

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

# Straitéis Athghiniúna agus Fhorbairt Eacnamaíochta

## Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020–2025

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



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

“Newry, Mourne and Down is a place where ambition thrives. It’s a place where people get things done. This Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy translates aspiration into action. It is a pathway to social and economic growth, that will maximise our strengths and tackle the key issues to revitalise our region.”

Marie Ward, Chief Executive













# Foreword



**Councillor  
Laura Devlin  
Chairperson of Newry,  
Mourne and Down  
District Council**

**This Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan represents a significant milestone for Newry, Mourne and Down.**

It charts an ambitious and confident way forward that will fulfil and advance the objectives of our Corporate Plan 2019-23. It is designed to adapt to opportunities and challenges as they emerge, all with the objective of improving the lives and livelihoods of the people who live and work here. We are living in an extraordinary period in our history. Both the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit are requiring all of us to dig deep into our personal and professional reserves. Our Council's response to the pandemic has been a testament to the warm, generous and compassionate spirit that exists throughout the community.

This is a very special place, diverse in all its aspects. Our unique location, equidistant to Dublin and Belfast, is our unrivalled opportunity. We must take advantage of every prospect and position our City and District as a key location on the economic corridor along the east coast of this island. Our District stretches from the rolling rural landscape of South Armagh to the gorgeous expanse of Strangford Lough. There is the historic and energetic trading city of Newry, bustling Downpatrick, the outstanding beauty of the Ring of Gullion, and Newcastle, with the Irish Sea in front

and the beautiful Mournes towering behind. Who wouldn't want to invest in a region like this, to live here, to work here, or just pay a visit?

But we can't stand still. We want to revitalise our City, towns, villages and rural communities. We want to see sustainable economic development, creating opportunities for local people that will help them lead fulfilling lives. This is an area that is rich in potential and now is the time to unlock it. This strategy document identifies key areas for growth, not least in the creation of more and better opportunities for our young people. They are our future.

We have always been a resilient region, forging our own way forward. We have always been determined. This regeneration and economic development strategy demonstrates how we can harness that determination for the benefit of all.

# Réamhrá an Chathaoirligh



**Réamhrá an Chathaoirligh, An Comhairleoir Laura Devlin**

Is sprioc shuntasach bainte amach ag an lúr, Múrna agus an Dún é Straitéis agus Plean Gníomhaíochta um Athghiniúint agus Forbairt Eacnamaíochta.

Tugann sé léargas ar bhealach uaillmhianach muiníneach chun tosaigh a chomhlíonfaidh agus chuirfidh cuspóirí ár bPlean Corparáideach 2019-2023 chun cinn. Dearadh é le deiseanna agus dúshlán a thapú de réir mar a thagann siad chun cinn, agus le haidhm saoil agus slite bheatha na ndaoine atá ina gcónaí nó atá ag obair sa cheantar a fheabhsú. Tá muid ag maireachtáil le linn tréimhse úrghnách i stair an cheantair seo. Éilíonn paindéim Covid 19 agus Breatimeacht orainn uilig tochailt go domhan inár gcúlchistí pearsanta agus gairmiúla. Is fianaise é freagra ár gComhairle ar an phaindéim, ar an spiorad te, flaithiúil agus atruach atá ann fud fad an phobail.

Is áit ar leith í seo, éagsúil ina ghnéithe uile. Is é ár suíomh uathúil, ar chomhfhad le Baile Átha Cliath agus Béal Feirste, an deis gan sárú atá againn. Ní mór dúinn leas a bhaint as gach deis agus ár gCathair agus ár gCeantar a shuíomh mar phríomhshuíomh ar an chonair eacnamaíoch seo ar chósta thoir an oileáin. Síneann ár gCeantar ó thírdhreach rollach tuaithe Ard Mhacha, go Loch Cuan fairsing taibhsiúil. Ár gcathair tradála stairiúla lúr Cinn Trá; Dún Pádraig, baile gnóthach agus bríomhar; sáráilleacht Fháinne Cnoc Sliabh

gCuillinn; agus An Caisleán Nua idir Mhuir Éireann agus na Beanna Boirche maorga. Cé acu nach mbeadh ag iarraidh infheistíocht a dhéanamh sa cheantar seo, nó a bheith ina chónaí ann, ag obair ann, nó fiú cuairt a thabhairt ar an cheantar?

Ach ní féidir linn a bheith díomhain go fóill. Ba mhaith linn ár gCathair, bailte, sráidbhailte agus pobail thuaithe a athbheochan. Ní mór dúinn forbairt eacnamaíoch inbhuanaithe a fheiceáil ag cruthú deiseanna do dhaoine áitiúla, a chuideoidh leo saol sásúil a bheith acu. Is réimse é seo a bhfuil acmhainní saibhir ann agus anois an t-am chun é a dhíghlasáil. Is leis an doiciméad straitéise seo príomhréimhsí fáis, go háirithe i gcruthú níos mó deiseanna agus deiseanna níos fearr dár ndaoine óga. Is iadsan ár dtodhchaí ár mbealach féin chun tosaigh.

Bhí muid acmhainneach i gcónaí inár gceantar, ag cruthú ár mbealach féin. Tá muid diongbhailte i gcónaí. Taispeánann an straitéis athghiniúna agus forbairt eacnamaíochta seo conas is féidir linn leas a bhaint as an phlean ar son maitheas gach duine.

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# 1.0

## Executive Summary

Newry, Mourne and Down is a place where ambition thrives. It's a place where people get things done. This Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy translates aspiration into action. It is a pathway to social and economic growth, that will maximise our strengths and tackle the key issues to revitalise our region.

A survey of our residents has shown that supporting local businesses and attracting investment and jobs is a top priority. And it is the priority at the core of this plan, drawn up in a collaboration with a range of key players, including education providers, economic development stakeholders and business.

Some of our companies are world leaders, flag-bearers for our District and wider region. They are firms like Norbrook, in pharmaceuticals, First Derivatives, in software technology and STATSports in wearable tech. There are niche successes like the world-renowned Lowden Guitars and ground-breaking food companies like Finnebrogue, satisfying a growing international appetite for innovation and craftsmanship. Alongside these titans of their sectors, we have a thriving community of start-ups, driving their businesses to achieve growth through

scaling. All of these businesses, and our close relationship with the Northern Ireland Executive, with agencies like InvestNI, InterTradeIreland, Tourism NI and others, keep us linked to a global market and will help to ensure that future investment is delivered.

We want to build on our record of business creation and new job opportunities. We want to help more people to get into work and to ensure that our workforce has the right skills. We want to help our economy to deal with the impact of both Covid-19 and Brexit through a strategy that helps us to go beyond.

We want to exploit our connectedness, our unique position in the Border Corridor, our road and rail links, our commercial port at Warrenpoint. Our action plan also supports investment in regeneration across our District. It recognises

investment in Newry City, which will help it to become a catalyst for the whole region and to truly realise its status as a city whose best days are ahead.

This document is the outcome of much hard work by a great many people committed to the development of this region and the future of its people. I want to thank them for everything they have done to get us to this point. There are challenges ahead but this strategy, both robust and flexible, will allow us to face them with confidence, and re-launch our District.



# Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2019-23 presents Council's ambitious agenda and strategic priorities to further develop our region as a great place to live, study, work, invest in and visit. This Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy will support the delivery of our Corporate Plan objectives by outlining our economic priorities and supporting actions to regenerate and revitalise our district, support business growth and boost our economic performance, thereby improving the standard of living for all our residents.

The strategy has been informed by:

- reviewing our existing activities and drawing upon the knowledge, experience, learnings and feedback of our staff and stakeholders,
- a review of existing policies and strategy research,
- a series of one-to-one and group consultations with our businesses, stakeholders and partners

This Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy is designed to be flexible and agile enough in order to respond to political and economic uncertainty locally and internationally. It can be adopted to enable Council to work with our businesses, partners and stakeholders to address challenges and exploit new opportunities as they emerge. A flexible and responsive approach to business engagement and support is of particular relevance in response to Covid-19 and Brexit. The District has a strong history of resilience, entrepreneurial spirit, and an ability to effectively adopt and respond to challenges. This strategy will seek to build on this by establishing an environment and economy for businesses to innovate, invest, grow and expand into a thriving, successful region.







## 2.0

# Economic Profile of the District

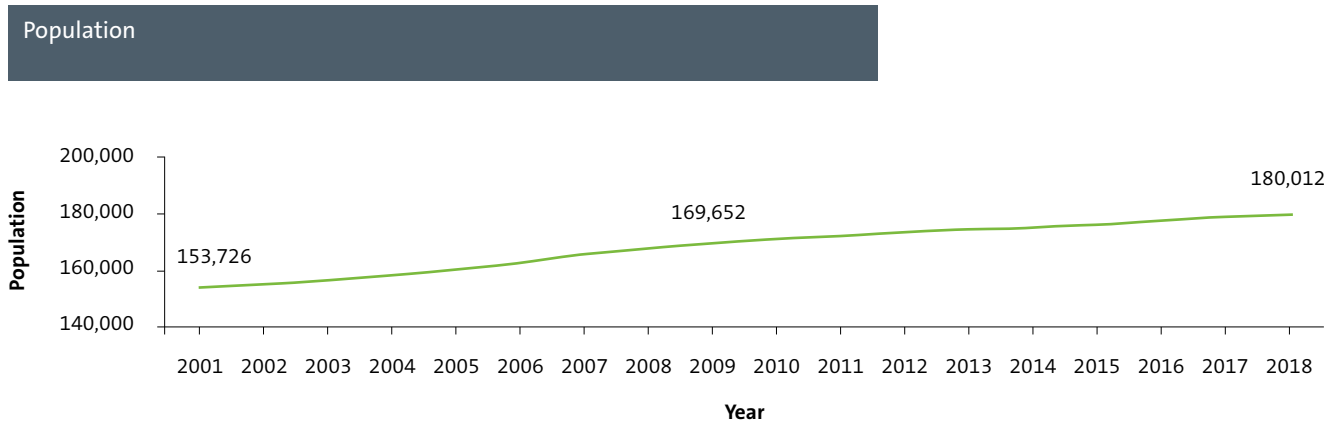
With an estimated population of 180,012, a coastline of approximately 150 Kilometres, and encompassing an area of 1,634 square Kilometres, our strategic location provides an opportunity for business development, local and international investment, promotion of cross-border initiatives, as well as establishing the District as a premier tourism destination.



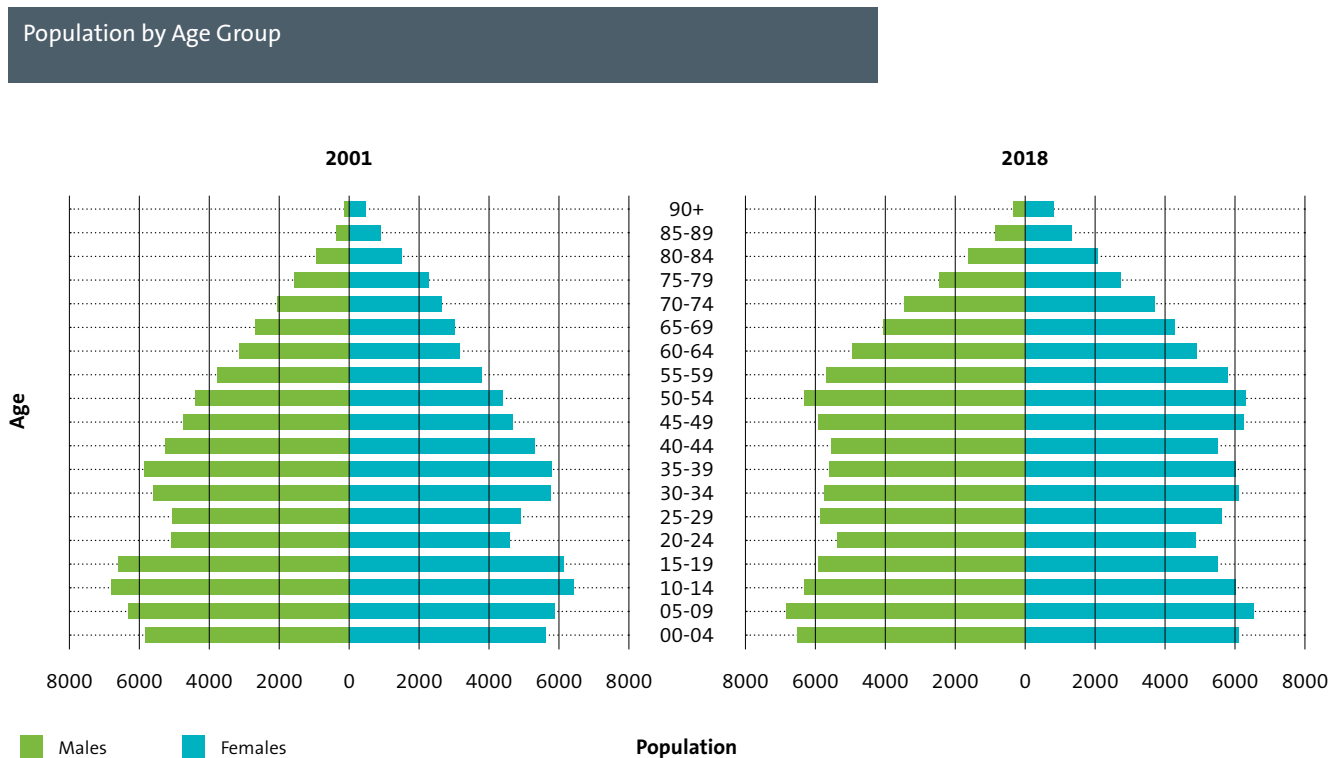


## 2.1 Population

The population of the Newry, Mourne and Down District has increased by 17% from 2001 (153,726) to 2018 (180,012) as detailed in the graph below.



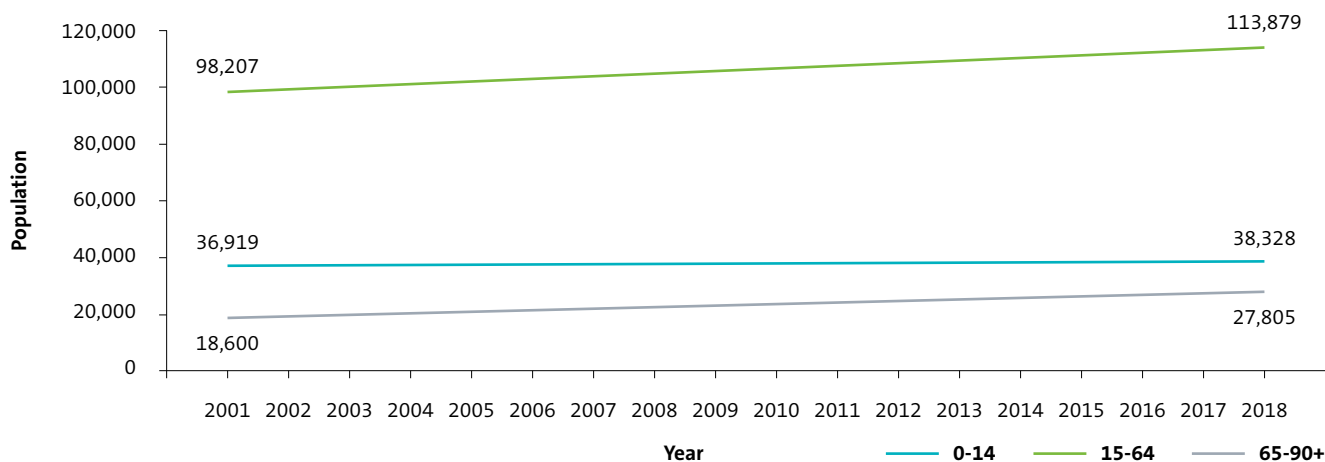
From 2001-2018, as well as an increase in population, the age profile of the population has also changed. As visually evident below there has been an increase of the population aged 35 and over<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> NISRA (2020) Population Estimates: Making Life Better age groups (administrative geographies)

The most notable changes can be seen within the older age brackets. From 2001-2018 there has been a 4% increase in 0-14 year olds, a 16% increase in 15-64 year olds, and a nearly 50% (49%) increase in those aged 64 and over<sup>2</sup>.

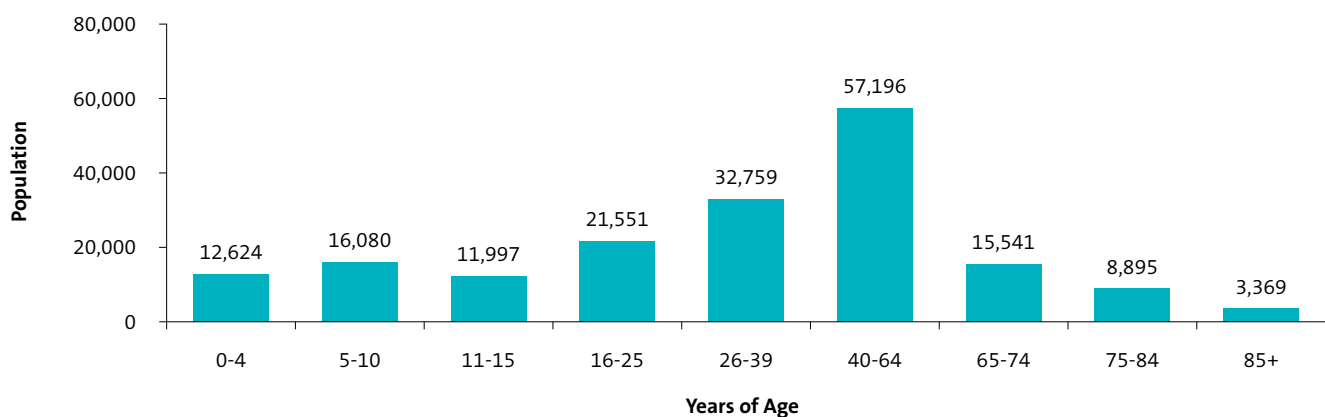
#### Age Bracket Changes 2001-2018



Source: NISRA (2020) Population Estimates: Making Life Better age groups (administrative geographies)

In 2018, the District of Newry, Mourne and Down, had an estimated population of 180,012. The female population represented 50.4%<sup>3</sup> of the total population. The majority of the population (62%)<sup>4</sup> was aged between 16 and 64 with 40-64-year olds recorded as the most common age bracket. The remaining 38% of the population is represented by those under 16-year olds (23%) and those over the age of 64 (15%)<sup>5</sup>.

#### Population by Broad Age Brackets



Source: NISRA (2020) Population Estimates: Making Life Better age groups (administrative geographies)

<sup>2-5</sup> NISRA (2020) Population Estimates: Making Life Better age groups (administrative geographies)

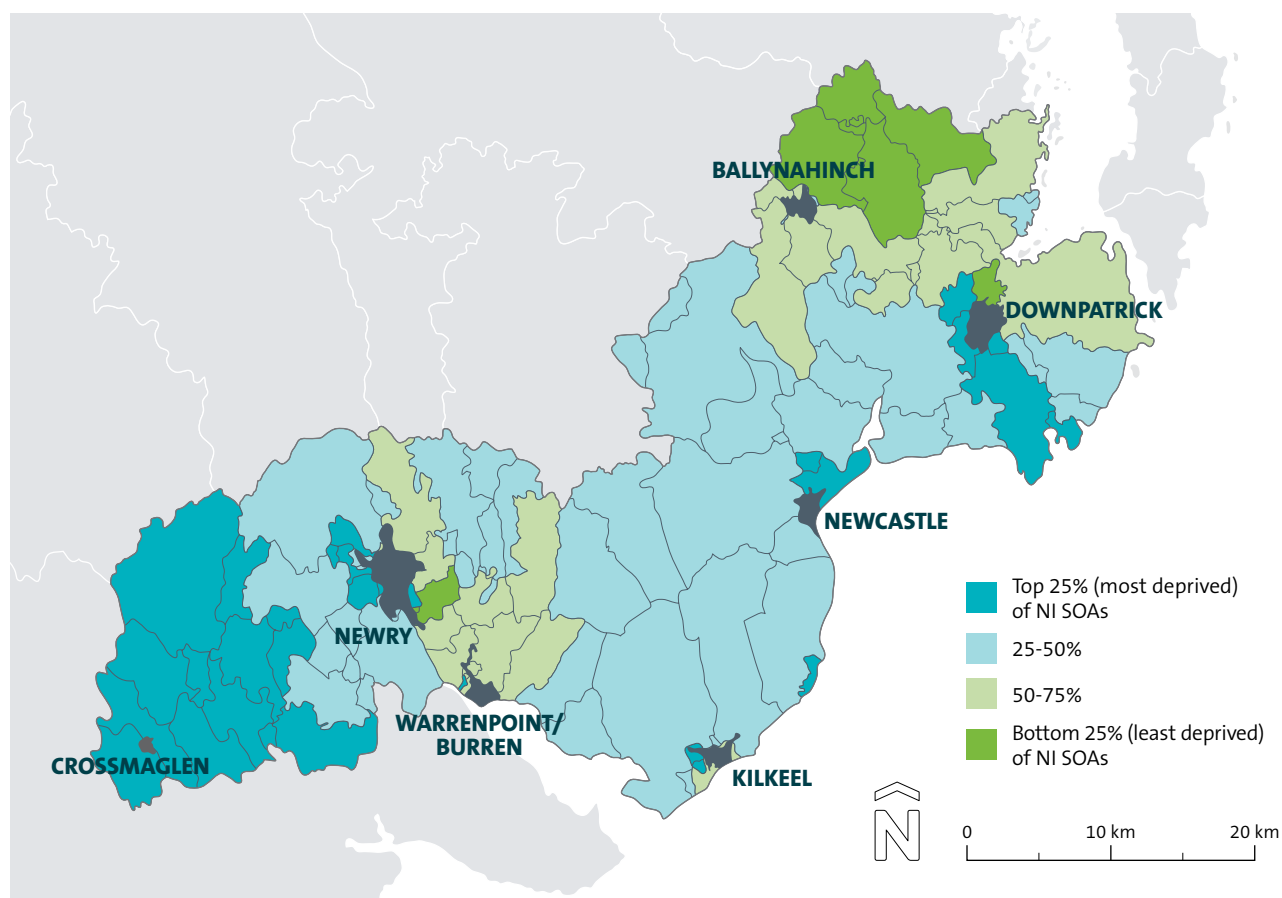
## 2.2 Multiple Deprivation

When analysing the population in terms of deprivation, the Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM2017) is the official measure of deprivation in Northern Ireland. The NIMDM 2017 provides information on seven types or 'domains' of deprivation and an overall multiple deprivation measure comprising a weighted combination of the seven domains.



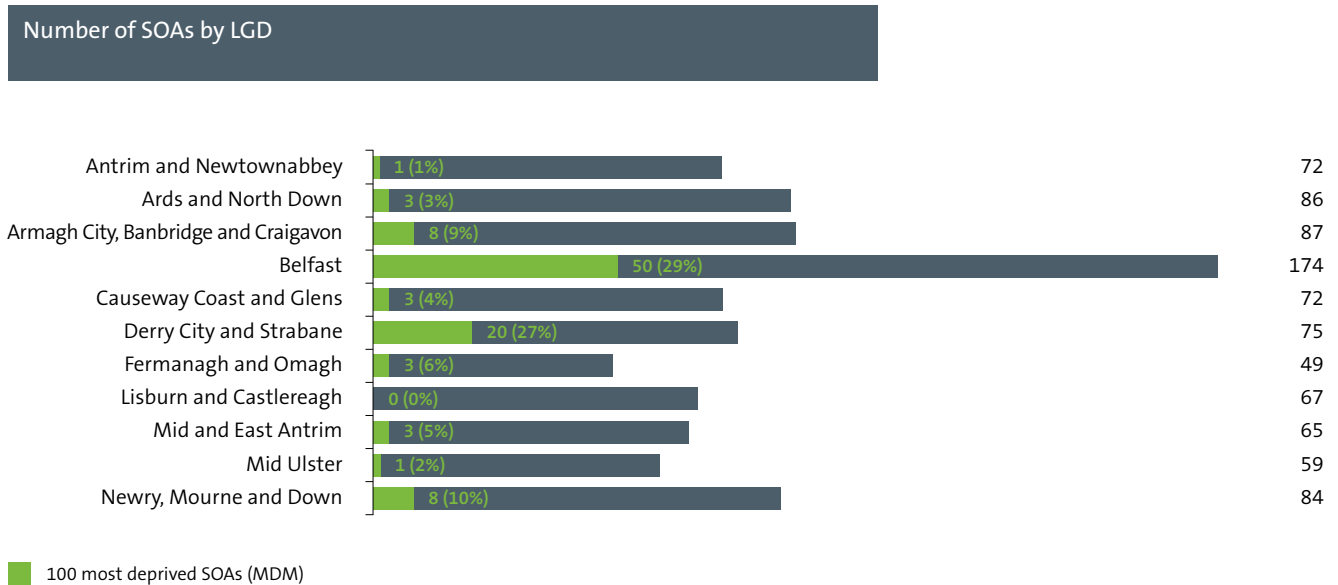


In 2017 Newry, Mourne and Down saw a rise in Super Output Areas (small geographical areas for reporting purposes) in the top 25% of NI's most deprived areas with four more Super Output Areas within this category compared to 2010 levels<sup>6</sup>. In total, 23 of the District's 84 Super Output Areas are within the top 25% (NI) for Multiple Deprivation rank.<sup>7</sup>



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Newry Mourne and Down has the third highest percentage level of Super Output Areas within the top 100 most deprived areas within NI<sup>8</sup>.



Source: NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

Income deprivation is worth 25%, which is calculated using DfE/HMRC income data. A total of 32 Super Output Areas are within the top 25% of the income deprivation domain and four of the five highest ranked SOAs in NI for income deprivation come from within our District.

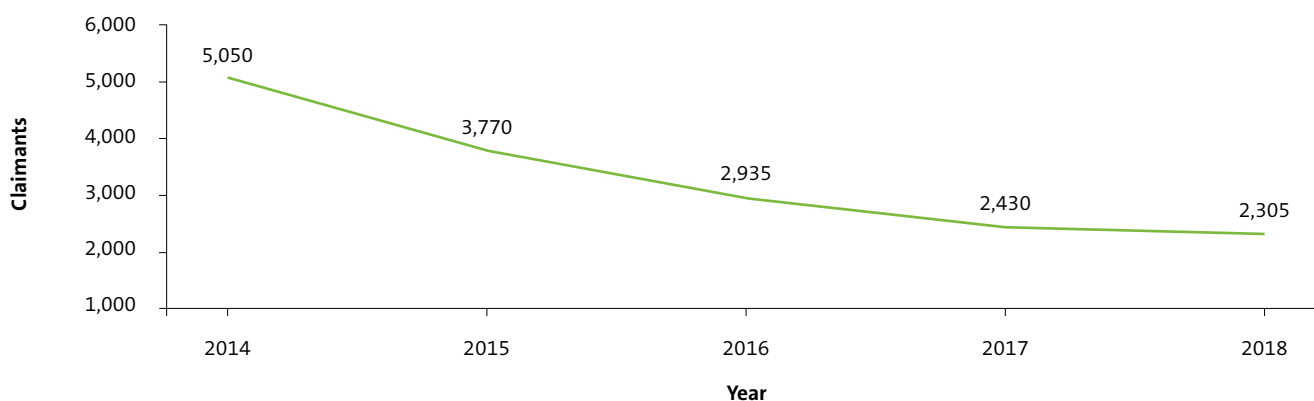
<sup>8</sup> NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

## 2.3 Employment

In 2018, there were a total of 57,618 employee jobs within the District. A total of 14,159 (25%) of the jobs within the District were public sector (below the NI Average of 27%), which highlights the District's strong private sector<sup>9</sup>.

Analysing the claimant count within the District, which measures the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed (based on administrative data from the benefits system) the average number of claimants has decreased annually, overall by 2,745 from 2014 to 2018<sup>10</sup>.

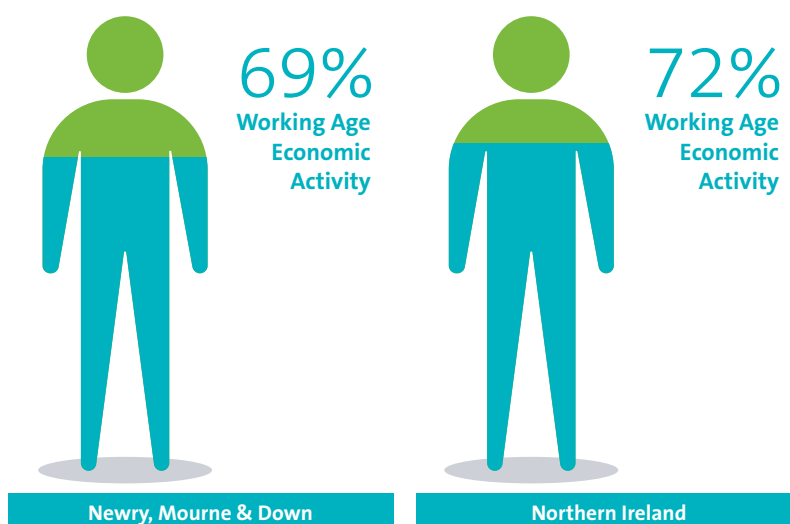
Claimant Count Annual Averages



Source: NISRA (2018) Claimant Count Annual Averages - Experimental (administrative geographies)

Meanwhile, from 2015 to 2018 the rate of economic activity and employment rate has fluctuated but seen no significant change<sup>11</sup>. This is an area that this Strategy will seek to improve by developing new interventions aimed at supporting the economically inactive back into employment.

Labour Market Structure (2018)



<sup>9</sup> Inter departmental Business Register (2018) Business Demography

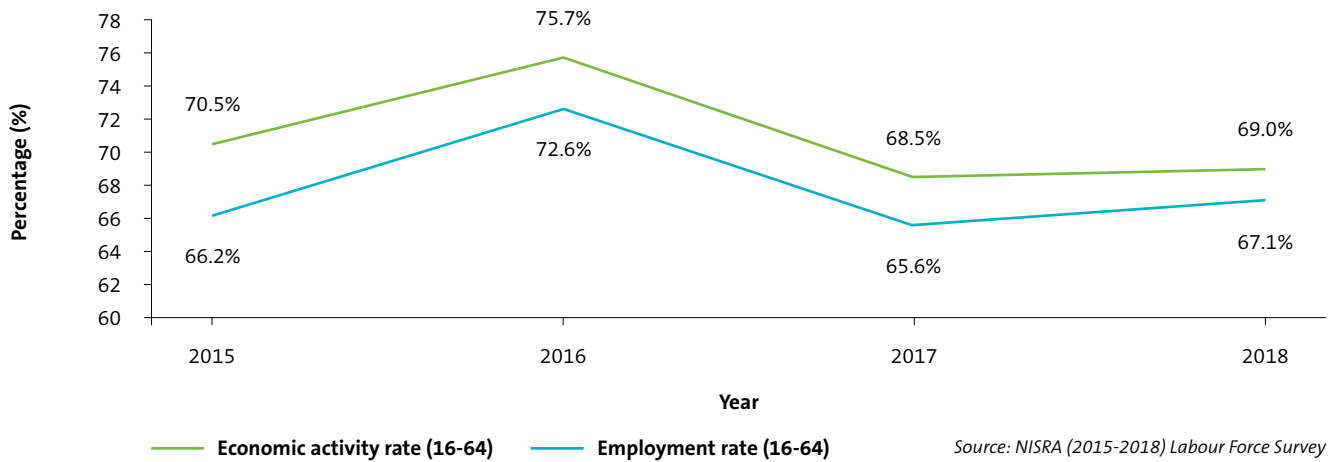
<sup>10</sup> NISRA (2018) Claimant Count Annual Averages - Experimental (administrative geographies)

<sup>11</sup> NISRA (2015-2019) Labour Force Survey

Source: NISRA (2018) Labour Force Survey

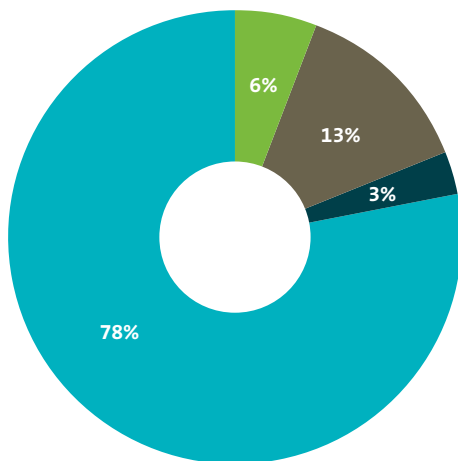


### Newry, Mourne and Down Economic Activity and Employment Rates (2015-2019)



Focusing on the four headline industry sectors, 78% of those employed in Newry, Mourne and Down in 2018 were within the services industry sector<sup>12</sup>. Each industry sector is predominately male based except for services which has a female workforce equating to 61%<sup>13</sup>.

### Number of Employee Jobs in Newry, Mourne and Down by Headline Industry Sector (2018)

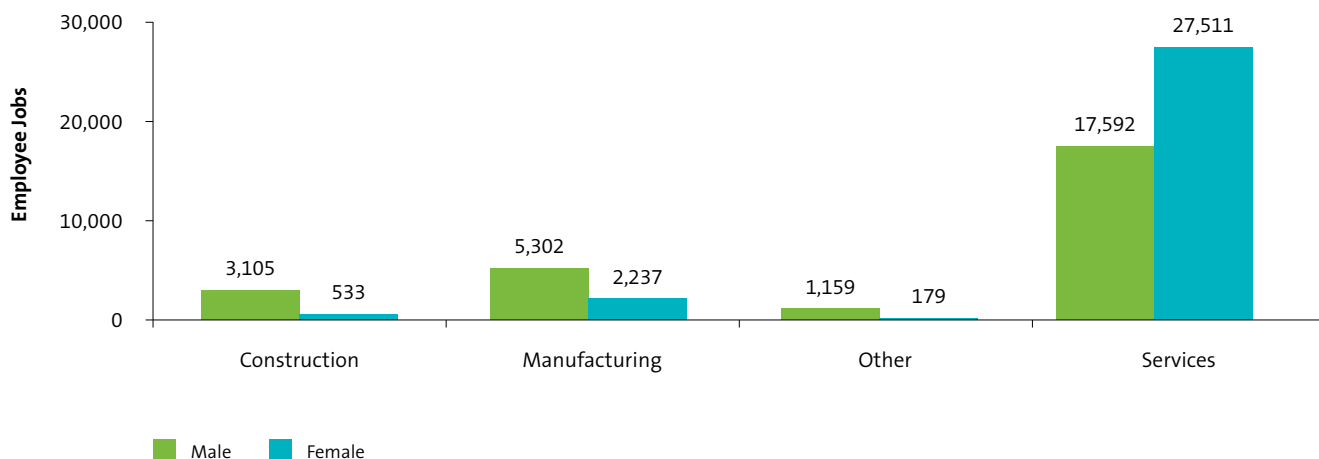


	Number of Employee Jobs	Percentage (%)
Construction	3,639	6
Manufacturing	7,540	13
Other	1,337	3
Services	45,102	78

Source: ONS (2016 & 2018) Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

<sup>12-13</sup> ONS (2016 & 2018) Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

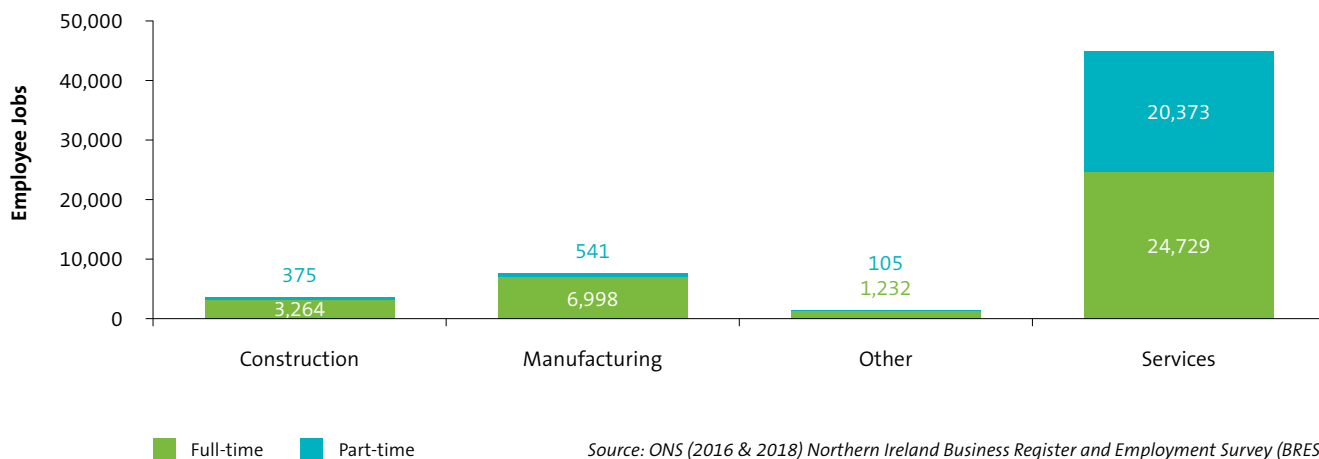
### Number of Employee Jobs in Newry, Mourn and Down by Gender Within Headline Industry Sectors (2018)



Source: ONS (2016 & 2018) Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

Within the headline industries, most contracts are full-time. However, the services sector appears to be the exception with 45% of its employees on part-time contracts<sup>14</sup>.

### Contract Type by Headline Industry Sector in Newry, Mourn And Down (2018)



Source: ONS (2016 & 2018) Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

<sup>14</sup> ONS (2016 & 2018) Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

A total of 20 Super Output Areas are within the top 25% in the Employment Deprivation rank within Northern Ireland<sup>15</sup>.

### Employment Deprivation

Super Output Area	Employment Domain Rank (where 1 is most deprived) (1-890)	Proportion of the Working Age Population Who Are Employment Deprived (%)
Ballybot	73	37.2%
Murlough	77	36.5%
Drumgullion_1	89	34.8%
Ballymote	93	34.6%
Daisy Hill_2	100	34.0%
Quoile_1	105	33.7%
Crossmaglen	109	33.1%
Ardglass_1	115	32.7%
Kilkeel South_2	122	32.2%
Daisy Hill_1	124	32.1%
Bessbrook	130	31.9%
Cathedral_2	133	31.4%
Clonallan_1	157	29.8%
St Patrick's_2	163	29.6%
Kilkeel Central_2	177	28.7%
Castlewellan_1	184	28.3%
St Mary's	203	27.1%
Derrymore_2	207	27.0%
Donard_1	208	26.8%
Creggan	221	26.4%

Source: NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

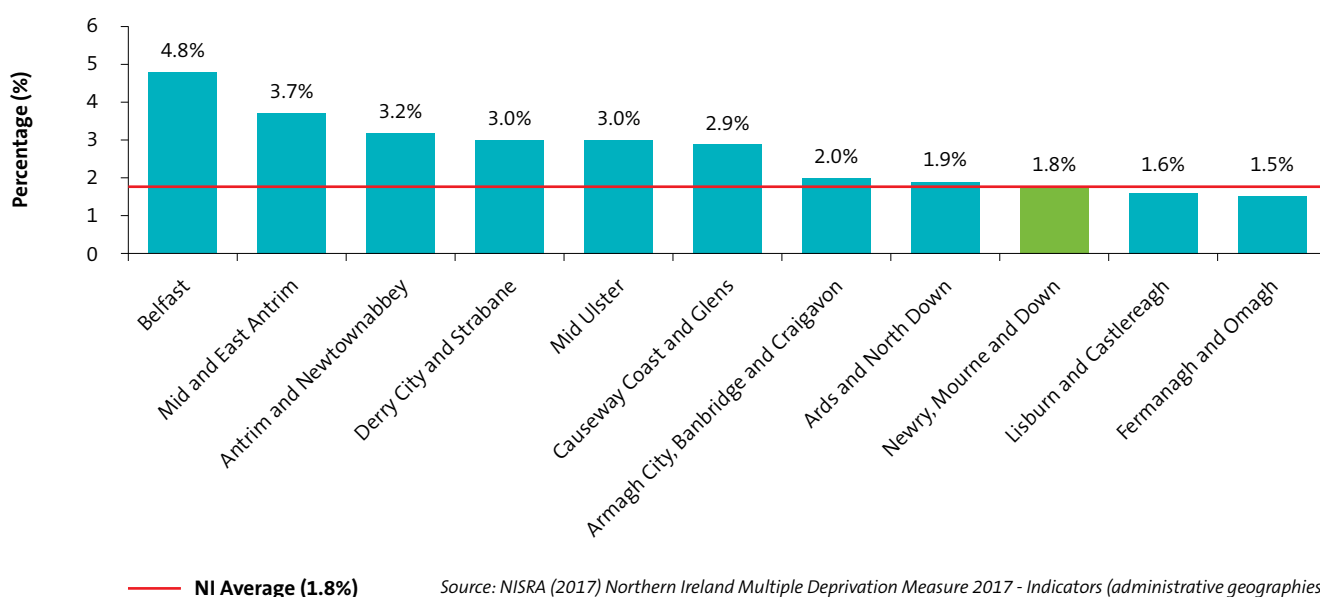
<sup>15</sup> NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

## 2.4 Labour Market

The purpose of the Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain within the Multiple Deprivation Measure is to identify the prevalence of poor educational outcomes for children and low levels of qualifications for working age adults at the small area level.

A total of 14 Super Output Areas are within the top 25% in the Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain rank within Northern Ireland<sup>16</sup>. The proportion of those leaving school aged 16, 17 and 18 not entering into education, employment or training within Newry, Mourne and Down is equal to the Northern Ireland average of 1.8% (2017)<sup>17</sup>.

Proportion (%) of Those Leaving School Aged 16, 17 and 18 Not Entering Education, Employment or Training in Newry, Mourne and Down (2017)



Source: NISRA (2017) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 - Indicators (administrative geographies)

In 2018, 30.2% of the working age population had achieved NVQ Level 4 and above and over half (52%) had achieved below NVQ Level 4. Meanwhile 17.9% had no qualifications, compared with 14.7% across Northern Ireland<sup>18</sup>. Those who continued to study onto higher education have mostly

been recorded as studying “all other disciplines” whilst, qualifications gained in maths, computing, engineering and technology subjects have increased each year from 2015 to 2017<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

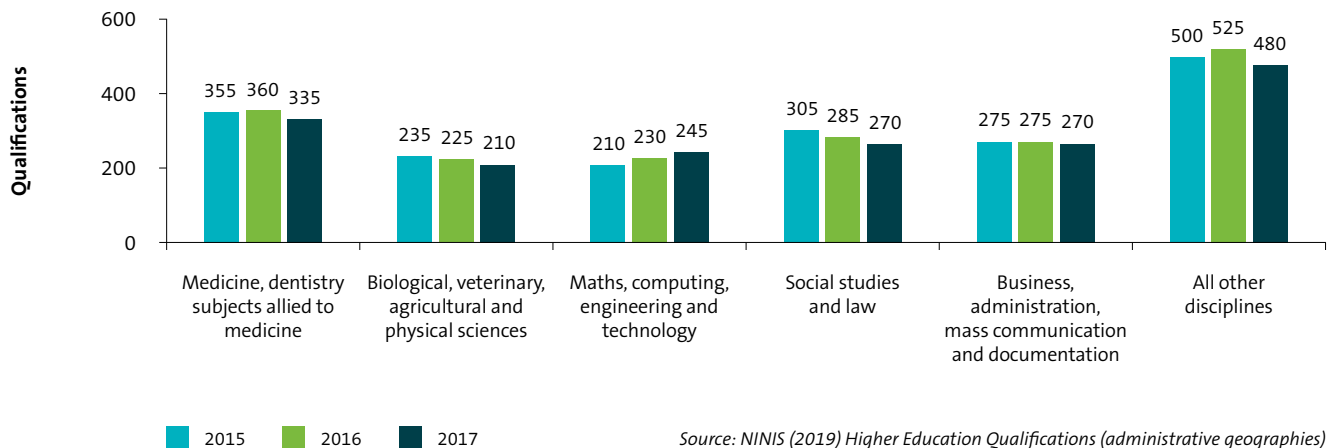
<sup>17</sup> NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

<sup>18</sup> NISRA (2018) Economic Activity and Qualifications (administrative geographies)

<sup>19</sup> NINIS (2019) Higher Education Qualifications (administrative geographies)

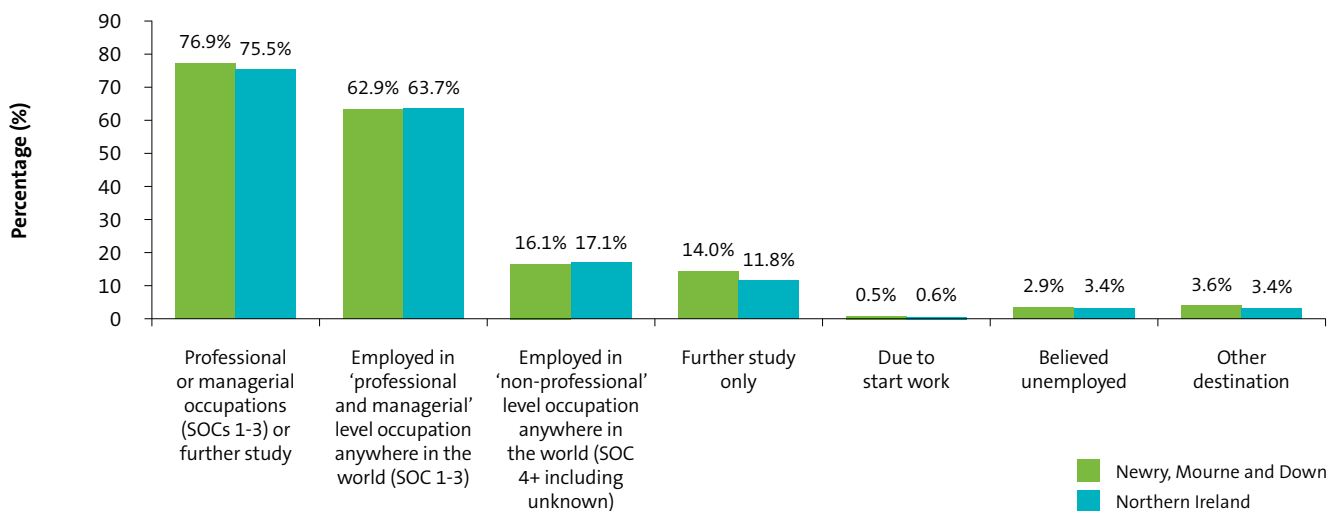


### Higher Education Qualifications in Newry, Mourne and Down (2015-2017)



Of the higher education graduates (2016/17), 76.9% are in 'professional or managerial occupations or further education', 16.1% employed in 'non-professional level occupations' and 2.9% believed to be 'unemployed'<sup>20</sup>.

### Higher Education Graduates in Professional or Management Occupations or in Further Study Six Months After Graduation with a Newry, Mourne and Down Pre-study Address (2016-17)



Source: NINIS (2018) In professional or management occupations or study after graduation (administrative geographies)

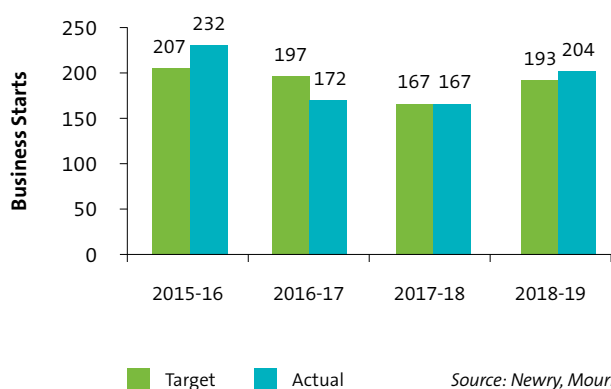
<sup>20</sup> NINIS (2018) In professional or management occupations or study after graduation (administrative geographies)

## 2.5 Business Birth and Growth

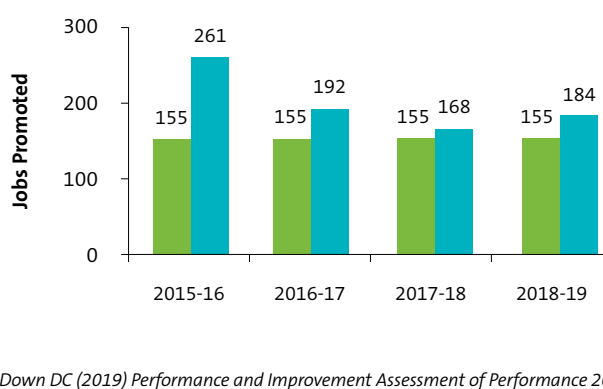
Since 2015-16, the Council has approved 1,140 business plans, supported 776 new business starts and promoted 805 new jobs through business start-up activity. Targets have been achieved each year for business plan approvals and business starts, apart from 2016-17, when the programme moved into interim delivery arrangements which resulted in lower levels of participation. The Council has consistently exceeded the targets set for the number

of jobs promoted, and is currently ranked 4/11 across Northern Ireland, following a 9.5% increase in the number of jobs promoted between 2017-18 and 2018-19. The Council performed well against the statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development. During 2018-19, the Council promoted 184 new jobs through business start-up activity, exceeding our target by 19%.

Number of Business Starts in Newry, Mourne and Down (2015/16-2018/19)



Number of Jobs Promoted in Newry, Mourne and Down (2015/16-2018/19)



Source: Newry, Mourne and Down DC (2019) Performance and Improvement Assessment of Performance 2018-19

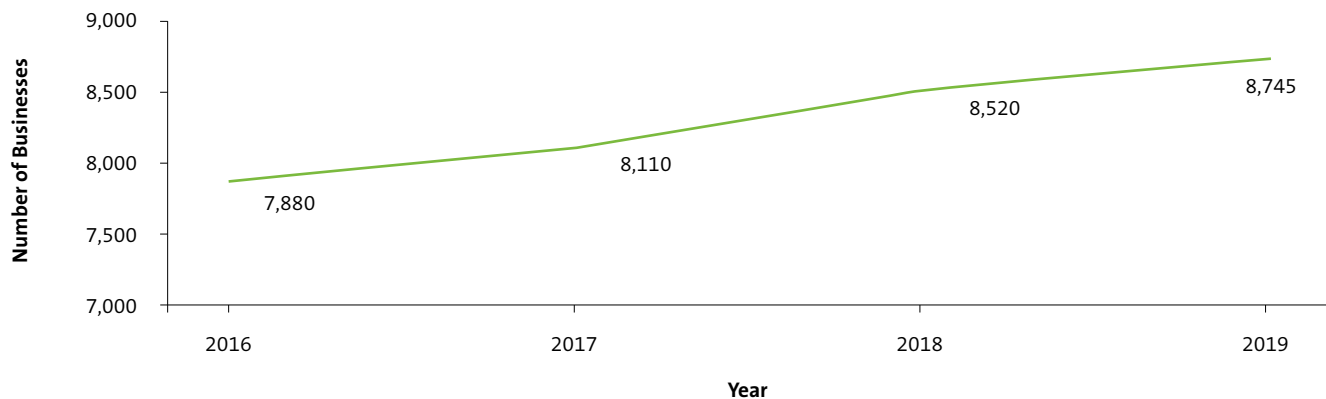
Newry, Mourne and Down has a healthy rate of business births, with the number increasing from 560 (2015) to 725 (2018). Newry, Mourne and Down has the second highest of all councils in this field and is well above the Northern Ireland average (536) in 2018<sup>21</sup>.

From 2016-19, the total number of VAT or PAYE registered businesses within the District has increased annually and micro businesses with one to nine employees accounts for the majority of the total enterprises in the Newry, Mourne and Down District which have increased in number annually<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Inter-Departmental Business Register (2018) Business Demography NI

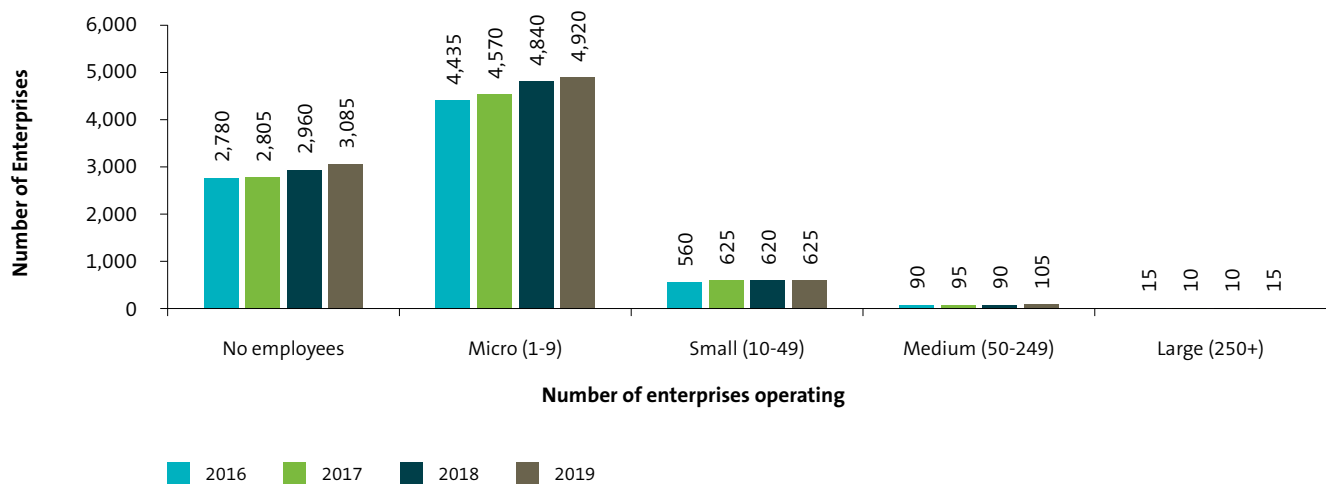
<sup>22</sup> NISRA (2019) VAT and or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland (administrative geographies)

### VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in NMD (2016-2019)



Source: NISRA (2019) VAT and or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland (administrative geographies)

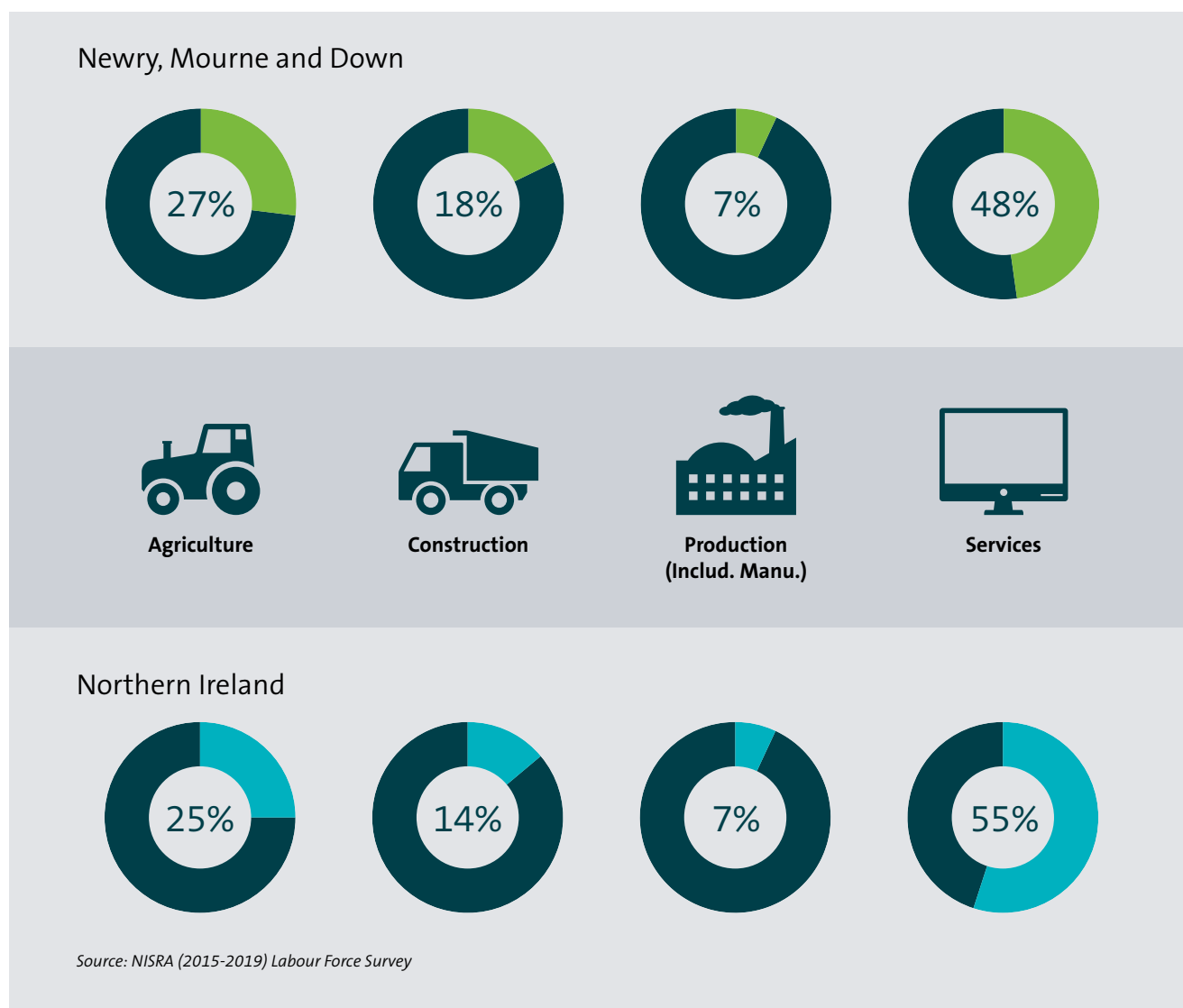
### Enterprises by Size in NMD (2016-2019)



Source: NISRA (2019) VAT and or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland (administrative geographies)

## 2.6 Business Base

The Services sector is where the majority of businesses are located within Newry, Mourne and Down. The District is notable for the proportion of its businesses that are in the Agriculture sector and the construction sector continues to be a strong and increasing presence in the local business base<sup>23</sup>.



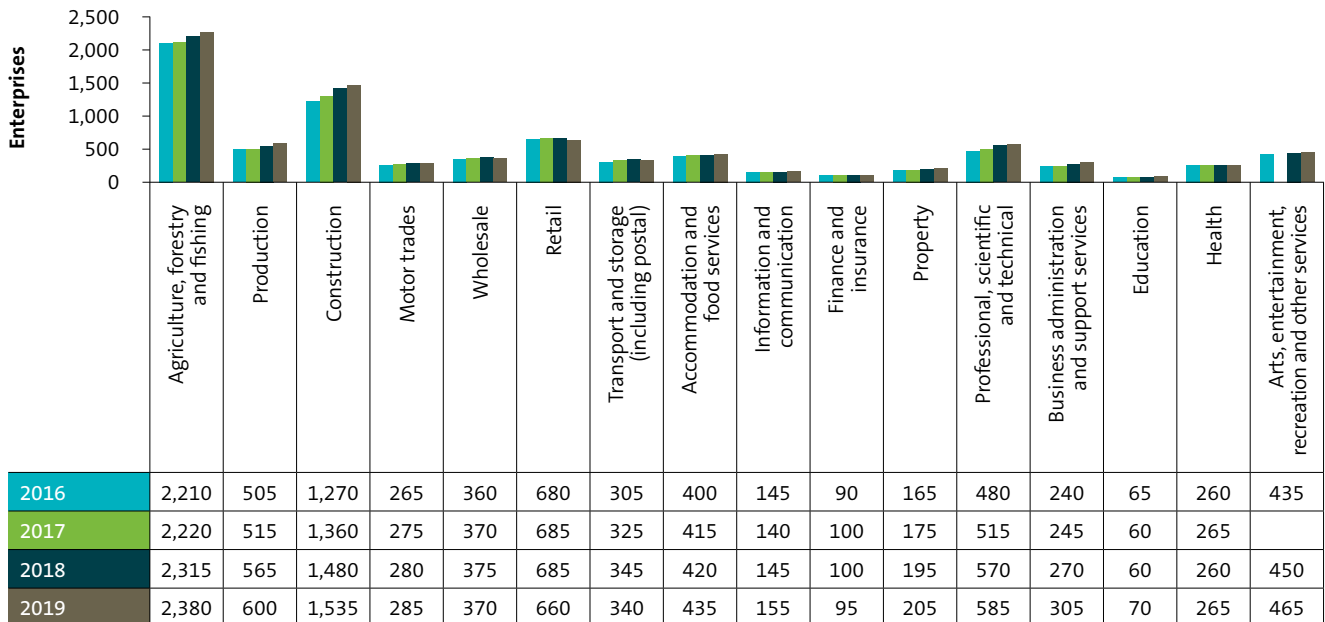
Breaking down the enterprises into further sectors, 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' appears to be the largest enterprise sector within the Newry, Mourne and Down District (2016-2019)<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> NISRA (2015-2019) Labour Force Survey

