

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 14 September 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor K Feehan

Committee Members:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor N Lawlor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor M Ruane
Councillor H Young	

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor W Clarke

Officials in attendance: Mr C Mallon, Director, Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director, Regeneration
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance

via Teams: Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/086/2026: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Quinn

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. He asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

ERT/087/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ERT/088/2026: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 10 AUGUST 2026

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/089/2026: **MOURNE GULLION LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS PROJECT – BASELINE SURVEY**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Baseline Surveys for Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth outlined the report which sought approval of the business case detailed at Appendix 1 of the officer's report. She noted that one of the initial workstreams had been the commissioning of baseline ecological surveys, which were required to establish baseline data for measuring habitat condition, which was a key requirement of the project. Mrs Smyth confirmed that the baseline surveys were fully funded through the Lottery Heritage Fund and the DAERA Environment Fund.

Councillor Young noted that the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were in an unfavourable condition due to factors including wildfires, erosion and inappropriate development. She welcomed the proposed multi-agency approach and its alignment with the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and the Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan. She highlighted risks associated with seasonal survey windows and queried how these risks had been assessed, whether contingency timescales had been identified, and if any related decisions would be taken on a multi-agency basis.

Mrs Smyth advised that the timing of the surveys had been agreed as part of the project, that multiple agencies were involved and were aware of the agreed timescales, and that the survey was progressing accordingly. She added that this was the first item of business to ensure the project was completed within the required timescales.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the business case for Baseline Surveys for Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project as outlined in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Nighttime Economy / Evening Living. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report, which outlined the work undertaken since the previous Committee discussion to explore the development of a Night-Time Economy Action Plan for Downpatrick, Newcastle and Newry. She advised that engagement had taken place with Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Ashby de la Zouch Town Council and the Association of Town and City Management in relation to Purple Flag accreditation and best practice in supporting a safe, clean and vibrant night-time economy. She further advised that the proposed Enterprise and Regeneration Strategy would provide an opportunity to consider and shape future actions to support the night-time economy across the three locations.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the report and sought clarification on the proposed timeline, noting that the original Motion had been submitted in April and that engagement with regeneration groups had yet to take place. She also highlighted changing patterns within the night-time economy, noting the success of a recent museum event which had operated from 4.00pm to 9.00pm.

In response, Mrs Smyth advised that the next stage would involve the procurement of external consultancy support to assist with the development of the strategy. She further advised that engagement with regeneration groups was expected to take place before Christmas 2026 and continue into early 2027.

Councillor Galbraith welcomed the report, thanked officers for their work to date and echoed Councillor Hanlon's comments regarding changing patterns in the night-time economy.

Councillor Hanna questioned the suitability of Downpatrick and Newcastle pursuing Purple Flag accreditation given their smaller populations, to which Mrs Smyth advised that Purple Flag accreditation was determined by the quality and operation of a location's night-time economy rather than its population size. She noted that Belfast and Derry/Londonderry held Purple Flag status and that Newry had previously been accredited. She further advised that the accreditation process considered factors such as evening activity, accessibility, transport, public conveniences and safety.

Following a further query from Councillor Hanna, Mr Mallon advised that Purple Flag provided an established framework for assessing and improving the night-time economy. He noted that, while some elements might not be applicable in smaller towns, the framework could help identify appropriate interventions and inform future improvements. He further advised that the proposed Council-wide strategy would consider both daytime and night-time economies across the district, with any recommendations informed through engagement with local chambers of commerce and regeneration groups.

Councillor Hanlon noted that, while Downpatrick had a resident population of approximately 11,500, the wider DEA population was closer to 21,000 and supported the town centre. She also

highlighted the impact of recent flooding and emphasised the importance of regeneration initiatives in supporting local businesses and the town's recovery.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to engage with Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group, Newry Regeneration Working Group, Newry BID and Chambers of Commerce within the district to develop recommendations for a nighttime economy action plan through the new Enterprise and Regeneration Strategy.

ERT/091/2026: RING OF GULLION LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme - Legacy phase project – Heritage Festival. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, which detailed proposals for a Heritage Festival, as set out in Section 2.2 and the accompanying appendix. She advised that approval was sought to issue a Service Level Agreement for the delivery of the Heritage Festival Landscape Partnership Legacy Phase Project.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve issuing of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the delivery Ring of Gullion Heritage Festival Landscape Partnership Legacy phase project as set out in section 2 of the officers' report.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of 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).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised that the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/092/2026: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: CALL 1 2027/28

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance: Call 1 2027/28. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to proceed with the delivery of call 1 financial assistance for 27/28 revenue projects, in line with the timeframe and themes outlined within the officer's report.

FOR NOTING

ERT/093/2026: BATHING WATERS CONSULTATION

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Consultation Response on the Bathing Waters Policy Review for Northern Ireland. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the consultation response submitted by the deadline of 21 August 2026.

In response to a query from Councillor Lee-Surginor regarding accessibility, Mr Mallon advised that the dashboard was available online. He confirmed that Council had submitted a corporate response to the consultation and noted that members of the public and other stakeholders could also submit responses. He further advised that a link to the dashboard could be provided to Members.

ERT/094/2026: HARBOURS BILL

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, Consultation Response on the Harbours Bill. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Young regarding ongoing public concerns relating to odours and noise associated with port operations, and the mechanisms available to the Department to intervene in any future comparable situations, Mr Mallon advised that he would revert to her outside the meeting.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the consultation response.

ERT/095/2026

NMD MUSEUMS QUARTERLY UPDATE

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding NMD Museums Quarterly Update Report (Q1 26/27 Apr-Jun). **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the update on the activities, programming and achievements of NMD Museums.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.22pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 October 2026

Signed:

Councillor K Feehan
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed:

Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism