sept 2025 -25,500 attendance 22025/26 programme of giant adventure events successfully delivered, with approximately 34,000 attendees across the 3 Giant adventure events (Wake the Giant, Eats and Beats and Footsteps in the Forest). Delivery of the St Patricks Day events in Newry and Downpatrick, 15,000 attendees in each location. Delivered Newry Arts Festival, 23 events, 748 attendees.									
Development and promotion of the district’s museums offering that will engage schools, local communities and visitors to the district	<table><tr><td></td><td>Sep 25</td><td>Mar 26</td></tr><tr><td>Target</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Progress</td><td>Green</td><td>Green</td></tr></table>		Sep 25	Mar 26	Target			Progress	Green	Green
	Sep 25	Mar 26								
Target										
Progress	Green	Green								
	Notes: 1Both Down County Museum and Newry and Mourne Museum have resumed a rolling programme of temporary exhibitions, and both are upgrading and making interventions in their permanent galleries now that the two Curator posts are filled. The education and outreach programme, although hindered by absence at Down County Museum, continues to educate and entertain thousands of school children. Both museums are poised to begin PEACE Plus funded community engagement projects and continue to work in partnership with NMDDC colleagues and external organisations such as Newry BID, Down Community Arts and the St Patricks Centre in promoting the district 2NMM two temporary exhibitions and two Peace Plus funded projects commenced (flowering and housing). DCM gallery converted to a dedicated art gallery launch with the AONB photographic exhibition. 23,500 visitors to the Museums (schools, communities and tourists).									
Development and promotion of a district wide arts programme that will engage schools, local communities, the arts sector and visitors to the district	<table><tr><td></td><td>Sep 25</td><td>Mar 26</td></tr><tr><td>Target</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Progress</td><td>Green</td><td>Green</td></tr></table>		Sep 25	Mar 26	Target			Progress	Green	Green
	Sep 25	Mar 26								
Target										
Progress	Green	Green								
	Notes: 1Delivered an extensive range of arts workshops. Delivered the Artist Bursary Programme. Applications received for the Artist in Residence Programme. 2Total footfall of 28,096 at Down Arts Centre, delivered 39 performances with a total audience of 3,920. A programme of 53 workshops (100 classes) delivered to adults and children. Managed a programme of eight artists bursaries of total value of £5,000 . Theatre in residence programme for 10 months Dramability. £15,000 awarded for an Artist in Residence writer/visual artist (10 workshops,163 attendees). Creation of Scotch Street Mural Art Project with two local schools.									
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	<table><tr><td></td><td>Sep 25</td><td>Mar 26</td></tr><tr><td>Target</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Progress</td><td>Green</td><td>Green</td></tr></table>		Sep 25	Mar 26	Target			Progress	Green	Green
	Sep 25	Mar 26								
Target										
Progress	Green	Green								

Notes:		1Grant received from DEARA for Eats and Beats LOO from HED Conservation Area Pilot Natural History Museum - Fixing our broken planet. 2Historic Environment Fund grant £10,000 received from survey of 5 no. locks on Newry Canal. Historic Environment Fund 25/26 £5,000 Revival Scheme for conservation area project. DEARA grant of £14,732 for Eats and Beats. Esmee Fairbairn award, community Museum project £95,000.		
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 25 Amber	Mar 26 Green
Notes:		1NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place MMGP Following decision by National Trust not to grant a lease, NMDDC working with key stakeholders to explore an alternative proposal Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September Regional Innovation Hub Potential partnership opportunities being explored that could support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City 2NCCR Full Business Case approved by DfC Planning Approval in place Project delayed following receipt of Pre Action Protocol Tourism Investment Concept for a new Tourism project has been approved by BCRD Exc Board, NMDDC, DfE and TNI, following withdrawal of MMGP as a BRCD project. Concept will be progressed to OBC. Grade A Office Accommodation grant £3 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 19th September however with nil applications received. Development grant will be reopened in Q1 2026/27 Hotel Accommodation grant £1 Million Office accommodation grant was launched 15th September with 4 applications submitted and now under assessment. Regional Innovation Hub MoU created and signed between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Queens University Innovation Oversight Board as an academic partner on the Regional Innovation Hub project. Potential partnership opportunities being explored with Digital Catapult that could also support the operation of a regional innovation hub in Newry City		
Collaborate with key stakeholders in order to progress delivery against the Downpatrick Regeneration Living High Streets Toolkit. (CPP) (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green

	Notes:	1 Council provides secretariat to DRWG. Meetings occur monthly. Engagement with Ministers for Economy and Infrastructure. Engagement with Rivers Agency, DfI, DfC. Submission of an application to PEACEPLUS for The Grove. 2 Secretariat provided to DRWG, the group meet monthly to progress projects identified in the action plan. Church Street & De Courcy Public Realm underway with contractor appointed and task and finish meetings continue along with monthly meetings with key stakeholders Council has received funding for a Property Facade scheme in St. Patrick's Avenue, this will be implemented via LEP in 26/27. Following the launch of the Urban Park in Dunleath, additional funding was secured for linkages etc. Down Rally will take place summer 2026, supported by DRWG and NMDDC. Funding for The Grove secured from PEACEPLUS.		
Progress implementation of Church Street and De-Courcy Place capital investment programme		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
	Notes:	1 Project board established, PQQ issued, utilities on site. Ongoing engagement with DfI. 2 Pre contract works ongoing with utilities. Contractor appointed following procurement, task and finish meetings continue along with monthly meetings with key stakeholders.		
Prioritise and advance key regeneration projects identified in master plans and strategies, and ensure funding opportunities are maximised		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
	Notes:	1 Kilkeel Public Realm is progressing to RIBA stage 3. LEP has identified regeneration projects for inclusion for funding in the action plan. 2 Key Priority for LEP Action Plan was investment in the regeneration of City, Towns and Villages necessary to support economic development. Regeneration initiatives progressed are district wide schemes that will tackle dereliction and improve property façade. Officers are working closely with DAERA on the development of Shaping Sustainable Places, a new funding model to be launched 26/27. Both schemes detailed deliver against masterplans and strategies. Crossmaglen Square improvement plan complete.		
Implementation of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Regeneration and Transformation theme. (CPP) (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
	Notes:	1 Legal agreements being developed and issued Procurement of civils undertaken 2 Legal documentation process ongoing with 2 fully completed. Procurement process has commenced with CPD for projects over £50k. ITT documents commenced.		

Sustainable investment in the protection and enhancement of Councils AONB's through implementation of NI Environment Funded action plan (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 87	Mar 26 Green 87
	Notes:	1 Ongoing delivery of priority actions across biodiversity, access, and community engagement, with strong partner collaboration and successful event and volunteer programming supporting AONB objectives. EF Change Request LoO signed. 2 Ongoing delivery of priority actions		
Progress the implementation of the Geo Park Action plan and continued management and investment in Council's geo park assets (CWB)		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 87	Mar 26 Green 87
	Notes:	1 Progressed the integrated Strategy and Management Plan, aligned with council priorities and UNESCO guidance, and advanced partner engagement and communications to strengthen Geopark delivery. 2 Led development of the £11–12M Landscape Connections Strangford & Lecale AONB bid. Outcome of application - June 2026. Confirmed project partnership and contributed to development phase planning for the £12M Landscape Connections Mourne & Gullion bid, focused on habitat restoration, water management, and community reconnection.		
Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 87	Mar 26 Green 87
	Notes:	1 Partnership meetings ongoing with a programme of activity delivered via SLAs. 2 Partnership meetings ongoing with a programme of activity delivered via SLAs.		
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green 87	Mar 26 Green 87
	Notes:	1 £4.5 million of LEP funding has been ringfenced for NMDDC - 2025/26 - March 2028. NLHF - Castlewellan Forest Park - £110k additional funding Capturing the collection at DCM - £4733 Mourne Esplanade Beach Access: £5,000 2 External funding secured: Ballynahinch Christmas Lighting £20,000 Peat+: €1,879,737 CMap: €700,636.20 The Grove Downpatrick €74,130		
ERT4: To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.				

Efficient and effective delivery of Council's financial assistance programme		Sep 25 Target Progress Green 8/1	Mar 26 Target Progress Green 8/1
Notes:	1 Five calls open for 2025/2026 305 Letter of Offer Issued 2 361 Applications administered through financial assistance 25/26 resulting in 255 Letters of Offer issued under Financial Assistance themes, awarding £644k of grant aid.		
Support Capacity building across community and business sectors in the application of financial assistance. (CWB)		Sep 25 Target Progress Green 8/1	Mar 26 Target Progress Green 8/1
Notes:	1 15 Pre Application workshops were delivered on financial assistance opportunities during open call for applications. Post assessment - workshops were held with successful applicants on the claim procedure and LoO terms and conditions. 2 15 Pre Application workshops were delivered on financial assistance opportunities during open call for applications. Post assessment - workshops were held with successful applicants on the claim procedure and LoO terms and conditions.		
Progress the implementation of the Local Co-designed Peace Plus Action Plans. (CPP) (CWB)		Sep 25 Target Progress Green 8/1	Mar 26 Target Progress Green 8/1
Notes:	1 Partnership Established Letter of Offer in place and deliver model established Implementation against action plan underway. 2 The Partnership continues to meet and all strands of the programme have commenced delivery		
ERT5: A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and Licensing obligations of Council.			
Maintain processing times within statutory targets.		Sep 25 Target Progress Green 8/1	Mar 26 Target Progress Green 8/1
Notes:	1 Building control and licensing targets achieved 2 Building control and licensing targets achieved		
Engage with regional partners in relation to regulations to ensure continued alignment with emerging requirements (CWB)		Sep 25 Target Progress Green 8/1	Mar 26 Target Progress Green 8/1

	Notes:	1 ongoing		
		2 BCNI and Licensing Forum		
Delivery of licensing functions to support local communities and businesses		Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Amber
	Notes:	1 Backlog with Dual Language Road nameplates due to historical staffing issues.		

Maintain percentage of time for processing domestic building control application within 21 days to 80%	Target Actual	Sep 25 80% 86%	Mar 26 80% 88%
Maintain percentage of time for processing commercial building control application within 35 days to 80%	Target Actual	Sep 25 80% 71%	Mar 26 80% 80%
	Notes:	1 Staff sick absence negatively impacting target.	
Maintain percentage of time for processing all application returns within 14 days to 85%	Target Actual	Sep 25 85% 90%	Mar 26 85% 93%

ERT6: A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement

Improvement to processing times to achieve statutory targets.	Target Progress	Sep 25 Amber	Mar 26 Amber
	Notes:	1 Achieved for major applications , local and enforcement targets still below target	
		2 no change update	
Engagement with key stakeholders and partners to develop a collaborative approach to planning improvements (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green	Mar 26 Green
	Notes:	1 workshop with agent and public consultation held on validation checklists	
		2 validation checklist preparation completed and launch planned June 2026	

Continued capacity building and mentoring within the planning function (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Amber 1	Mar 26 Amber 7
Notes:	1 ongoing with new staff and focus on group and 121 sessions etc. 2 work remains ongoing		
Introduction of validation checklists	Target Progress	Sep 25 Amber 1	Mar 26 Green 7
Notes:	1 approved by committee, staff training ongoing. 2 internal training complete and operational arrangements in place to go live June 2026		
Average processing time for local planning applications of 15 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 25 15 49 weeks 1	Mar 26 15 46.8 7
Notes:	1 stats only available up to June 2025 2 stats only available to dec 2025		
Average processing time for major planning applications of 30 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 25 30 54 weeks 1	Mar 26 30 98 7
Notes:	1 up to 30 June 2025 2 up to Dec 2025 based on 7 projects		
70% of planning enforcement cases are processing within 39 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 25 70% 74%	Mar 26 70% 64.7%
Average processing time for validating planning applications of 6 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 25 6 6	Mar 26 6 1
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for more than 12 months to 170	Target Actual	Sep 25 170 473	Mar 26 170 561 1

Notes: 1 to dec 2025			
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months to 870.	Target Actual	Sep 25 870 1054	Mar 26 870 961 * 1
Notes: 1 to dec 2025			
Reduce the number of enforcement cases in the system for more than 12 months to 580 (subject to the service operating at full complement).	Target Actual	Sep 25 580 610	Mar 26 580 648 * 1
Notes: 1 to dec 2025			
To determine 110 applications per month	Target Actual	Sep 25 660 703	Mar 26 1320 1464
ERT7: Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP)			
Notes:		1 Delivery remains on target - Draft strategy launched June 2025, consultation conclude sept 2025. 2 responses reviewed and counter representations being consulted on as per timetable	
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Council's key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 25 Green * 1	Mar 26 Green * 1
Notes:		1 ongoing 2 yes, activity remains ongoing as per plan	

Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate

Annual Business Plan 2026-27



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

Contents

Page

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Background and Context	3
3.0	Purpose and Values	5
4.0	Challenges and Opportunities	6
5.0	Cross-Cutting Themes and Actions	7
6.0	Directorate Objectives and Alignment to the Corporate Plan	9
7.0	Performance	18
8.0	Organisation and Directorate Structure	19
9.0	Financial Information	20
10.0	Governance Arrangements	20

1.0 Introduction

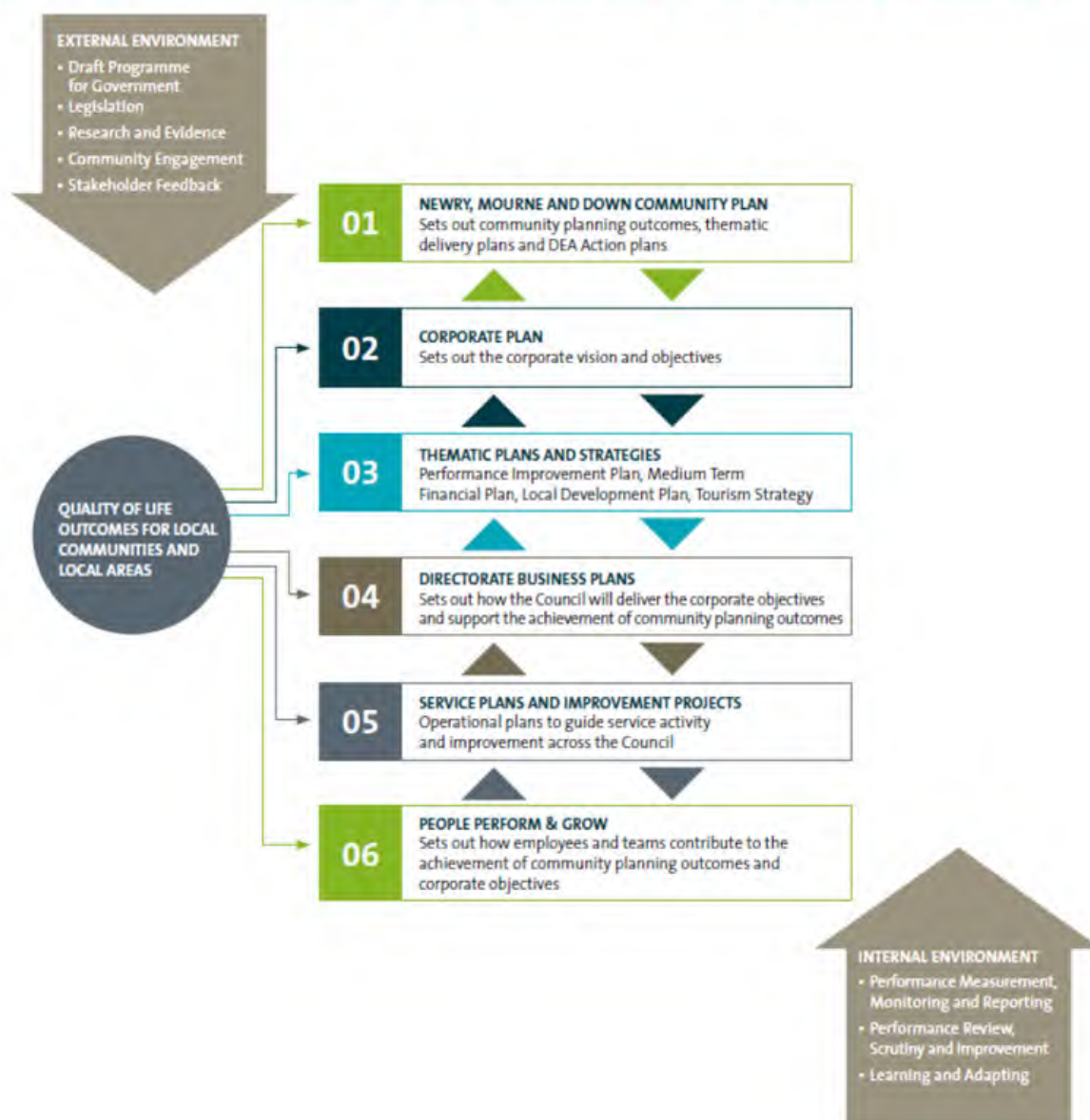
1.1 The Economy, Regeneration and Tourism (ERT) Directorate is responsible for the following key functions of Council:

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

2.0 Background and Context

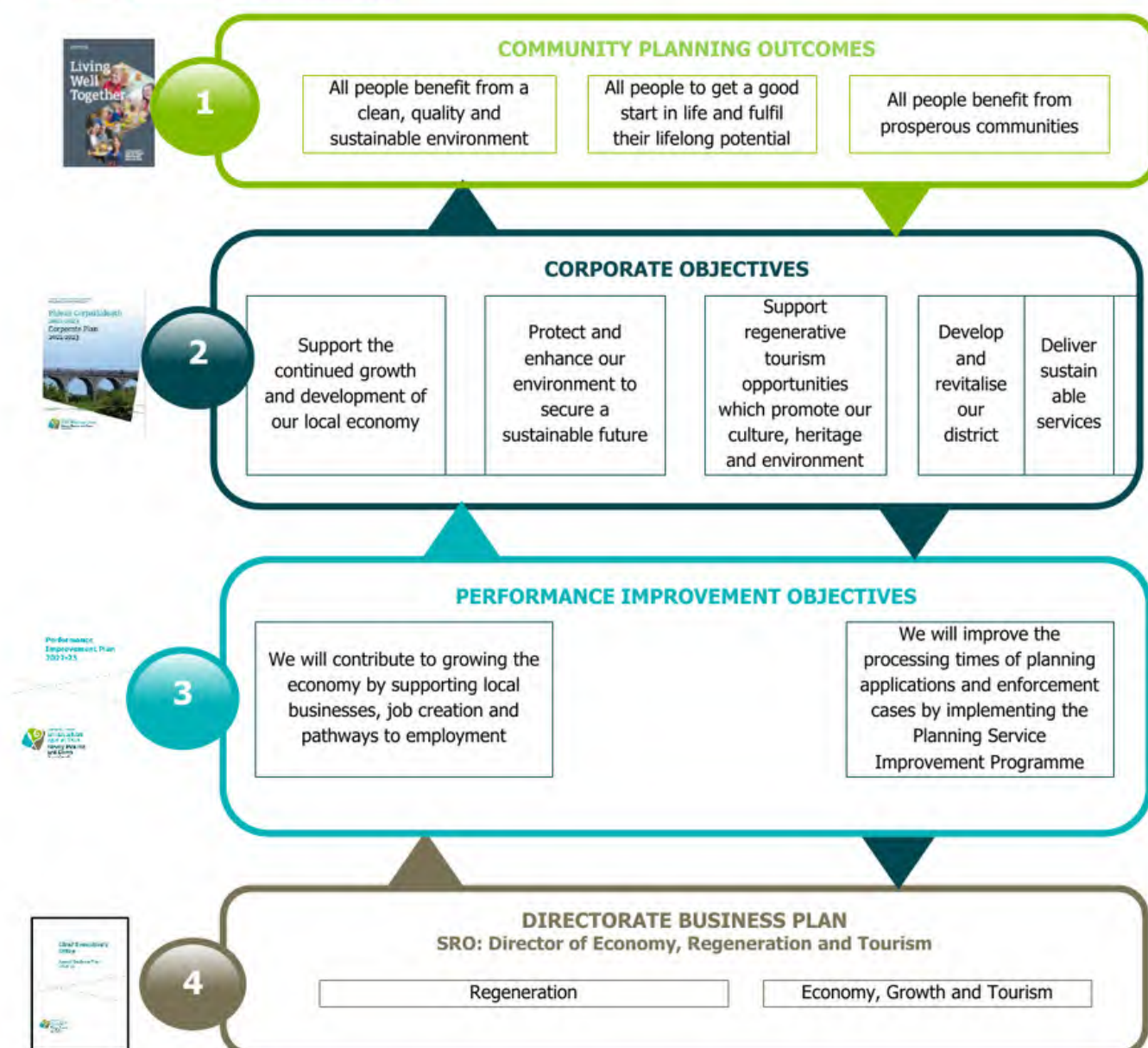
- 2.1 The ERT Business Plan is developed within the context of the Community Plan and Corporate Plan 2024-27. The Community Plan sets out the long term outcomes for the District, based on the needs and aspirations of local people. The draft Corporate Plan sets out the key strategic objectives for the Council between 2024-27, and how it will contribute to achieving the community planning outcomes.
- 2.2 The Community Plan and Corporate Plan are cross cutting and strategic in nature. They guide all activity within the organisation, as well as the subsequent allocation of resources, and sit within a hierarchy of plans, as outlined in the 'Business Planning and Performance Management Framework (Figure 1).
- 2.3 The Business Planning and Performance Management Framework drives and provides assurance that the Council is delivering its corporate vision and priorities, whilst securing continuous improvement in the exercise of functions. It provides a mechanism to join up and cascade the various plans and strategies across the organisation, demonstrating how employees contribute to achieving community planning outcomes and corporate priorities, for the ultimate benefit of the citizens we serve.

Figure 1: Business Planning and Performance Management Framework



- 2.4 Whilst the Corporate Plan focuses on issues which cut across the organization and are strategic in nature, the ERT Business Plan provides an overview of the key operational activities for the coming year. These activities are explicitly linked to corporate objectives, and coupled with 'business as usual' service delivery, provide clear direction for all employees within the Directorate (Figure 2). Directorate Business Plans are supported by Service Plans and 'People Perform and Grow'.
- 2.5 The ERT Business Plan is published annually and is the basis upon which performance is managed and reviewed by the full Council, Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee and Senior Management Team.

Figure 2: ERT Alignment across the Business Planning and Performance Management Framework



3.0 Purpose and Values

3.1 Purpose

3.1.1 The ERT Directorate's primary purpose is to develop, implement and monitor key strategies and plans to deliver economic, regeneration, tourism, arts and culture outcomes for the Council, deliver the statutory functions within the planning, Building Control and licensing that together contribute to the delivery of community planning outcomes and corporate priorities.

3.2 Values

3.2.1 The Department adheres to the Council's values which are outlined in the Corporate Plan 2024-27:

	What This Means
Respect	We will demonstrate respect for all people in our attitudes, behaviours and working relationships.
Transparency	We will be transparent in how we make decisions
Excellence	We will take pride in our work and be passionate about the standards we strive to achieve.
Integrity	We want the people of our district to trust us to do the right thing
Accountability	We will be accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. We will be accountable for how we plan for and use resources sustainably.

3.2.2 In accordance with the Section 75 requirements of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), the Chief Executive's Department is committed to carrying out its functions having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard for the desirability to promote good relations. All new and revised policies, procedures and programmes of work will be subject to an equality screening and rural needs impact assessment (where appropriate).

4.0 Challenges and Opportunities

- 4.1 The ERT was established in 2017 following the reorganisation of the former Strategic Planning and Performance Directorate and Regulatory and Technical Services Directorate. The directorate continues to evolve in line with organisational change, and remains committed to developing and embedding the necessary plans, policies and processes to deliver improvement across the organisation.
- 4.2 Influences within the external and internal environment continuously present challenges and opportunities, which have an impact on the overall management and operation of the ERT Directorate. These influences can be summarised as follows:

External Environment

- Macro Economic Environment – impact of inflation on capital projects
- Funding availability – transition to a range of new funding opportunities

- Stakeholder engagement and varying sectoral needs.
- Wider societal and economic recovery from the Covid pandemic
- Resumption of international travel market
- Level of disposable income and consumer confidence
- Inflation and interest rate changes
- Potential supply chain & labour market impacts as a result of Brexit and Covid recovery, etc
- Available external match funding for project delivery
- Lack of appropriate space to accommodate requests for use of Council land.
- Reliance on external partners to effectively discharge planning function.

Internal Environment

- Available match-funding for project delivery
- Challenges of labour market on accessing people
- Requirement to deliver business plan objectives on time with available resources, whilst ensuring the need for efficiencies.
- Working in partnership with the private sector to grow opportunities for greater economic return to Council and the district.
- Opportunities created by new ways of working and new IT systems for Planning and Building Control

5.0 Cross-Cutting Themes and Actions

There are a number of cross cutting actions aligned to the Community Planning Partnership priorities, Community Wealth Building and Sustainability and Climate Change that span across all Directorates and contribute to the fulfillment of Directorate Objectives, Corporate Objectives and ultimately Community Planning Outcomes.

Officers should indicate where their actions are contributing to the fulfillment of CPP, CWB or SCC actions by putting the relevant acronym in the column.

These actions should be identified in liaison with the relevant officers (CPP – Alan Beggs; CWB – Colin Moffett; SCC – Conor Sage) and relevant annual assessments of service plans forwarded to the above officers.

Acronym	Themes
CWB	Community Wealth Building
CPP	Community Planning Partnership priorities
SCC	Sustainability and Climate Change

Community Planning Partnership Priorities

While all actions will contribute to the delivery of the Community Plan, some actions may be considered appropriate to be contained within the Community Planning Partnership Priorities.

Relevant priorities should:

- Align to the outcomes of the Community Plan
- Involve collaborative working across statutory and community voluntary sector partners for both design and delivery.
- Report through the Community Planning Structures
- Measure and report impacts and outcomes

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building is an approach to the way that economies function, retaining more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people.

Key actions in relation to CWB should deliver on the 5 recommendations and sub-recommendations contained within the CLES/DTNI report – Newry, Mourne and Down pioneering the potential of community wealth building.

Sustainability and Climate Change

Sustainability and the climate change emergency continue to be a key driver of Council with the key objective of improving the lives and livelihoods of the people who live and work here. Approval to develop a Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy was agreed in June 2022.

6.0 Directorate Objectives and Alignment to the Corporate Plan

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 licensing 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).

ALIGNMENT TO THE CORPORATE PLAN	
Directorate Objective	Corporate Plan Objective
To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy
To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment.	Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment
To deliver regeneration investments in infrastructure, tourism & cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest.	Develop and revitalise our District
To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.	Empower communities to play an active part in civic life
A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licensing obligations of Council.	Develop and revitalise our District

	• Deliver Sustainable Services
A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement.	• Develop and revitalise our District • Deliver Sustainable Services
Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP).	• Develop and revitalise our District • Deliver Sustainable Services

Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Directorate Business Plan

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 —	Mar 27 173 —
Number of existing businesses supported on their growth journey	Target Actual	Sep 26 94 —	Mar 27 188 —
Number of new start businesses supported on their start up journey	Target Actual	Sep 26 59 —	Mar 27 119 —
Number of participants supported on employment pathway initiatives	Target Actual	Sep 26 125 —	Mar 27 250 —
Advance opportunities from Councils strategic location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Deliver against the ambitions and maximise the opportunities from investments arising from Belfast Region City Deal (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Shape delivery approach and funding mechanism for future delivery of business start-up and growth support	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Collaborate with businesses and key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that stimulate economic growth (CPP) (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Delivery of opportunities that improve access to skilled labour appropriate to growth ambitions across the district	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Create opportunities to develop awareness of the districts diverse business base, product & service offering and successful entrepreneurs	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —

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 —	Mar 27 —
Secure external investment, where appropriate, to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
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 —	
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 —	
Grow visitor attendance across 3 x Giant Adventure Events (baseline 25/26 events)	Target Actual	Mar 27 34,000 - 3 Giant Adventure Events —	
Increase footfall across NMD Museums (baseline 25/26)	Target Actual	Sep 26 1.5% —	Mar 27 3% —
Progress investments in major tourism projects that will develop the district as an international visitor destination	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Progress sustainable projects that promote accessibility to facilities and attractions across the district	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Investment in assets that will develop the tourism, cultural and heritage offering across the district	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Development of visitor experiences which focus on outdoor adventure, food and drink, and heritage and culture	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —

Delivery and development of a tourism events / festival programme that promotes and enhances the arts, culture and heritage offering across the district	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Development and promotion of the district's museums offering that will engage schools, local communities and visitors to the district	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
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 —	Mar 27 —
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 —	Mar 27 —
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
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 & Conference —	Mar 27 New Tourism Proposal: OBC —
Collaborate with key stakeholders in order to progress delivery against the Downpatrick Regeneration Living High Streets Toolkit. (CPP) (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Commence implementation of Church Street and De-Courcy Place capital investment programme	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Advance regeneration and digital innovation projects, that align to Council priorities	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Implementation of Capital - PEACEPLUS Local Community Regeneration and Transformation projects. (CPP) (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 25 Projects —
Advance key cultural and heritage projects, and ensure funding opportunities are maximised	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —

Sustainable investment in the protection and enhancement of Councils AONB's through implementation of NI Environment Funded action plan	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
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	Mar 27
Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
Commence shaping potential regeneration opportunities relevant to new investment areas: Shaping Sustainable Places and DAERA new Rural Policy	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target Actual	Sep 26	Mar 27
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	Target Actual	Sep 26	Mar 27
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	Mar 27 350
Support Capacity building across community and business sectors in the financial assistance process. (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
Efficient and effective governance of Council's non-financial assistance initiatives	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
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%	
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 —	Mar 27 —
Delivery of licensing functions of Council with 6 monthly reports to Council on progress and outputs	Target Actual	Sep 26 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% —	Mar 27 82% —
Maintain percentage of time for processing commercial building control application within 35 days to 80%	Target Actual	Sep 26 80% —	Mar 27 80% —
Maintain percentage of time for processing all application returns within 14 days to 87%	Target Actual	Sep 26 87% —	Mar 27 87% —
Licensing team process on 375 applications per month	Target Actual	Sep 26 2250 —	Mar 27 4500 —
Pilot and fully implement new software to facilitate online applications to reduce hard copy files	Target Actual	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 Yes —
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 —	Mar 27 —
Continued capacity building and mentoring within the planning function (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26 —	Mar 27 —
Average processing time for local planning applications of 15 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 26 15 —	Mar 27 15 —
Average processing time for major planning applications of 30 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 26 30 —	Mar 27 30 —

70% of planning enforcement cases are processing within 39 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 26 70% —	Mar 27 70% —
Average processing time for validating planning applications of 3 weeks	Target Actual	Sep 26 3 —	Mar 27 3 —
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for more than 12 months to 570	Target Actual	Sep 26 570 —	Mar 27 570 —
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months to 870.	Target Actual	Sep 26 870 —	Mar 27 870 —
Reduce the number of enforcement cases in the system for more than 12 months by 10% from 648	Target Actual	Sep 26 580 —	Mar 27 580 —

To determine 120 applications per month	Target Actual	Sep 26 720 —	Mar 27 1440 —
Establish and implement an action plan to reduce legacy applications in system	Target Progress	Sep 26 — —	Mar 27 — —
Allocate 90% of valid enforcement cases within 3 days	Target Actual	Sep 26 90% —	Mar 27 90% —
Site visit 90% of priority 1 enforcement cases in 3 days	Target Actual	Sep 26 90% —	Mar 27 90% —
site visit 90% of all priority 2 enforcement cases in 15 days	Target Actual	Sep 26 90% —	Mar 27 90% —
site visit 90% of all priority 3 enforcement cases in 15 days	Target Actual	Sep 26 90% —	Mar 27 90% —
site visit 90% of all priority 4 enforcement cases in 20 days	Target Actual	Sep 26 90% —	Mar 27 90% —

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	Mar 27
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Council’s key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CWB)	Target Progress	Sep 26	Mar 27
Finalise Plan Strategy for submission to DfI	Target Actual	Mar 27 Yes	

7.0 Performance

ERT Plans and Strategies

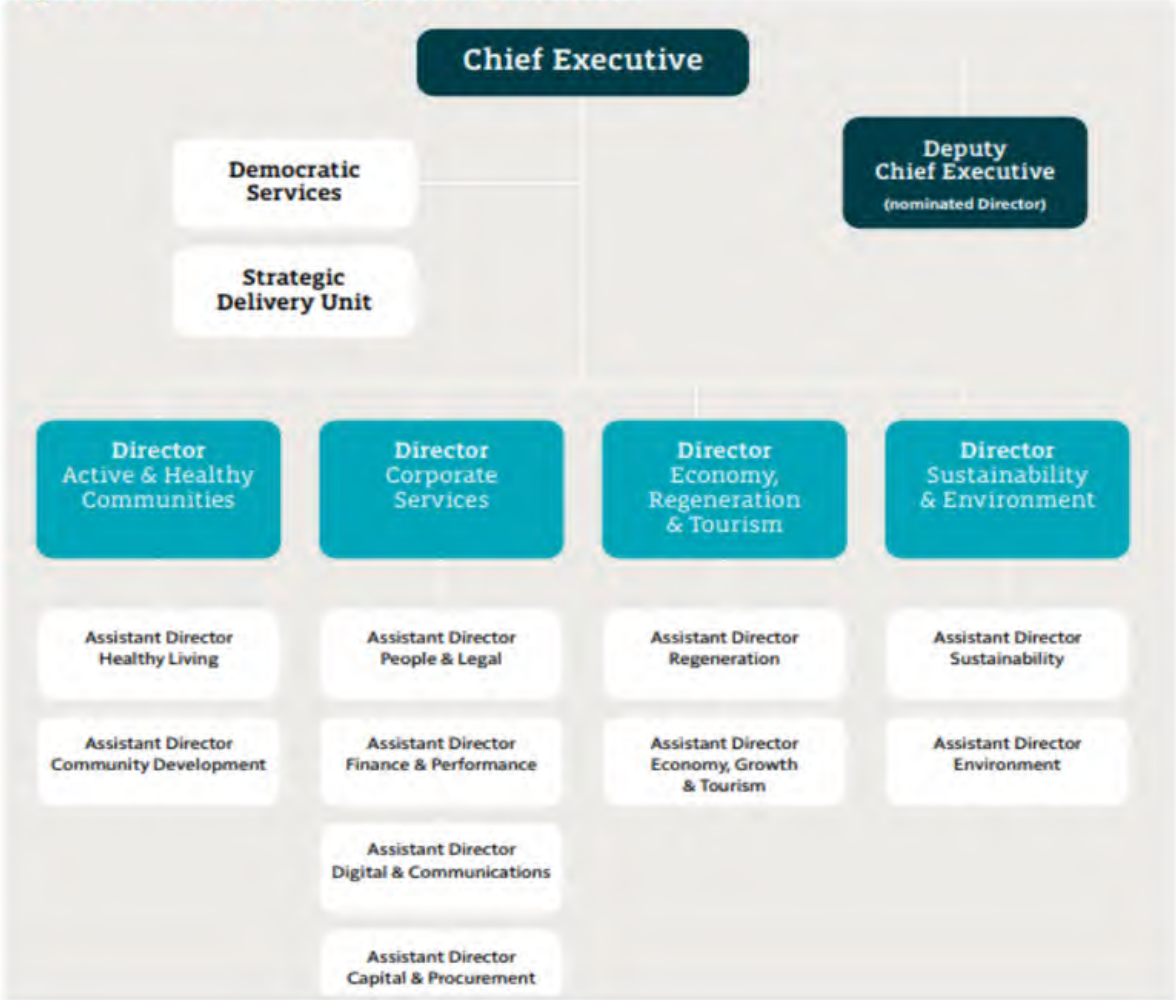
7.1 The ERT Directorate is responsible for leading the development, implementation and review of the following plans and strategies, which influence the work of the Office and Council:

- Economic, Regeneration and Investment Strategy
- Tourism Strategy
- Rural Development Strategy
- Arts and Culture Strategy
- Local Development Plan – draft Plan Strategy
- Financial Assistance Policy
- Peace Plus Co-Designed Local Action Plan

8.0 Organisation and Directorate Structure

The ERT Directorate is one of four Departments, which together, comprise the Management structure of the Council. This is shown in Figure 3. The Directorate structure is set out in Figure 4.

Figure 3 Council Management Structure



9.0 Financial Information

Net estimated expenditure Revenue (2026-27)	
Economy, Growth and Tourism	£
Regeneration	£
TOTAL: ERT Directorate	£

10.0 Governance Arrangements

- 10.1 Reviewing performance and reporting progress to Elected Members and other key stakeholders facilitates transparency, accountability and improvement in everything the Council does. The political and organisational governance arrangements to develop, monitor and report the Council's progress in implementing the ERT Business Plan are outlined below, and are supplemented by regular reviews by the ERT Director and his team. The governance arrangements the Council has put in place to deliver continuous improvement are also subject an annual audit and assessment by the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Figure 4: Governance Arrangements

Full Council

- Ratification of ERT Business Plan
- Ratification of annual and biannual reviews of ERT Business Plan

Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee / Audit Committee

- Scrutiny and challenge around the Duty of Improvement
- Provide assurance that performance management arrangements are robust and effective

Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee

- Consideration, scrutiny and approval of ERT Business Plan
- Consideration, scrutiny and approval of the annual and biannual reviews of ERT Business Plan

Senior Management Team

- Development, consideration and approval of ERT Business Plan
- Development, consideration and approval of the annual and biannual reviews of ERT Business Plan

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas Serving Down and South Armagh

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Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8 th June 2026
Subject:	Tourism Trade/Consumer shows for 26/27
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Michelle Boyle, Head of Product Development and Visitor Experience
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	x	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To approve recommendation outlined at section 3 of this report <u>Background</u> 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 representing the district. 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. 1. Ireland Workshop - BENE region- September 2026 2. Flavours of Ireland – London – October 2026 3. Golf Ireland Convention – Venue TBC – October 2026 4. Irish Golf tour operator Association conference – Venue TBC – October 2026 5. World Travel Market – London – November 2026 6. Ireland meet Germanys Workshop – Frankfurt – November 2026 7. Incoming Tour operators Association workshop – TBC – November 2026 8. Dublin holiday World – Dublin – January 2027 9. Celtic Connections – Glasgow – January 2027 10. Britain & Ireland Market Place – London – January 2027 11. Incoming Tour Operators Association Ireland Workshop Dublin – March 2027 12. Nordic Workshop – Copenhagen – March 2027 13. TNI Meet the Buyer – Belfast - April 2027

	14.IAGTO European Convention (IEC) – Venue TBC – May 2027
2.0	Key issues
2.1	1. Ireland Workshop - BENE region A series of 1-2-1 meetings with key Dutch and Belgian travel trade to encourage travel to the region from BeNe. Ideal fit due to the low-cost airlines operating directly from Belfast to Amsterdam. 2. Flavours of Ireland brings together Irish industry and global travel trade to showcase the Island of Ireland with a of programme of 10-minute 1-2-1 meetings 3. 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 4. 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. 5. 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 Council propose is to exhibit as part of the Tourism Ireland platform, at which Local Authorities will be attending to promote their respective districts. 6. Ireland meet Germanys Workshop This B2B Workshop and Networking event aims to connect Industry to key German, Austrian and Swiss buyers. Buyers from market-based operators will come together with Industry representatives for a one-day workshop, followed by a networking evening. 7. Incoming Tour Operators Association (Belfast Nov 2026) 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 8. 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 District key product and a captive audience is a close to home market. Attendees are interested in the short break market. 9. 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.

	10. 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. 11. Incoming Tour Operators Association (Dublin Mar 2027) 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 12. 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). 13. 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. 14. 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 2.1, in collaboration with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, to support the tourism sector and promote the destination.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	The annual marketing budget will be used to cover costs associated with attending the tourism consumer/trade platforms. Estimate budget is outlined in appendix 1.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i>

	Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	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: 1) Tourism Trade/Consumer shows for 26/27 – budget
8.0	Background Documents
	N/A

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8th June 2026
Subject:	PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Sonya Stephenson – Head of Programmes Sarah McClory – Project Coordinator

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To approve the recommendations as set out in section 3. <u>Background</u> The PEACEPLUS Partnership met on the 21st May 2026. The recommendations arising from these meetings require ERT Committee approval.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Projects to be progressed: Strand 2 and 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan The Partnership have agreed the procurement and delivery of the below activities under Strand 2 and 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan • 2.1 Capacity building for community groups graphic design training. • 2.5 Community led shared history and culture programme. Crotlieve DEA. Project exploring the tradition of booleying. • 2.8 Community Justice Interventions Programme - Interactive Drama and Documentary Film - 'Choices and Consequences' (district wide project) • 3.2 Minority Community Social Support: Slieve Croob-Creative Cultures, after school programme. • 3.3 Progressive Conflict Resolution training: The National and Cultural Identity Principles of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022. • 3.5 Themed Diversity Festivals: Farmers Fest. A November farmers festival celebrating local agriculture, community, and sustainability, including workshops, and cultural activities. • 3.6 Youth Engagement Addressing Sectarianism in the Next Generation Newry and Mourne (district wide). • 3.7 Shared History and Culture Programmes: This history of Women's Executions- Slieve Croob and Downpatrick.

