



June 9th, 2025

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Monday, 9th June 2025 at 6:00 pm** in **Council Chamber, Monaghan Row, Newry.**

**Committee Membership 2025-26**

Councillor D Lee-Surginor **Chairperson**

Councillor K Feehan **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor T Andrews

Councillor W Clarke

Councillor C Galbraith

Councillor O Hanlon

Councillor G Hanna

Councillor V Harte

Councillor G Kearns

Councillor A Lewis

Councillor S Murphy

Councillor A Quinn

Councillor M Ruane

Councillor J Tinnelly

Councillor H Young

# Agenda

## 1.0 Introduction and Apologies

## 2.0 Declarations of Interest

## 3.0 Action Sheet : Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism - Committee Meeting Monday 12 May 2025

 *ERT Action Sheet - 12.05.2025.pdf*

*Page 1*

## 4.0 To Agree Start Times for Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meetings 2025-2026

 *Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meetings 2025 - 2026.pdf*

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### *For Discussion/Decision*

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## 5.0 Officer Report on Notice of Motion - Outdoor Adventure Revamp of Delamont County Park

 *ERT Report - NoM Delamont Country Park.pdf*

*Page 8*


## 6.0 ERT Business Plans

 *ERT Report - Directorate Business Plans.pdf*

*Page 12*

 *Appx 1 ERT Directorate Annual Assessment of Business 2024-25.pdf*

*Page 15*

 *Appx.2 - Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Business Plan 2025-26.pdf*

*Page 51*

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### *Economy Growth & Tourism*

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## 7.0 DBEC Report - Business Case for Marketing

 *ERT Report - DBEC Communications & Marketing Partner.pdf*

*Page 75*

 *Appx DBEC Comms and Marketing Partner - Business Case.pdf*

*Page 79*

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### 7.1 Exempt Appendix - DBEC Business Case for Marketing

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.

 ***Appx DBEC Comms and Marketing Partner - Business Case (restricted).pdf***

***Not included***

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## ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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### **8.0 Geopark Interpretation Masterplan**

 ***ERT Report - Geopark Interpretation Master Plan.pdf***

***Page 87***

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### **9.0 Labour Market Partnership**

 ***ERT Report - Labour Market Partnership 25 26.pdf***

***Page 91***

 ***Appx 1 Labour Market Partnership Action Plan.pdf***

***Page 95***

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## ***Exempt Appendices***

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#### **9.1 Exempt Appendix - Labour Market Partnership**

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.

 ***Appx 2 Labour Market Partnership Budget (restricted).pdf***

***Not included***

 ***Appx 3 Labour Market Partnership Business Case (restricted).pdf***

***Not included***

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## ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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### **10.0 Local Economic Partnership**

 ***ERT Report - Local Economic Partnership.pdf***

***Page 98***

 ***Appx 2 Local Economic Partnerships - DfE Guidance and ToR.pdf***

***Page 102***

 ***Appx 3 Local Economic Partnerships - NMD Terms of Reference.pdf***

***Page 111***

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## ***Exempt Appendices***

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#### **10.1 Exempt Appendix - Local Economic Partnership**

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.

 ***Appx 1 Local Economic Partnership Reports March & April 2025 (restricted).pdf*** ***Not included***

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## ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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### **11.0 PEAT Plus Project**

 ***ERT Report - PeatPlus Project.pdf***

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## ***Exempt Appendices***

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### **11.1 Exempt Appendix - PEAT Plus Project**

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.

 ***Appx 1 Peat Plus Budget - resource (restricted).pdf***

***Not included***

 ***Appx 2 Peat Plus Business Case (restricted).pdf***


***Not included***

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## ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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### **12.0 Tourism Trade Consumer Shows 2025/26**

 ***ERT Report - Tourism Trade Consumer Shows 2025-2026.pdf***

***Page 124***

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## ***Exempt Appendices***

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### **12.1 Exempt Appendix - Tourism Trade Consumer Shows 2025/26**

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.

 ***Appx Tourism Trade Consumer Shows 2025-2026.pdf***

***Not included***

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## ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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### **13.0 Financial Assistance Call 2& 3**

 ***ERT Report - Financial Assistance Call 2 & 3.pdf***

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### ***Exempt Appendices***

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#### **13.1 Exempt Appendix - Financial Assistance 2025/2026 - Sports Facility Capital and VJ Day**

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.

 <b><i>Appx 1 FA - VJ day celebration 2025 (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 2 FA - Sports Facility Capital (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 3 FA - Community Minor Capital Items (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 4 FA - Community Capital for Community Facilities (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>

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### ***Economy Growth & Tourism***

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#### **14.0 PEACE Plus Theme 1.1 Procurement**

 ***ERT Report - PEACE Plus Theme 1.1 Procurement.pdf***

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### ***Exempt Appendices***

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#### **14.1 Exempt Appendix - PEACE Plus Theme 1.1 Procurement**

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.

 <b><i>Appx 1 PEACE Plus Partnership Board Minutes 22 May 2025.pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 2 PEACE Plus Business Case 2.4 Civic Pride (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 3 PEACE Plus Business Case 2.4 health and wellbeing (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>
 <b><i>Appx 4 PEACE Plus Business Case 2.7 Social Prescribing (restricted).pdf</i></b>	<b><i>Not included</i></b>

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

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#### **Warrenpoint Front Shore Kiosks**

***For Decision***

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.

 **ERT Report - Warrenpoint Front Shore Kiosks.pdf**

**Not included**

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### ***For Noting***

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## **15.0 AONB & Geopark Update 2024/25**

 **ERT Report - AONB and Geopark update 24.25.pdf**

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# Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews  
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Cllr Callum Bowsie  
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Ms Michelle Boyle  
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Fionnuala Branagh  
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Cllr Jim Brennan  
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Ms Sonya Burns  
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Lorraine/Emma Burns/McParland  
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Mr Gerard Byrne  
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Cllr Pete Byrne  
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Cllr Philip Campbell  
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Cllr William Clarke  
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Cllr Laura Devlin  
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Ms Louise Dillon  
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Cllr Cadogan Enright  
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Cllr Killian Feehan  
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Cllr Doire Finn  
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Cllr Conor Galbraith  
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Cllr Mark Gibbons  
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Cllr Oonagh Hanlon  
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Cllr Glyn Hanna  
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Cllr Valerie Harte  
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Cllr Martin Hearty  
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Cllr Roisin Howell  
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Cllr Tierna Howie  
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Ms Catherine Hughes  
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Cllr Jonathan Jackson  
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Cllr Geraldine Kearns  
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Miss Veronica Keegan  
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Mrs Josephine Kelly  
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Mrs Sheila Kieran  
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Cllr Cathal King  
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Cllr Mickey Larkin  
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Cllr David Lee-Surginor  
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Cllr Alan Lewis  
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Cllr Oonagh Magennis  
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Mr Conor Mallon  
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Cllr Aidan Mathers  
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Cllr Declan McAteer  
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Cllr Leeanne McEvoy  
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Jonathan McGilly  
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Ms Tracie McLoughlin  
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Ms Aveen McVeigh  
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Maureen/Joanne Morgan/Johnston  
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Sinead Murphy  
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Cllr Selina Murphy  
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Cllr Kate Murphy  
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Cllr Declan Murphy  
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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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Cllr Michael Ruane  
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin  
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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  
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Cllr David Taylor  
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly  
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Cllr Jill Truesdale  
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Mrs Marie Ward  
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Cllr Helena Young  
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ACTION SHEET

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 12 AUGUST 2024

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/069/2024	Castlewellan Forest Park – Café and mobile vendor provision	it was agreed that the Council undertake a tender process to appoint a suitably experienced operator to deliver catering services at Castlewellan Forest Park as set out in section 2.1 of the officer's report.	A Smyth	Underway – valuation obtained, tender live	Y

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2024

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/080/2024	Down County Museum Café	it was agreed that Council undertake a tender process to appoint a suitably experienced operator to deliver catering services at Down County Museum.	A Smyth	In progress – works to be progressed to prepare for café facility	N

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/004/2025	BRCD Regional Hub Report	<p>The following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To approve the attached business case</li> <li>- To approve the procurement of consultancy support for the development of an outline business case for a regional innovation hub within Newry Civic &amp; Regional Hub</li> <li>- To approve the appointment of consultancy support following the BRCD Digital Advisory Board Approval</li> </ul>	A Smyth	In progress – ICT procurement underway	Y

ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 10 MARCH 2025

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/022/2025	Ballykinlar Hut Removal update	<p>the following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the update on the expression of interest process relating to the Ballykinlar Hut</li> <li>• To accept the Expression of Interest from Applicant 2 for the Ballykinlar Hut and all physical contents, subject to an agreed work plan</li> <li>• To approve the request from Applicant 1 for a copy of the digital information associated with the Ballykinlar Hut project held by the Council</li> </ul>	A Smyth	Underway – legal agreements being drafted to enable transfer	Y

## ECONOMY, REGENERATION &amp; TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 14 APRIL 2025

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Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/030/2025	CMAP Advanced Mooring System	<p>The following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To note Coastal Monitoring and Adaptation Plan Project (CMAP) grant award – 1 April 2025 for 48 months</li> <li>To approve the completion of required documentation, including partnership agreement with Ulster University and associated legal agreements to allow commencement of CMAP.</li> <li>To commence the recruitment process for 1 FTE according to the terms and conditions of the Letter of Offer.</li> <li>To approve the Business Case for the implementation of the Advanced Mooring Systems project which is the identified lead partner for the Coastal Monitoring and Adaptation Plan Project.</li> </ul>	A Smyth	In Progress	N
ERT/031/2025	Go Succeed Update	<p>The following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To note the update provided on the implementation of Go Succeed 2024/25</li> <li>To approve Council entering into a MoU / Collaboration agreement with Belfast City Council (subject to Legal approval) to guarantee implementation of Go Succeed in 2025/26.</li> </ul>	A Smyth	In Progress	N
ERT/033/2025	Financial Assistance Call 1	It was agreed to allocate the letters of offer to projects as per Council policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation	A Smyth	In Progress	N



## ECONOMY, REGENERATION &amp; TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING – MONDAY 12 MAY 2025

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/041/2025	Action sheet of ERT meeting held 15/04/25	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	C Mallon	Noted	Y
ERT/042/2025	Arts Outreach Programme	<p>the following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To deliver an Artist Bursary Programme, awarding Letters of Offer to 6 bursaries.</li> <li>To deliver 2 Artist Bursaries through a Service Level Agreement with the John Hewitt Programme</li> <li>To deliver a Theatre Company in Residence Programme, establishing a Service Level Agreement for delivery against KPIs between June 2025 and March 2026</li> <li>To deliver an Artist in Residence programme, establishing a Service Level Agreement for delivery against KPIs between September 2025 and March 2026</li> <li>To support a Schools Shared Education Project through issue of a Letter of Offer for implementation of a Streets Mural Arts Project.</li> </ul>	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/043/2025	Data Sharing agreement between DAERA & 11 Councils	it was agreed to approve the Data Sharing Agreement between DAERA and the 11 Councils regarding planning applications on agricultural land.	J McGilly	actioned	Y
ERT/044/2025	Kilkeel Chamber	it was agreed to approve the establishment of a Service Level Agreement with Kilkeel Chamber to deliver three artisan markets in 2025/26.	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/045/2025	NI Regional Planning IT System	it was agreed to approve the Service Level Agreement between the Intelligent Client Function (ICF) and the 11 partner Planning Authorities and associated costs of the Shared Service for the Planning System	J McGilly	Actioned	Y



Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/046/2025	Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme	<p>it was agreed to issue Service Level Agreements for the delivery of 3 Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Legacy phase projects as set out in section 2 and 4 of the Officers Report, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Workshop Teaching Space – SLA with Mountain Ways Ireland</li> <li>•Heritage across the Generations – SLA with Rural Health Partnership</li> <li>•Ring of Gullion Heritage Festival – SLA with Oriel Events</li> </ul>	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/047/2025	Young Enterprise NI	it was agreed to issue a Letter of Offer to Young Enterprise NI to deliver the "Building Aspirations" project in 25/26.	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/048/2025	Newry River Channel Markers	it was agreed to approve that Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with Carlingford Lough Commission (CLC) to maintain 10 Navigational Markers within the Newry River from Narrow Water to Victoria Lock Gates.	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/049/2025	Tyrella Beach – Season Parking Permit	it was agreed to approve the proposal to continue to operate a seasonal carpark permit at Tyrella Beach	A Smyth	Underway	N
ERT/050/2025	DBEC Application to SEUPB	<p>it was agreed to note the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•That a funding application has been submitted to SEUPB PEACEPLUS Programme under Investment Area 6.1 – Strategic Planning &amp; Engagement, seeking €2 million to enable the delivery of a programme.</li> <li>•To note Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as the lead Partner for the project.</li> </ul>	C Mallon	Noted	Y
ERT/051/2025	Eats & Beats – Buskfest	it was agreed to note the partnership between Eats & Beats Event and Banbridge Buskfest by offering the Overall Winner of Buskfest 2025 a performance slot on stage at the Eats and Beats Festival 2025	A Smyth	Noted	Y



## **ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
9 June 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
11 August 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
8 September 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
13 October 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
10 November 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
8 December 2025	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
19 January 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
9 February 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
9 March 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
20 April 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry
11 May 2026	6.00 pm	Boardroom, Monaghan Row, Newry

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Notice of Motion – Outdoor Adventure Revamp of Delamont Country Park (C/063/2025)
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Michelle Boyle Head of Tourism Product Development & Visitor Experience

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>To note progression against delivery of the Delamont Country Park – Masterplan that seeks to deliver against the vision that Delamont Country Park is developed as a landmark outdoor tourist attraction, and <i>Window to Strangford Lough</i></p> <p>To agree to proceed with the project as set out in the Masterplan and Business case presented to SFWG on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and subject to consideration by SPR on the 12 June 2025</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>A Notice of Motion (C/063/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – Outdoor Adventure Revamp of Delamont Country Park) was brought forward to Council in April 2025. The Motion was referred to the Economy, Regeneration &amp; Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Orders.</p> <p>The notice of motion sets out:</p> <p><i>"That this Council recognises the magnificent 200-acre landscape of Delamont Country Park on the shores of Strangford Lough and its untapped tourism potential close to the greater Belfast area. Acknowledges that following the success of the miniature railway over 25 years ago, its important that the Council invests in innovative new experiences particularly for the secondary school age. Calls for market research to be conducted into the potential of Delamont being home to a major outdoor adventure that utilises its scenic drumlins and shoreline and thus would make Delamont a landmark tourist attraction for the north of the district."</i></p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
2.1	<u>Delamont Country Park - Masterplan Vision</u>

In 2019 Council completed a Masterplan for Delamont Country Park. The recommended vision for the Park is '*Window to Strangford Lough*'. This has been selected as currently no other sites around the Lough provide a definitive place to view, explore and experience Strangford Lough.

The key areas recommended for development to deliver on the vision and make Delamont Country Park a landmark outdoor tourist attraction are set out below:

- Signage and immersive interpretation experience
  - Thoughtfully designed signage and immersive interpretation experiences play a crucial role in engaging visitors and deepening their understanding of a site's natural, cultural, or historical significance. By incorporating modern interpretive tools such as interactive displays, augmented reality (AR), storytelling installations, and multilingual signage, visitors can explore the environment with greater context and curiosity. These experiences should be inclusive and accessible, using universal design principles and sensory elements to cater to diverse audiences. The goal is to foster meaningful connections between visitors and the site, encouraging stewardship and repeat visits.
- New and enhanced trail network
  - A well-planned and enhanced trail network can transform the visitor experience by providing safe, sustainable, and varied routes for exploration. Trails should accommodate different skill levels and interests—ranging from casual walks to more challenging walks—while showcasing the area's most scenic, ecological, or historical features. New trail elements will be added and Improvements will include upgraded surfaces, wayfinding signage, rest areas, and integration with natural habitats. Trails also offer opportunities for educational waypoints, wildlife observation, and recreational activities, all while managing foot traffic to protect sensitive areas.
- New visitor orientation centre
  - A new visitor orientation centre serves as a vital hub for first impressions and logistical support, offering guests the information and resources they need to plan a rewarding experience. Designed to be both functional and inviting, it will include interpretive displays, maps, staff assistance, restrooms, and a range of visitor facilities. Sustainable, context-sensitive architecture can help the centre blend into its surroundings while also acting as a model for environmental responsibility. It can also serve as a base for guided tours, community events, or educational programs, positioning it as both a gateway and a gathering place.
- A 'stand out' viewpoint, visitor attraction
  - A 'stand out' viewpoint or signature visitor attraction will become the defining highlight of a site, offering a dramatic or unique perspective that leaves a lasting impression. Whether it's a panoramic lookout, an architectural installation, a cantilevered platform, or an artistic structure integrated with the landscape, it will harmonize with the environment while offering a moment of awe or reflection. Ideally, it becomes a destination



	<p>in itself—iconic, photogenic, and tied to the narrative of the place. With thoughtful placement and interpretation, it can enhance appreciation of the surrounding beauty, support education, and become a driver for tourism and economic vitality.</p>
	<p><u>Delamont Country Park - Masterplan Implementation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver fully on the vision as set out in the Masterplan for Delamont Country Park across all four key aspects, the cost is estimated at approx. £5 million.</li> <li>• A phased approach is therefore being taken to progress and implement the 4 core project areas</li> <li>• Some initial scoping work has been undertaken across the key areas of development and a high-level costing prepared.</li> <li>• Below sets out the next steps that seeks to progress delivery against the Master Plan, which will help facilitate future funding applications for implementation of the project at Delamont.</li> </ul> <p>New and enhanced trail network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council have progressed the Trail Network design and obtained the necessary Planning Approval. The project has been developed to RIBA stage 3.</li> <li>• Funding was recently applied for via EBR under PEACE however the overall project was unsuccessful</li> </ul> <p>New visitor orientation centre and A 'stand out' viewpoint, visitor attraction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A paper has been prepared for consideration at SPR Committee, seeking a capital budget to progress the above 2 projects to RIBA stage 3, including an allowance for survey work and further business case development.</li> </ul> <p>Signage and immersive interpretation experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A paper has been prepared for consideration at SPR Committee, seeking capital budget to commence development of an Interpretation plan that would further develop and set out the interpretative experience.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	To note progression against delivery of the Delamont Country Park – Masterplan that seeks to deliver against the vision that Delamont Country Park is developed as a landmark outdoor tourist attraction, and <i>Window to Strangford Lough</i>
3.2	Members agree to proceed with the project as set out in the Masterplan and Business case presented to SFWG on the 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2025, subject to capital funding approval at SPR on the 12 June 2025
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	<p>A Capital proposal is under consideration for the progression of the below two projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre Development works RIBA Stage 1- 3, for a new visitor orientation centre and A 'stand out' viewpoint, visitor attraction</li> <li>• Development of an Interpretation plan for Signage and immersive interpretation experience</li> </ul>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>	
5.1	<b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.2	<b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/> The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.3	<b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b> 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 <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rationale:</i>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	
	None	
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	
	None	

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Directorate Business Plan
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Conor Mallon Director – Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Conor Mallon Director – Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

<b>For decision</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>		
1.1	<p><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.</p> <p><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.</p>		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>		
2.1	<p><b>Assessment of Directorate Business Plans 2024-25</b></p> <p>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 2024-25. These assessments provide an overview of the performance of each Directorate and have been used to influence the development of the 2025-26 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.</p> <p>The assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2024-25 is attached at Appendix 1.</p>		



2.2	<p><b>Directorate Business Plans 2025-26</b></p> <p>Directorate Business Plans 2025-26 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 2025-26 are also now aligned to the new organisational structure following completion of the planning for the future process.</p> <p>The ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26 is attached at Appendix 2.</p>
2.3	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.0	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<p>To consider and approve the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2024-25</li> <li>ii. ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26</li> </ul>
4.0	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	There are no financial resources implications within this report.
5.0	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p>

	<p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.</p>
6.0	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix 1 – Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2024-25</li> <li>Appendix 2 – ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26</li> </ul>
8.0	<b>Background Documents</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directorate Business Plans 2024-25</li> <li>Assessments of Directorate Business Plans 2023-24</li> </ul>

# Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate

## Annual Assessment Business Plan 2024-25



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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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

### Key Directorate Objectives

#### Economy, Growth and Tourism –

- Engage & collaborate with key stakeholders to support economic growth and prosperity across the district.
- Deliver infrastructure improvements across our rural and urban settlements.
- Efficient and effective provision of financial assistance to support our communities, businesses and the delivery of council services.
- Deliver a sustainable tourism approach which supports local communities livelihoods and the environment.
- Protect and enhance the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across the District.