<sup>24</sup> NISRA (2019) VAT and or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland (administrative geographies)



## Enterprises by Sector (2016-2019)

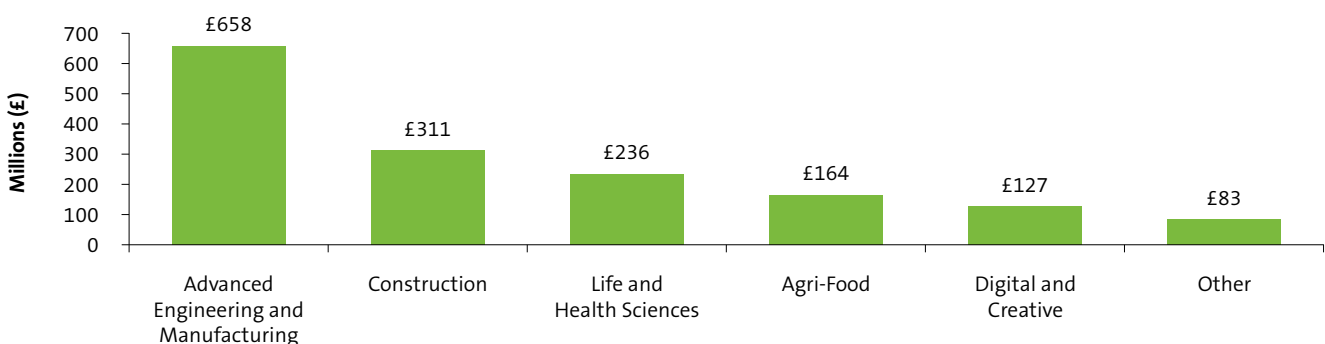


Source: NISRA (2019) VAT and or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland (administrative geographies)

While the number of enterprises operating across Newry, Mourne and Down is important it is also necessary to look at sales and revenue of various sectors across the District in order to see a more rounded picture of the economic landscape within Newry, Mourne and Down.

The graph below highlights the sales (£) by broad sectors within the Newry, Mourne and Down District in 2019. Comparing both graphs, we see that while the number of enterprises operating within Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the highest within the district, sales contributed to the economy from this sector is fourth highest with Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing accounting for over 40% of total sales.

## Sales by Sector (£) Newry, Mourne and Down (2019)



Source: BRES (Business Register and Employment Survey) data.

The BRES (Business Register and Employment Survey) data which is analysed above at LGD level was also analysed at a DEA level by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre as part of ongoing work to support the Council's Local Development Plan process. They have profiled the broader sectors of Construction, Manufacturing, Services & Other. The table shows the sectoral concentration – using employment shares – for each of the DEAs in 2017.

#### Total Employment by Broad Sector (Percentage of DEA Total), Newry, Mourne and Down DEA's 2017

	Percentage of DEA Total (%)				
	Construction	Manufacturing	Other	Services	Total
Crotlieve	20.6%	18.2%	3.6%	57.6%	100.0%
Downpatrick	3.6%	2.4%	8.7%	85.3%	100.0%
Newry	4.6%	5.7%	8.5%	81.2%	100.0%
Rowallane	11.4%	11.5%	5.2%	71.9%	100.0%
Slieve Croob	13.6%	15.8%	8.9%	61.7%	100.0%
Slieve Gullion	10.1%	24.4%	16.4%	49.1%	100.0%
The Mournes	11.6%	17.6%	6.6%	64.2%	100.0%
Newry, Mourne and Down Total	9.2%	12.1%	8.6%	70.2%	100.0%

Source: NISRA (BRES) & UUEPC Analysis

In terms of specialisation at a DEA level, there are some features which might be expected, such as larger towns (Downpatrick and Newry) having a higher dependence on service-based sectors, with shares between 81% and 85%. In comparison, more rural DEAs (such as Slieve Gullion) have a lower share of less than 60% of total DEA employment.

The rural DEAs have a higher concentration of employment in 'Other' (which is largely based on the use of natural resources), with this broad sector accounting for between 7% and 9% of employment in the Mournes and Slieve Croob DEAs. This compares to 6% or less in more urban-based DEAs.

The table also highlights that the Manufacturing sector is a key employer in at least three DEA areas (The Mournes, Slieve Gullion and Crotlieve) with shares of total local employment ranging from 18% to 24%. The importance of one large employer in a DEA can be summed up by the example of the airplane seat manufacturer Rockwell Collins which is based in Kilkeel in the Mournes DEA and employs around 800 people.

Total Employment by Broad Sector (Percentage of Newry, Mourne and Down District Total),  
Newry, Mourne and Down DEAs, 2017

	Percentage of DEA Total (%)				
	Construction	Manufacturing	Other	Services	Total
Crotlieve	23.8%	16.0%	4.5%	8.7%	10.6%
Downpatrick	5.3%	2.7%	13.9%	16.5%	13.8%
Newry	16.1%	15.0%	31.6%	36.9%	32.4%
Rowallane	10.3%	7.9%	5.0%	8.5%	8.5%
Slieve Croob	11.5%	10.2%	8.0%	6.8%	7.6%
Slieve Gullion	14.8%	27.2%	25.8%	9.4%	12.6%
The Mournes	18.2%	21.0%	11.1%	13.2%	14.5%
Newry, Mourne and Down Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NISRA (BRES) & UUEPC Analysis

What becomes clear in the above table is that the Newry DEA has the highest proportion of service-based sectors within the Council area, with more than a third (37%) of all service jobs located in Newry. Since 2013 the service sector in Newry DEA has continued to expand, creating an additional 1,100 jobs (94% of all jobs created in the Newry DEA). Part of this is the growth in ICT, given the continued expansion of First Derivatives, and the success and growth of STATSports in recent years.

Newry & Crotlieve DEAs have the highest concentration of employment in the remaining two sectors (Other and Construction). Almost a third (32%) of all 'Other' employment in the NM&DDC area is in the Newry DEA, most likely due to higher concentration of Utilities workplaces in the area. Crotlieve DEA has the highest concentration of Construction workers of all DEA's in the NM&DDC area, accounting for almost a quarter (24%) of that sector's total employment.

As for Manufacturing, both tables show how The Mournes and Slieve Gullion DEAs have the highest proportions of the Council area's employment in this sector. The two DEAs contribute almost half (48%) of all employment in Manufacturing for the NM&DDC area.

## 2.7 Connectivity and Infrastructure

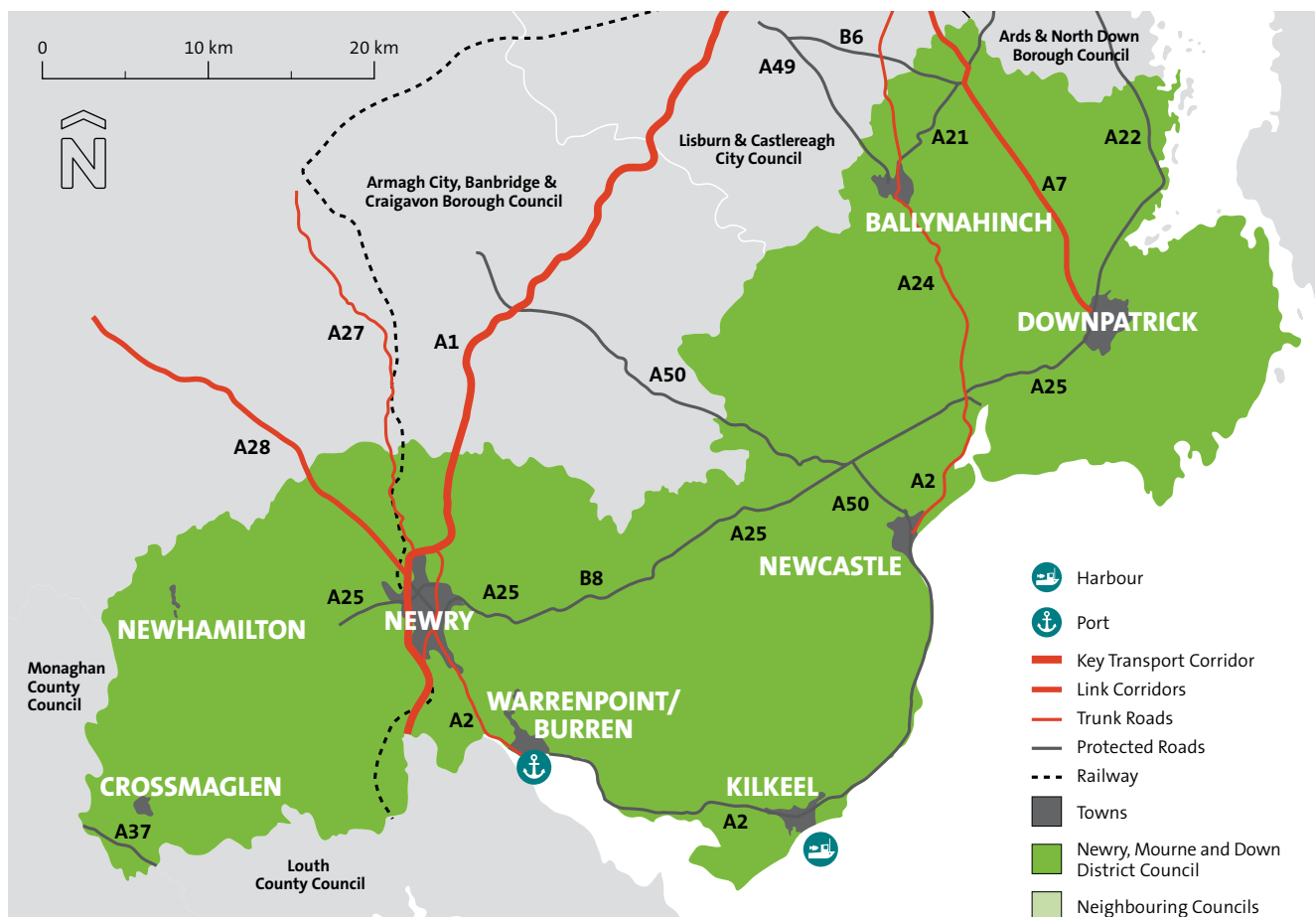
Newry, Mourne and Down District is uniquely placed on the Eastern Economic Corridor, with Newry City midway between Dublin and Belfast. In terms of infrastructure, the A1, which goes through the District and links seamlessly to the Republic of Ireland's M1 at the border, provides high-quality road access, meaning that both Dublin and Belfast are only an hour away. The District is also served by the Belfast to Dublin Enterprise railway service, which stops at Newry.

The District is home to Warrenpoint Port, which is one of Northern Ireland's commercial ports. In terms of cargo, the port is the second largest in Northern Ireland and the fifth largest on the island of Ireland.

One of the projects that will be delivered as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (mentioned below), which was approved in 2018, is the much anticipated Newry

Southern Relief Road. That project will link the A1 bypass of Newry City with the A2 Warrenpoint dual carriageway, thus linking Warrenpoint Port with Ireland's Eastern Economic Corridor.

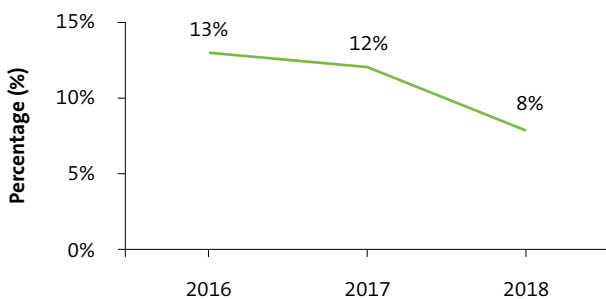
The District is also easily accessible from the ports of Dublin, Dun Laoghaire, Belfast and Larne as well as Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport and Belfast City Airport.