2.2	Opportunity for additional funding from SEUPB SEUPB have offered Partnerships an opportunity for additional funding due to the potential underspend of the wider PEACEPLUS Programme within this calendar year only. SEUPB asked all Local Authorities to submit proposals for additional projects that could be delivered with all expenditure claimed by end of September 2026. A proposal of summer programmes to be delivered throughout the district has been submitted to SEUPB. This consisted of 30 projects that would engage with 303 participants and valued at €349,249.21. SEUPB is currently reviewing this proposal and if approved this would be an addendum to our current Letter of Offer and would have no impact on our Action Plan.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Approve the business case for procurement, appointment and delivery of activities under Strand 2 and 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan as set out in the report
3.2	To note the minutes of PEACEPLUS Partnership on 21 st May 2026.
3.3	To note the submission of a bid for additional funding for summer programmes
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Revenue/Payroll: Project 85% funded by the EU and 15% by the two Governments
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	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. Appx.1 - PEACEPLUS Project Board Minutes 21 May 2026 Appx.2 - PEACEPLUS approval to commence procurement 2.8 Community Justice Interventions Programme Appx.3 - PEACEPLUS approval to commence procurement 3.3 Progressive Conflict Resolution training: The National and Cultural Identity Principles of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022. Appx.4 - PEACEPLUS Approval to commence procurement 3.6 Responsive Peace Building.
8.0	Background Documents
	N/A

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8 th June 2026
Subject:	Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 - 2041
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Aveen McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-	
For decision	☒ For noting only

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To approve the recommendation in section 3.1 of this report. <u>Background</u> Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy was launched by DAERA for public consultation on 9th March 2026 and closed on 1st June 2026.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	- DAERA’s Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy Council officers have actively engaged in the co design of DAERA’s Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy. DAERA’s Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy contains proposals to introduce a new, place based and partnership led approach to supporting rural communities. The proposed vision is: “People and Government working together to shape a thriving, sustainable and inclusive rural Northern Ireland”. This vision is supported by an overarching aim: “To understand, champion and support rural Northern Ireland”. To help turn this vision and aim into action, the policy is guided by three core objectives: - To improve the scope, relevance, accessibility and timeliness of rural research, statistics and other evidence and their use across government. - To inform, influence and support strategic government policy from a rural perspective. - To promote and support innovative, collaborative government action on rural challenges and opportunities

	The proposals outlined within the draft policy were shaped by rural stakeholders through the co design process. The five proposals are: • Proposal 1: Putting Rural Voices at the Heart of Government • Proposal 2: Local Partnerships for Local Impact • Proposal 3: Understanding Rural • Proposal 4: Strengthening Rural Communities at Local and Regional Level • Proposal 5: Reviewing the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 • Proposal 2: Local Partnerships for Local Impact The policy is proposing to create Local Strategic Rural Partnerships, the Partnerships are intended to operate alongside existing council structures, providing a flexible mechanism to identify rural priorities, address gaps in provision and support co-ordinated delivery, while avoiding duplication. A DAERA Enabling Rural Fund will be designed to support community-led local action and investing in the voluntary and community sector. The Enabling Rural Fund is intended to support activity emerging from the Partnerships and to act as a catalyst for locally responsive interventions in rural areas. Council officers across several departments (ERT, AHC and Corporate Services) coordinated a response to the Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy. Further information on the draft strategy is available at: Future Rural Policy Consultation
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To approve Council's submission of a response to the consultation: DAERA's Rural NI - Our New Approach 2026 – 2041 draft policy
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	N/A
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒

5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	1) NMDDC Consultation Response to DAERA's Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 – 2041
8.0	Background Documents

**NMDDC’s response to Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026 - 2041
Public Consultation Document**

Question 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed vision for Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Question 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aim for Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- **Neutral**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Question 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed objectives of Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- **Neutral**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: While we broadly agree with the objectives, we feel that they are overly focused on internal DAERA practices and do not set out sufficiently ambitious aspirations for improving outcomes for people living in rural areas

Question 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the guiding principles of Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: The Council agrees that the guiding principles set out are appropriate and welcomes the inclusion of the principles of “collaboration” and “community-led”. It is important that any new approach to rural development is taken forward through meaningful engagement with all rural stakeholders, including local government, and that it is shaped and led by rural communities themselves.

Question 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Rural Champions Model as a way to ensure rural voices are heard in government decision making?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: The Council welcomes the co-design of Local Strategic Rural Partnerships. These partnerships should be carefully developed to ensure there is no duplication with the work of existing Community Planning Partnerships and that they are closely aligned with existing community planning structures, ensuring strong links with CPPs.

Question 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a Rural Collaboration Fund will support joint working across government to develop solutions for cross-cutting rural issues and new opportunities?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: Council welcomes joint working across government; funding is essential to support the implementation of the proposals.

Question 7. How important or unimportant is it for local councils and the Northern Ireland Executive to work more closely together on rural issues?

• **Very important**

- Important
- Neutral
- Not important
- Not important at all

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: We understand that the policy focuses on building on existing community planning structures through the creation of Local Strategic Rural Partnerships, however this will require careful consideration as to how LRSPs will align with current structures. This will require appropriate funding and skillset.

Question 8. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the introduction of the DAERA Enabling Rural Fund would help unlock extra investment for rural communities?

- Strongly agree

• **Agree**

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Question 9. How important or unimportant do you think it is to carry out a Rural Baseline Study with repeated studies at regular intervals to track changes and plan for the future?

- Very important

- **Important**

- Neutral

- Not important

- Not important at all

Response: Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

We agree that it is important to create a strong evidence base to enable a clear understanding of rural communities. This evidence base should, as far as possible, utilise existing research and data collection already undertaken across the region. The Department should also consider whether existing online platforms could host and integrate this data, rather than developing an additional data resource through the proposed “Rural Observatory”.

We welcome the inclusion of “lived experience” within the research model and agree that this qualitative information is important in complementing the quantitative data and statistics that are often the primary focus of research projects of this nature.

Question 10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with creation of a Rural Research and Evidence Model?

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neutral

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

See above comments

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question including, what types of data or insights would make the biggest difference for your area.

Question 11. How important or unimportant do you think it is to develop a rural typology for Northern Ireland?

- Very important
- Important
- **Neutral**
- Not important
- Not important at all

Response: Please share your views on how we should recognise these differences so that policies and support meet the real needs and help harness the opportunities of your community

The Council would require further clarity on how the proposed new typology will be developed, as well as its relationship to existing administrative geographies, before it is able to provide further comment on this proposal.

Question 12. Do you agree or disagree that long-term investment in voluntary and community groups will help ensure diverse rural voices are heard?

• **Strongly agree**

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question

Response: The Council recognises that there are a wide range of community and voluntary groups throughout the District, supported by existing networks with limited resources. Consideration should be given to how the community and voluntary sector can be financially supported in a reliable and sustainable way to enable it to support rural communities effectively and provide representation within decision-making processes.

Question 13. Are you aware of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016?

Yes/No

Question 14. Do you agree or disagree that the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 has made a positive difference to rural communities?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Do not know

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question

Response: The Act has mainstreamed and regularised consideration and recording (Rural Needs Impact Assessments) of the social and economic needs of rural communities in relation to matters pertaining to the scope of the legislation.

Question 15. Do you agree or disagree that a review of the effectiveness of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 should be carried out?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- **Neutral**
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Do not know

Please share any further views or suggestions you have in relation to this question.

Response: Annual reports are provided by Public Authorities to DAERA each year. These are reported to the Minister each year. In addition, DAERA have recently implemented a new Online Reporting tool which will improve the report process.

Question 16. What do you believe should be the top priorities for this proposed policy? Please provide any comments you wish to make in response to this question

Response: The consultation repeatedly references “local partnerships”, “co-design”, and “whole-of-government approaches”, however councils need to be engaged rather than have advisory status. It is essential that structure, governance, and resource should be prioritised in the policy.

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8 th June 2026
Subject:	Crossmaglen Square Improvement Plan
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Aveen McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	☐	For noting only	☒
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To note the recommendations in 3.1 of this report. <u>Background</u> An Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) were procured to complete an improvement plan to assess the potential redevelopment and utilisation of Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square and its immediate environs.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Crossmaglen is classified as village settlement, with Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square as the principal civic space. Investment activity within and around Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square has primarily focused on civic space maintenance, and planting initiatives. The Square was identified as a key focal point for future regeneration and improvement planning within Crossmaglen. The Square is defined by a central area of Council-owned land, extending to the inner edge of the surrounding roadway. The carriageway and outer footpaths fall under the ownership of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Consultants were appointed in 2025/26 to develop an Improvement Plan, which reviewed the current function and role of the Square and identified opportunities to enhance its attractiveness, functionality and overall contribution to the village beyond routine maintenance interventions. To inform the plan, meetings and a public engagement session were held. The improvement plan was presented at the Slieve Gullion May DEA meeting.

2.2	The Plan considers how the space can be improved to better support everyday use, community activity, events and local businesses, while also responding to the needs and aspirations of residents and stakeholders. Council is engaging with DfC regarding the proposed 'Shaping Sustainable Places' funding programme. Early indications from DfC suggest the programme will support a flagship package of interventions aimed at addressing decline and supporting regeneration in urban and rural areas within the district. By identifying priority actions through the Improvement Plan, Council will be well positioned to respond to and deliver projects aligned to any future 'Shaping Sustainable Places' funding calls as they emerge.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note Crossmaglen Square Improvement Plan and its recommendations.
3.2	To note that further information will be presented to members on opportunities arising from shaping sustainable places.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	No immediate financial implications, officers will actively seek external funding.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If funding is secured an impact assessment will be complete If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	1) Crossmaglen Square Improvement Plan
8.0	Background Documents
	N/A



Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square Crossmaglen Square

Improvement Plan

March 2026



Aerial photo of Crossmaglen Square

Content

01	Introduction	05
02	Project Overview	07
03	Understanding the Square	09
04	Engagement Approach	12
05	Improvements Proposed	16
06	Phasing and Delivery	30
07	Vision for the square	32

01

73



Aerial photo of Crossmaglen Square

Introduction

Purpose of The Report

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square is a central and well-used space within Crossmaglen, but over time it has begun to show signs of wear and a need for renewal. While ongoing maintenance has helped to sustain its function, there is a clear opportunity to take a more strategic approach to how the Square operates, how it is used, and how it can better serve the town in the future.

This Improvement Plan has been developed to review the current function of the Square and to identify opportunities for enhancement that go beyond routine maintenance. It considers how the space can be improved to better support everyday use, community activity, events and local businesses, while also responding to the needs and aspirations of residents and stakeholders.

Importantly, the Improvement Plan provides a clear and structured framework for change. It sets out a series of short-term, medium-term and long-term improvements, establishing a coherent direction for the future of the Square. This approach not only helps to build momentum and confidence in the proposed changes, but also positions the Council to seek and secure external funding by demonstrating a well-considered and deliverable vision.

Overall, the Improvement Plan aims to guide the sensitive and meaningful enhancement of this unique

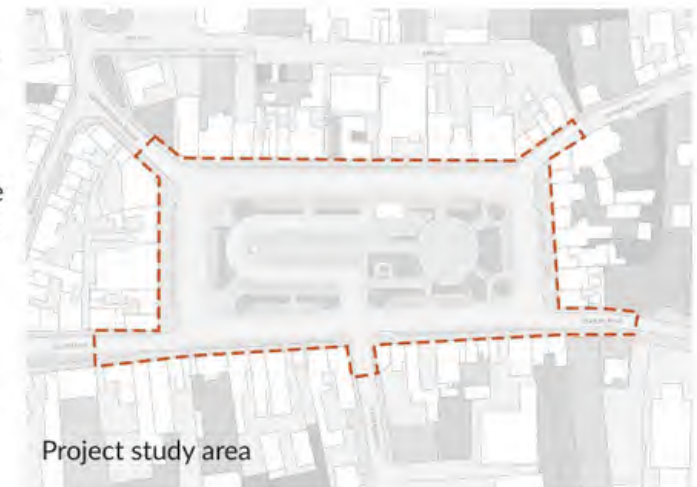
town centre space, ensuring it continues to play a vital role in the life of Crossmaglen.

Study Area

The study area for this Improvement Plan focuses on Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square, the principal civic space at the heart of Crossmaglen. The Square is defined by a central area of Council-owned land, extending to the inner edge of the surrounding roadway. The carriageway and outer footpaths fall under the ownership of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

While land ownership is divided, the Square has been considered in its entirety as a single, cohesive space. This “wall-to-wall” approach ensures that the relationship between the central Square, the surrounding roads, and the adjoining streets is fully understood and addressed. In particular, it recognises that how people arrive at, move through, and experience the Square is intrinsically linked to both the public realm within the Square and the road network that frames it.

The Improvement Plan therefore considers not only the internal layout and function of the Square, but also the key connections, crossings and arrival points around its edges. This integrated approach is essential to delivering meaningful and coordinated improvements that enhance both the quality of the space and how it is accessed and used. The extent of the study area is illustrated in the accompanying diagram.





Aerial photo of Crossmaglen Square

Project Overview

The Project

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commissioned this study to undertake a feasibility-led assessment of Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square, with a view to identifying practical and deliverable opportunities for its improvement and revitalisation.

The project has involved a review of previous studies, engagement with the local community and stakeholders, and a detailed analysis of how the Square currently functions. This has informed the development of a series of proposals aimed at enhancing the usability, accessibility and overall quality of the space.

The output of this commission is this Square Improvement Plan, which brings together analysis, engagement findings and design thinking into a clear set of recommendations. The plan is intended to guide future decision-making, support the delivery of phased improvements, and provide a robust basis for securing funding for future investment in the Square.

Who We Are

dwg. is a design-led public realm and placemaking practice, appointed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to undertake this commission. Our work focuses on the regeneration of town centres and civic spaces, combining strategic thinking with practical, deliverable design solutions.

The team leading this project has extensive experience in preparing improvement plans and feasibility studies for towns and villages across Ireland and the UK. This includes the successful delivery of public realm schemes such as Clanbrassil Street in Dundalk, Omeath Town Centre and Sligo City Centre, as well as similar studies undertaken across Counties Meath, Cavan, Dublin, Galway, Roscommon and Cork.

This breadth of experience ensures that the proposals set out within this Improvement Plan are grounded in both design quality and deliverability, drawing on a strong track record of turning ideas into built projects.

Process Undertaken

The preparation of this Improvement Plan has followed a structured and design-led approach, combining analysis, engagement and informed design thinking.

A detailed physical assessment of the Square was undertaken to understand how the space currently functions, including its layout, movement patterns, condition and key features. This was supported by a review of previous studies and village plans to ensure that past recommendations and ongoing objectives were fully considered and built upon.

Engagement has been a central part of the process. This has included discussions with Council representatives, alongside a comprehensive public consultation involving community members, local businesses and stakeholders. This engagement has provided valuable insight into how the Square is used, the challenges it faces, and the aspirations for its future.

These inputs have been combined with dwg.'s experience in delivering similar town centre improvement projects, ensuring that proposals are both ambitious and realistic. Careful consideration has been given to cost, value and deliverability, with a focus on identifying improvements that can have a meaningful impact while remaining achievable over time.

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77



3.1 Existing Layout and Context

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square is a large and prominent civic space at the centre of Crossmaglen, forming the focal point of the town and connecting to key surrounding streets. Its scale and location give it significant potential; however, its current layout and configuration limit how effectively it functions as a cohesive and well-used public space.