#### Regeneration –

- A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licensing obligations of Council.
- Provide a robust, efficient and responsive development management service within the Council Planning Department.
- Progress the preparation and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP) in accordance with the agreed timeframe to direct future land use across the district.
- Provide a robust, efficient and effective planning enforcement function within the Council Planning Department to address breaches of planning control.



Economy, Growth and Tourism			
Engage & collaborate with key stakeholders to support economic growth and prosperity across the district.	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN		
	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy		
Economy, Growth & Tourism			
ERT1 : Engage & collaborate with key stakeholders to support economic growth and prosperity across the district			
Number of jobs promoted through business start up activity (statutory)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>179</div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div> <div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>
Notes:	<p>1 69 jobs were created between April and September 2024. Go Succeed offers 3 types of plans (Basic, Enterprise Action and Business). This accounts for 41% of the annual target</p> <p>2 137 jobs were created from Oct 24 - Mar 25 (figures to be validated). 205 jobs created for 24/25 based on 0.6 return. (344 Basic, business and enterprise action plans)</p>		
Number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div> <div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>
Notes:	<p>1 Between April and September 2024 there were 8 social enterprises engaged with 8 new social enterprise jobs created. 69 new jobs were created through Business Start Up Activity with 179 Businesses supported to progress growth and scaling ambitions</p> <p>2 8 full time and 8 part time jobs supported via NMDSE (24/25 total). 205 jobs created via Go Succeed E&amp;F. 219 businesses received mentoring (217 mentoring Grow - 2 scaling)</p>		

Amount of investment secured by the Council		<div>Target</div> <div>Actual</div>	<div>Yes</div> <div>Yes</div>	<div>Yes</div> <div>Yes</div>
	<div>Notes:</div> <div>1 Council secured £102,650 from DfE for Multiply, LMP LoD received in August for £522,963.25 application submitted to DfC for Kileel River £22,900, application submitted to UKSPF £942,457.00. Application submitted to DfC for £28850 for Chalmers academy</div> <div>2 Council in partnership with UU applied to SEUPB for PEACEPLUS funding £700k over 4 years (CMAP). Grant was awarded to UU in March. Council secured £2.59 million from DfC for Church Street &amp; DeCourcy Public Realm. LMP secured an additional £7,525.00 to assist with transport for the Careers Fairs along. Council secured £23,500 from DfE for Childcare Academy. Council secured DfF to the value of £26,000. LEPs were announced in January 2025, Council will receive £4.5m in funding.</div>		<div>Yes</div> <div>Yes</div>	<div>Yes</div> <div>Yes</div>
Implementation of Go Succeed – entrepreneurial support service (community outreach, diagnostic, mentoring, masterclasses, grants, peer to peer networks). (CWB)		<div>Target</div> <div>Progress</div>	<div>Amber</div>	<div>Green</div>
	<div>Notes:</div> <div>1 Direct Contract award issued to SENTINUS via Community Outreach for Go Succeed. Masterclasses and workshops continue either in person and online. Council has engaged with Full Circle to assist with the administration of grants</div> <div>2 Council hosted in person Masterclasses and networking events in Retail, Craft and Construction. Additional support for the Construction and Tourism/Hospitality sectors was provided via mentoring. Enterprise Week was delivered across the district. Engagement with Newry Women's Business Group. Sentinel Digital Makers Programme concluded on 21st March 2025 with 5 post primary schools piloting an app for development. A Peer to Peer support network was delivered with Savour Mourne.</div>		<div>Amber</div>	<div>Green</div>
Develop an engagement stakeholder forum to strengthen, support and build resilience communication with the private sector (CPP)		<div>Target</div> <div>Progress</div>	<div>Amber</div>	<div>Green</div>
	<div>Notes:</div> <div>1 Report presented to ERT in September to establish a group.</div> <div>2 Local Economic Partnership was established on 27th January 2025. Members include: DfE, Invest NI business rep groups, CPP groups and third level education. Two meetings have been held.</div>		<div>Amber</div>	<div>Green</div>

Implementation of LMP 24/25 action plan to improve employability and skills via engagement with business and education (subject to funding) (CWB) (CPP)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>
<div>Notes</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>NMD LMP received funding for operational spend on 28 August and have since commenced operational delivery to include Enterprise Pathway Programme, Transport Employability Academy, Employer Engagement Events, Upskilling for Growth Programmes and Employment Pathway event. Remaining initiatives as outline in 24/25 Action Plan will be delivered over the course of 24/25 Q3 and Q4, in addition to Q1 of 25/26. Engagement with businesses, education and training providers and key stakeholders has continued since Q1 24/25.</div><div>2</div><div>NMD LMP continued with the delivery of the Enterprise Pathway Programme, Transport Employability Academy, and Upskilling for Growth Programmes in Q3 and Q4, along with additional delivery to include a major Skills Conference focusing on the workforce challenges and opportunities within the NMDIC area, Classroom Assistant Employability Academy, Childminding Employability Academy, Digital Skills Academy, Childcare Employability Academy, and Warehousing and Manufacturing Academy. A pre-employment support programme, Get Work Ready was launched and continues to be delivered. Several events were conducted in Q3 And Q4 such as two Careers Fairs for all post primary school students throughout the District, Springboard Takeover Day, Bring IT On – Get Into Tech event, along with sponsorship of SEHC Excellence Awards, namely Apprentice of the Year, and SERC's Big Apprenticeship Event. NMD LMP engaged with Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to conduct a review of the Strategic Assessment to inform the 25/26 Action Plan which also entailed engagement with local businesses, education and training providers and key stakeholders.</div></div>	
Engage with Council partners on the development of business support service/programme post March 2025	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>
<div>Notes</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>Engagement with Belfast City Council and UKSPFF has been positive regarding an extension to Go Succeed post 2025. An outcome is expected in November 2024.</div><div>2</div><div>An application to UKSPFF was submitted on 10 March 2025. Feedback has been positive and a grant award is expected in early April 2025.</div></div>	



Lead the secretariat and work in partnership with all member councils and universities of DBEC to deliver on the strategic aims and actions plans for the corridor. (CWB) (CPP)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div>-1</div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div>-2</div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>NINDOC on behalf of the DBEC Partnership (8 Councils &amp; 2 Universities) provide a key role in progressing actions as per the DBEC Governance Structure organising, servicing, and progressing actions from DBEC Director, CEO, and Political Advisory Group Steering Group meeting. Key activities progress across 3 core themes focusing on Sustainable and Innovation-led growth, Skills Development and Engagement &amp; brand development.</div><div>2</div><div>NINDOC is the administrative lead Council on behalf of the DBEC Partnership (8 Councils &amp; 2 Universities) and continues to provide a key role in progressing actions as per the DBEC Governance Structure, organising, servicing, and progressing actions from the DBEC Director, CEO, and Political Advisory Group Steering Group meeting. Key activities progressed in the last 6 months include the launch of a new DBEC website, the delivery of a major DBEC Summit, launch of a new Investment Proposition for the region, enhanced DBEC brand development (printed and digital media), ongoing engagement with key stakeholder and progression of project development and funding bids.</div></div>		
Support local business development and growth via a range of initiatives including artisan markets, social economy, marketing initiatives, events, international relations and digital engagement. (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div>-1</div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div>-2</div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>Artisan Markets are hosted monthly in Newcastle, Downpatrick and Newry. Make it Local campaign was delivered in Newcastle to coincide with Eats and Beats and Ampen Irish Open. Social Enterprises are supported via NIMEA (SLA). Digital engagement is via adries and Pbook.</div><div>2</div><div>Artisan markets continue in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Warrenpoint supporting local crafters and makers. Social Economy Programme delivered by NIMEA continues. An event was held in conjunction with Go Succeed and SENI in December 2024, the Social Economy Action plan was launched. Staff have received training on SE engagement. A Christmas Make it Local and Two Spring Make it Local campaigns were delivered resulting in engagement with over 30 businesses.</div></div>		

Liaise and work with Invest NI on the implementation of Decarbonisation project (CWB) (SCC)				<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>1</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>2</div>
Notes:				<div>1 Event hosted on 19th June with over 40 stakeholders and businesses represented</div> <div>2 Invest NI liaised with S&amp;E regarding website updates</div>			
Progress Skills, Employability and innovation pillars under BRCD (CWB) (CPP)				<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>1</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>2</div>
Notes:				<div>1 Board meetings continue under BRCD</div> <div>2 Board meetings continue under BRCD</div>			
Development and management of the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund under FFNI across all Councils providing financial assistance for Digital Transformation in micros/small businesses. (CWB) (SCC)				<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>1</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>2</div>
				<div>1 • DTFF is an important programme delivered right across all of Northern Ireland. It has been designed to stimulate Digital Transformation and innovation in our small and micro businesses. These types of businesses generally do not have the capital reserves or resources to start to experiment, prototype and deliver new products or services using new and emerging technologies • DTFF officially launched in November 2023 and to date has delivered three successful calls. The project is due to run until March 2026 with a further 4 calls planned. • To date the project has issued 172 Letters of Offer with an average grant of €15k. The estimated value of all Letters of Offer from Calls 1-3 is approx. £2.5m. • Within the NMDDC area the project has funded approx. 300K to local businesses allowing them to introduce emerging technologies as part of their digital transformational plans. • DTFF complements and aligns with a number of other projects in the Digital and Innovation pillars and is an important step forward in Councils positioning their intent to drive their local economies with an increasing focus on innovation support for our local businesses.</div>			

Notes:	<p>2 Digital Transformation Flexible Fund The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) is a key programme delivered across all of Northern Ireland and is led by Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council. With a capital budget of £7.5 million, the DTFF programme stands out for its unique approach, spanning all City and Growth Deals in the region. It reflects a collaborative ambition between central and local governments to foster digitally-driven innovation that accelerates business growth and regional economic development. Now in its fourth funding call since launching in November 2023, the DTFF has played a crucial role in helping businesses integrate emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, immersive technologies, and big data. As one of the first initiatives under the complementary fund, the programme has already delivered noticeable impacts on the ground. • The programme is currently in its fourth call, with a 66% increase in expressions of interest compared to Call 3. • Three calls have been successfully completed, and Call 4 is underway (as of April 2025). • Since its inception, the programme has: a Received 987 expressions of interest (Calls 1-4). a Invited over 439 eligible businesses to submit full applications. a Received 263 grant applications from eligible businesses. a Issued over 171 Grant Letters of Offer, totalling £2.5 million. a The average grant amount has exceeded expectations, rising from £12.5k to £16.5k. a The project is expected to run until March 2026, with four more calls planned. a In the MDDOC area, the project has issued grant offers of approximately £300k (subject to claims), enabling local businesses to adopt emerging technologies as part of their digital transformation plans. a DTFF complements and aligns with other projects under the Digital and Innovation pillars, marking a significant step in the Council's efforts to drive local economic growth with an increased focus on innovation support for businesses.</p>	Target		Progress	Green	Green	Green	
					100%	100%	100%	
Notes:	<p>Facilitation of Mobile Action plan NI implementation on behalf of 11 NI councils (CWB) (SCC)</p>	<p>1 • In June 2022, DfE, NILGA and OFCOM launched the Mobile Action Plan for Northern Ireland (MAPNI) to break down the barriers to mobile deployment across the Northern Ireland. • FFNI was nominated by Solace to represent all Councils. • FFNI requested that each local authority nominate digital champions to assist mobile operators at a local level following the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy and DSIT guidance. • In Sept 23 following FFNI engagement with each local authority, all Councils have nominated Digital Champions and this subgroup is led and coordinated by FFNI. • This group has met regularly to discuss current barriers to deployment and best practice around infrastructure and regeneration which is a key priority for economic growth across of local authorities and central government. • Under the Mobile Action Plan, FFNI officers within Newry, Mourne and Down currently sit on the Northern Ireland Barrier Busting (NIBBT) Oversight group, the communications subgroup, the planning subgroup and the public assets subgroup which meet regularly with other key stakeholders across central government and the mobile industry. • An elected member's best practice guide and awareness event is currently being planned by the Communications Subgroup and led by NILGA and Mobile UK to inform on the local authority role and importance of connectivity (Advanced Wireless and Fibre).</p>	Target		Progress	Green	Green	Green
					100%	100%	100%	

2 In June 2022, the Department for the Economy (DfE), the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), and OFCOM launched the Mobile Action Plan for Northern Ireland (MAPNI) to address obstacles in mobile deployment across the region. • The Full Future Northern Ireland (FFNI) was nominated by Solara to represent all councils and coordinates nominated Digital Champions from each council. These champions act as single points of contact within their own council to support mobile operators in line with the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy and DSIT guidance. • This subgroup has met regularly to discuss current deployment challenges and share best practices regarding infrastructure and regeneration—critical priorities for economic growth across local authorities and central government. • FFNI has been working collaboratively with DfE, NILGA, and Mobile UK to create a best practice guide and awareness event for elected members, which is expected to be launched in Q2 2026. • This awareness campaign aims to highlight the importance of connectivity (both advanced wireless and fibre) which aligns with the Growth Deal and Capital projects in Newry, Mourne, and Down, as well as throughout Northern Ireland.

Economy, Growth and Tourism				
Deliver infrastructure improvements across our rural and urban settlements		ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN		
		Develop and revitalise our district		
ERT2 : Deliver infrastructure improvements across our rural and urban settlements				
Amount of investment secured by the Council		Target	Progress	
	Notes		Green +1	Green +2
				</



Continue to progress the delivery of Belfast Region City Deal tourism and regeneration projects: • Newry City centre regeneration • Mourne Mountains Gateway Project • Regional Innovation Hub	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
Notes:  1 Council awaits a decision on planning on Theatre and Conference Centre and Civic Centre. Council will progress with an CBC for Regional Innovation Hub. Mourne Mountains Gateway Project pre planning continues along with community/business engagement. 2 Planning Approval for NCOR achieved Programme Board and Project Board continue to meet as per Governance Arrangements FBC Completed and approved by BRCD and Council Ongoing engagement with the Stakeholder group and the design team ICT in place for MMGP, with delivery underway towards stage 2 by March 25. Stakeholder Forum Established Public Engagement events delivered Nov / Dec 2024. Programme Board and Project Board continue to meet as per Governance Arrangements	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
Review and update regeneration plans	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
Notes:  1 Officers review masterplans bi annually. Engagement will continue inline with LEP development and implementation. 2 Officers met in Oct/Nov to review and update Masterplans. Council liaising with OTC regarding future workshops. LEP launched and the group are in the process of identifying projects	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>



Notes:	<p>2. DfC &amp; Council • PSNI Site – A multi-disciplinary team have been established to oversee the design brief which is due published by September 2025. Following this process, it is anticipated that a developer will be appointed early 2026. • No. 39 Irish Street – The building has been demolished in line with HED regulations as it is a listed building. There is several old buildings which will now be looked at once the vegetation has been removed. The site will be included in the overall project of the PSNI site. • Skate and Pump Park due to be completed in May 2025. • Lynn Doyle entrance upgrade work has commenced and will be completed in approximately 8 weeks. The work consists of new planters, seating area, the grounds are being resurfaced, street lighting. • Church Street &amp; De Courcy Place Public Realm scheme, LeO has been received from Dept of Communities and NMDC have also approved their funding contribution. Planning Permission has been granted and pre works by the utility providers has commenced before the scheme go live at the later end of 2025. • DRWG Committee continue to meet monthly to working on the priorities identified within the Downpatrick Living High Street Framework and Tracker. A resource has been put in place to assist with moving these projects forward. DRWG are planning an public meeting on the 28 April @ 5.30pm in the Art Centre to brief the public on the progress of current projects. UKSPF • St Patrick's Avenue, Street Character Restoration - Through UKSPF funding a consultant has been appointed to complete a concept feasibility Study to RIBA stage 0-2. This process is completed (31 March) and the next steps is to secure funding to move to the next stage. Business owners have been instrumental in sharing their ideas for shaping the design future of the street. • The Grove - This area has also benefited from UKSPF funding and has undergone an extensive transformation. The invasive species and overhanging branches have been removed, the historic trees have been pruned and made safe, graffiti removal, new street furniture installed, street lighting columns and railings re-painted and steps throughout the Grove have been refurbished. Water improvements • DfI are currently resurfacing Market Street, Irish Street and bottom of English Street is currently undergoing a resurfacing scheme by DfI. • The Old Trust building on Market Street - Down Business Centre are working on securing this property - this is still ongoing • DfC funding DfI to upgrade lighting to the value of £25k on English Street</p>
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Complete final phase of the Carlingford Lough Greenway		Target	Progress	
Notes			Green	Green
			Green	Green
		1 Carlingford Lough Greenway Contractors 'AG Wilson Ltd' were the successfully appointed Supplier to deliver the Northern Boardwalk Sections. Following their appointment in March 2024 a Design & Build process was undertaken from April to July 2024. A big aspect of this was NIEA Sign-off being worked through and finally achieved in August 2024. Onsite works are now underway up until early 2025, with key Clearance works having been commenced. On completion a total of 1.1 km of Piled Boardwalk will have been installed, a total of 1.7 km of Northern Greenway created and the overall Carlingford Lough Greenway from Newry to Carlingford will have been completed providing an overall 20 km of Active Travel Greenway.		
		2 Carlingford Lough Greenway Contractors 'AG Wilson Ltd' were the successfully appointed Supplier to deliver the Northern Boardwalk Sections. Following their appointment in March 2024 a Design & Build process was undertaken from April to August 2024. A big aspect of this was NIEA Sign-off being worked through and finally achieved in August 2024. Onsite works got underway in September 2025, with vegetation clearance. Thereafter, all other elements of the programme, where then able to be undertaken over the latter part of 2024 and into early 2025. Key Activities included installation of Metal Piling, fabrication of new Steel Boardwalk, erection of Timber Fencing along with other Planting and VRS (Vehicle Restraint System) & Bollard installation works. On completion by early summer 2025, 1.1 km of Piled Boardwalk will have been installed, creating a total of 1.7 km of Northern Greenway (Between Victoria Lock and the Borden)Excluding 600m of unbound gravel pathway was completed 12 months before) adding to the overall Carlingford Lough Greenway from Newry to Carlingford that will have been completed providing some 20 km of Active Travel Greenway.		