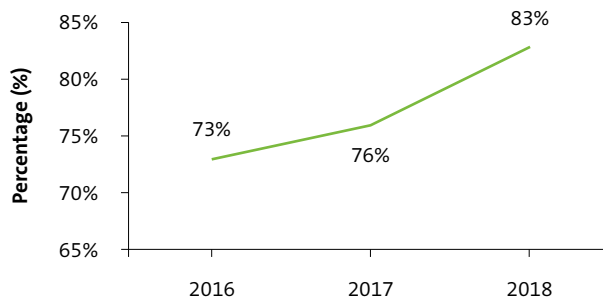
Broadband connectivity has increased within the District, with a 10% increase from 2016 to 2018 in the percentage of properties receiving superfast broadband<sup>25</sup>. However, the District falls below the regional average for the percentage of properties that receive Ultrafast broadband by 34%, ranking second lowest in the region<sup>26</sup>.

Percentage of Properties in NMD  
Unable to Get 10Mbit/s Download (2016-2018)



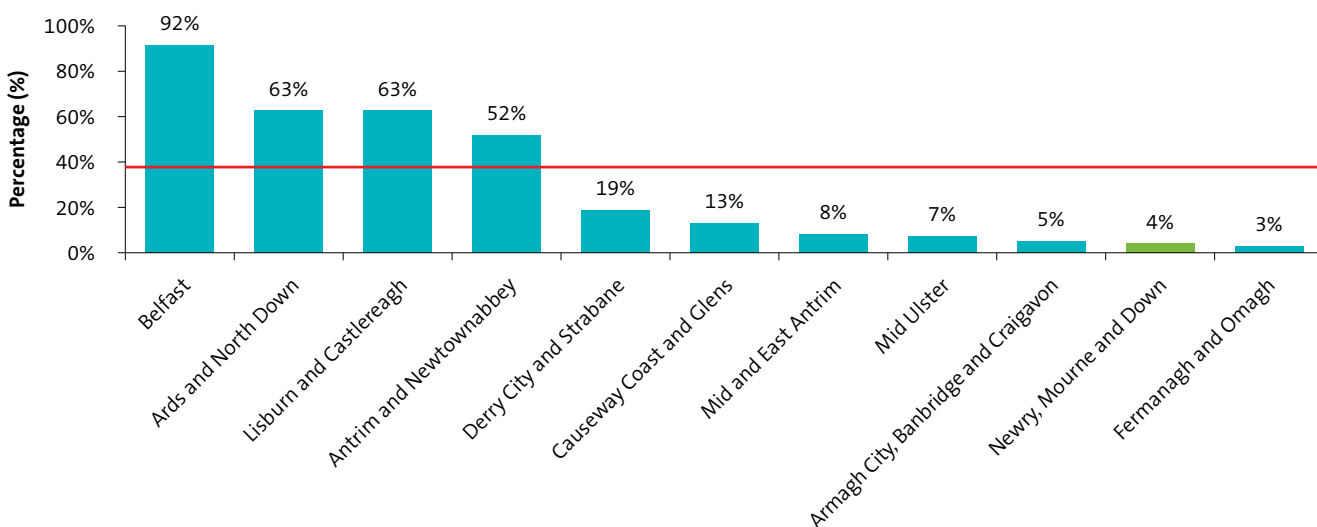
Source: OFCOM (2016-2018) Connected Nations Report

Percentage of Properties in NMD  
>=30Mbit/s (Superfast) (2016-2018)



Source: OFCOM (2016-2018) Connected Nations Report

Percentage of Properties in NMD >=300Mbit/s (Ultrafast) (2018)



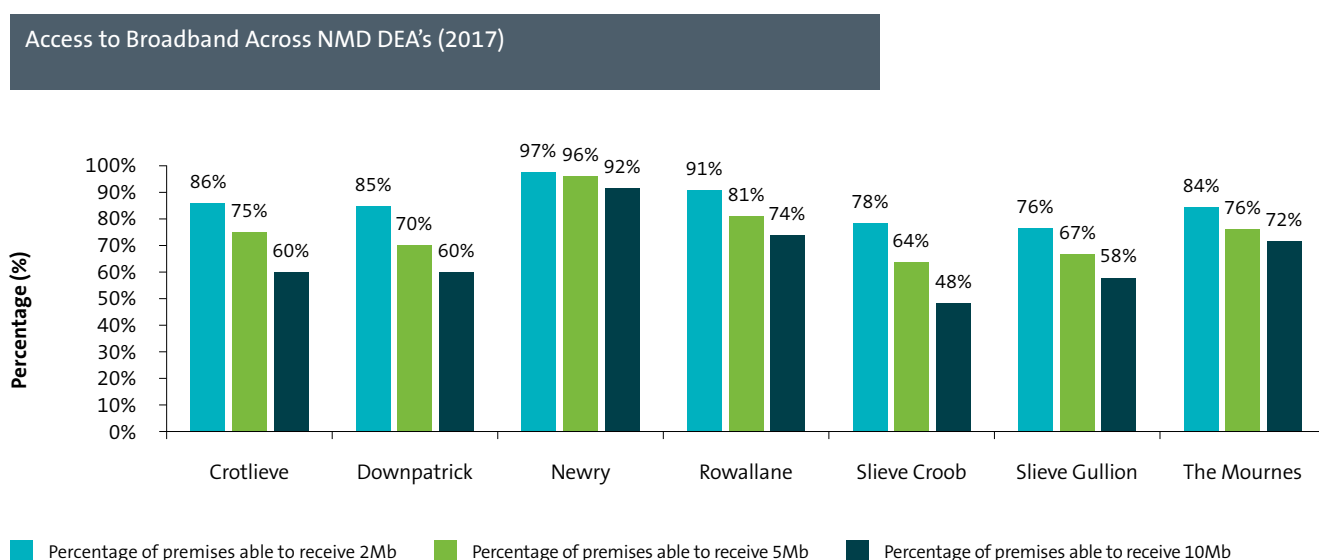
— NI

Source: OFCOM (2018) Connected Nations Report

<sup>25</sup> OFCOM (2016-2018) Connected Nations Report

<sup>26</sup> OFCOM (2018) Connected Nations Report

Looking at broadband connectivity by DEA, Newry appears to have the most access with Slieve Croob the least<sup>27</sup>.



Source: Newry, Mourne and Down DC Evidence and Research Team (2017)

In response, the Council hosts the Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium, which comprises the 10 councils in Northern Ireland outside Belfast. In May 2019, the Consortium secured £15 million of funding from the UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to provide gigabit capable fibre broadband coverage throughout Northern Ireland. A proportion of that money will be used to boost fibre broadband in Newry, Mourne and Down which is crucial for investment, jobs, business infrastructure and a key enabler of future economic growth.

A total of 36 Super Output Areas are within the top 25% in Access to Services Deprivation Domain rank within Northern Ireland<sup>28</sup>.

The Access to Services domain score is calculated by combining three equally weighted indicators:

- 1 Travel time by private transport to the services.
- 2 Public transport time to the same services with the exception of schools, A&Es and petrol stations:

the public transport model does not include bespoke school bus routes and timetables, and it was postulated that for emergency treatment, people would not rely on public transport.

- 3 Proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s.

The inclusion of the public transport and broadband indicators helps to highlight rural deprivation and isolation. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council ranks second at LGD level in this domain behind Fermanagh and Omagh.

<sup>27</sup> Newry, Mourne and Down DC Evidence and Research Team (2017)

<sup>28</sup> NISRA (2020) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017



# 3.0

## Economic Outlook for the District

### 3.1 Economic Outlook Post Covid-19 – Potential Economic Consequences

COVID-19 pandemic and the economic fallout is truly unparalleled in economic experience. The future scenario for the economy remains highly uncertain, with forecasters not expecting economic output to recover to 2019 levels until 2022 at the earliest.

Recent estimates of the potential impact caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are set out below. The forecasts for an annual decline in GDP in 2020 currently range between 7% and 14%, with Ulster University Economic Policy Centre estimate showing a contraction in economic output in 2020 of 12.7%.

#### Economic Impact of Covid-19

COVID-19 Economic Impact Estimates	Equivalent Annual Percentage Decline in GDP	Peak Unemployment	Source
UK	14% 12.8% 6.5%	9.5% 10% 9.6%	Bank of England OBR IMF
Rol	12.0% 10.5% 8.3%	24% 24.7% 18.8%	ESRI Department of Finance Central Bank of Ireland
NI	12.7% 7.5%	12.0% 5.0%	UUEPC Danske Bank / OE

Source: UUEPC: Economic Consequences of Covid-19



The changing estimates emphasise that the length of the period of strict containment measures is critical. There is the immediate, if temporary, impact in terms of contraction in 2020 followed by an increased probability of permanent economic damage if a longer 'lockdown' is required.

Four scenarios the economy could follow; the scenario which economies will follow remains highly uncertain

- **V-shaped recovery**

The best-case scenario, the recession is relatively deep but is short-term in nature.

- **U-shaped recovery**

The recession is deep and prolonged.

- **W-shaped recovery**

The economy recovers quite quickly, but a second wave outbreak forces a re/imposition of containment measures and pushes the economy back into recession.

- **L-shaped recovery**

The most pernicious scenario, where the recession is deep, growth does not return to pre-recession levels and permanent damage is done.

All sectors have been impacted by the Coronavirus lock-down. A NI Chamber of Commerce members survey completed in March 2020 highlighted the significance of the immediate & early impact on local (mainly smaller) firms:

- 36% of businesses closed their operations temporarily.
- Over 50% of businesses were accessing the furlough scheme for some or all of their employees.
- 38% of businesses have seen a significant decrease in their workforce.

*Source: NI Chamber & BDO, 8 April 2020, "Quarterly Economic Survey and COVID-19 Business Impact Tracker"*

The impact on the labour market is also significant, firstly for those working in sectors which have been placed in lock-down, but also for those who may lose their jobs as businesses re-open and place efforts in recovery and responding to new economic demands. The first official data on unemployment are the claimant count figures released by NISRA on 19 May 2020 showed an increase of 26,500 to 56,200 for the

period up to 9 April 2020. By that early stage the unemployment rate had risen to 6.1%, an almost doubling of the rate in just over a month.

HMRC have reported that 8.4 million jobs (more than 25% of total workplace jobs) across the UK were being covered by the furlough scheme with more joining during May. Research undertaken by the UUEPC have indicated that in NI a combined figure of 249,500 workplace jobs are impacted by BOTH furloughing and lay-offs. This equates to almost 48% of all private sectors jobs in NI. *(Source: UUEPC: Economic Consequences of Covid-19).*

It is also relevant to consider that businesses will face further staffing decisions as restrictions begin to be eased and firms reopen.

#### Economic Impact of Covid-19: Furlough Staff

	Total Employees Q4 2019 (Estimates)	Total Furloughed and Laid Off Employees (Estimates)	Percentage Change (%)
Newry, Mourne and Down	63,800	22,000	-34.5%
Northern Ireland	788,600	249,500	-31.6%

The percentage change in the District of 34.5% makes the Council area above the NI average, and the second-worst affected by job furloughs and layoffs. One area not addressed in these estimates is the impact on the self-employed and new/potential entrepreneurs in local labour markets. These groups are vital to local enterprise and job creation and will not feature in the workplace jobs data. The anecdotal evidence suggests that large percentages of the self-employed – especially those engaged in trades – are restricted in their work practices at present. This implies that Council areas with the highest percentages of self-employed and entrepreneurial intentions, i.e. Newry, Mourne and Down – will find themselves most impacted. (Source: UUEPC: *Economic Consequences of Covid-19*)

In considering the impact in GVA, the degree of impact is closely related to the extent of reliance on three sectors: Construction, Manufacturing (non-food) and Accommodation. 20% of this District's GVA in 2018 came from the Manufacturing and Construction sectors, both of which have experienced a sharp fall. In terms of GVA decline across all Council's, this Council area is expected to be the 4th most severely impacted.

Source: UUEPC: *Economic Consequences of Covid-19* & Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP).

#### Economic Impact of Covid-19: GVA

	Q2 Percentage Decline in GVA	Full year Percentage Decline in GVA	CPP Estimates/Ranks for Q2 Decline
Newry, Mourne and Down	-30.2%	-12.0%	-38.1% (4)

Across NI, four Council areas will see the greatest impacts proportionally in their local economies in terms of both employment and GVA. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is one of

these four Councils. This reflects the sectoral concentrations of Construction, many parts of Manufacturing, Accommodation and Retail.