The Square is defined by a central area of parking, framed by wide surrounding roads and a series of footpaths and planted areas. While there is a considerable amount of space available for both pedestrians and vehicles, these elements are often fragmented and not well connected. As identified through analysis, pedestrian movement across the Square is challenging, with limited crossing points and wide carriageways creating barriers between different parts of the space.

The arrangement of raised planters, walls and level changes further contributes to this fragmentation. Many of these elements restrict movement, reduce visibility and create areas that are underused or difficult to access. Several walls within the Square are also approaching the end of their lifespan, presenting both a constraint and an opportunity for rethinking how the space is structured.

Vegetation and trees provide some softening to the Square; however, planting is often contained within

raised areas that are difficult to maintain and do not contribute fully to the usability or quality of the space. In addition, while the Square accommodates a significant amount of parking, the layout is not optimised, and the relationship between parking, pedestrian movement and public space is not clearly defined.

Overall, the current layout results in a space that, while large and centrally located, is not as easy to use, flexible or inviting as it could be. There are clear opportunities to better organise the Square, improve connections, and unlock underutilised areas to support a wider range of activities, including events, markets and everyday town centre use.



3.2 Key Components of the Square

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square is made up of a number of key components that collectively define how the space functions and is experienced. Understanding these elements is essential in identifying how the Square can be improved.

- **Parking**

Parking is a primary function of the Square and is essential to supporting local businesses and town centre activity. While there is a significant provision of spaces, the layout and management of parking can be inefficient, with a need to better balance short-stay and long-stay use and improve how parking integrates with the wider public space.

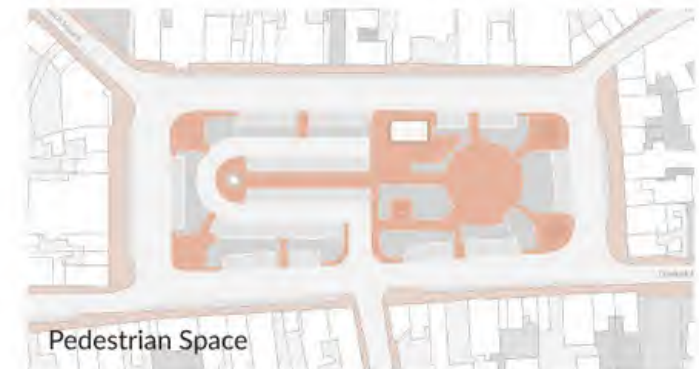
- **Pedestrian Space**

Vehicular movement currently dominates the Square, with wide roads and circulation routes shaping how the space operates. In contrast, pedestrian movement is less well supported, with limited crossing points and disconnected routes making it difficult to move safely and comfortably across the Square.

- **Vegetation and Trees**

Existing trees and planting contribute positively to the character of the Square, but many planted areas are raised and difficult to maintain. There is an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and introduce more usable and accessible green space, alongside a clearer and more structured planting approach.

The Square also plays an important role in hosting markets and community events; however, its current layout limits flexibility, with level changes and fragmented spaces reducing its adaptability. In addition, opportunities for people to sit, gather and spend time are currently limited, with seating and social spaces not well positioned to support interaction or encourage people to dwell.

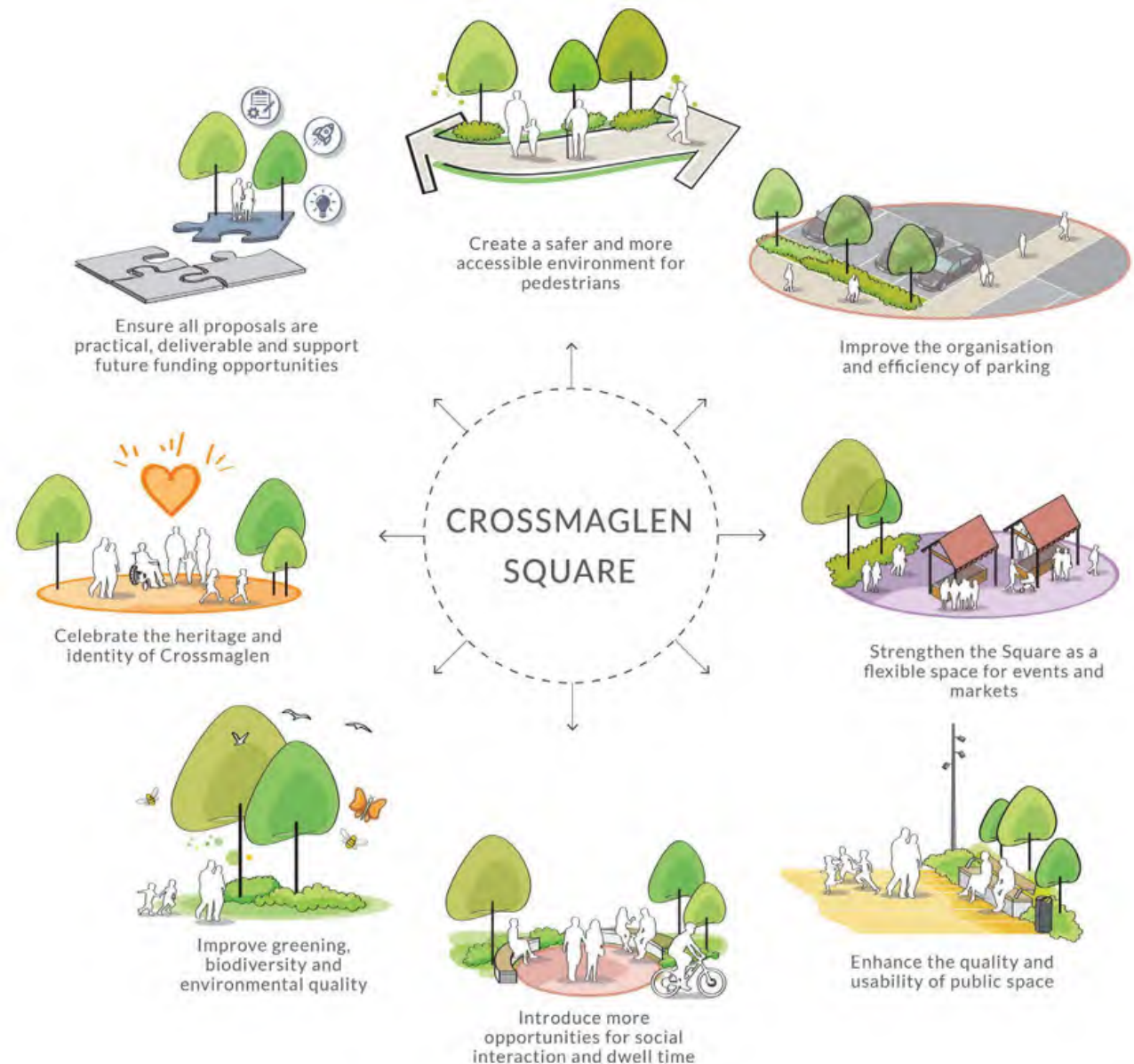


3.3 Objectives for the Square

80

Based on the analysis of the Square and feedback from engagement, the Improvement Plan seeks to achieve the following key objectives:

- Create a safer and more accessible environment for pedestrians
- Improve the organisation and efficiency of parking
- Strengthen the Square as a flexible space for events and markets
- Enhance the quality and usability of public space
- Introduce more opportunities for social interaction and dwell time
- Improve greening, biodiversity and environmental quality
- Celebrate the heritage and identity of Crossmaglen
- Ensure all proposals are practical, deliverable and support future funding opportunities



04 81

The feedback gathered through this process has directly informed the development of the Improvement Plan, ensuring that the proposals respond to how the Square is used today while helping to shape a clear and supported direction for its future.

During the engagement, emerging ideas were shared and discussed openly, allowing for a constructive dialogue around potential improvements. This

The boards and feedback survey which were used during the engagement process

You can also email your thoughts to streets@studiodwe.com

Cardinal Ó Flaich Square

Improvement Plan

Crossmaglen Square

➔ The Project

We are developing a Square Improvement Plan for Cardinal Ó Flaich Square in Crossmaglen. The aim is to identify practical, deliverable ways to enhance the Square – making it more welcoming, accessible and adaptable for everyday use, markets and community events. This includes improving the usability of the public space, how people move through and around it, and the overall experience of the town centre. The plan will establish clear priorities and actions to guide future investment and support the long-term vitality of Crossmaglen. It is a strategy to identify where and how the Square could be improved, ensuring the Council and community are ready with clear proposals to support future funding opportunities as they arise.

➔ Who We Are

Working in partnership with Nenagh, Moate and Down District Councils, dwg has been appointed to prepare the Cardinal Ó Flaich Square Improvement Plan. dwg is a public realm design and planning practice with extensive experience in town regeneration and civic space improvement. We specialise in developing practical, deliverable proposals that balance design quality with cost awareness and long-term sustainability, helping councils and communities enhance the places at the heart of their towns.

➔ Public Engagement Process

We are keen to understand how Cardinal Ó Flaich Square is used today and what matters most to the people who live, work and visit Crossmaglen. Your views will help us build a strong understanding of how the square functions, what works well and where improvements could be made. This early engagement is about listening and learning, not that the Square Improvement Plan is grounded in local experience and responses to real needs. There will be further opportunities for involvement at the project development and in future funding and delivery opportunities arise.

➔ Key Considerations

We have reviewed previous village plans and carried out an initial assessment of the Square. A number of consistent themes have emerged:

- The Square is the civic heart of Crossmaglen but is currently underused
- There is a long-standing ambition to create a high-quality shared public space
- The Square should better support markets, festivals and everyday community use
- Improvements may be required to paving, landscaping and street furniture
- Accessibility across the Square can be challenging in places and could be improved
- There are limited possibilities crossing paths and drop herbs connecting both sides of the Square
- Parking layout and circulation could be reviewed
- A number of walls within the Square are impacting the level of their lifespan and require a long-term solution
- Planting and vegetation should be reviewed to improve maintenance and increase biodiversity
- The public realm block would benefit from upgrading to improve durability and ease of maintenance
- Building frontages and the surrounding streetscape influence the overall appearance
- The Square plays an important role in supporting town centre vitality, tourism and wellbeing

These themes will help guide the development of the Square Improvement Plan.

➔ Programme

The project is being delivered over the coming weeks, with the following key steps:

February 2026	Early March 2026	Late March 2026	April 2026
Underpinning the report: the findings and opportunities	Engagement with stakeholders (business and community)	Developing options for a range of strategic improvements within the square	Final recommendations, action plan and report to Council

Crossmaglen Square Action Plan
Local Business and Residents

Board 1

Please fill in a questionnaire, or send any comments to stewin@dwg.ie

Engagement

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square

Crossmaglen Square

Improvement Plan

Layout of the Existing Square



Aerial View of Existing Square



Board 2

Please fill in a questionnaire, or send any comments to streets@dundubw.gov.uk

dwg.

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square

Crossmaglen Square

Improvement Plan

Dimensions



Pedestrian Space



Green areas



Walls



Roads



Parking



Trees



All layers



Board 3

Please fill in a questionnaire, or send any comments to streets@dundubw.gov.uk

dwg.

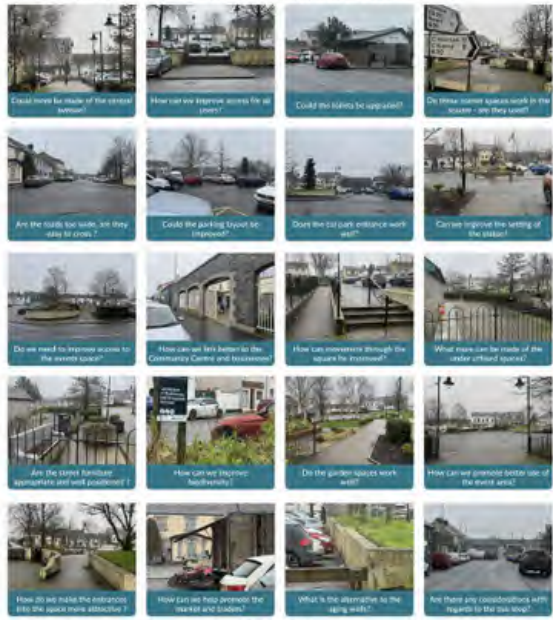
Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square

Crossmaglen Square

Improvement Plan

Considerations for the future of the square

These photographs highlight a range of existing conditions within Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square, illustrating key issues, considerations and areas of potential. They reflect how the Square is currently experienced, including aspects of accessibility, materials, layout, planting and overall quality. Together, they help identify where improvements could enhance functionality, appearance and long-term sustainability.



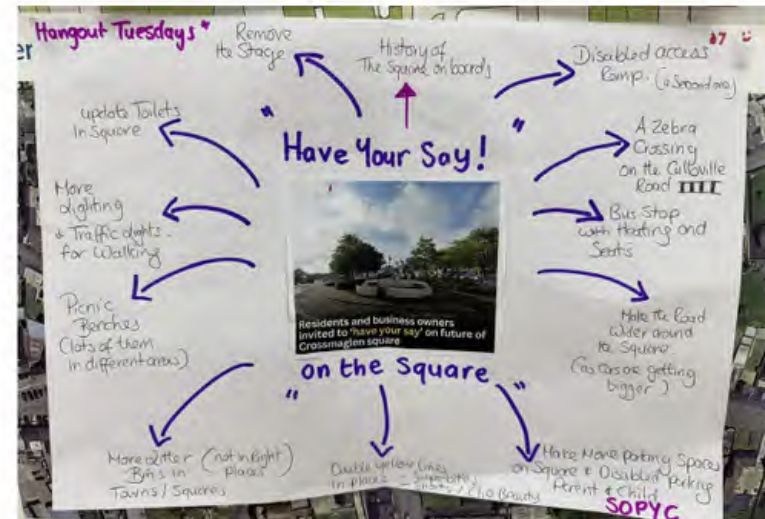
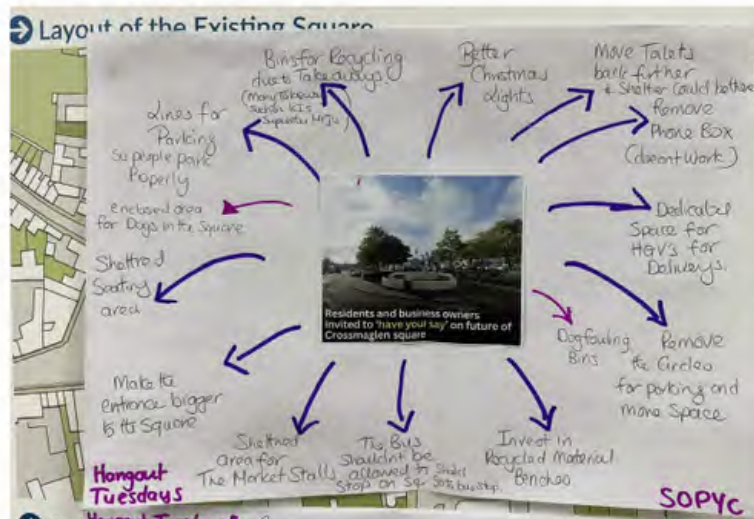
Board 4

Please fill in a questionnaire, or send any comments to streets@dundubw.gov.uk

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4.2 Summary of Feedback

83



Engagement with the community, businesses and stakeholders identified a number of consistent themes regarding how the Square is currently used and where improvements are needed. These are summarised below.

- **Parking and Traffic Management**

Parking is a critical function of the Square and widely valued, but there are concerns about how it is currently arranged and managed. Many highlighted the need for more efficient use of space, clearer markings and a better balance between short-stay and long-stay parking.

- **Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility**

There is a strong desire for improved pedestrian safety, particularly through the introduction of crossing points and better connections across the Square. Accessibility for all users, including children and those with mobility needs, was identified as a key priority.

- **Seating and Social Spaces**

There is a need for more and better-quality seating, with an emphasis on social seating that encourages people to gather, linger and spend time in the Square.

- **Children, Play and Recreation**

The Square currently offers very little for children

and families. There is a clear aspiration to introduce more family-friendly elements, including informal play opportunities and spaces for children to safely spend time.

- **Public Space Design and Layout**

Many respondents feel the Square is underused and could function more effectively. Specific issues were raised around unused areas, the circular layouts, and the need for a clearer and more flexible arrangement of space.

- **Events, Markets and Activity**

The Square is valued as a venue for events, particularly at Christmas and Halloween. There is support for strengthening its role as a market and event space, with improved visibility and usability.

- **Maintenance and Upkeep**

Concerns were raised about the condition of surfaces, walls, planting and general upkeep. There is a strong desire for a higher standard of maintenance and more durable improvements.

- **Bins, Waste and Cleanliness**

Feedback highlighted the need for better provision and positioning of bins, as well as improved cleanliness across the Square.

- **Lighting, Safety and Comfort**

Improved lighting was identified as important for both safety and the overall experience of the Square, particularly in the evening.

- **Toilets and Facilities**

The public toilets were highlighted as in need of upgrading, with a focus on improving quality and ease of maintenance.

- **Heritage, Identity and Character**

There is a strong interest in reflecting local heritage, particularly lace-making and the historic market, within the design of the Square.

- **Greening, Landscaping and Biodiversity**

Many people would like to see more planting, colour and greenery, alongside improvements to how existing planting is maintained.

- **Cycling and Sustainable Travel**

There is some support for introducing facilities such as cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points.

- **Transport and Bus Facilities**

Feedback highlighted the importance of bus facilities, including the need for comfortable waiting areas and well-managed bus movements.

These themes form the basis of the Improvement Plan proposals set out in the following section.

5.1 Parking and Traffic Management

05 85

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to rebalance the Square to improve how vehicles move, park and access the space, while supporting safer conditions for pedestrians. The focus is on creating a clearer and more efficient layout that reduces conflict, improves circulation and makes better use of available space.

Proposed Improvements

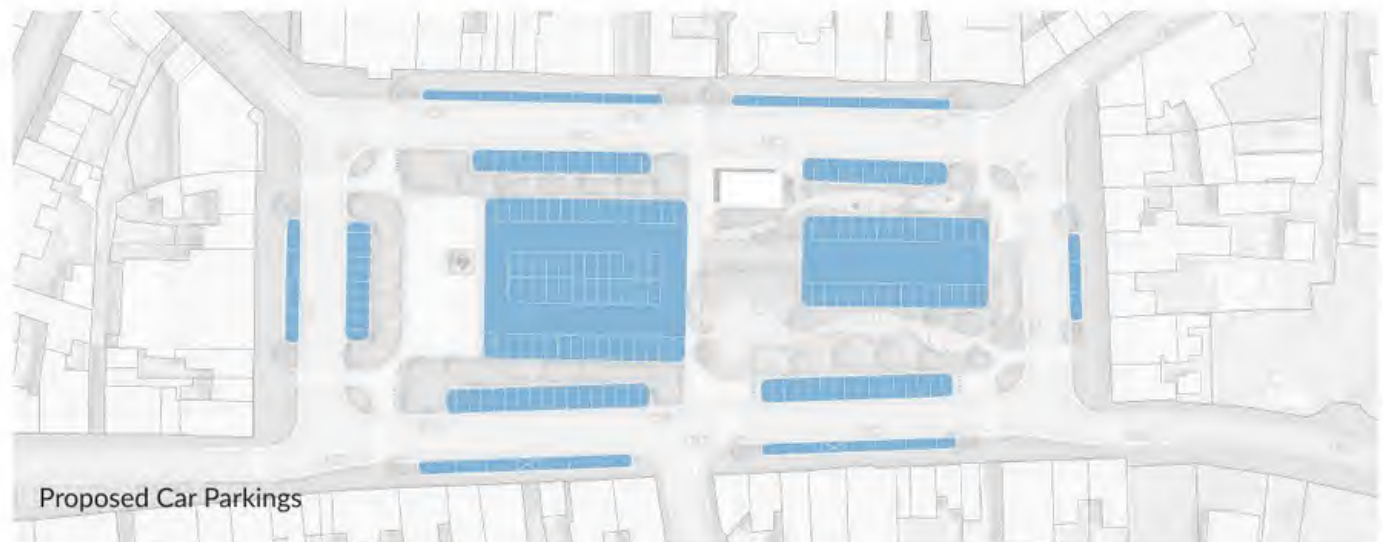
- Introduce formal pedestrian crossings at all key junctions around the Square as part of a wider strategy to calm traffic and organise movement
- Reconfigure kerb lines at key locations to subtly narrow carriageways, reducing vehicle speeds and improving overall traffic control
- Relocate the entrance to the central car park to the eastern side of the Square to improve visibility and reduce conflict points
- Reorganise parking within the Square to maximise efficiency, including removal of the underused central paved area in the western zone to create additional spaces
- Introduce a new parking arrangement within the eastern zone, designed to function flexibly as both parking and an overflow event space
- Remove non-compliant mid-block steps on

the northern and southern edges to simplify movement patterns and reinforce safer crossing locations

- Provide clear and consistent parking layouts and circulation routes to reduce informal parking and improve overall operation

Outcome

These changes will create a more efficient and legible layout for vehicles, improving safety and circulation while maintaining a strong level of parking provision and supporting the overall function of the Square.



5.2 Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility

Design Intent

Building on the proposed changes to the layout and circulation of the Square, the Improvement Plan seeks to significantly improve pedestrian safety and accessibility. The focus is on creating clear, safe and inclusive routes that connect key destinations and make movement on foot intuitive and comfortable for all users.

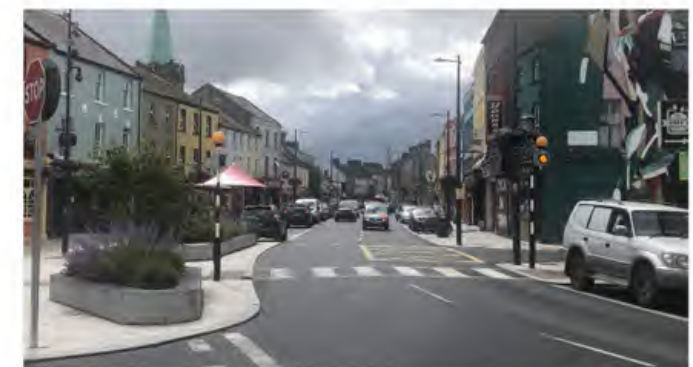
Proposed Improvements

- Provide formal pedestrian crossing points at all key locations, including the four main junctions, the additional junction into the Square, and the connection towards the Community Centre
- Establish a clear north-south pedestrian route through the Square, strengthening connectivity across the space
- Introduce dropped or raised crossings (subject to further design development), with zebra crossings as the preferred solution at most locations
- Consider a controlled crossing near the statue area, where pedestrian activity is expected to be highest
- Improve accessibility throughout the Square, including upgrades to the ramp adjacent to the toilet block

- Create a more defined and safer pedestrian environment around the statue, prioritising pedestrian use in this key area
- Trial the introduction of double yellow lines at key junctions to prevent vehicles from parking on footpaths and obstructing pedestrian movement
- Consider the longer-term use of double yellow lines and bollards where necessary to protect pedestrian routes and ensure clear and safe access
- Ensure all routes are fully accessible for wheelchair users, parents with prams and those with limited mobility

Outcome

These improvements will transform how people experience and move through the Square, making it safer, more accessible and easier to navigate, while encouraging greater use and supporting everyday activity.



5.3 Seating and Social Spaces

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to transform the Square into a more sociable and welcoming place by introducing well-designed seating areas that encourage people to gather, interact and spend time in the space. The focus is on creating comfortable, well-located and flexible social spaces that support everyday use and enhance the overall experience of the Square.

Proposed Improvements

- Remove existing seating areas located at the corners of the Square and to the rear of the toilet block, where they are currently underused or poorly positioned
- Introduce new, well-defined social seating areas in more appropriate and active locations within the Square
- Provide a range of seating types, including social seating arrangements that allow people to sit together and interact
- Incorporate picnic benches to support families, groups and informal use of the space
- Position seating in locations that benefit from activity, views, sunlight and proximity to key destinations within the Square

- Specify seating that is comfortable, durable and suitable for long-term use
- Ensure a proportion of seating includes armrests and backrests to support older users and those with additional needs

Outcome

These improvements will create a more comfortable and sociable environment, encouraging people to dwell, meet and spend time in the Square, helping to strengthen its role as a welcoming and active town centre space.



5.4 Children, Play and Recreation

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to introduce a more family-friendly environment within the Square, recognising the importance of creating a space that appeals to all age groups. While play areas exist within residential parts of Crossmaglen, there is currently limited provision within the town centre itself. Integrating opportunities for play within the Square will help increase dwell time, encourage social interaction and make the space more welcoming for families and visitors.

Proposed Improvements

- Introduce informal and integrated play elements within the Square rather than a standalone or formal playground
- Focus play activity within key locations, particularly within the eastern area of the central space, helping to activate a currently underused part of the Square
- Incorporate playful features into the landscape, such as markings, seating elements and interactive features that encourage exploration and activity
- Design play opportunities to sit alongside social spaces, creating shared areas for children, families and the wider community
- Ensure all play elements are sensitively integrated

into the overall design of the Square, maintaining flexibility for events and everyday use

Outcome

These improvements will create a more inclusive and family-friendly Square, encouraging greater use by all age groups and helping to support a lively, sociable and well-used town centre space.



5.5 Public Space Design and Layout

89

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to reorganise the Square to create a more balanced, legible and flexible public space that works for all users. The current layout presents a number of underused and fragmented areas; therefore, a revised structure is proposed that can be delivered incrementally over time. The aim is to create a clearer arrangement of spaces that supports everyday use, events and social activity, while improving the overall quality and usability of the Square.

Proposed Improvements

- Establish a dedicated civic space around the statue, creating a car-free area that provides a strong focal point and setting for gathering and activity
- Reorganise the overall layout of the Square to improve clarity, accessibility and ease of use
- Maximise and rationalise parking to make it more efficient and better integrated within the overall design
- Enhance arrival points into the Square, making them more welcoming, legible and accessible from surrounding streets
- Introduce a series of defined activity areas within the Square, allowing for different uses and scales

of activity to take place simultaneously

- Create smaller garden and landscape spaces that provide variety, visual interest and opportunities for rest and informal use
- Ensure the layout supports flexibility, allowing the Square to adapt to events, markets and everyday activity

Outcome

These changes will create a more coherent and adaptable Square, improving how the space is used and experienced. By providing a clear structure and a range of different spaces, the Square will become more welcoming, functional and capable of supporting a wide variety of activities.

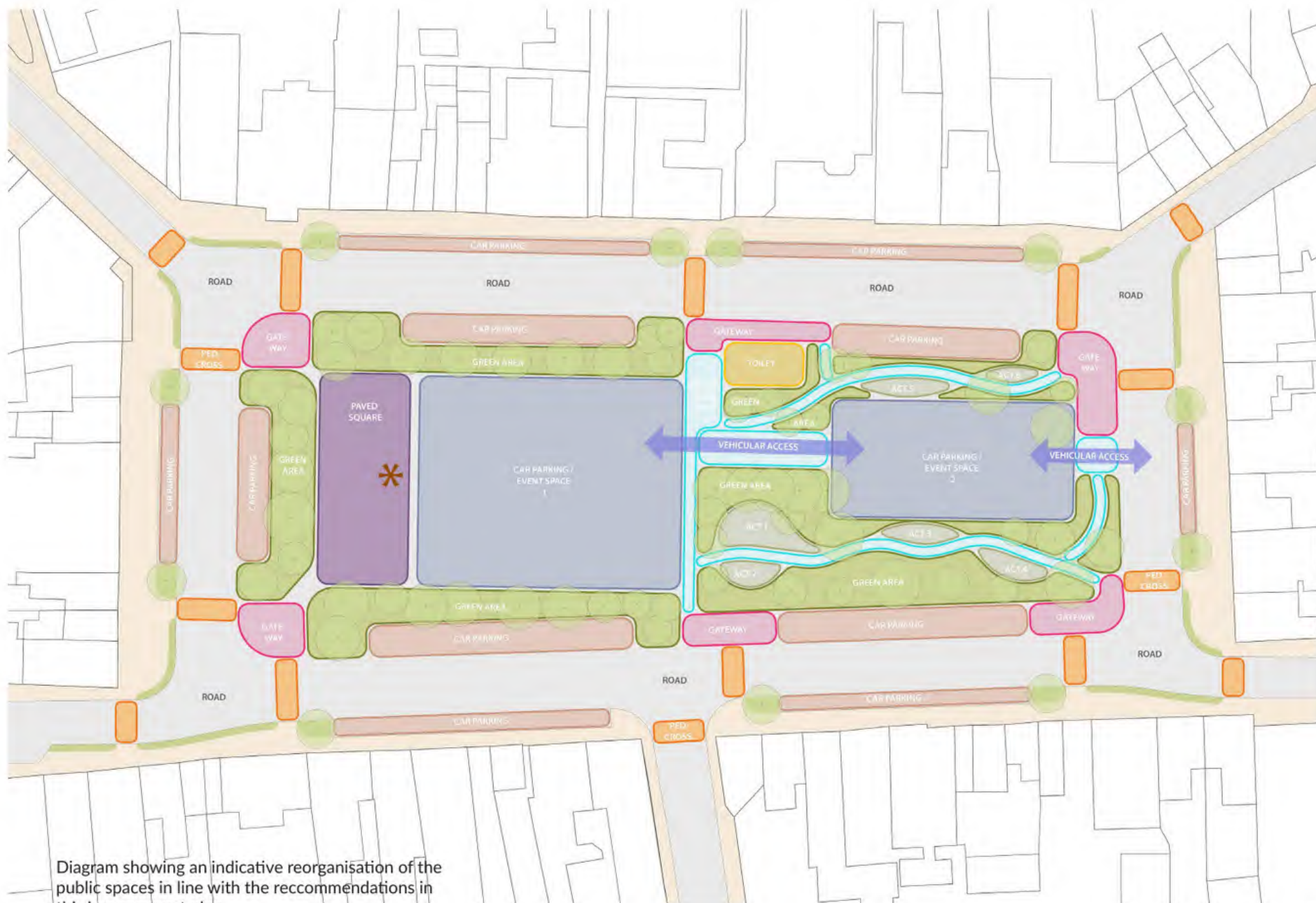


Diagram showing an indicative reorganisation of the public spaces in line with the recommendations in this improvement plan

5.6 Events, Markets and Activity

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to strengthen the Square as a flexible and well-functioning space for events, markets and everyday activity. By reorganising the layout, the proposals create a series of clear, level and adaptable spaces that can be used individually or together, supporting a wide range of activities throughout the year.

Proposed Improvements

- Create a dedicated civic space around the statue on the western side of the Square (a), forming a car-free area suitable for everyday events and gatherings
- Provide a large, central open space adjacent to the statue (b), designed as a level, unobstructed area that can accommodate major events while also functioning as parking when not in use
- Introduce a further flexible space towards the eastern side of the Square (c), created through the new internal route, providing an additional level area that can be used for both parking and events
- Enable these three spaces to operate independently or collectively, allowing for a range of event sizes and formats
- Relocate the main access point to the eastern side of the Square, ensuring that event spaces can

remain operational while maintaining access to parking

- Retain and support existing market activity around the perimeter of the Square, ensuring that stalls can continue to operate within car parking areas as they currently do

Outcome

These changes will provide a clear and flexible structure for events and markets, allowing the Square to accommodate a wide variety of activities more easily. The result is a more adaptable and functional space that supports both everyday use and larger community events, reinforcing the Square's role as the social and cultural heart of Crossmaglen.



5.7 Maintenance and Upkeep

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to simplify the Square and reduce ongoing maintenance requirements through a more efficient and considered layout. While maintenance will always be required, the aim is to design a space that is robust, durable and easier to manage over time, reducing unnecessary complexity and long-term costs.

Proposed Improvements

- Remove a significant number of existing walls and level changes where possible, particularly where they do not serve a clear function, helping to simplify the overall layout
- Retain walls where necessary, such as those associated with existing trees, while reviewing how these can be better integrated into the design
- Reduce the extent of railings, guardrails and other unnecessary barriers to create a cleaner and more open public space
- Specify robust and durable materials for paving, walls and street furniture that are suitable for long-term use
- Introduce planting that is low maintenance, replacing high-maintenance shrubs with more sustainable and manageable alternatives

- Ensure paths and surfaces are designed to withstand regular use and reduce the need for ongoing repairs
- Create a simpler and more legible layout that is easier to clean, maintain and manage

Outcome

These changes will result in a more practical and sustainable Square, reducing maintenance demands while improving the overall appearance and usability of the space, helping to ensure it remains attractive and well cared for over time.



5.8 Bins, Waste and Cleanliness

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to improve the overall cleanliness and appearance of the Square through a more considered approach to waste management and a reduction in elements that contribute to visual clutter and maintenance issues. Feedback highlighted the need for better bin provision; however, this must be balanced with practical considerations around servicing and the impact of excessive bin provision on the public realm.

Proposed Improvements

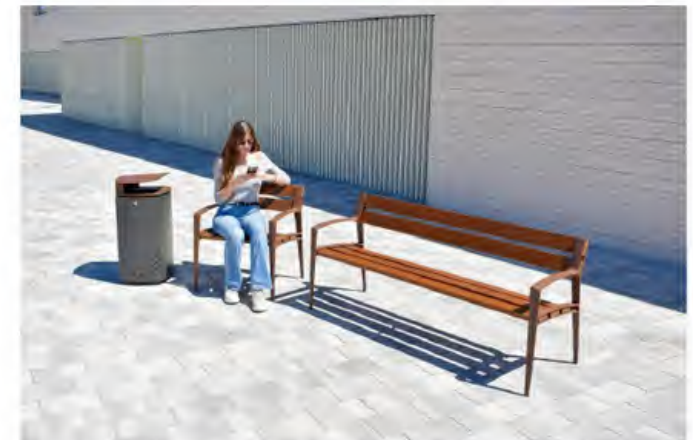
- Provide bins in strategic locations, particularly at key entrances to the Square and near areas of activity, ensuring they are visible and convenient without creating clutter
- Avoid over-provision of bins, recognising that excessive numbers can attract additional waste and negatively impact the appearance of the space
- Explore opportunities for on-street recycling provision, subject to further consideration and agreement with the Council
- Simplify the overall layout of the Square to support easier cleaning and maintenance
- Reduce the number of walls where possible, removing elements that currently contribute to

visual clutter and maintenance challenges

- Where walls are retained, repaint them using a darker, warmer colour palette to improve their appearance and reduce the visibility of staining and wear

Outcome

These measures will help create a cleaner, more attractive and easier-to-manage environment, supporting a higher standard of upkeep while maintaining a simple and uncluttered public space.



5.9 Lighting, Safety and Comfort

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to enhance the safety, usability and overall character of the Square through a comprehensive lighting strategy. While the surrounding roads are already well lit, the lighting within the Square itself requires renewal. This provides an opportunity to introduce a coordinated and hierarchical lighting approach that supports events, improves visibility and reinforces the structure of the space.

Proposed Improvements

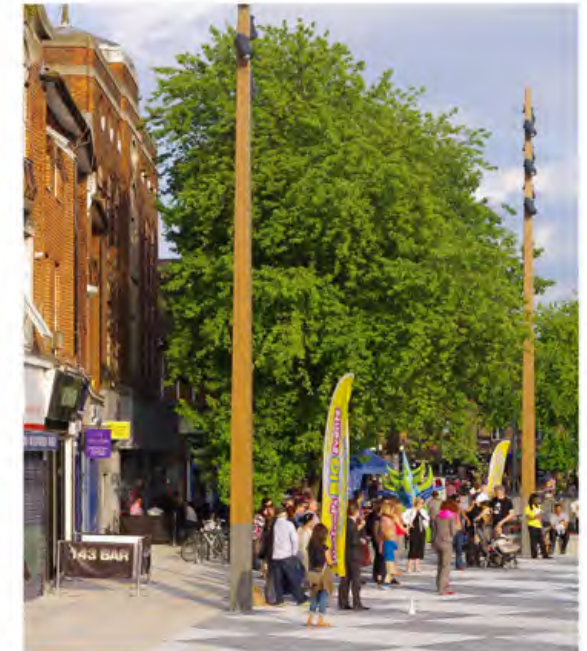
- Replace existing lighting within the Square with a new, coordinated lighting scheme
- Introduce a hierarchy of lighting columns to reflect the different uses and importance of spaces within the Square
- Provide taller feature lighting columns (typically up to 10 metres) around the main western event space to define its edges and support large-scale events
- Install medium-height columns (approximately 6 metres) within the eastern areas and secondary spaces, including circulation and parking zones
- Use smaller-scale lighting (approximately 4 metres) along entrance routes, pedestrian paths and key arrival points to create a more human-scale

environment

- Incorporate feature lighting to highlight the statue and reinforce its role as a focal point within the Square
- Integrate power supplies for events within or adjacent to lighting columns, ensuring they are discreetly located and do not impede movement or flexibility of the space

Outcome

This approach will create a safer, more legible and visually attractive Square, improving comfort during the evening and enabling the space to function effectively for events. The introduction of a clear lighting hierarchy will help define different areas within the Square while supporting flexibility and long-term usability.



5.10 Toilets and Facilities

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to improve the quality and functionality of the existing toilet facilities while better integrating the building into the overall layout of the Square. The aim is to ensure the facility is practical, durable and easy to maintain, while removing underused areas that detract from the quality and usability of the surrounding space.

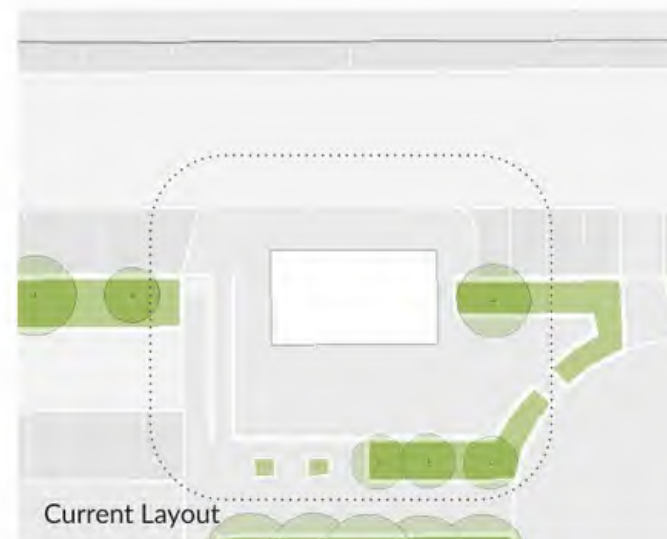
Proposed Improvements

- Refurbish the existing toilet block internally to improve condition, durability and ease of maintenance
- Upgrade materials and fittings to ensure they are robust and suitable for long-term use
- Retain the current location of the facility, recognising its role within the Square and its relationship to surrounding uses
- Remove and reconfigure the underused space to the rear of the toilet block, which currently detracts from the quality of the Square
- Integrate the toilet building more effectively into the surrounding public realm, improving how it relates to adjacent spaces and movement routes

Outcome

These improvements will provide a more functional

and better-maintained facility while removing underutilised areas, contributing to a cleaner, safer and more coherent public space.



Current Layout



Improved Layout

5.11 Heritage, Identity and Character

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to strengthen the identity of the Square by celebrating the rich heritage of Crossmaglen and creating a space that is distinctive, recognisable and meaningful to both residents and visitors. The town's history, particularly its association with lace making, presents a strong opportunity to embed local character within the design, while also supporting tourism and enhancing the overall experience of the Square.

Proposed Improvements

- Establish a clear civic focus around the statue, creating a central and recognisable point within the Square that reflects its cultural and historical importance
- Introduce interpretation and information elements within the Square to communicate the history of the town and enhance the visitor experience
- Support and complement the emerging heritage trail, including the use of plaques and QR codes linked to buildings around the Square
- Incorporate references to local lace-making heritage through patterns, motifs and detailing within paving, surfaces or other design elements
- Explore opportunities for both temporary ("meanwhile") and permanent installations that

celebrate local identity and craftsmanship

- Ensure that heritage elements are integrated sensitively within the overall design, contributing to a cohesive and high-quality public space

Outcome

These measures will help create a Square that reflects the unique identity of Crossmaglen, strengthening its sense of place and making it more engaging for residents and visitors alike, while supporting wider tourism and heritage initiatives.



Typical lace patterns which could be used to influence the square design and add identity and character

5.12 Greening, Landscaping and Biodiversity

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to enhance the quality, visibility and ecological value of planting within the Square, creating greener, more attractive and more usable spaces. Existing planting areas are often raised, difficult to maintain and do not contribute fully to the character or function of the Square. The aim is to introduce a more effective and sustainable approach to landscaping that improves biodiversity while remaining practical to manage.

Proposed Improvements

- Reconfigure existing planted areas, reducing raised planters where possible to create more accessible and usable green spaces
- Remove overgrown and declining shrubs that have reached the end of their useful life
- Introduce new planting that is denser and more visually impactful, providing immediate improvement to the appearance of the Square
- Select planting that is low maintenance, robust and suitable for long-term management
- Increase biodiversity through a more varied planting palette, including species that support pollinators and seasonal interest
- Introduce new standard trees that provide

structure and definition while maintaining clear visibility beneath their canopies

- Develop a long-term strategy for tree replacement and succession, ensuring continuity as existing trees mature or decline
- Improve ground conditions through appropriate soil preparation and specification to ensure planting can establish and thrive

Outcome

These improvements will create a greener, more vibrant and more sustainable Square, enhance its visual quality and environmental performance while ensuring planting is practical to maintain and contributes positively to the overall design.



5.13 Sustainable Movement and Transport

Design Intent

The Improvement Plan seeks to support a range of sustainable and practical transport options while ensuring the Square continues to function primarily as a flexible civic space. The aim is to accommodate facilities such as cycling and public transport in a way that is appropriate to the scale of the Square and does not compromise its usability for events, parking and everyday activity.

Proposed Improvements

- Retain and support the existing bus stop location, recognising that the current canopy provides an effective shelter for users
- Enhance the waiting environment through the introduction of seating and improved integration with the surrounding public space
- Ensure that bus movements are clear, safe and well managed within the overall layout of the Square
- Consider the introduction of cycle parking within the town centre, located in appropriate and convenient positions
- Explore opportunities for covered cycle stands where suitable, ensuring they do not interfere with key public spaces

- Review the potential for electric vehicle charging points within the wider town centre, with consideration given to locating these within dedicated parking areas rather than within the main event spaces
- Ensure that any new transport-related infrastructure is carefully positioned and integrated into the overall design of the Square

Outcome

These measures will support a broader range of travel options while ensuring the Square remains a flexible and well-functioning civic space. By carefully integrating transport facilities, the Improvement Plan will enhance accessibility without compromising the quality or usability of the public realm.



Phasing and Delivery

Overview

The Improvement Plan has been developed to allow for a phased and flexible approach to delivery. It recognises that while a comprehensive transformation of the Square is possible, there are also opportunities to implement smaller, early interventions that begin to improve the space immediately.

These initial actions can act as “quick wins”, helping to build momentum, demonstrate positive change and support future funding applications. Over time, further improvements can be delivered incrementally as funding becomes available, or alternatively progressed as part of a larger, coordinated investment.

This approach ensures that each stage of delivery contributes towards the overall vision for the Square, allowing it to evolve in a structured and achievable way.

Enabling Actions

Before physical works are undertaken, a number of enabling steps will be required to inform design development and delivery:

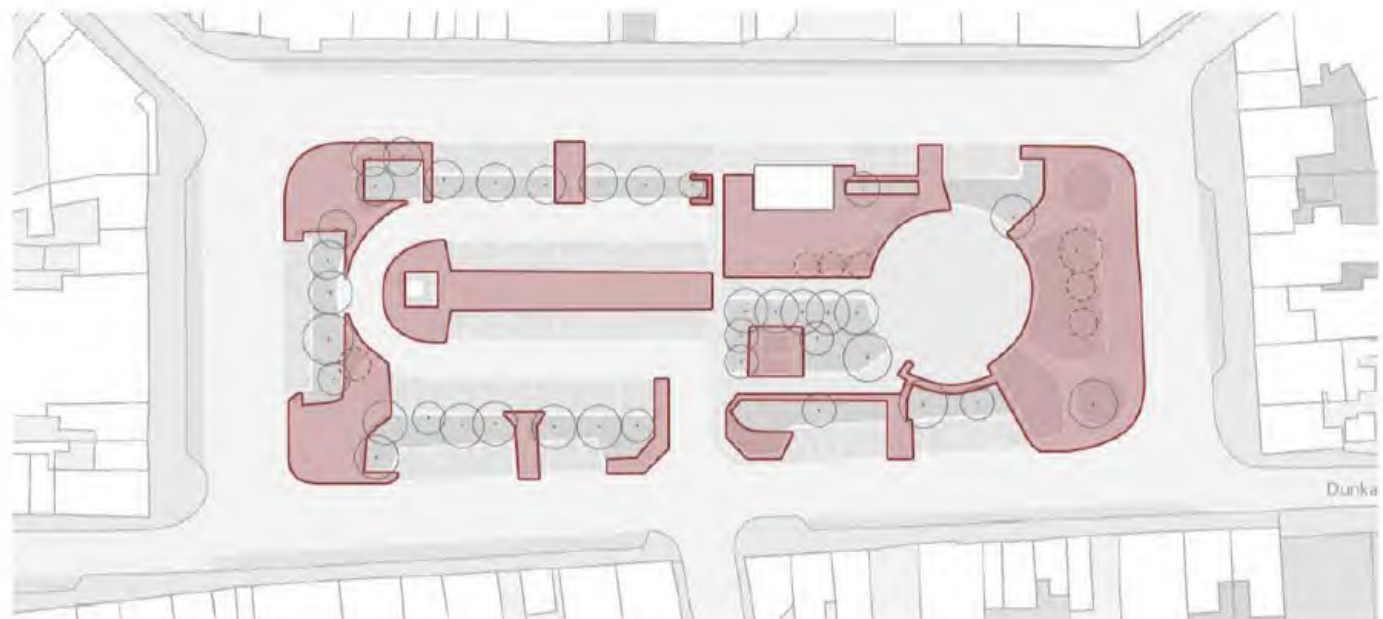
- Topographical survey of the Square
- Tree survey and assessment
- Electrical and utilities survey
- Review of land ownership and opportunities

within a 5-minute walk of the Square (including potential for additional parking)

- Ongoing coordination with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
- Identification and application for funding opportunities
- Development of detailed design proposals and a phased delivery strategy

Outcome

These changes will create a more efficient and legible layout for vehicles, improving safety and circulation while maintaining a strong level of parking provision and supporting the overall function of the Square.



Areas of the existing square to be changed in line with the recommendations in this improvement plan

Meanwhile Uses

Short-term, low-cost interventions can be introduced to begin activating the Square and testing ideas:

- Introduction of lace-inspired motifs within existing paved areas
- Cleaning and jet washing of surfaces to improve appearance
- Promotion of parklets and temporary use of parking spaces for seating or activity

Short-Term Improvements (Quick Wins)

Targeted improvements that can be delivered relatively quickly and at lower cost:

- Repainting of existing walls to improve appearance
- Introduction of double yellow lines to improve parking management
- Refurbishment of the public toilets
- Installation of new welcome signage and heritage interpretation

Medium-Term Enhancements

Subject to funding, these works would deliver significant improvements to the structure and function of the Square:

- Installation of pedestrian crossings at all junctions, including buildouts and appropriate sight lines
- Removal of intermediate access points to simplify movement and improve safety
- Removal of unnecessary walls to open up the space
- Reconfiguration of the Square layout, including:
- Creation of a level, flexible event space
- Introduction of a new internal route and improved connections
- Relocation of the main entrance/exit
- Installation of a new lighting scheme
- Introduction of additional trees and planting
- Creation of a new civic plaza around the statue
- Provision of a new accessible ramp and improved north-south connection

Long-Term Opportunities

Further strategic improvements that may be delivered over time:

- Identification and development of a new car park within walking distance of the Square to support long-stay parking
- Introduction of time-limited parking (e.g. 2-hour bays) to improve turnover and support local businesses

Vision for the Square

Overview

The Improvement Plan is supported by a series of illustrative materials that set out a clear and positive vision for the future of Cardinal Ó Fiaich Square. These have been developed to communicate how the Square could evolve over time and to provide a strong foundation for future design development and funding opportunities.

Illustrative Concept Plan

An illustrative concept plan has been prepared to represent the proposed improvements at a high level. This plan brings together the key proposals set out in this report, demonstrating how the Square could be reorganised to improve accessibility, usability and overall quality. It should be viewed as an indicative design that establishes a clear direction, which will require further detailed design, surveys and engagement as the project progresses.

Key Moves Diagram

A key moves diagram has been developed to clearly illustrate the principal changes proposed within the Square, identifying elements to be removed, retained and introduced. This diagram helps to explain how the Square can be incrementally transformed over time, with each intervention contributing towards the overall vision. It provides a practical framework for phased delivery, showing how individual

improvements can collectively lead to a coherent and enhanced public space.

Artist's Impression

An artist's impression has also been prepared to bring the proposals to life and demonstrate the potential character of the Square. This visualisation conveys the atmosphere, quality and activity that the improvements could deliver, helping to illustrate a more vibrant, welcoming and engaging space. It is intended to inspire and support discussions with stakeholders and funding bodies, providing a clear sense of what the Square could become.

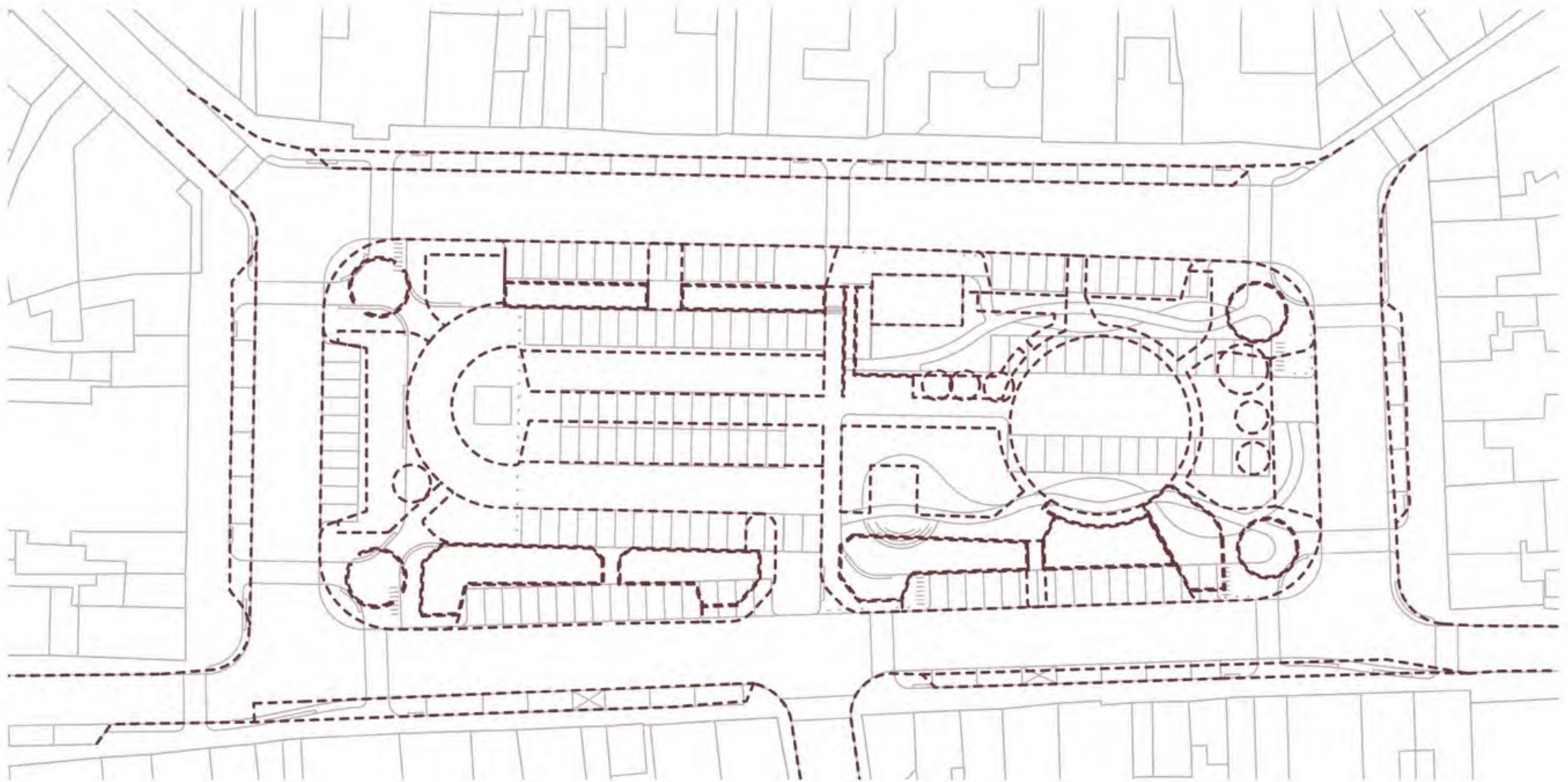
Outcome

Together, these materials present a compelling and achievable vision for the Square, helping to communicate both the practicality and ambition of the proposals. They provide a strong basis for moving forward into detailed design, consultation and delivery, while supporting future funding applications.



Typical images of what the square could look like

07 Vision for the Square



Plan showing an indicative reorganisation of the public spaces overlaid with the existing layout of the square



07 Vision for the Square



Artists Impression showing an indicative reorganisation of the public spaces in line with the recommendations in this improvement plan

dwg.

Report to:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday 8 th June 2026
Subject:	Local Economic Partnership Grants: Revive and Re-Imagine
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism.
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Aveen McVeigh Head of Regeneration and Business Development

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<u>Purpose</u> To note the recommendations in 3.1 of this report. <u>Background</u> Council is in receipt of a Letter of Offer from Department for Economy (DfE) to deliver a range of projects that were developed by the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) with a focus on delivering Regional Balance. As outlined at ERT Committee in May 2026, Council is progressing with the mobilisation of a Revive and Reimagine: Commercial Property Grant and Revive and Reimagine: Property Façade Renewal Scheme.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Overview - Revive and Reimagine - Commercial Property Grant The Revive and Reimagine Property Grant is a targeted intervention developed to encourage private sector investment to stimulate local economic activity, attract new businesses and provide growing space for existing enterprises The grant supports the restoration and/or expansion of underused, vacant and derelict properties within urban and rural settlement limits, bringing them back into productive use as high-quality, sustainable and functional commercial spaces. Funding Total funds available: £2,000,000 Grant awards are available from: £50,000 - £200,000 and will cover up to 50% of eligible project costs. There is no limit on the overall project value; however, the maximum grant available is £200,000.

2.2	• Timeframe The grant programme will open on 16th June 2026 at 12.00 and close on 8th September 2026 at 12.00 noon. Applications will be operated through the online Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS). Applicants can register for an account at: https://newrymournedowndc.smartsimpleuk.com • Information sessions Information sessions on the scheme and application process will be held on Wednesday 17 June, from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, at Down County Museum, Downpatrick and Tuesday 23 June from 12.00 noon to 2.00pm, Killeavy Castle, Killeavy. Council officers from the Local Economic Partnership, Planning, Building Control and Go Succeed along with representatives from Land and Property Services will be in attendance. • Overview - Property Façade Renewal Scheme St. Patrick's Avenue Following the completion of a feasibility study of St Patrick's Avenue in Downpatrick the findings enabled Council to secure funding for Reimagine Property Façade Renewal Scheme. The grant supports the renewal and improvement of occupied commercial property façades within St. Patrick's Avenue, Downpatrick. • Funding Total funds available: £600,000 (Phase 1 & 2) Grant awards are available from £5,000 to £20,000 and will cover up to 50% of eligible project costs. There is no limit on the overall project value; however, the maximum grant available is £20,000 • Timeframe The grant programme will open on 16th June 2026 at 12.00 noon and close on 11th August 2026 at 12.00 noon. Applications will be operated through the online Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS). Applicants can register for an account at: https://newrymournedowndc.smartsimpleuk.com • Information session An information session on the scheme and application process will be held on Wednesday 17 June, from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, at Down County Museum, Downpatrick. Council officers from the Local Economic Partnership, Planning, Building Control and Go Succeed along with representatives from Land and Property Services will be in attendance.
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3.0	Recommendations
3.1	To note the launch of the Revive and Reimagine: Commercial Property Grant and Property Façade Renewal Schemes.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	LEP is 100% funded by DfE.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will 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 ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒

	If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	n/a
8.0	Background Documents
	Guidance notes for applicants will be available on Council website when the funding call opens