Economy, Growth and Tourism				
Efficient and effective provision of financial assistance to support our communities, businesses and the delivery of council services	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Empower communities to play an active part in civic life			
ERT 3 : Efficient and effective provision of financial assistance to support our communities, businesses and the delivery of council services				
Number of capacity building programmes delivered to community and businesses	Target	Progress	Green +2	Green +2
	Notes: 1 127 attendees across 4 workshops 2 4 Capacity Building workshops delivered Jan - Feb 2025, with 145 attendees.			
The delivery of internal and external funding programme - DTFF (CWB) (CPP) (SCC)	Target	Progress	Green +1	Green +2

The delivery of internal and external funding programme - DTFF (CWB) (CPP) (SCC)		Target	Progress	
			Green -- 1	Green -- 2
Notes		<p><b>1</b> • DTFF is an important programme delivered right across all of Northern Ireland. It has been designed to stimulate Digital Transformation and innovation in our small and micro businesses. These types of businesses generally do not have the capital reserves or resources to start to experiment, prototype and deliver new products or services using new and emerging technologies. • DTFF officially launched in November 2023 and to date has delivered three successful calls. The project is due to run until March 2026 with a further 4 calls planned. • To date the project has issued 172 Letters of Offer with an average grant of £15k. The estimated value of all Letters of Offer from Calls 1-3 is approx. £2.5m. • Within the MMDDC area the project has funded approx. 300K to local businesses allowing them to introduce emerging technologies as part of their digital transformation plans. • DTFF complements and aligns with a number of other projects in the Digital and Innovation pillars and is an important step forward in Councils positioning their intent to drive their local economies with an increasing focus on innovation support for our local businesses.</p> <p><b>2</b> • The programme is currently in its fourth call, with a 66% increase in expressions of interest compared to Call 3. • Three calls have been successfully completed, and Call 4 is underway (as of April 2025). • Since its inception, the programme has: o Received 987 expressions of interest (Calls 1-4). o Invited over 439 eligible businesses to submit full applications. o Received 283 grant applications from eligible businesses o Issued over 171 Grant Letters of Offer, totalling £2.5 million. o The average grant amount has exceeded expectations, rising from £12.5k to £16.5k. o The project is expected to run until March 2026, with four more calls planned. o In the MMDDC area, the project has issued grant offers of approximately £300k (subject to claims), enabling local businesses to adopt emerging technologies as part of their digital transformation plans. o DTFF complements and aligns with other projects under the Digital and Innovation pillars, marking a significant step in the Council's efforts to drive local economic growth with an increased focus on innovation support for businesses.</p>		

The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Financial Assistance (FA)		<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
	Notes	<div>1 All calls for financial assistance completed through rates External funding calls continuing.</div> <div>2 578 applications were submitted and 414 applications received a Letter of Offer for 24/25.</div>					
The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Service Level Agreements		<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
	Notes	<div>1 NMDDC issued SLAs to NMEA to deliver Innovate Accelerate and Social Enterprise to support local businesses and Social Enterprises. NMDDC issued SLA to Downpatrick Community Collective to deliver 3 artisan markets.</div> <div>2 SLA was issued to NMEA to deliver Enterprise Week 2024.</div>					
The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Facility Management Agreements		<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
	Notes	<div>1 all issued</div> <div>2 All FMA underway as per SLA agreements</div>					
The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Tourism Accommodation		<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Amber</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
	Notes	<div>1 Ongoing subsidy control approvals being sought</div> <div>2 Subsidy Control approved underway. Draft documents in placed with scheme criteria launched on 31 March 2025</div>					
The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Flood Funding Schemes (Enhanced & Hardship Schemes)		<div>Target</div>	<div>Progress</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Amber</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Target</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
	Notes	<div>1 Letters of offer issued and claims ongoing</div> <div>2 All Letters of Offer issued and claims being processed in line with DfE requirements</div>					

The delivery of internal and external funding programme - Grade A Office Accommodation	Target	Progress	Target	Progress
			Amber +1	Green +2
Review of FA and SLA's including review of processes and procedures. (CWB)	Notes:	1 Ongoing subsidy control approvals being sought 2 Subsidy Control approved in place. Draft documents in placed with scheme criteria launched on 31 March 2025		
		Target	Progress	Target
			Amber +1	Green +2
Capacity building within community and business sectors. (CWB) (CPP)	Notes:	1 FA Review completed and results to be presented 2 New FA criteria applied to funding calls opened in Q4 24/25 (for 25/26 financial period)		
		Target	Progress	Target
			Green +1	Green +2
Implementation of the Local Co-designed Peace Plus Action Plan. (CWB) (CPP) (SCC)	Notes:	1 Workshops on FA and Flood delivered 2 Workshops on FA and Flood delivered		
		Target	Progress	Target
			Amber +1	Green +2
	Notes:	1 Action plan approved by SEUJRB 2 Action Plan approved and LoO now in place		

Economy, Growth and Tourism				
Deliver a sustainable tourism approach which supports local communities and the environment	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment			
ERT4 : Deliver a sustainable tourism approach which supports local communities livelihoods and the environment				
Visitor spend (£)		Target	Progress	Green +1
				Green +2
	Notes	1 The spend for NMD in 2023 was £79,172,950. NISRA has advised due to methodology changing this will be our based 2 Spend figures for Local Authorities for 2024 are not available yet from NISRA		
Volume of overnight stays in the district		Target	Progress	Green +1
				Green +2
	Notes	1 The volume of overnight stays to NMD reported by NISRA in 2023 was 482,861. Due to a change in methodology NISRA have advised 2023 should be the baseline year. 2 No new data available for 2024 yet for Local Authorities		



Visitor satisfaction	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div> <div><div>83%</div><div>83%</div></div> <div><div>83%</div><div>83%</div></div>	<p>1 In response to this feedback Council has put in place a mobile vendors service across sites which includes a new service at Kiltorney to provide tea/coffee in the carpark to address queues in the cafe. A new cafe provision will be in place at Castlewellan Forest park next year with works already underway. Council also has design concepts in development at both Delamont and Kiltorney which includes interpretation and the Castlewellan Forest Park restoration project due to be completed in May 2025 includes interpretation and signage</p> <p>2 The Council has put in place a mobile vendors service across sites which provides an important visitor service. The tender for the new cafe provision at Castlewellan has been drafted. New interpretation has been finalized at Castlewellan Forest Park which will be important in servicing visitor requirements. Plans are underway for a visitor satisfaction survey for 2025</p>
Investment into tourism capital projects	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div> <div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>	<p>1 The Council has an ongoing programme of investment. The Falls Trail was completed in the period with all signage and waymarking in place. Total investment £1.4million. Other projects including Namia and Delamont are preparatory phase with investment of £80,000</p> <p>2 The Council has an ongoing programme of investment. The Falls Trail was formally launched in October - £1.4 Million investment investment in new visitor facilities at Tyrella Beach is well underway which are due to complete by summer 2025 - £600k investment. As part of the UKSPF funding a new accessible beach facility will be opened in 2025 in Partnership with Mae Murray Foundation the equipment has been purchased and will be available for use this year in Tyrella. Castle Park, Newcastle as a legacy of the Irish Open in 2024 has been upgraded with improved parking and improved electrical facilities to enhance the sites capacity to host events. Other projects including Namia and Delamont are preparatory phase with investment of £80,000 OBC Underway for a new visitor experience at Castlewellan Forest Park Design Development underway for a new visitor experience at Camough Lake</p>

Launch & commence delivery of the new Tourism Strategy 2024 - 2029 (CWB) (CPP)					
	Notes		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>
Continue to invest in and deliver major Sustainable Tourism Capital projects that will attract visitors to NI and the district (CWB) (SCC)			<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>
	Notes				

Promote collection of new visitor experiences which focus on outdoor adventure, food and drink and Heritage and Culture.		Target	Green **1	Progress	Green **2
	Notes:	<p>1 The Mourne Mountains &amp; Ring of Gullion region has promoted its food, drink, culture, heritage, and adventure experiences through various initiatives. In April 2024, 70 key stakeholders, tour operators, destination management companies and influencers attended the launch of new outdoor and adventure experiences, with guests sampling at least four activities. This reinforced the region's appeal as a top adventure tourism destination. Digital marketing campaigns targeting the ROI, showcasing food and drink, outdoor, and cultural experiences, alongside a dedicated campaign for the Ardglen Irish Open. In partnership with Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland, 20 familiarisation trips were arranged for travel operators, journalists, and influencers.</p> <p>2 The destination engaged in approximately 14 Tourism Ireland, ITOA, ETOA and Tourism Northern Ireland B2B platforms to promote the destination and its unique experiences. By bringing back leads and making connections with key industry partners, successfully securing bookings for 2026. The Tourism Website (Mourne Mountain &amp; Ring of Gullion) has a featured section on all visitor experiences and delivered a range of social media campaigns to ROI which has seen a 77% increase of ROI visitors to the website. In March 2025 a Hidden Gems Showcase Event was held in Newry Market promoting 55+ experiences within the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark, with various demonstrations and tastier sessions</p>	Target	Amber **1	Green **2
Continue the delivery of Councils Arts, Culture and Heritage strategy		Target	Amber **1	Progress	Green **2
	Notes:	<p>1 The recent filling of a number of key vacant posts in the CAHE team will allow improved delivery of the actions set out in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy</p> <p>2 Successful delivery of Giant Adventures events programme, schools engagement programme at the museums, and comprehensive Arts programme at Down Arts Centre</p>	Target	Amber **1	Green **2

Continue to support the delivery of the new Newry Arts, Theatre and Conference facility and develop options for Operating Model	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>
Notes:  Develop a range of engagement opportunities with the Arts Sector	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div> <div>1 Engagement is ongoing with the Arts sector, with design teams progressing project through Planning stages. 2 Planning Permission obtained for NICCR, initial scoping work commenced on operating model.</div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>
Notes:  Deliver and review the Tourism events programme and maximise opportunities from the Irish Open. (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div> <div>1 The recently secured funding for district wide arts festival will provide an opportunity for engagement with the Arts Sector 2 Engagement with Arts Sector remains underway and something which will be continually developed, as key stakeholders in the redevelopment of the Arts Facilities in Newry City. Engagement with Arts Sector being developed for Arts Festival early - mid 2025.</div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>
Notes:  Deliver and review the Tourism events programme and maximise opportunities from the Irish Open. (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div> <div>1 Successful delivery of the 2024 events programme including the Irish Open fringe events in Newcastle. The review of the tourism events programme was presented to members on 25th October 2024 2 Successful delivery of the 2024 events programme including the Irish Open fringe events in Newcastle. The review of the tourism events programme was presented to members on 25th October 2024</div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Green</div></div>

Review and implementation of NMD Museum forward plans.	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
Notes:  1 The forward plans for the museum will be reviewed and implemented with the appointment of the two new Curators (currently going through the pre-appointment process). 2 Curators in post and implementing museum action plans			
Increase accessibility to museums through engagement programme with community and visitors.	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+3</div></div>
Notes:  1 A vibrant, accessible and busy engagement programme is being delivered in Newry Museum. The Education Officer in Down Museum is currently being recruited and once this is completed, a similar programme will be delivered in Down Museum. 2 A vibrant, accessible and busy engagement programme is being delivered in Newry and Down Museum			

Economy, Growth and Tourism				
Protect and enhance the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across the District	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	ERT5 : Protect and enhance the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across the District			
Visitor spend (£)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
	Notes: 1 The spend for NMD in 2023 was £79,172,950. NISRA has advised due to methodology changing this will be our baseline 2 No new data available for 2024 yet for Local Authorities			
Volume of overnight stays in the district		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>+2</div></div>
	Notes: 1 The volume of overnight stays to NMD reported by NISRA in 2023 was 482,981. Due to a change in methodology NISRA have advised 2023 should be the baseline year. 2 No new data available for 2024 yet for Local Authorities			
Visitor satisfaction		<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>83%</div><div>76%</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>87%</div><div>83%</div><div>+2</div></div>



Visitor satisfaction	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div> <div><div>83%</div><div>76%</div></div> <div><div>83%</div><div>76%</div></div> <div><div>83%</div><div>76%</div></div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>In response to this feedback Council has put in place a mobile vendors service across sites which includes a new service at Kibronney to provide refreshment in the carpark to address queues in the cafe. A new cafe provision will be in place at Castlewellan Forest park next year with works already underway. Council also has design concepts in development at both Delamont and Kibronney which includes interpretation and the Castlewellan Forest Park restoration project due to be completed in May 2025 includes interpretation and signage</div></div> <div><div>2</div><div>In response to this feedback Council has put in place a mobile vendors service across sites which includes a new service at Kibronney to provide refreshment in the carpark to address queues in the cafe. A new cafe provision will be in place at Castlewellan Forest park next year with works already underway. Council also has design concepts in development at both Delamont and Kibronney which includes interpretation and the Castlewellan Forest Park restoration project due to be completed in May 2025 includes interpretation and signage</div></div>
Investment into tourism capital projects	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div> <div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div><div>1</div><div>The Council has an ongoing programme of investment. The Falls of Moura Trail completed in the period with all signage and waymarking in place. Total investment £1.4million. Other projects including Naima and Delamont are preparatory phase with investment of £30,000</div></div> <div><div>2</div><div>The Falls of Moura Trail was formally launched in October. Investment in new visitor facilities at Tyrrel's Beach is well underway which are due to complete by May 2025. As part of the UKSPF funding a new accessible beach facility will be opened in 2025 in Partnership with Mae Murray Foundation the equipment has been purchased and will be available for use this year in Tyrrel's. Castle Park, Newcastle as a legacy of the Irish Open in 2024 has been upgraded with improved parking and improved electrical facilities to enhance the sites capacity to host events</div></div>

Management of the Ring of Gullion and Strangford & Lecale AONBs through implementation of NI Environment Fund projects focusing on 1) Nature and Climate Recovery: Building Ecological and Climate Resilience, Landscape, water, habitats, species and earth science. 2) Connecting People with the Environment: Connecting with the natural environment, understanding it and taking action to have a positive effect on it (SCC)	Notes:	<table><tr><td>Target</td><td>Green</td><td>Green</td></tr><tr><td>Progress</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr></table>	Target	Green	Green	Progress	1	2
Target	Green	Green						
Progress	1	2						
Development and implementation of the Geo Park plan Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme (CPP) (SCC)	Notes:	<table><tr><td>Target</td><td>Green</td><td>Green</td></tr><tr><td>Progress</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr></table>	Target	Green	Green	Progress	1	2
Target	Green	Green						
Progress	1	2						

Identifying opportunities, collaborating and developing funding applications aligned to Council corporate priorities (SCC)	<div>Target</div> <div>Progress</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div>1 We have identified funding opportunities aligned with Council priorities, including submitting applications to Peace Plus 5.1 and 5.2 for a prelands project in Gullion and Mourne, and a coastal marine project. We also secured 100% funding for trail development and maintenance along the Lecale Way.</div> <div>2 We are actively identifying and developing funding opportunities aligned with Council corporate priorities, with recent successes including the approval of our 5.2 Peace Plus application and EOLs for both Mourne Gullion and Strangford &amp; Lecale Landscape Connections. We are currently awaiting a decision on our 5.1 Peace Plus application.</div>		
Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme (SCC)	<div>Target</div> <div>Progress</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+1</div>	<div>Green</div> <div>+2</div>
<div>Notes:</div>	<div>1 We continue to support the Landscape Partnership legacy programme in line the ten year Legacy Plan (Lunasa Festival and Partners Projects)</div> <div>2 Gapsark management and permission remain ongoing, with officers attending key meetings and supporting the Landscape Partnership legacy programme, including the Lunasa Festival and partner projects.</div>		

Regeneration				
A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licensing obligations of Council	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Deliver sustainable services			
ERT6 : A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licensing obligations of Council				
Maintain the percentage time for processing Domestic BC applications within 21 days to 82%	Target	82%	82%	82%
	Actual	87%	91%	91%
Maintain the percentage time for processing Commercial BC applications within 35 days to 82%	Target	82%	84%	82%
	Actual	84%	85%	85%
Maintain the percentage time for processing all application returns within 14 days to 88%	Target	88%	93%	88%
	Actual	93%	96%	96%
Increase number of online applications by a further 5%	Target	5%	5%	5%
	Actual	50%	28%	28%
Maintain the processing times of BC applications. (SCC)	Target		Green	Green
	Progress		Green	Green
Engage with regional partners and Department for Infrastructure in relation to regulations to ensure continued alignment to emerging requirements of sustainability. (SCC)	Target		Green	Green
	Progress		Green	Green
Notes:	1 Ongoing engagement with Department via BCNI 2 Ongoing engagement with Department via BCNI			

Engage with partners internal and external to ensure an efficient and effective licencing department.	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-1</div> <div>-2</div>
Notes:  1 Effective and efficient Licensing service being delivered, with exception of backlog in processing of Dual Language Nameplate applications due to historical staff resourcing difficulties. 2 Effective and efficient Licensing service being delivered, with exception of backlog in processing of Dual Language Nameplate applications due to historical staff resourcing difficulties.		
Implement public realm schemes in Warrenpoint, Downpatrick, Saintfield, Castlewelfan, Bessbrook and Rostrevor (SCC)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div></div> <div>-1</div> <div>-2</div>
Notes:  1 schemes completed, final defects to be completed after 1 year 2 All schemes progressing as per plan		
Complete Cross Border Greenway (SCC)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-1</div> <div>-2</div>
Notes:  1 scheme progressing as per plan 2 Scheme to be completed June 2025 and launched		



Regeneration				
Provide a robust, efficient and responsive development management service within the Council Planning Department	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Deliver sustainable services			
ERT7 : Provide a robust, efficient and responsive development management service within the Council Planning Department				
Average processing time for local planning applications of 15 weeks		<div><div>Target</div><div>15</div></div>	<div><div>Actual</div><div>43.1</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>15</div><div>50</div><div>+2</div></div>
Notes:	<div><div>1</div> During Q1 2024-25, the average processing time for local planning applications was 43.1 weeks which is above the regional average of 19.0 weeks. When compared to Q1 2023-24, this represents an increase of 14.5 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.</div> <div><div>2</div> Increased number of applications being processed with majority of applications out of target at time of allocation due to resource challenges that remain on going</div>			
Average processing time for major planning applications of 30 weeks		<div><div>Target</div><div>30</div></div>	<div><div>Actual</div><div>118.5</div><div>+1</div></div>	<div><div>30</div><div>21.7</div></div>
Notes:	<div><div>1</div> During Q1 2024-25, the average processing time for major planning applications was 118.5 weeks which is above the regional average of 30.6 weeks. When compared to Q1 2023-24 however, this represents a decrease of 364.5 weeks for Newry, Mourne and Down.</div>			



Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for more than 12 months to 150		<div>Target</div> <div>150</div> <div>Actual</div> <div>397</div> <div>+ 1</div> <div>150</div> <div>437</div> <div>- 2</div>
Notes:  1 As at 30 June 2024, Newry, Mourne and Down had 397 planning applications in the system for 12 months or more. This represents an increase of 45 applications when compared to March 2024 and 157 applications when compared to 30 June 2023. A reduction of 247 applications is required to achieve the annual target. 2 number of application received remains high despite backlog of applications		
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months to 700		<div>Target</div> <div>700</div> <div>Actual</div> <div>1108</div> <div>+ 1</div> <div>700</div> <div>1092</div> <div>- 2</div>
Notes:  1 As at 30 June 2024, Newry, Mourne and Down had 1,108 planning applications in the system for 12 months or less. This represents a decrease of 46 applications when compared to 31 March 2024 and an increase of 84 applications when compared to 30 June 2023. A reduction of 408 applications is required to achieve the annual target. 2 ongoing efforts to retain staff levels required to address processing times		
Continual review of service to ensure statutory targets are achieved.		<div>Target</div> <div></div> <div>Progress</div> <div></div> <div>Amber</div> <div>+ 1</div> <div></div> <div>Amber</div> <div>- 2</div>
Notes:  1 Reports ongoing to SMT and SPR around service review etc. 2 ongoing review of targets with mentoring plan in operation to assist staff deal with challenges of high caseloads		

Engagement with stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to development management service (CPP)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-1</div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-2</div>
Notes:  1 ongoing, workshop planned Q4 2 workshops with agents completed around validation checklists with further plans in place for 25/26 Engagement with OI , PAC and Planning partners remains ongoing with PIP currently being reviewed.			
Capacity building across the sector to better understand the challenges within the planning service and role of consultees. (CPP)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-1</div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>Amber</div></div> <div>-3</div>
Notes:  1 ongoing work with agents and applicants etc 2 ongoing work with agents via workshops etc			

Regeneration				
Progress the preparation and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP) in accordance with the agreed timeframe to direct future land use across the district	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Deliver sustainable services			
ERT8 : Progress the preparation and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP) in accordance with the agreed timeframe to direct future land use across the district.				
Progress against agreed timetable:		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div><div>-1</div></div>	
Notes:	1 Draft plan agreed by Council. Launch planned for June 2025 and public consultation there after as per timetable agreed by Council and DfI			
Engage with key stakeholders to ensure the LDP is fully reflective of local development requirements and aligns to planning policy (CPP) (SCC)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div><div>-1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div><div>-2</div></div>
Notes:	1 ongoing engagement and members workshops 2 ongoing engagement with stakeholders and members, public consultation commences summer 2025 on draft plan strategy			
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Councils key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CPP)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div><div>-1</div></div>	<div><div>Green</div><div>Green</div><div>-1</div></div>
Notes:	1 ongoing, relevant departments engaged in draft plan strategy development			

Regeneration				
Provide a robust, efficient and effective planning enforcement function within the Council planning department to address breaches of planning control	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Deliver sustainable services			
ERT9 : Provide a robust, efficient and effective planning enforcement function within the Council planning department to address breaches of planning control.				
70% of planning enforcement cases are processed within 39 weeks		<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>70%</div><div>40.8%</div></div>	<div><div>70%</div><div>45%</div></div>
Reduce the number of enforcement cases in the system for more than 12 months to 450		<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>450</div><div>598</div></div>	<div><div>450</div><div>593</div><div>+ 1</div></div>
	Notes:	1 significant resourcing challenge with enforcement team over past 6 months - recruitment ongoing		
Delivery against the statutory targets (SCC)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Red</div><div>+ 1</div></div>	<div><div>Red</div><div></div></div>
	Notes:	1 Statutory targets not met		
Engage with key stakeholders around regulations and the impact of noncompliance on planning policy (CPP)		<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+ 1</div></div>	<div><div>Amber</div><div>+ 2</div></div>
	Notes:	1 ongoing engagement 2 engagement ongoing, training also planned with staff around conditions on planning applications and implications for enforcement		

# Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Directorate

## Annual Business Plan 2025-26



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

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## 1.0 Introduction

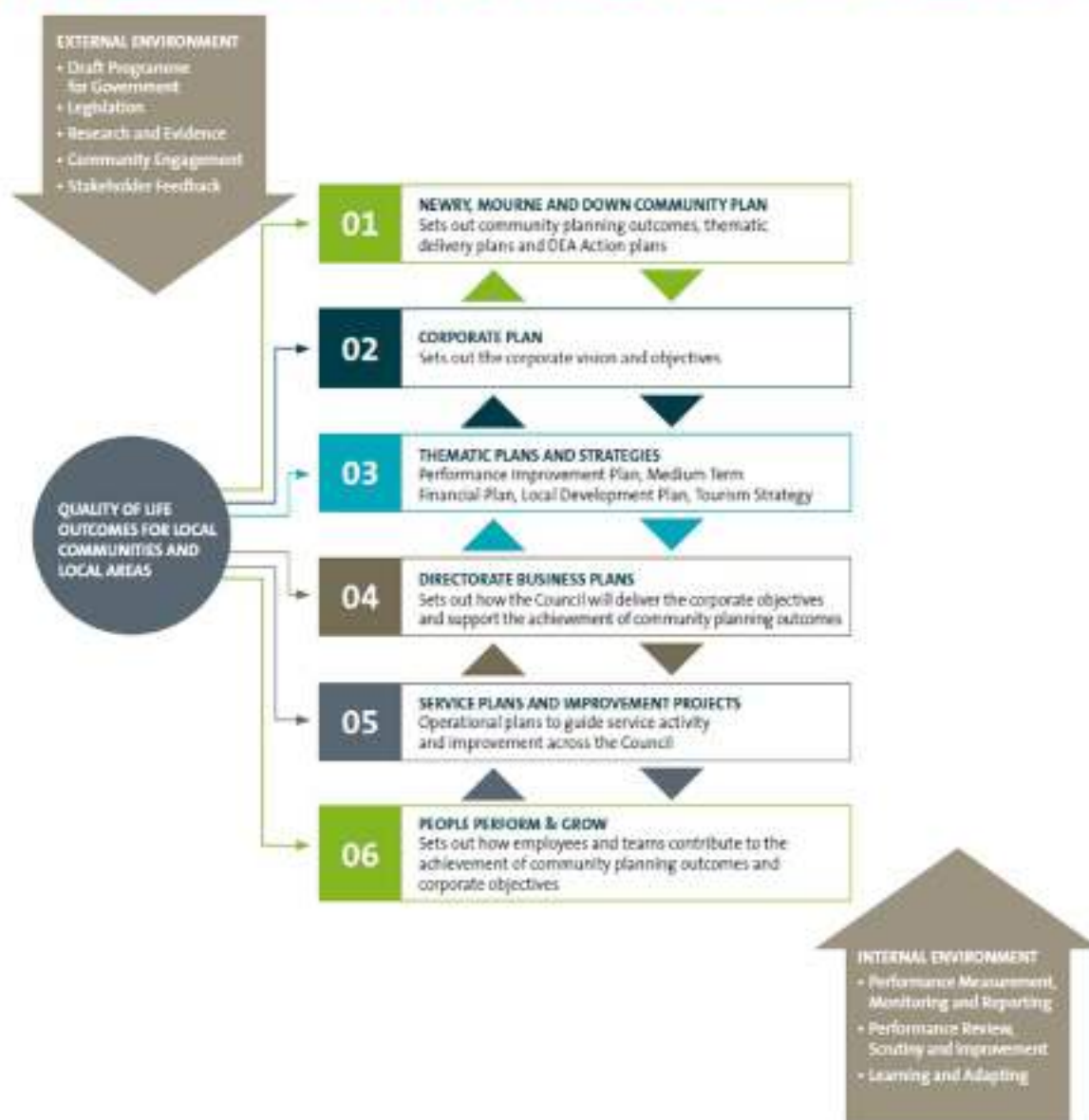
1.1 The Economy, Regeneration and Tourism (ERT) Directorate is responsible for the following key functions of Council:

- **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.

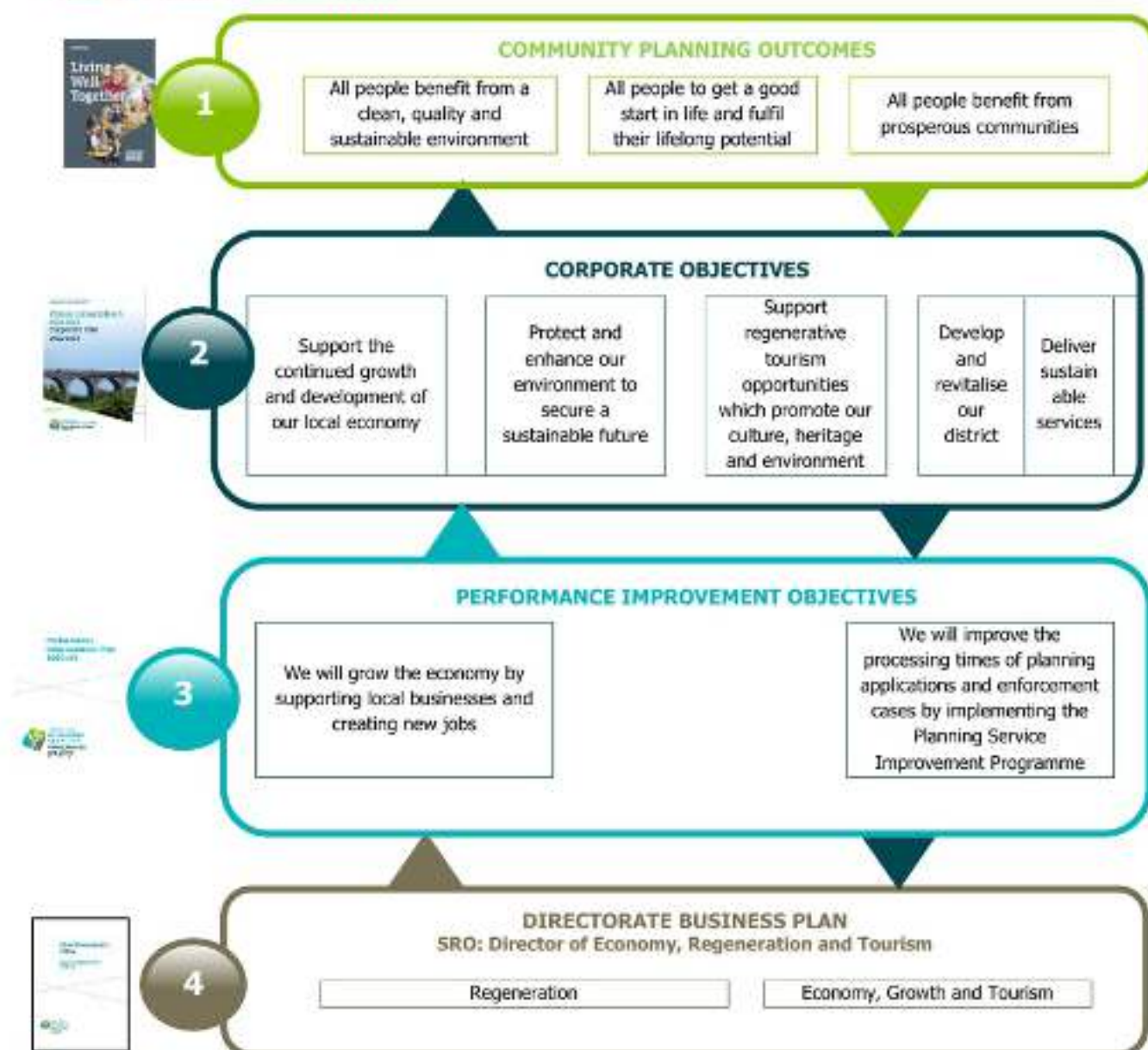
**Figure 1: Business Planning and Performance Management Framework**



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 continues 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 2023



## 6.0 Directorate Objectives and Supporting Actions

### Key Office Actions

#### **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)

Economy, Growth and Tourism	
To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN Support the continued growth and development of our local economy
ERT1 : To support opportunities for sustainable and prosperous economic growth across the district.	
Jobs promoted through business start-up activity (statutory)	<div>Target173</div> <div>Actual--</div>
Number of existing businesses supported on their growth journey	<div>Target80</div> <div>Actual--</div>
Number of new start businesses supported on their start up journey	<div>Target120</div> <div>Actual--</div>
Delivery of 2025 – 2030 Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy	<div>Target</div> <div>Progress--</div>
Advance opportunities from Councils strategic location on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (CWB)	<div>Target</div> <div>Progress--</div>
Deliver against the ambitions and maximise the opportunities from investments arising from Belfast Region City Deal (CWB)	<div>Target</div> <div>Progress--</div>

Collaborate with key stakeholders on the advancement and delivery of opportunities that stimulate economic growth for the district. (CPP) (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
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)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Create opportunities to develop awareness of the districts diverse business base, product & service offering and successful entrepreneurs	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
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	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Secure external investment, where appropriate, to support delivery of actions under this objective	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>

Economy, Growth and Tourism				
To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, business and the environment	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Support regenerative tourism opportunities which promote our culture, heritage and environment Develop and revitalise our district			
ERT2 : To progress tourism, culture and heritage which delivers for local communities, businesses and the environment				
Level of Visitor spend (NISRA) (£)	Target			
	Actual	—		—
Number of overnight stays (NISRA)	Target			
	Actual	—		—
Development of visitor experiences which focus on outdoor adventure, food and drink, and heritage and culture.	Target			
	Progress	—		—
Progress investments in major tourism projects that will develop the district as an international visitor destination	Target			
	Progress	—		—
Collaborate with key stakeholders to progress sustainable active travel projects that promote accessibility to facilities and attractions across the district	Target			
	Progress	—		—

Investment in assets that will develop the tourism, cultural and heritage offering across the district	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Delivery and development of a tourism events and festival programme that promotes and enhances the arts, culture and heritage offering across the district	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Development and promotion of the district's museums offering that will engage schools, local communities and visitors to the district	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Development and promotion of a district wide arts programme that will engage schools, local communities, the arts sector and visitors to the district	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>



Economy, Growth and Tourism		
To deliver regeneration investments in infrastructure, tourism & cultural assets, that will revitalise the district as a place to live, work and invest	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN	
	Support the continued growth and development of our local economy	
	Develop and revitalise our district	
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	<div></div>
Collaborate with key stakeholders in order to progress delivery against the Downpatrick Regeneration Living High Streets Toolkit (CPP) (CWB)	Target	
	Progress	<div></div>
Progress implementation of Church Street and De-Courcy Place capital investment programme	Target	
	Progress	<div></div>
Prioritise and advance key regeneration projects identified in master plans and strategies, and ensure funding opportunities are maximised	Target	
	Progress	<div></div>
Implementation of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Regeneration and Transformation theme (CPP) (CWB)	Target	
	Progress	<div></div>



Sustainable investment in the protection and enhancement of Council's AONB's through implementation of NI Environment Funded action plan (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Progress the implementation of the Geo Park Action plan and continued management and investment in Council's geo park assets (CWB)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Continued stewardship of Landscape partnership legacy programme	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
To secure external investment where appropriate to support delivery of actions under this objective	<div><div>Target</div><div>Progress</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>

Economy, Growth and Tourism			
To facilitate opportunities that will empower and enable communities to deliver against Councils key thematic areas.	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN		
	Empower communities to play an active part in civic life		
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	Target	<div></div>	<div></div>
	Progress	<div></div>	<div></div>
Support Capacity building across community and business sectors in the application of financial assistance. (CWB)	Target	<div></div>	<div></div>
	Progress	<div></div>	<div></div>
Progress the implementation of the Local Co-designed Peace Plus Action Plans. (CPP) (CWB)	Target	<div></div>	<div></div>
	Progress	<div></div>	<div></div>

Regeneration	
A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and licencing obligations of Council.	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN
	Develop and revitalise our district
	Delivery of sustainable professional services.
	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future
ERT5 : A statutory duty to apply the Building Regulations and Licensing obligations of Council.	
Maintain processing times within statutory targets.	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Progress</div></div>
Engage with regional partners in relation to regulations to ensure continued alignment with emerging requirements (CWB)	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Progress</div></div>
Delivery of licensing functions to support local communities and businesses	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Progress</div></div>
Maintain percentage of time for processing domestic building control application within 21 days to 80%	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Actual</div></div> <div>80%</div>
Maintain percentage of time for processing commercial building control application within 35 days to 80%	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Actual</div></div> <div>80%</div>
Maintain percentage of time for processing all application returns within 14 days to 85%	<div><div></div><div>Target</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Actual</div></div> <div>85%</div>

Regeneration				
A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN			
	Develop and revitalise our district			
	Delivery of sustainable professional services.			
	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future			
ERT6 : A statutory duty to apply the Planning Act / Development Management Regulations and enforcement				
Improvement to processing times to achieve statutory targets.	Target			
	Progress			
Engagement with key stakeholders and partners to develop a collaborative approach to planning improvements (CWB)	Target			
	Progress			
Continued capacity building and mentoring within the planning function (CWB)	Target			
	Progress			
Introduction of validation checklists	Target	Introduction by		
	Progress			
Average processing time for local planning applications of 15 weeks	Target	15		15
	Actual			
Average processing time for major planning applications of 30 weeks	Target	30		30
	Actual			

70% of planning enforcement cases are processing within 39 weeks	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>70%</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>70%</div><div>—</div></div>
Average processing time for validating planning applications of 6 weeks	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>6</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>6</div><div>—</div></div>
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for more than 12 months to 170	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>170</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>170</div><div>—</div></div>
Reduce the number of planning applications in the system for less than 12 months to 870	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>870</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>870</div><div>—</div></div>
Reduce the number of enforcement cases in the system for more than 12 months to 580 (subject to the service operating at full complement)	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>580</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>580</div><div>—</div></div>
To determine 110 applications per month	<div><div>Target</div><div>Actual</div></div>	<div><div>600</div><div>—</div></div>	<div><div>1320</div><div>—</div></div>

Regeneration			
Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP)	ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PLAN		
	Develop and revitalise our district		
	Delivery of sustainable professional services.		
	Protect and enhance our environment to secure a sustainable future		
ERT7 : Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP)			
Prepare and delivery of the Local Development Plan in accordance with the agreed timeframe	Target		
	Progress		
Ensure the LDP is reflective of Council's key strategic priorities as reflected in key strategies (CWB)	Target		
	Progress		



## 7.0 Performance

### ERT Plans and Strategies

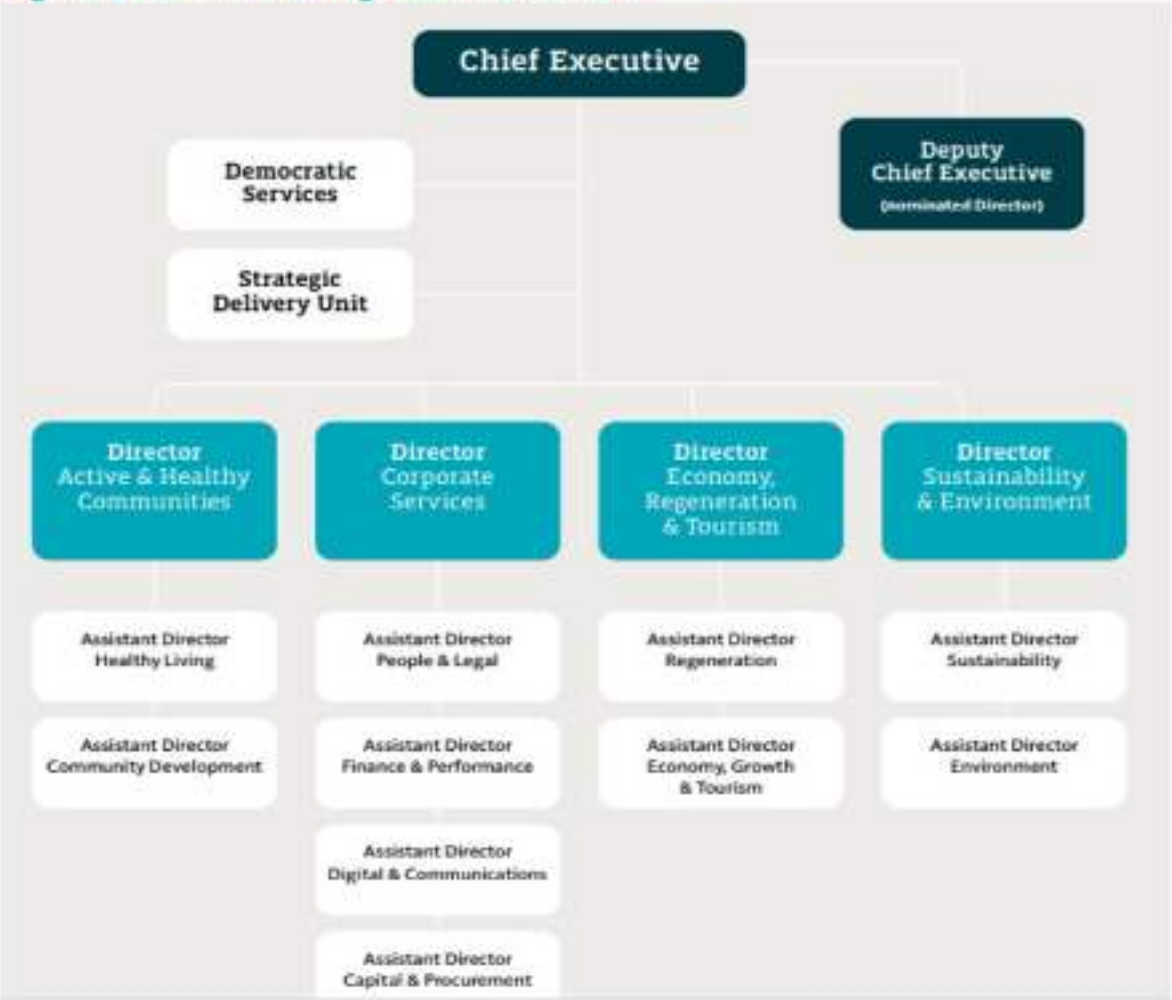
7.1 The ERT Directorate is responsible for leading the development, implementation and review of the following plans and strategies, which influence the work of the Office and Council:

- 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 (2025-26)	
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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0330 137 4036 (Planning)  
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**Oifig Dhún Pádraig**  
**Downpatrick Office**  
Downshire Civic Centre  
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road

Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Communications and Marketing Partner
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Conor Mallon Director of ERT   Chair of DBEC Director Steering Group
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Elaine McAlinden Partnership Manager DBEC

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To seek approval for the attached Business Case recommending the procurement of a Communications and Engagement Partner to support brand development and event management for the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC).</p> <p><u>Background</u> The DBEC Partnership is a local government collaboration comprising eight councils and two universities along the Dublin–Belfast Economic Corridor. Formally established in 2018, the Partnership was created to unlock the region’s economic potential through joint strategic actions.</p> <p>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is the Lead Council and is responsible for delivering actions through the DBEC governance structure.</p> <p>The vision for the DBEC, as set out in the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan (December 2022), is:  <i>"DBEC to be a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative R&amp;D, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure."</i></p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues:</b>
2.1	<p><b><u>Communications and Engagement</u></b></p> <p>A number of priority actions have been endorsed by the DBEC Governance Structure. A critical action involves enhancing DBEC’s communications, branding, and engagement efforts to build recognition of the Corridor’s strategic value, locally and internationally.</p>



	<p>To progress this, the DBEC Partnership proposes to procure a Communications and Engagement Partner for a period of 3 years who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a comprehensive Communications and Engagement Action Plan to guide DBEC's internal and external messaging.</li> <li>• Design and implement targeted marketing and engagement campaigns to increase brand visibility.</li> <li>• Refine and promote the DBEC Investment Proposition, with a focus on international positioning.</li> <li>• Identify and engage business influencers and alumni to amplify promotional reach.</li> <li>• Support the design and delivery of strategic events to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Promote investment opportunities</li> <li>◦ Showcase high-value business sectors</li> <li>◦ Raise awareness of regional economic strengths</li> <li>◦ Engage graduates, students, and job seekers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Align communications with a wider investment narrative for the island of Ireland.</li> </ul> <p>These activities will contribute to fulfilling the objectives set out in the DBEC Strategy and support Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's corporate aim to:  <i>"Maximise the district's location as a cross-border gateway to Great Britain, Ireland and international markets."</i></p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve the attached business case.</li> <li>• To approve the procurement and appointment of a communications and engagement partner to support DBEC brand development and event delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All DBEC activity, including this procurement, is fully funded through annual contributions from the eight participating DBEC Councils.</li> <li>• Funds are administered and managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as the Lead Council. Refer to Appendix 1 for detail on cost.</li> </ul>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i>



	<p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	<p><b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b></p>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>

	<p>This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph <b>3</b> of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – <b>Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Business Case: DBEC Communications and Engagement Partner</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>
	N/A

## Business Case (Short Form)

£30,000 < £100,000 Expenditure

Project Title:	<b>Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Communications and Engagement partner</b>
Directorate:	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Department
SECTION A	
Tell us about your project:	<p>The <b>Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Partnership</b> is a collaboration between eight local councils and two universities located along the corridor between Dublin and Belfast. Formally established in 2018, the Partnership aims to collectively unlock the region's economic potential.</p> <p>The <b>administrative geography</b> of DBEC reflects the participating councils, while the <b>functional geography</b> is defined by key road and rail infrastructure linking the two cities.</p> <p><b>Participating Councils:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council</li> <li>2. Belfast City Council</li> <li>3. Dublin City Council</li> <li>4. Fingal County Council</li> <li>5. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council</li> <li>6. Louth County Council</li> <li>7. Meath County Council</li> <li>8. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</li> </ol> <p><b>Partner Universities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ulster University</li> <li>2. Dublin City University</li> </ol> <p>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council serves as the <b>lead council</b> and is responsible for progressing actions through the DBEC governance structure.</p> <p>The purpose of the DBEC Partnership is to enhance <b>competitiveness</b> and support <b>sustainable economic growth</b> across the region. A <b>strategy and action plan</b> sets out the Partnership's strategic vision and priorities. Several actions have been approved through this plan, including the development of a clear <b>marketing strategy</b> and active <b>stakeholder engagement</b>. These will be advanced by the lead council on behalf of the Partnership.</p>

<p><b>1. What is the current provision?</b></p> <p><b>2. What is the proposed provision (what options have you considered)?</b></p>	<p><u>Current Provision: Communications and Engagement</u></p> <p>The contract for DBEC's Marketing and Communications Partner concluded on <b>31 March 2025</b>, and there is currently <b>no professional communications or engagement support</b> in place for the Partnership.</p> <p>Recognising the importance of ongoing strategic promotion, the DBEC Directors <b>endorsed the continued need for professional marketing services</b> as a key driver in raising the region's profile and strengthening its place-based identity.</p> <hr/> <p><u>Proposed Provision</u></p> <p>The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Partnership has agreed to procure a <b>Communications and Engagement Partner</b> to support the delivery of key strategic priorities outlined in the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan. This appointment will enhance the Partnership's capacity to build the DBEC brand, strengthen its investment proposition, and engage key stakeholders regionally and internationally.</p> <p><u>Scope of Services</u></p> <p>The appointed partner will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a <b>comprehensive Communications and Engagement Action Plan</b> to guide DBEC's internal and external messaging.</li> <li>• Design and deliver <b>targeted engagement campaigns</b> to raise the visibility and impact of the DBEC brand.</li> <li>• Refine and enhance the <b>DBEC Investment Proposition</b>, with a focus on positioning the region to attract international investment.</li> <li>• Identify and engage <b>key business influencers and prominent alumni</b> to support promotional efforts and expand DBEC's reach.</li> <li>• Support the planning and delivery of <b>strategic events</b> that:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Promote the region's investment potential</li> <li>◦ Showcase priority business sectors</li> <li>◦ Raise awareness of economic opportunities</li> <li>◦ Engage students, graduates, and job seekers to consider the corridor as a place to live and work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contribute to a <b>wider investment message</b> for the region and the island of Ireland.</li> </ul> <p><u>Delivery Options</u></p> <p><b>Option 1: In-House Delivery Using Existing DBEC Resources</b></p> <p><b>Advantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings—only internal staff costs incurred</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to professional marketing and communications expertise</li> <li>• Reduced capacity to deliver high-impact engagement and event activity</li> <li>• Inability to fully meet the strategic objectives of the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan</li> </ul>
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### 3. What is the need and how is it evidenced.

- Weaker development of a compelling investment proposition

#### Option 2: Appoint External Communications and Engagement Partner

##### Advantages:

- Access to specialist marketing and communications expertise
- Strengthened DBEC brand and investment proposition
- Enhanced stakeholder engagement and wider regional and international outreach
- Increased capacity to plan and deliver impactful events and campaigns
- Supports long-term strategic positioning of the Economic Corridor

##### Disadvantage:

- Involves additional financial cost

#### Need

Over the past two years, significant progress has been made in establishing the **Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Partnership** and reaffirming the Corridor's critical role in driving **economic growth, innovation, and cross-border collaboration**.

As the Partnership evolves, **communication approaches must also adapt**—expanding reach to new audiences and stakeholders to ensure the full potential of the Corridor is realised.

#### Importance of Brand Development

Developing the **DBEC brand and profile** is a key strategic action. It is essential to:

- Build recognition of DBEC both **locally and internationally**
- Showcase the region's **strength in fostering successful companies**
- Position the Corridor as a **strategic location for investment**

#### Strategic Alignment

The importance of a dedicated communications and engagement strategy is explicitly outlined in the **DBEC Partnership Action Plan (December 2022)**. The Plan identifies the following short-term priorities:

- Develop a **coherent marketing and communications strategy** with a clear editorial voice
- Actively **engage with stakeholders** across the region
- Create a communications approach that clearly articulates the **benefits of the Economic Corridor**
- Establish and promote **dedicated communication channels** to support ongoing engagement



<p><b>4. Are all statutory approvals in place – please outline?</b></p>	<p><u>Statutory Approvals</u> Not Applicable</p>
<p><b>5. Are there any risks associated with this project – please outline.</b></p>	<p><u>Risks</u></p> <p>Failure to procure and implement a dedicated Communications and Engagement Partner presents several strategic and operational risks for the DBEC Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Delay or failure to develop and launch a DBEC Marketing and Communications Strategy</b>, potentially weakening the continued development of the DBEC brand and investment proposition.</li> <li>• <b>Limited engagement with key stakeholders</b>, including industry, member councils, academia, and businesses, reduces collaborative momentum and alignment.</li> <li>• <b>Reduced visibility and brand recognition</b> for the DBEC region both nationally and internationally, impacting the Corridor's ability to attract investment and talent.</li> <li>• <b>Inconsistent or fragmented messaging</b>, weakening stakeholder confidence and limiting impact.</li> <li>• <b>Missed opportunities to showcase regional strengths</b>, business success stories, and sectoral advantages, particularly to international investors.</li> <li>• <b>Inability to effectively support and promote strategic events</b>, resulting in reduced participation and impact.</li> <li>• <b>Lower graduate and talent attraction</b>, as the corridor may not be perceived as a dynamic place to live and work.</li> <li>• <b>Failure to meet objectives outlined in the DBEC Strategy and Action Plan</b>, resulting in reputational risk and weakened justification for continued investment in the partnership.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Any other relevant information? i.e. drawings, plans, photographs...</b></p> <p><b>You are not limited to one page, please expand where necessary.</b></p> <p><b>All of the above questions must be addressed.</b></p>	<p><u>Other Relevant Information</u></p> <p>The <b>DBEC brand</b> has developed significantly over the past two years.</p> <p>The Partnership now benefits from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong and growing <b>brand recognition</b></li> <li>• A <b>modern website</b> showcasing the region's strengths</li> <li>• Active <b>social media platforms</b></li> <li>• An established <b>e-zine communications platform</b></li> <li>• A <b>comprehensive investment proposition</b> highlighting the Corridor's key sectors and assets</li> </ul> <p>While these assets are now in place, they require <b>ongoing management and development</b> to ensure content remains current,</p>

	relevant, and impactful. Continued effort is needed to <b>grow and strengthen DBEC's marketing and engagement</b> activity to fully promote the region's potential and maintain momentum		
SECTION B			
7. Is your expenditure linked to the Corporate Plan/Community Plan/Directorate Business Plan – please reference the relevant section.	<input type="checkbox"/> Conditions Survey  This expenditure is directly linked to the <b>DBEC Partnership Strategy and Action Plan (December 2022)</b> . It supports the delivery of key actions identified by the Partnership and aligns with the <b>corporate objectives, directorate strategy, and business plan</b> of the <b>lead Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</b> . This alignment ensures that investment in marketing and communications contributes not only to the advancement of the DBEC region but also to the strategic goals of the lead authority.		
8. Has this project been identified as a priority in your Directorate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	
Please provide details:	<p><b>Corporate Alignment</b>                  An objective within <b>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Corporate Plan</b> is to:                  "Maximise the district's location as a cross-border gateway to Great Britain, Ireland and international markets."                  The progression of the <b>DBEC Partnership</b> and delivery of the associated <b>Strategy and Action Plan</b> directly support this objective. By promoting regional collaboration and enhancing the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor's strategic positioning, the Partnership contributes to both economic growth and international connectivity.                  Developing the <b>brand and profile of DBEC</b> is identified as a key action. It is essential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build <b>local and international recognition</b> of DBEC's strengths</li> <li>• Highlight the Corridor's <b>track record in supporting successful businesses</b></li> <li>• Position the region as a <b>strategic investment location</b> within the island of Ireland and beyond</li> </ul> <p>This work is integral to maximising each of the DBEC Council Partners' roles as a cross-border economic gateway and aligning their local initiatives with regional and international growth opportunities.</p>		
9. Preferred Option – Please detail your preferred option and a rational why this	<p><b>Preferred Option</b>  <b>Option 2: Appoint External Communications and Engagement Partner</b>                  Following a review of the existing DBEC Resource Team, it is clear that</p>		



option was selected	<p>the internal capacity is not sufficient to design, develop, and implement a marketing support service of the scale and scope required.</p> <p>Therefore, the preferred option is to <b>procure external consultancy support</b> to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and deliver a comprehensive <b>communications and engagement plan</b></li><li>• Enhance the <b>DBEC brand</b> and <b>investment proposition</b></li><li>• Support <b>strategic event delivery</b></li><li>• Strengthen engagement with stakeholders, businesses, and investors across local, regional, and international levels</li></ul> <p>This approach will ensure delivery against key actions in the <b>DBEC Strategy and Action Plan (2022)</b> and provide the professional expertise needed to maximise the region’s visibility and impact.</p>									
<p>10. Please provide a breakdown of all costs, including running costs (whole life costs).</p> <p>Please provide information on how these costs have been arrived at.</p>	<p><b>Procurement and Budget Overview</b></p> <p><b><u>Account Code / Cost Centre / Project Code (if applicable):</u></b></p> <p><b>2173 – Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)</b></p> <p>The <b>procurement process</b> should be initiated as soon as practically possible to secure a <b>high-calibre Marketing and Communications Partner</b>. The appointed supplier will be responsible for leading the strategic promotion of the DBEC region, enhancing visibility, and supporting engagement with key audiences.</p> <p><b>Approved Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A total budget of <b>£80,000</b> has been approved by the DBEC Directors to support marketing and communications activities.</li><li>• This budget will cover 36 months (<b>September 2025 – August 2028</b>) or until the full allocation is utilised, whichever comes first.</li><li>• A <b>call-off contract</b> may be established to provide flexibility for DBEC to commission additional support as required, particularly for time-sensitive or international opportunities.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Indicative Budget Breakdown by Work Package</u></b></p> <table><tr><th>Work Package</th><th>Estimated Annual Cost</th><th>3-Year Total</th></tr><tr><td><b>1. Communications &amp; Engagement Plan</b> (Strategy, editorial guidance, tone of voice, messaging matrix)</td><td>£6,000</td><td>£18,000</td></tr><tr><td><b>2. Brand Development &amp; Investment Proposition</b></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Work Package	Estimated Annual Cost	3-Year Total	<b>1. Communications &amp; Engagement Plan</b> (Strategy, editorial guidance, tone of voice, messaging matrix)	£6,000	£18,000	<b>2. Brand Development &amp; Investment Proposition</b>		
Work Package	Estimated Annual Cost	3-Year Total								
<b>1. Communications &amp; Engagement Plan</b> (Strategy, editorial guidance, tone of voice, messaging matrix)	£6,000	£18,000								
<b>2. Brand Development &amp; Investment Proposition</b>										

	(Refinement of visual identity, materials, inward investment content) <b>3. Targeted Campaigns &amp; Digital Content Creation</b> (Social media campaigns, video, graphics, web updates) <b>4. Stakeholder Engagement &amp; Influencer Outreach</b> (Business ambassadors, alumni, trade missions support) <b>5. Event Marketing &amp; Promotion</b> (Content creation, media materials, promotional toolkits) <b>6. Monitoring, Reporting &amp; Analytics</b> (Monthly analytics, evaluation reports, audience insight) <b>  Total Estimated Spend     £79,950  </b> <i>Figures are indicative and may be refined through the procurement process.</i>	£5,000 £7,000 £3,000 £4,000 £1,650	£15,000 £21,000 £9,000 £12,000 £4,950
11. Please indicate how this project will be financed.  Please provide details	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal Funding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External Funding	
<b>Funding and Financial Management</b> The <b>Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)</b> is funded through <b>annual contributions from each of the eight Member Councils</b> . These partner contributions form the core budget for delivering DBEC's strategic activities.  All financial transactions are <b>managed by the Lead Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</b> , which provides <b>accounting and financial oversight</b> through its internal finance function. This ensures robust financial governance, transparent reporting, and alignment with local government financial standards.			
Is or will there be any perceived cross-EU Border interest for this requirement/project:		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
There is significant cross-EU border interest in this requirement.			
The <b>Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)</b> spans <b>eight local authorities</b> , covering both <b>Northern Ireland (UK)</b> and <b>Ireland (EU)</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Northern Ireland Councils:</b> Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Belfast City Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</li> </ul>			

- **Ireland Councils:** Dublin City Council; Fingal County Council; Louth County Council; Meath County Council

The Partnership also includes **Dublin City University** (Ireland) and **Ulster University** (Northern Ireland).

The Corridor covers a 100-mile stretch between Dublin and Belfast and is home to over **2 million people**, representing **Ireland's most economically significant region**. It presents a unique opportunity for **cross-border cooperation, shared economic development**, and **international investment promotion**, further reinforcing the need for an effective and coordinated communications and engagement strategy.

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Elaine McAlinden, DBEC Partnership Officer	<b>Date Submitted:</b>	19/5/2025
<b>Validated by</b>	Sign: Damien McConville, DBEC Programme Manager Date: 20/5/2025		
<b>Director Approval:</b>	 Sign: Date: 03.06.2025		
<b>Committee Approval:</b>	ERT Committee Date: 09.06.2025		
<b>Council Approval</b>	Date: 07.07.2025		



<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Geopark Interpretation Master Plan
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Darren Rice AONB and Geopark Manager

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

	For decision	x	For noting only	
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>			
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To consider adoption of the Interpretation Masterplan for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark as the framework for all future interpretation development across the Geopark.</p> <p><u>Background</u> The <i>Forever Mournes</i> partnership appointed Haley Sharpe Design to develop an Interpretation Masterplan for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark (MGS Geopark).</p> <p>The Interpretation Masterplan aims to enhance existing interpretive infrastructure across the Geopark's diverse sites, improving visitor experiences through storytelling, emotional engagement, and accessibility.</p> <p>The strategic framework builds on previous interpretation efforts by consolidating findings from key documents (e.g., <i>Mourne Community Renewal Through Nature</i>, <i>Outline Interpretation Strategy for Mourne</i>, and the initial <i>MGS Interpretation Plan</i>), supplemented with site visits and consultation with key stakeholders and project partners.</p> <p>The Masterplan is currently undergoing an approval process across all partner organisations. If approved by all, it will serve as a shared framework guiding onsite interpretation at partner-managed sites, creating a cohesive, consistent, and compelling interpretive journey for visitors across the entire Geopark destination.</p>			
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>			
2.1	Key findings from the Interpretation Masterplan for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark (MGS Geopark) are:			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inconsistent Interpretation Across Sites:</b> Existing signage and storytelling vary widely in quality, tone, and thematic cohesion across different locations, leading to a disjointed visitor experience.</li> <li>• <b>Accessibility Gaps:</b> Trails and interpretive materials are not consistently accessible to all visitors, limiting inclusivity and missing opportunities to welcome diverse audiences.</li> <li>• <b>Intangible Cultural Heritage Visibility:</b> Local myths, legends, traditions, and intangible cultural heritage are underrepresented across the Geopark, reducing opportunities for deeper emotional engagement and place-based storytelling.</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Coordination:</b> A unified interpretive approach is essential to maintain consistency, but successful implementation across multiple landowners and site managers requires structured collaboration and commitment.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of a Cohesive Interpretive Approach:</b> Interpretation across the Geopark is currently fragmented in style, messaging, and quality. This weakens the potential to reinforce the shared narratives that connect our communities, landscapes, and heritage.</li> <li>• <b>Need to Enhance Visitor Engagement:</b> Visitors increasingly seek authentic, meaningful experiences. Without a strategic interpretive approach, opportunities are missed to foster deeper understanding, emotional connection, and visitor loyalty to the Geopark.</li> <li>• <b>Compliance with UNESCO Global Geopark Standards:</b> Maintaining UNESCO Global Geopark status requires effective interpretation that actively promotes the Geopark's values of conservation, education, and sustainable development.</li> </ul>
	<p>Next Steps are identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phased Implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritise a phased approach to implementation, focusing initially on high-impact, high-visibility sites as identified within the Master Plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>External Funding Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Seek external funding opportunities, where appropriate, to support and enhance the delivery of interpretation projects under the Master Plan, but without creating additional commitments beyond existing development plans.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Integration with Existing Work Programmes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Embed the Master Plan within existing departmental and organisational work programmes, ensuring that all future updates to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>interpretation align with its framework. This approach will avoid additional costs and promote a consistent visitor experience across the Geopark.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and Stakeholder Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collaborate with local communities and tourism businesses to co-create content where required, strengthening local engagement and authenticity.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Phased Replacement and Upgrading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Proceed with the phased replacement and upgrading of existing panels, digital content, and visitor materials in line with current planned delivery schedules.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	To consider adoption of the Interpretation Masterplan for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark as the framework for all future interpretation development across the Geopark.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	<p>The adoption and implementation of the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark Interpretation Master Plan will not incur additional costs beyond those already planned within existing departmental budgets and delivery programmes.</p> <p>The Master Plan is designed to align with NMDDC's existing policies and operational work programmes, ensuring that future interpretation updates are incorporated into routine maintenance, renewal, and capital improvement schedules.</p> <p>Where appropriate, external funding opportunities may be pursued to enhance project delivery; however, this will complement rather than add to existing financial commitments. No new or unplanned budgetary pressures will arise because of adopting the Master Plan.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> NA</p>
6.0	<p><b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b></p>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
	<p>n/a</p>
8.0	<p><b>Background Documents</b></p>
	<p>Available upon request - MGS Geopark Interpretation Masterplan</p>

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	NMD Labour Market Partnership 2025/2026
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Aveen McVeigh Head of Regeneration and Business Development

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To approve the acceptance of Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer (LoO) for Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD) Local Market Partnership (LMP) Skills and Employability activities including administration and operational budget.</li> <li>2. To approve the attached business case for the implementation of NMD LMP Action Plan for 2025/2026.</li> <li>3. On acceptance of the Letter of Offer, approval to proceed with the necessary procurements required for appointment of delivery agents to implement the initiatives outlined in attached appendix documents</li> </ol> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>DfC funds NMD LMP to deliver initiatives that assist those identified as unemployed or economically inactive, into employment or self-employment or closer to employment.</p> <p>NMD LMP has delivered a range of initiatives since 2021/2022, Council provides the administrative support and governance for NMD LMP.</p> <p>Council submitted an Action Plan bid for funding to DfC following a strategic assessment of the District for 2025/2026.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
2.1	<p>To prepare for 2025/2026 NMD LMP funding application process, Council completed the following:</p> <p><u>Strategic assessment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategic assessment was informed through several key steps including:</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A review and analysis of existing data and strategies including statistical analysis on labour market and employability relevant to NMD.</li> <li>- Council engaged with LMP members comprising of a wide range of stakeholders including businesses, education, statutory agencies etc.</li> <li>- A Turning the Curve Exercise was undertaken in relation to the Action Plan Themes and projects, to consider the initiatives in relation to the outcomes to be achieved.</li> </ul> <p><u>Development of Action Plan:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result of the above consultation and engagement process, an Action Plan for the District has been agreed by the partners and submitted to DfC for approval.</li> <li>• DfC have approved the initiatives outlined within the Action Plan for the 2025/2026 period.</li> <li>• Identification of delivery of employability initiatives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ NMD Action Plan for 2025/2026 identifies several themes, aims and key activities which are evidence based and focused on outcomes which improve employability and labour market conditions across the District.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>On approval and acceptance of Letter of Offer, Officers continue to implement the action plan for 2025/2026.</p> <p>Council will need to procure and appoint external delivery agents to implement the range of initiatives outlined in the business case.</p> <p>SLAs are required to deliver the below projects. SLAs will be tailored for each activity/event and will detail key outputs. Delivery agents/individuals will report against delivery, timescales, and cost. including the following SLAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The establishment of an SLA with Newry and Mourne Enterprise/Down Business Centre for implementation of the Enterprise Pathways Programme.</li> <li>• The establishment of SLAs with SRC and SERC to deliver the Employability Academies subject to LMP budget availability and review of other academies to be delivered under the 2025/26 Action Plan.</li> <li>• The establishment of SLAs with SRC and SERC to deliver the Upskilling for Growth programmes to local employers and their employees.</li> <li>• The establishment of an SLA with Newry Chamber of Commerce to facilitate a District wide Conference focusing on Skills and Employability.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To approve the acceptance of Department for Communities Letter of Offer for Newry, Mourne Down Labour Market Partnership, Skills and</li> </ol>

	<p>Employability activities including administration and operational budget as set out in appendix 2.</p> <p>2. To approve the attached business case (appendix 3) for the implementation of Newry, Mourne Down Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2025/2026.</p> <p>3. On acceptance of the Letter of Offer, approval to proceed with the necessary procurements required and appointment of delivery agents to implement the initiatives outlined in attached appendix documents</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	NMD LMP Activity is 100% funded by DfC and reflected in Council's budget for 2025/2026. Refer to Appendix 2.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	<i>Rationale:</i>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p><b>*Appendix 2 and Appendix 3</b> - These items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - <b>Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Summary Action Plan and outputs 2025/2026</p> <p>*Appendix 2 – Budget and procurement</p> <p>*Appendix 3 – NMD LMP Business Case 2025/2026</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>
	N/A

## Appendix 1 – Action plan and associated outputs

<b>Action Plan 2025/2026</b>	
<b>Strategic Priority 1</b>	
<b>LMP Delivery and Development</b>	
1.1 Effective delivery of the LMP	Ensure the delivery of the 2025/2026 Action Plan and respond to new challenges in the labour market.
1.2 Develop Action Plan for 2026/2027	A consultation exercise will be undertaken to update research, identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply, to aid in the scoping of interventions to meet skill gaps, vacancies and recruitment challenges for a future 2026/2027 Action Plan.
<b>Strategic Priority 2</b>	
<b>To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally</b>	
<b>Economic Inactivity Theme</b>	
2.1 Get Work Ready: pre-employment support	Personalised employment pathways programme to support participants into employment, education or training.
2.2 Enterprise Pathway Programme	Specialised mentoring and business support for participants between 'Go Succeed' participation and establishing a trading business which offers either PT or FT self-employment for the business owner
<b>Unemployed Theme</b>	
2.3 Employability Academies	Identify, design and deliver a range of employment academies for skill interventions in sectors and occupations where opportunities for employment is identified with local employers.
2.4 A Place to Work	<p>Build on the 'Place to Work Campaign' which promotes NMD as a good place to work with opportunities for career progression.</p> <p>Promoting improved information on local employers, employment opportunities and career pathways, building on linkages with schools / job seekers and local businesses to promote the District as a leading employment location, creating awareness of key sectors, employment and upskilling opportunities.</p>
<b>Disability Theme</b>	
2.5 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Employer Engagement Workshop	Engage with local SME employers from various sectors to explain to and update on disability employment issues and outline the variety of supports available to them. Provide advice and updates on disability legislation and employment issues enabling people with disabilities to gain employment.



**Appendix 1 – Action plan and associated outputs**

2.6 Diversity Participant Programme	Support unemployed or economically inactive participants with a disability closer to employment by identifying training needs and potential suitable employers. Participants to receive a dedicated personalized plan, one-to-one mentoring, to include CV development and identify potential placement opportunities.
<b>Skilled Labour Supply Theme</b>	
2.7 Upskilling for Growth	Meeting employer needs and supporting career progression by upskilling employees. Provide support to employers to upskill staff to enable career progression for those in employment to facilitate vacancies and opportunities for those entering the labour market.
2.8 Skills Conference	Conference for businesses, careers teachers, school principals, training providers, recruitment consultants and academics from across Newry Mourne and Down District Council area and further afield, to develop a cohesive strategy to identify current and future skills gaps across all sectors to develop short, medium and long-term solutions to meet local skills and staff shortages.
<b>Strategic Priority 3</b>	
<b>To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision either regionally or locally</b>	
<b>Increased Awareness</b>	
3.1 Employment Pathway Events	Support delivery of Jobs Fairs and Career fairs and events, including sectoral focused events where scope and opportunity exists.
3.2 Promote apprenticeships, traineeships and placements as pathways to employment	Promote the benefits of recruiting through opportunity pathways, such as Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and work experience placements to employers.
3.3 Increased awareness of employability and skills programmes	Increase awareness among job seekers and those who wish to upskill, of the range of employability and training support there are available.



## Appendix 1 – Action plan and associated outputs

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### Action plan Outputs

Outputs	Participants directly supported	Employers - directly engaged	Events	Participants attending events	Value of grants distributed £
Strategic Priority 2					
<b>Theme 1: Economic Inactivity</b>					
2.1 Get Work Ready	48				
2.2 Enterprise Pathways Programme	38				19,000
<b>Theme 2: Unemployed</b>					
2.3 Employability Academies	56				
2.4 A Place to Work		15	3	250	
<b>Theme 3: Disability</b>					
2.5 Employer Disability Advice Workshop		10	1		
2.6 Inclusion Participant Programme	10				
<b>Theme 4: Skilled Labour Supply</b>					
2.6 Upskilling for Growth	88	30			
2.7 Skills Conference			1	200	
Strategic Priority 3					
3.1 Employment Pathway Events		100	3	2000	
3.2 Opportunity and Apprenticeship awareness		40	2	500	
3.3 Increased awareness				300	
<b>Outputs</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2800</b>	<b>£19,000</b>

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Local Economic Partnership: Update
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism.
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Aveen McVeigh Head of Regeneration and Business Development

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To note the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) action reports from meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and to approve the recommendations in 3.1 of this report that on receipt of a Letter of Offer (LoO), and subject to officer/legal review to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sign and accept a Letter of Offer for implementation of the Local Economic Partnership</li> <li>2. Sign and accept a Memorandum of Understanding with DfE for the implementation of the Local Economic Partnership</li> <li>3. To commence recruitment of associated secretariat resource</li> </ol> <p><u>Background</u> On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Minister Murphy announced Department of Economy (DfE) funding of £45 Million to support the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships (LEP) across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The formation of LEPs was identified as having a key role in delivering regional balance, by bringing together central and local government, with other relevant stakeholders to create improved economic prosperity at a local level</p> <p>The NMD LEP, held their inaugural meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025, with the aim of delivering on a Regional Balance Fund focusing on creating good jobs, increasing productivity, improving regional balance and decarbonisation.</p> <p>DfE has informed Council, that the anticipated funding allocation to Council is £4.5 Million until March 2028. The funding is capital and revenue. It is anticipated that up 20% will be allocated to revenue, adopting a similar matrix to that applied to Labour Market Partnerships.</p>

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
2.1	<p><u>NMD LEP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership meetings continue (appendix 1 - action reports), members are working collaboratively to identify key themes and priority interventions needed to strengthen the District's proposition including business productivity</li> </ul> <p><u>DfE Business Case for LEP Investment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DfE have submitted a business case to Department of Finance regarding investment for Local Economic Partnership under the Regional Balance Fund. This business case has been approved for investment</li> </ul> <p><u>LEP Letter of Offer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DfE have issued to Council, draft documents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Balance Fund Project Guidance</li> <li>DfE – Council draft Memorandum of Understanding</li> <li>DfE – Council draft LoO</li> </ul> </li> <li>Council will review the draft documents, and provide any necessary commentary to DfE, following internal review and engagement with other NI Council's via SOLACE</li> </ul> <p><u>LEP Resource</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On receipt of a Letter of Offer Council will undertake recruitment to ensure a dedicated resource allocation to support delivery of the LEP investment</li> </ul> <p><u>NMD LEP Investment areas</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In anticipation of receipt of a Letter of Offer, Council have been working with the LEP to prepare initial scoping on investment areas. This work remains underway, and will be further shaped following the receipt of DfE Regional Balance Fund Project Guidance, and the DfE LEP Action Plan template which is to be received</li> </ul> <p><u>NMD LEP Terms of Reference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Terms of Reference for the NMD Local Economic Partnership is attached at appendix 2</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>To approve, that on Receipt of a Letter of Offer, and subject to officer/legal review to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign and accept a Letter of Offer for implementation of the Local Economic Partnership</li> <li>Sign and accept a Memorandum of Understanding with Department for Economy for the implementation of the Local Economic Partnership</li> <li>To commence recruitment of associated secretariat resource</li> </ol> <p>To note the LEP action reports from meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025.</p>

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	LEP is 100% funded by DfE.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>*Appendix 1 - This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph <b>3</b> of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - <b>Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Appendix 1 – LEP Action reports: March 2025 and April 2025</li> <li>• Appendix 2 - DfE Guidance and ToR for LEPs</li> <li>• Appendix 3 – NMD LEP Terms of Reference</li> </ul>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>
	N/A





## **Department for the Economy**

### **Local Economic Partnerships Guidance Document**

April 2025

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to support councils in setting up Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).
- 1.2 The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. The Plan outlined how the department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholder to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) between Oct-Dec 2024.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 2.1 Councils will establish, chair, and operate the LEP within their area. They will:
  - Determine LEP Terms of Reference (TOR), assisted by DfE and Invest NI. This will set out the focus of the LEP, membership, decision-making process, and extent of DfE/ Invest NI role. A template is attached at Annex A.
  - Appoint staff to support the LEP. They will manage operational issues relating to their LEP, act as liaison with DfE and Invest NI, and ensure all governance, and assurance matters are adhered to in line with appropriate procedures. They will also act as the interface between councils/ LEPs and DfE/ Invest NI.
  - Take control of identifying actions, designing suitable projects, and overseeing implementation.
- 2.2 DfE and Invest NI will:
  - Support the set up and operation of LEPs.
  - Advocate and champion the local economic needs of each LEP.
  - Appoint a DfE Strategic Advisor to work alongside the relevant Invest NI Regional Office to provide direct support to the LEP.
  - Meet council and agree proposed structure and membership, assist in drafting TOR, and secure funding.

- Ensure actions are aligned with Programme for Government outcomes and Economic Vision objectives.
- Provide specialist support, data, and ongoing guidance as required.

### 2.3 Local Economic Partnerships will:

- Bring together local economic stakeholders to reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.
- Identify actions and develop projects that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council Economic Development Strategies and Invest NI Business Strategy. These will be developed with advice from DfE and Invest NI, and they should be appraised and scored/ ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.
- Put in place effective monitoring and evaluation – this will be agreed dependent on the nature of the projects.

## 3. LEP Structure & Membership

- 3.1 Councils will determine what format the LEP will undertake to ensure flexibility and to meet local needs.
- 3.2 This can be a new standalone body or integrated with an existing structure such as a Labour Market Partnership (LMP) or a Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Councils may merge LEPs to work across a neighbouring council area within an Invest NI region.
- 3.3 The LEP TOR will set out this structure and should have:
  - Clear and efficient decision-making procedures.
  - Membership criteria and transparent selection procedures.
  - Appointment terms and conflicts of interest management.
  - Agreed frequency of meetings and required quorum for decision-making.

### 3.4 Membership must include:

- FE Representative(s)
- Local Enterprise Agency representative(s)
- Local business representative(s)/Chamber of Commerce representative
- Third sector representative(s)

### 3.5 Membership can also include:

- University representative(s)
- Financial services representative(s)
- Industry and/or lobby groups
- Public sector organisations(s)
- CPP or LMP representative(s)
- Trade union representative(s)

Membership should reflect local economic needs with no one sector dominating at the expense of others. Each organisation should have an equal vote. Diversity in representation is encouraged; membership should not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, marital status and whether or not a person has dependents.

## Annex A – TOR Template



**Department for the Economy**

**Local Economic Partnerships**

**Terms of Reference**

**March 2025**



# Document Control

## Summary

This document provides the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

## Key personnel

Role	Name	Position	Date
Author		DfE Regional Balance	1/11/24
First Approver		DfE Lead	1/11/24
Final Approver		Group Owner	XX/11/24

This ToR and any amendments to it will be subject to consideration and approval by the DfE (Department for the Economy) Regional Balance Team.

## Document status history

Version	Issue Date	Reason for Update	Updated by
0.1	31/10/24	1st Draft	
0.2	XX/11/24	2nd Draft	
Final			

## Distribution

Version	Name	Responsibility / Branch (or Organisation)	Date
0.2			
0.3			

## Introduction and Context

- 1.1 The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. The Plan outlined how the department will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholders to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).

## Justification for the formation of Local Economic Partnerships

- 2.1 Local Economic Partnerships will play a key role in delivering regional balance, by bringing together central and local government, ALBs, and local stakeholders to create improved economic prosperity at a local level.

## Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Local Economic Partnership (LEP) will be owned by the Local Government District (LGD) with support from DfE (Regional Balance Team) and Invest NI (Regional Office Network).
- 3.2 Roles and Responsibilities are outlined in the LEP Guidance document.

## Membership & Attendance

- 4.1 Membership of the Local Economic Partnership is comprised of the following:
  - [LGD to insert LEP members here]

- 4.2 Secretariat to the group will be provided by **[LGD to insert name here]**
- 4.3 Attendance is important but in exceptional circumstances deputies may attend. Deputies should have the full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member and be sufficiently briefed to provide accurate and timely information to the Local Economic Partnership.
- 4.4 A quorum will consist of **[LGD to insert details here]**. When a quorum is not present, the meeting should be adjourned to another time.
- 4.5 The partnership should strive to reach decisions by consensus. If a matter cannot be agreed by consensus, the LEP should agree a process for handling i.e. decision by a majority of votes. In the event of a tie, Invest NI Regional Manager will have the deciding vote.

## Meetings – Timetable and Protocol

- 5.1 The timescale of this will be **[LGD to insert]** (can be reviewed and amended with agreement from LEP at later time).
- 5.2 The Local Economic Partnership will convene **[LGD to insert]**.
- 5.3 Each member should take personal responsibility to proactively declare any potential conflict of interest arising on the group's agenda or from changes in the member's personal circumstances. The Chair should then determine an appropriate course of action with the member.
- 5.4 The secretariat will be responsible for circulating papers in advance of meetings.
- 5.5 Standing items at meetings will include:
  - Conflicts of Interest
  - Action points from previous meeting

- Local Economic Partnership Updates (including Deliverables, Risks and Issues Management)
- Invest NI Briefing

## Terms of Reference – Authority and Review

- 6.1 The Terms of Reference for the Partnership will be approved by Director Social and Regional Economy, DfE.
- 6.2 Overall responsibility for the Local Economic Partnerships lies with **[insert appropriate LGD Director]**.



# **NMD Local Economic Partnership**

## **Terms of Reference**

**January 2025**



## Introduction and Context

The Sub-Regional Economic Plan was launched 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. The Plan outlined how the Department for Economy will work with Invest NI, Councils and other key stakeholders to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs).

The formation of Local Economic Partnerships was identified as having a key role in delivering regional balance, by bringing together central and local government, with other relevant stakeholders to create improved economic prosperity at a local level.

## Function

The NMD Local Economic Partnership will bring together local economic stakeholders that reflect local needs and strengths, promoting collaborative working, and drive greater integration between local and central government economic initiatives.

The function of the NMD Local Economic Partnership will to be identify actions and develop project proposals that align with the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, Council's Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Invest NI Business Strategy and which ultimately deliver against local economic and regeneration priorities.

The NMD Local Economic Development Partnership will be responsible for identifying and overseeing development and subsequent monitoring of project proposals

## Membership

Membership organisations of the NMD Local Economic Partnership is detailed at appendix 1. Individual members shall co-operate in accordance with the provisions of these Terms of Reference.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) will establish, chair, and operate the Newry Mourne and Down Local Economic Partnership (NMD LEP) within the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, assisted by Department for Economy (DfE) Regional Balance Team, and Invest NI Regional Office Network. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council assumes responsibility for accountability for spend.

Secretariat to the NMD Local Economic Partnership will be provided by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. The secretariat role will manage operational issues relating to the NMD Local Economic Partnership, act as liaison with DfE and Invest NI, and ensure all governance, and assurance matters are adhered to in line with appropriate procedures.

Attendance at the meetings is vital; however, in exceptional circumstances deputies may attend. Deputies should have the full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member and be sufficiently

briefed to provide accurate and timely information to the NMD Local Economic Partnership.

A quorum will consist of 25% attendance. When a quorum is not present, the meeting should be adjourned to another time.

A Vice Chair can be elected from the Partnership, to hold a vice -chair term for period of 12-months. Individuals may not serve as Vice Chair for more than two terms. Nominations for this position will be sought from Partnership members.

#### Additional Membership / engagement with experts

Additional nominations for the NMD Local Economic Partnership can be considered at any point, where relevance and need is agreed through the Partnership. It is recognised that membership may grow as the NMD LEP progresses.

If a topic or issue arises, and the Partnership feels the topic is outside the expertise of the members, the Partnership can seek the advice of external experts. The Partnership can invite other stakeholders to attend meetings as and when necessary.

### **Decision Making**

The partnership should strive to reach decisions by consensus. If a matter cannot be agreed by consensus, the LEP should agree a process for handling i.e. decision by a majority of votes. Each organisation will have one equal vote.

Project proposals will be brought forward and developed by the Partnership, with the advice and guidance from DfE and Invest NI. Projects should be appraised and scored & ranked (where relevant) using a consistent and transparent methodology.

The Partnership will ensure effective monitoring and evaluation is in place, and appropriate to the nature of the projects.

#### Ratification of Decisions

Decisions made by the NMD Local Economic Partnership are subject to consideration by the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee, and final approval of the Full Council Committee of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

### **Alignment**

The NMD Local Economic Partnership will deliver against the Economic Development function of the Community Planning Partnership.

A member of the NMD Local Economic Partnership will be nominated to represent the LEP at the Community Planning Partnership Board, to ensure frequent reporting and dialogue, and identify and deliver against common priorities. LEP updates will be submitted to the Partnership Board in advance of the meetings to ensure alignment

with the wider Community Planning Outcomes. (representative identified at appendix 1).

A member of the NMD Local Economic Partnership will be nominated to represent the LEP at the NMD Labour Market Partnership, to ensure frequent reporting and dialogue, and identify and deliver against common priorities. (representative identified at appendix 1)

Community Voluntary Sector representatives, who are also members of the NMD Strategic Stakeholder Forum (SSF), will represent the SSF collectively and have responsible for reporting back to SSF through the existing mechanisms.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Each Partnership member will take personal responsibility to proactively declare any potential conflict of interest arising on the group's agenda or from changes in the member's personal circumstances. The Chair should then determine an appropriate course of action with the member.

### **Frequency & Format of meetings**

The Partnership will meet on a quarterly basis. However, in the initial pre-development stages the Partnership may wish to meet more frequently on a monthly/bimonthly basis.

#### Format of meetings

Proposed standing items at meetings will include:

- Conflicts of Interest <sup>1</sup>
- Action points from previous meeting
- Local Economic Partnership Updates (including Deliverables, Risks and Issues Management)
- DFE / Invest NI items
- AOB

The secretariat will be responsible for circulating papers in advance of meetings. The Project Board agenda, with attached meeting papers will be distributed by email at least three (3) working days prior to the next scheduled meeting. The actions to be taken will be recorded in the format of an action report.

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<sup>1</sup> Conflict of Interest Template – appendix 3

## **Funding and Delegated Authority**

Department of Economy will make available funding to NMDDC for the Project agreed and approved for delivery by the NMD Local Economic Partnership. The level of funding is detailed in appendix 2.

Delegated Authority for decision making on allocation of funding to projects will lie with either Newry, Mourne and Down District Council or Invest NI, dependent on funding levels. Delegated Authority limits is detailed in appendix 2.

## **Delivery and Procurement**

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will hold responsibility for the procurement and delivery of agreed projects, and as such will manage procurement processes according to their Council's Procurement Policy.

Council's Procurement Policy can be accessed at [Procurement Policy \(newrymournedown.org\)](http://newrymournedown.org), and may be updated from time to time.

## **Finance and Audit**

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will provide accounting and financial management for the Partnership, providing financial information and governance documentation and any other assistance required for external audit.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council may perform internal auditing of the Partnership arrangements in line with the standard of the Council's audit processes.

## Appendix 1

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<b>Table 1: LEP Structure &amp; Membership</b>	
<b>Sectoral focus</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Local Government Authority	NMDDC
Department for Economy / Funder	DFE
	Invest NI
Department for Communities / Regeneration	DFC
Local Enterprise Agency representative	Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency
	Down Business Centre
Further Education Representation	Southern Regional College
	South Eastern Regional College
University Representative	Ulster University EPC
Local business representative	Newry Chamber of Commerce & Trade
	Newry BID
	Warrenpoint, Burren & Rostrevor Chamber
	Kilkeel Chamber
	Newcastle Chamber
	South Armagh Business Improvement Group
Community Regeneration	Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group
	County Down Rural Community Network
	Confederation of Community Groups

(1) Nominated representative for the Community Planning Partnership

(2) Nominated representative for the Labour Market Partnership



Appendix 2

DFE Funding provision - Operational Budget	
2025/2026	£ TBC
2026/2027	£ TBC
2027/2028	£ TBC

Delegated Authority Limits <i>(Subject to change as to be advised by DfE)</i>	
£ TBC	
£ TBC	

## Appendix 3

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### Conflict of interest declaration

<b>NMD Local Economic Partnership</b>
---------------------------------------

Partnership Member Details	
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Tel:</b>
<b>E-mail:</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b>	

Conflict of Interest
<p>Conflict of Interest refers to situations in which personal interests (which may include financial interests) may compromise, or have the appearance of, or potential for, compromising professional judgement and integrity and, in doing so, the best interests of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the purpose of the NMD Local Economic Partnership.</p> <p>Examples of conflicts of interest include: <i>(This is not an exhaustive list)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a financial interest or any other personal interest in a project proposal or any entity involved in any project proposal.</li> <li>• Being employed by (as staff member or volunteer) in a project proposal or any entity involved in any potential project proposal</li> <li>• Being a member of a project proposal management/executive board.</li> <li>• Canvassing, or negotiating with, any person with a view to entering into any of the arrangements outlined above.</li> <li>• Having a close member of your family (which term includes unmarried partners) or personal friends who falls into any of the categories outlined above.</li> </ul> <p>It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that any, and all, potential conflicts are disclosed to the Chair of the NMD Local Economic Partnership in writing.</p> <p>Individuals will be excluded from discussions where the identified conflict is in the Chair's opinion material and cannot be mitigated.</p>

### Option 1:

**"I do not have** any conflicts of interest that prevent my full and unprejudiced participation in the NMD Local Economic Partnership. I also declare that I will inform the Chair of the NMD Local Economic Partnership immediately, should my circumstances change in any way that effects this declaration."

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**Or**

### Option 2:

**"I do have** a conflict of interest that may prevent my full and unprejudiced participation in the NMD Local Economic Partnership. The nature of this conflict of interest is described below:

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I also declare that I will inform the Council as soon as is practicable, should my circumstances change in any way that effects this declaration."

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**Your Personal Data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection legislation.**

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Peace Plus 5.1 – PEAT+
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Darren Rice AONB and Geopark Manager

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

		For decision	x	For noting only	
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>				
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To approve</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acceptance and return of required documentation to Ulster Wildlife/SEUPB, including but not limited to partnership agreement, Letter of Offer (LoO), and legal agreements to allow the commencement of PEAT+.</li> <li>2. Commence the recruitment process for 1FTE officer according to the terms and conditions of LoO.</li> <li>3. Approve the Business Case for implementation and proceed to carry out the required procurement exercises in line with NMDDC and PEACEPLUS procurement policies for the implementation of the project</li> </ol> <p><u>Background</u> PEACEPLUS is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and represents a funding partnership between the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive.</p> <p>Ulster Wildlife applied to SEUPB for funding under 5.1 Biodiversity, Nature Recovery &amp; Resilience Management theme for The PEAT+ project on behalf of cross border partners, including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.</p>				
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>				
2.1	<p>SEUPB has awarded funding to Ulster Wildlife (project lead) in respect of PEAT+.</p> <p>Partners on the project include, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Bord na Móna, Mourne Heritage Trust, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Crichton Carbon Centre, Atlantic Technology University Letterkenny, The Hutton Institute, Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) and Newry Mourne and Down District</p>				

	<p>Council. There are two associate partners including National Parks and Wildlife Service and Northern Ireland Water.</p> <p>PEAT+ will integrate climate, biodiversity, and social objectives, delivering on-the-ground restoration, community engagement, innovation, and capacity building. A key aim of PEAT+ is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from degraded peatlands while enhancing their long-term ability to capture and store carbon, supporting wider climate change mitigation goals.</p> <p>The project will promote biodiversity by restoring habitats and protecting important heritage features found within or beneath peatland areas. Additional environmental benefits include improved water quality, reduced flood risk, and a lower likelihood of wildfires. Through collaborative efforts, PEAT+ will help to revitalise vital ecosystems while supporting resilient communities.</p> <p><u>Overview of Peat+ outputs in NMDDC:</u> In partnership with Mourne Heritage Trust, NMDDC will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peatland Restoration: restore 84 hectares in key areas of the Eastern Mournes SAC by 2027.</li> <li>• Peatland Restoration Plans: New peatland restoration plan will be developed for a badly damaged area of the Eastern Mournes SAC by 2027.</li> <li>• Peatland Restoration: restore 10 hectares of peatland habitats across Slieve Gullion SAC.</li> <li>• Invasive Species Control: Invasive species control will be implemented on Slieve Gullion SAC by 2027, aiding in maintaining ecological balance.</li> <li>• Peatland Restoration Plans: New peatland restoration plan will be developed for areas of the Slieve Gullion SAC currently in poor condition by 2026.</li> <li>• Wildfire Management Planning: A new wildfire management plan will be developed for the Slieve Gullion SAC by 2027.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<p>To approve</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acceptance and return of required documentation to Ulster Wildlife/SEUPB, including but not limited to partnership agreement, Letter of Offer, and legal agreements to allow the commencement of PEAT+.</li> <li>2. Commence the recruitment process for 1FTE officer according to the terms and conditions of Letter of Offer.</li> <li>3. Approve the attached Business Case for implementation and proceed to carry out the required procurement exercises in line with NMDDC and PEACEPLUS procurement policies for the implementation of the project.</li> </ol>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	<p>PEACEPLUS Programme is funding 100% of eligible project costs, using match funding given by the Government of Ireland, UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive. See appendix 1 for resource allocations.</p>



<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i> NA</p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p>

	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>These items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - <b>Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Budget / Resources</li> <li>2. Economic Appraisal: PEAT+</li> </ol>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further Project related information can be available upon request</li> </ul>

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Tourism Trade/Consumer shows for 25/26
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Michelle Boyle, Head of Product Development and Visitor Experience
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth and Tourism

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> Approval to participate in the following tourism trade and consumer shows, in collaboration with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland, to support the tourism sector and promote the destination.</p> <p><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.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IFTM Top Resa – Paris – September 2025</li> <li>2. Flavours of Ireland – London – October 2025</li> <li>3. Golf Ireland Convention – Venue TBC – October 2025</li> <li>4. Irish Golf tour operator Association conference – Venue TBC – October 2025</li> <li>5. World Travel Market – London – November 2025</li> <li>6. Ireland meet Germanys Workshop – Frankfurt – November 2025</li> <li>7. Incoming tour operators Association workshop – TBC – November 2025</li> <li>8. Dublin holiday World – Dublin – January 2026</li> <li>9. Celtic Connections – Glasgow – January 2026</li> <li>10. Britain &amp; Ireland Market Place – London – January 2026</li> <li>11. Incoming Tour Operators Association Ireland Workshop Dublin – March 2026</li> </ol>

	<p>12. Nordic Workshop – Copenhagen – March 2026</p> <p>13. TNI Meet the Buyer – Belfast - April 2026</p> <p>14. IAGTO European Convention (IEC) – Venue TBC – May 2026</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>IFTM Top Resa</b> - a major annual French travel and tourism trade show covering all types of travel including – Leisure &amp; Groups as well as Business Tourism, over 3 days of one-to-one meetings. It is the only B2B trade show specialised in tourism in France. Tourism Ireland have launched a "twining" initiative this year to focus marketing efforts on specific regions within the island of Ireland. Each of their key overseas markets will collaborate with a particular region, promoting that area and its attractions. NMDDC tourism destination is collaborating with France.</p> <p><b>Flavours of Ireland</b> 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</p> <p><b>Golf Ireland Convention</b> bring together the Irish trade to meet with international golf tour operators in prescheduled 1-2-1 meeting to promote golf in the destination</p> <p><b>Ireland Golf tour Operator Association Conference</b> 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.</p> <p><b>World Travel Market (WTM)</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Ireland meet Germanys Workshop</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Dublin Holiday World</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Celtic Connections</b> 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.</p>

	<p><b>Incoming Tour Operators Association</b> (Dublin &amp; Belfast) Workshop is an opportunity to meet Ireland's largest and long-established Tour Operating/Handling Agents/DMC's. This event offers an opportunity to meet and sell our destination experiences to all members of ITOA</p> <p><b>Tourism Northern Ireland's Meet the Buyer</b> 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.</p> <p><b>BIM (Britain &amp; Ireland Marketplace)</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Nordic Workshop</b> 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).</p> <p><b>IAGTO (Incoming Association of Golf Tour Operators) European Convention</b> - 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</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>3.1</b>	Approval to participate 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.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	The annual marketing budget will be used to cover costs associated with attending the tourism consumer/trade platforms. Approximate cost to attend the above shows is outlined in appendix 1.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>



5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	<p><b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b></p>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
	<p>This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - <b>Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Cost</p>
8.0	<p><b>Background Documents</b></p>

	N/A

<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Financial Assistance 2025/2026 Sports Facility Capital and VJ Day
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director - Economy, Growth & Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Sonya Burns – Head of Programmes Ciara Burns – Project Coordinator

For decision		X	For noting only																						
1.0		Purpose and Background																							
1.1		<u>Purpose</u> To approve the allocation of letters of offer to projects under Financial Assistance as per Council Policy  <u>Background</u> Calls 2 and 3 for financial assistance 2025-2026 were for sport capital and for community capital with a second call for VJ Commemorations.  Attached are assessment reports against the above themes, which provide a breakdown of the number of applications, pass and fail at each stage of the process, geographical spread of the applications received and a breakdown of the final budget allocations to successful applicants. Outlined in section 2 is a summary of the assessment																							
2.0		Key issues																							
2.1		<u>Summary of assessment</u> <table><tr><th>Theme &amp; number applied</th><th>Applications Received</th><th>Applications recommended for funding</th><th>Number &amp; amount scored &amp; ranked</th></tr><tr><td>VJ Day</td><td>4</td><td>3 £3914</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Sports Facility - Capital</td><td>21</td><td>6 £207,060</td><td>5 £297,719.50</td></tr><tr><td>Community Minor Items</td><td>17</td><td>2 £6,060</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Community Capital</td><td>6</td><td>1 £60,000</td><td>0</td></tr></table>				Theme & number applied	Applications Received	Applications recommended for funding	Number & amount scored & ranked	VJ Day	4	3 £3914	0	Sports Facility - Capital	21	6 £207,060	5 £297,719.50	Community Minor Items	17	2 £6,060	0	Community Capital	6	1 £60,000	0
Theme & number applied	Applications Received	Applications recommended for funding	Number & amount scored & ranked																						
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Community Minor Items	17	2 £6,060	0																						
Community Capital	6	1 £60,000	0																						

	<p><u>Score and rank</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Score and rank will be applied to all themes where there is no budget availability for applications who were over the threshold and groups will be notified of same.</li> </ul> <p><u>Pre-Letter of offer conditions/Clarifications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some projects will be required to submit documentation and pre letter of offer requirements, if the panel are content with the conditions, then a Letter of offer will be issued.</li> <li>If a project cannot fulfil the pre-LoO condition or provide satisfactory clarification, then a letter of offer will not be issued and the next group on the scored and ranked list will be contacted (if applicable) or re-allocated.</li> </ul> <p><u>Community Capital works and items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to the underspend, it is proposed to open another call for Community minor capital items and Community Capital works (major &amp; minor) in August 2025.</li> <li>Due to the high fail rate of basic eligibility Officers have reviewed how groups are meeting these criteria. Ahead of future applications, a pro-forma will be developed between AHC and GFU for groups to complete which will assist them in their application through the demonstration of evidence from their group against the criteria being assessed.</li> <li>AHC will undertake capacity building with community groups in advance of application deadline</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<p>Please see recommendations below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To approve the issue of Letters of Offer to projects as per Council Policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation for each theme</li> <li>To approve that pre-letter of offer conditions must be met prior to issue of full letter of offer and where this is not satisfied budget to be re-allocated.</li> <li>Open a call for Community Capital works and Minor Items in August 2025.</li> <li>Capacity building delivered and pro-forma developed to support the application process for Community Capital works and Minor Items</li> </ul>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	Funding will be allocated from internal Council Budget and external funders where applicable as agreed by council.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b>

	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>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 – <b>information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) VJ Day Commemorations 2025 – 2026</li> <li>2) Sports Facility Capital</li> <li>3) Community Minor Capital items</li> <li>4) Community Capital for Community Facilities</li> </ul>
8.0	<b>Background Documents</b>
	N/A



<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth Assistant Director Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Sonya Stephenson – Head of Programmes Sarah McClory – Project Coordinator

For decision		X	For noting only
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>		
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 which are attached to this report.</p> <p>To approve the attached business cases and procurement the following elements of the Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Strand 2.4 Cross-Community Civic Pride Environmental Programmes</li> <li>ii. Strand 2.4 Community Action health and Wellbeing</li> <li>iii. Strand 2.7 Social Prescribing Programmes</li> </ul> <p><u>Background</u> The PEACEPLUS Partnership met on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025. The recommendations arising from these meetings require ERT Committee approval. Minutes are attached and recommendations outlined in Section 3 below both of which have been ratified by the Partnership.</p>		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>		
2.1	<p><u>Local Action Plan – Implementation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of the Action Plan has commenced.</li> <li>• Currently awaiting JEMS, the electronic management system, to be transferred from application stage to claims and reporting function.</li> <li>• South Eastern Regional College (Action Plan Delivery Partner) have developed a webpage that provides an overview of their projects and link to register interest. <a href="http://www.serc.ac.uk/Peace-Plus-Programmes-for-Newry-Mourne-and-Down-District-Council">www.serc.ac.uk/Peace-Plus-Programmes-for-Newry-Mourne-and-Down-District-Council</a></li> <li>• SERC have advised that projects can be delivered within community settings and across the district, ensuring accessibility and local engagement.</li> </ul>		
2.2	<u>Data Protection &amp; Appointment of External Controller Requirements</u>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appointment of an external controller (using the SEUPB framework provided) is in progress.</li> <li>• All PEACEPLUS projects must enter into a data processing agreement with the appointed framework member / external controller.</li> <li>• The formation of Call of Contract must be signed by the Lead Partner and the External Controller prior to forwarding to SEUPB for final signature.</li> </ul>
2.3	<p><u>Change Makers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Border Region presented an overview to the Partnership Board of the €40m PEACEPLUS grants scheme which is aimed at grassroots communities.</li> <li>• Further detail / register for Support: <a href="https://cooperationireland.org/projects/peace-plus-change-maker-funding-programme/">https://cooperationireland.org/projects/peace-plus-change-maker-funding-programme/</a></li> <li>• For support enquiries a helpdesk is available at: <a href="mailto:changemakers@cooperationireland.org">changemakers@cooperationireland.org</a></li> <li>•</li> </ul>
2.4	<p><u>Project Delivery</u></p> <p>The Partnership will commence procurement against the below stands of delivery of which business plans are attached:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strand 2.4 Cross-Community Civic Pride Environmental Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Project aims to enhance pollinator-friendly native habitats, increase biodiversity and native tree cover, engage residents in conservation activities, and raise awareness of the vital role pollinators play in ecosystems and food production.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strand 2.4 Community Action health and Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Aims to enhance health and wellbeing across the Newry, Mourne and Down district by implementing community-based, non-clinical interventions tailored to key areas of need.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strand 2.7 Social Prescribing Programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Aims to enhance health and wellbeing across the Newry, Mourne and Down district by implementing community-based, non-clinical interventions tailored to key areas of need. To improve the health and wellbeing of individuals in Newry Mourne &amp; Down through community-led, cross-community programmes that support holistic wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Partnership will have agreed to prepare procurement against the below stand of delivery of which a business plan will be presented to a future ERT Committee for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strand 2.3 Collaborative Interaction Programme – One Sustaining Cross-Community Relationships programme</li> </ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 which are attached to this report.</li> <li>2. To approve the attached business cases and procurement the following elements of the Action Plan: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Strand 2.4 Cross-Community Civic Pride Environmental Programmes</li> <li>ii. Strand 2.4 Community Action health and Wellbeing</li> <li>iii. Strand 2.7 Social Prescribing Programmes</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	<b>Revenue/Payroll:</b> Project 85% funded by the EU and 15% by the two Governments
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.2	<b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following:  The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/>  The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/>
5.3	<b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b>  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 <input type="checkbox"/>  Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/>  Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/>  <i>Rationale:</i>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>

6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service                      Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>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 – <b>information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information)</b> and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Appx. 1 PEACEPLUS Partnership Board minutes 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 (ratified 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025)</li> <li>ii. Appx 2 – Business case for Strand 2.4 Cross-Community Civic Pride Environmental Programmes</li> <li>iii. Appx 3 – Business case for Strand 2.4 community Action health and wellbeing</li> <li>iv. Appx 4 – Business case for Strand 2.7 Social Prescribing Programmes</li> </ul>
8.0	<p><b>Background Documents</b></p> <p>n/a</p>



<b>Report to:</b>	Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	AONB and Geopark implementation update 24/25
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Darren Rice, AONB and Geopark Manager

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

<b>For decision</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	<b>X</b>
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To note the 24/25 update on the AONB and Geopark progress.</p> <p><u>Background</u> The main funding mechanism for the AONB is the Environment Fund (EF). Council is in receipt of an EF Letter of Offer from NIEA from April 2023 to March 2028. The EF is for the provision of Management for the Ring of Gullion and Strangford &amp; Lecale AONBs; the Strangford Lough, Murlough and Carlingford Lough Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); and the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark.</p> <p>The funds implement measurable key environmental outcomes. The funds deliver against environmental obligations in various strategy, policy and legislation. The funds help to improve wellbeing for all by providing healthy landscapes for communities to enjoy and creating places where people want to live, work and visit.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b><u>Key issues</u></b>
2.1	<p>Summary of activities delivered in 24/25:</p> <p><u>Biodiversity, Habitat Management, and Tree Planting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four seasons of fixed-point photography images taken and submitted to NIEA for Ring of Gullion (RoG) and Slieve Lough (SL) monitoring.</li> <li>• Tree nursery and seed collection training completed as part of the Landscape NI training programme.</li> <li>• Lantra Basic Tree Survey training delivered – 6 trainees.</li> <li>• Annual native tree giveaway: 2,000 native trees distributed to 20 landowners and community groups across the two AONBs.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,050 young native whips planted at Castlewellan Tree Nursery by 20 volunteers; trees to be grown on for distribution in 25/26.</li> <li>• 30 replacement fruit trees planted in Donard Community Orchard with protective soap applied to prevent deer browsing.</li> <li>• Distributed 50 bird nest boxes</li> <li>• 168 fruit trees provided to 36 groups district wide as part of Pollinators Week; tree locations mapped.</li> <li>• Eco-Sports Pilot project to support local sports clubs and community groups in wildlife habitat management and biodiversity recording launched January 2025.</li> </ul>
2.2	<p><u>Invasive Species and Habitat Surveying</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Ring of Gullion invasive species survey using Council's Invasive Species Survey app, focusing on priority areas per the Invasive Species Action Plan.</li> <li>• Vegetation cutting along the Ring of Gullion Way and fencing repairs at Forkhill complete.</li> <li>• Surveyed right of way at Killeavy Church as a potential volunteer clearance project; deemed too steep and inaccessible for volunteers.</li> <li>• Launching a Volunteer Path Rangers scheme in collaboration with Outscape NI and GIS officer; survey tool set up via Survey123 to log ranger inputs.</li> </ul>
2.3	<p><u>Access, Trails, and Infrastructure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair and maintenance of 3.4km of Slieve Gullion upland trails, restoring damage caused by visitor impact and storms.</li> <li>• Repair of stone walls and livestock fencing completed on Lecale Way Strangford Road section.</li> <li>• Installed wash-down station pilot at Strangford Yacht Club to mitigate invasive species spread.</li> </ul>
2.4	<p><u>Community Engagement and Youth Programs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Rangers Programme delivered with 19 young participants.</li> <li>• Red Squirrel Group licence renewed with Forest Service; five wildlife cameras replaced; Red Squirrel stand featured at Green Space Community Horticultural Show.</li> <li>• Collaboration initiated with University of Ulster PhD student on Pine Marten research and conflict in the area; ongoing engagement with previous PhD research on red squirrel DNA with publication expected mid-2025.</li> </ul>

2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual photography competition successfully completed; AONB calendars (English and bilingual) designed, printed, and distributed.</li> <li>• AONB newsletters and seasonal eZines produced and distributed: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter editions with recipients ranging from 480 to 5,500 across RoG and SL.</li> </ul> <p><u>Training and Capacity Building</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Lantra Basic Tree Survey (12 attendees)</li> <li>◦ WiSE Train the Trainer (8 attendees)</li> <li>◦ WeBS Wetland Bird Survey (11 attendees)</li> <li>◦ Marine Citizen Science (40 attendees)</li> <li>◦ First Aid &amp; Emergency First Aid at Work (4 staff, 16 hours)</li> <li>◦ Introduction to GPS and GIS training (2 staff each)</li> <li>◦ CDM in Peatland Restoration (January 2025)</li> <li>◦ Pond Restoration (2 staff trained, February 2025)</li> <li>◦ Landscapes NI Butterfly Conservation Marsh Fritillary Monitoring Training</li> <li>◦ Nature Well-being training (Field Studies Ireland)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Staff attended numerous collaborative forums and stakeholder meetings, including National Outdoor Recreation Forum, Land Managers Forum, Ards and North Down Sustainable Tourism Group, All-Island Civil Society Forum on the Environment, Uplands Symposium, and Landscape NI meetings.</li> </ul> <p><u>Research, Monitoring, and Environmental Projects</u></p>
2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New freshwater habitat surveying methods introduced to enhance river monitoring where safe access is possible; plans developed for safe river access points.</li> <li>• Engaged with NIEA to finalise Slieve Gullion SAC Management Plan, focusing on pressure and threat updates and habitat map discussions; awaiting updated SAC Action Plan.</li> <li>• Completed Ring of Gullion IAS 4-year monitoring; Strangford Spartina survey completed.</li> <li>• Installed pilot AMS in Strangford Lough; monitoring ongoing.</li> <li>• Tyrella Beach dune erosion protection phase 1 completed with volunteer support (13 volunteers).</li> <li>• Priority Species Awareness programme along the coast engaged 224 people across 41 site visits.</li> </ul>

2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community catchment consultation participated in via Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), covering Newry, Fane, Glyde, and Dee catchments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance, Strategy, and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GIS SMART monitoring system designed.</li> <li>Carbon Calculator monitoring for AONB and Geopark in place.</li> <li>Geopark Strategic Framework (Strategy, Management Plan, and Action Plan) completed.</li> <li>Terms of Reference for Geopark Partners and Sustainable Tourism Cluster completed.</li> <li>Project partners on PEACEPLUS CMAP and PEACEPLUS Peat+</li> <li>Landscape Connections EoIs for Mourne Gullion and Strangford &amp; Lecale submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund; Projects moving forward to application (August and November 2025 respectively).</li> <li>NIEA Environmental Fund ROGSLL Change Request for years 3-5 of the EF submitted</li> <li>Delivery of outputs according to Letters of Offer across Strangford MPAs and AONBs maintained and monitored.</li> <li>Coordination with local authorities, NGOs, and partners ensured successful implementation of all work programmes</li> <li>Renewed UNESCO Global Geopark Membership for 25.26</li> </ul> <p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The Mourne Gullion Strangford AONB and Geopark teams continue to deliver a broad and integrated programme encompassing biodiversity conservation, habitat restoration, community engagement, sustainable tourism, and capacity building. Strategic planning and governance frameworks are in place to support continued success, supported by multiple secured and pending funding sources.</p>
3.0	<b>Recommendations</b>
3.1	To note the 24/25 update on the AONB and Geopark progress.
4.0	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	Budget for delivery was included in 24/25.
5.0	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>

5.1	<p><b>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b>Proposal initiating consultation</b></p> <p>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 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<b>Appendices</b>
	n/a
8.0	<b>Background Documents</b>
	n/a