## Moving Forward

In a post Covid-19 economy, it is vital recovery support is provided in a flexible and responsive manner to changing and challenging economic times. It is clear, that a co-ordinated programme of action focused support is launched in response to recovery and rebuild of the economy. A comprehensive programme of practical support will be required to help businesses recover and reboot. In acknowledging the impact on unemployment, with furlough staff not being re-employed, and businesses not re-opening, there should be a clear focus also on supporting the unemployed through upskilling/reskilling, and a programme which stimulates new start-ups, and pathways to self-employment.

To date, much of the efforts have been in response to covid-19. Moving forward, the focus will be on recovery, and rebooting/rebuilding for growth. Key to this as outlined in our action plan (section 6.0) is:

- A focus on delivery of economic development initiatives which offer direct and relevant support to our business community. Business engagement, and progression of strategic economic development initiatives are key, i.e. City Deal
- Support on a sectoral basis, with a focus on those sectors most severely affected
- Building on a partnership approach for delivery to ensure collaborative efforts are maximised for recovery and a full range of support is delivered
- Progressing regeneration initiatives which deliver investment that can help re-boot the economy
- Delivering reskilling and upskilling initiatives that meet the needs of businesses, and while addressing unemployment and inactivity challenges.

# Phase 1

## Covid-19 Response

Q1 2020/2021

- Go For It programme launched online and rebranded with new messaging: new opportunities, opportunities to work from home. Digital advertising which was off-line was relaunched.
- Information on NI and UK Government support packages disseminated to the business community, directly and through social media channels.
- Covid-19 business enquires managed directly, providing guidance, advice, and escalation when required (120+ direct engagements).
- Social media engagement and reach significantly increased.
- Existing programmes flexed, to launch a tailored programme of support for businesses to overcome barriers arising from Covid-19. 600 (circa) businesses directly supported (March 2020 - May 2020) / 521 mentoring hours delivered:
  - 1 An Introduction to Social Media for Small Businesses.
  - 2 Covid19 is here - What Now for Small Business.
  - 3 Managing Self in a Rapidly Changing World.
  - 4 Preparing a 100 Day Cash Flow Projection.
  - 5 Social Media Fundamentals.
  - 6 Perfecting Your Pitch.
  - 7 Managing Stress.
  - 8 Gearing Up to Sell A Service on You Tube.
  - 9 Getting Your Business Online for Beginners.
  - 10 Search Engine Optimisation and Google Analytics.
  - 11 How to make an impact on Social Media in 2020.
  - 12 Getting Started with Google Analytics and Google Data Studio.
  - 13 Get Found Online - SEO Tips to make your business more visible.
  - 14 How to Master Voice Search and Get Heard.
  - 15 Instagram for Business.
  - 16 Email Marketing for Autumn.
  - 17 Marketing Development Programme.
  - 18 Get your Business Online Programme.
  - 19 Business Resilience Programme.
  - 20 100 Day Consolidation programme.
  - 21 Business Reboot Programme.
  - 22 Financial Management for Non-Accountants Programme.
  - 23 Injection Control in the workplace.
  - 24 Emerging from Lockdown: Gearing up to Kick Start your Businesses.
  - 25 Cyber Security: What your Business Needs.
  - 26 Make your website work harder for you: webinar.
  - 27 Creating AR & VR Experiencing in your business.
- A new programme launched, Tender for Growth, directly focusing on supporting businesses reassess supply chains, and improve their tendering approaches to secure new contracts, and more business.
- Application under assessment for a new Export and Sales programme, to support business to extend their reach, and enhance sales on a North / South and East /West basis.



## 3.2 Economic Outlook: Pre Covid-19

It is important to reflect on previous economic forecasts, which were based on modest growth of 1% per annum. The issues associated with the NI and local economy still remain and are very much relevant as part of a strategy for recovery and growth.

This section of the report draws on the Economic forecasts completed 2019 (pre covid-19).

While the UK Elections have seen all political parties promising to increase UK Government expenditure and investment, it is acknowledged that Northern Ireland's productivity challenges are long-standing and complex and will require a long-term, whole of government focus.

While the consensus is that there is no "Silver Bullet" solution to fix the challenges facing the NI economy, economists agree that improvement can be achieved through a series of small steps and actions by central and local government, economic development stakeholders and the private sector. This Economic Development Strategy outlines a number of these steps and practical actions that will help improve our District's future economic performance.

The potential future performance of the labour market across the Council area was analysed using forecasts from the UUEPC Summer 2019 Economic Outlook applied to the local government model.

The forecasts include three scenarios, each of which incorporate a different potential outcome based on NI, UK and global economic trends and events. The scenarios are:

- **Baseline**

This scenario assumes an orderly UK exit from the EU towards a future trading relationship and is deemed the 'most likely outcome';

- **Upper**

This aspirational scenario is one where the NI employment rate in 2028 has converged with the current (higher) UK rate, thus pointing to a much stronger economic activity and labour market performance in NI; and

- **Lower**

This scenario assumes a severe global slowdown in GDP growth as well as complications arising from Brexit impacting on consumer and business confidence and demand.

In the Baseline scenario the total employment for the area is expected to reach around 76,000, marking an increase of 3,800 jobs over the next 12 years. In the aspirational Upper scenario, the forecast is that total employment will increase by around 8,400, reaching a total employment of around 80,600 by 2030. Conversely, the Lower scenario forecasts that total employment will only increase by as few as 500 jobs, with total employment forecast to slightly increase to around 72,700 by 2030.

## Total Employment Change by Sector, Newry, Mourne and Down, 2018-30

	Lower	Baseline	Upper
Agriculture	-900	-100	0
Mining & quarrying	0	0	0
Manufacturing	300	700	1,400
Utilities	0	0	0
Water supply & waste	0	0	100
Construction	300	500	800
Retail	-300	0	200
Transportation	0	100	200
Accommodation	0	300	600
Information & Comms	100	300	900
Financial activities	-200	100	400
Real estate	0	0	0
Professional & scientific	200	500	1,200
Administration services	100	200	400
Public Admin & defence	0	0	0
Education	200	200	400
Health & social work	600	600	1,100
Arts & entertainment	100	200	400
Other services	100	200	300
Total	500	3,800	8,400

Source: NISRA (BRES) & UUEPC Local Model Summer 2019 Outlook.

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

The table above shows the change in employment by sector over the next 12 years under each of the three scenarios. In the Baseline scenario, Manufacturing, Professional Services and Health are expected to be the largest growth sectors over the next 12 years with around 1,800 jobs to be created across the three sectors. In contrast, Agriculture and Retail may experience a small number of job losses from a combination of structural changes within each of the sectors (including automation of some tasks and jobs).

Similarly, Manufacturing and Professional Services are forecast to be the main drivers of employment growth in the Upper scenario with 3,700 jobs forecast to be created between the two sectors. In both, it may be a case where a shift in the NI sectoral structure means it begins to converge with that of the UK's economy, driven in part by growth spillovers from both Belfast and Dublin along the economic corridor between the two cities.

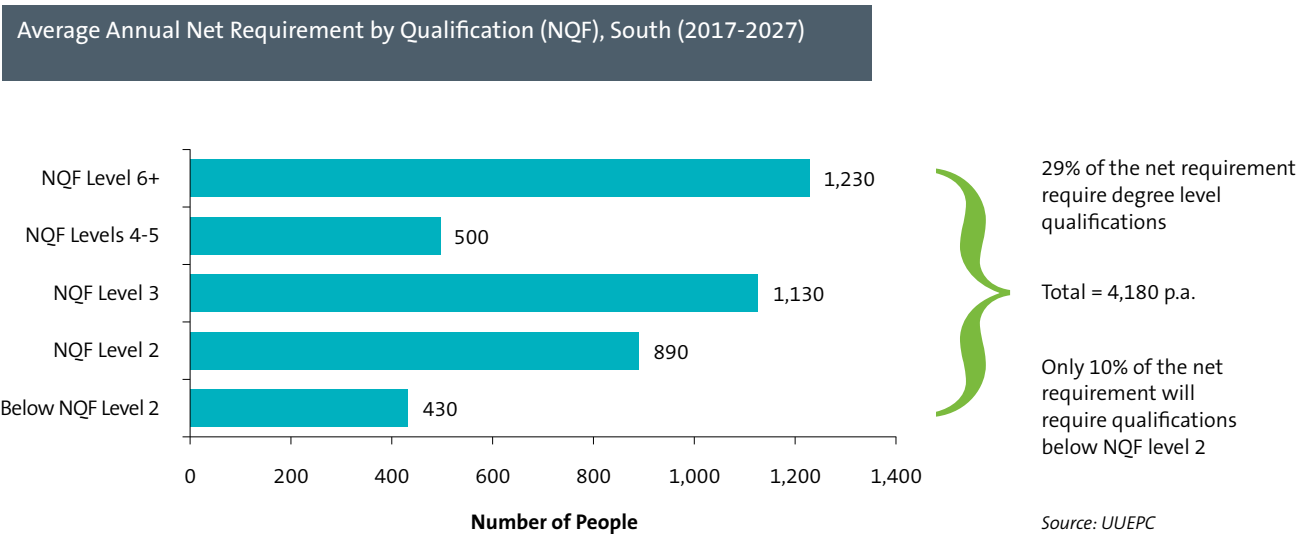
In comparison, the Lower scenario forecasts a loss of around 1,400 across three sectors – Agriculture, Retail and Financial Services. The reasons for these losses are likely to differ from sector to sector but all will be impacted by any negative impacts of a disorderly Brexit and any knock-on effects on consumer confidence or trade, with uncertainty around CAP being a particular issue for Agriculture.

The NI Skills Barometer was commissioned by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and involved the development of an economic model to forecast future skills needs and skills gaps by qualification level, subject area and sector.

A sub-regional report was also compiled and underpins skills forecasts, outputs from the assessment of future skills demand, and a review of supply side indicators covering all of Northern Ireland's Local Government Districts (LGD).

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area has been analysed together with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council area deemed as 'The South' in geographical terms, to forecast future skills needs and skills gaps by qualification level, subject area and sector.

It is forecast that 29% of total demand will require at least a degree level qualification, which is below the NI average. However, it is expected only 10% of job opportunities will be available to individuals with a qualification level below NQF level 2 as detailed in the graph below:

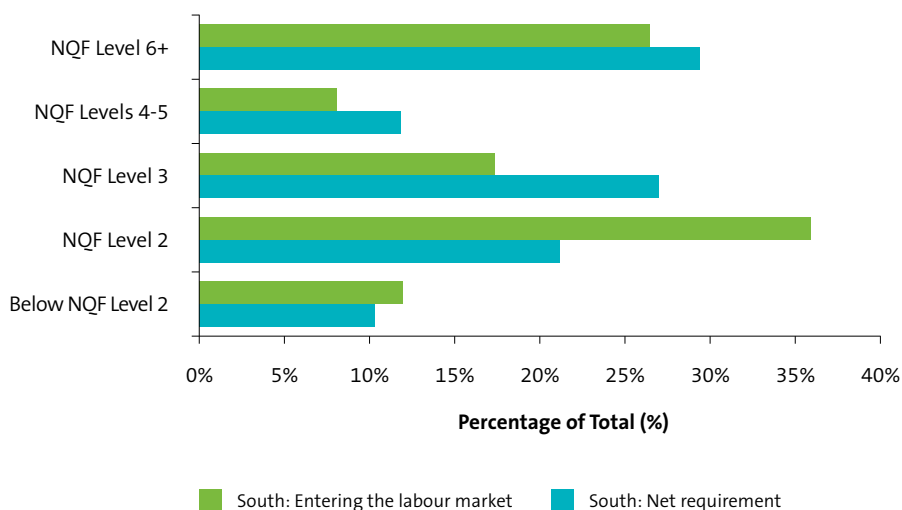


Benchmarking the skills profile of net requirement against those entering the labour market outlines that there is a marginal undersupply of high-level qualifications (NQF level 6+) as 27% are entering the labour market compared to a forecast demand of 29%.

A shortage of mid-level qualifications (NQF level 3-5) qualifiers as 26% enter the labour market but demand is forecast to require 39%.

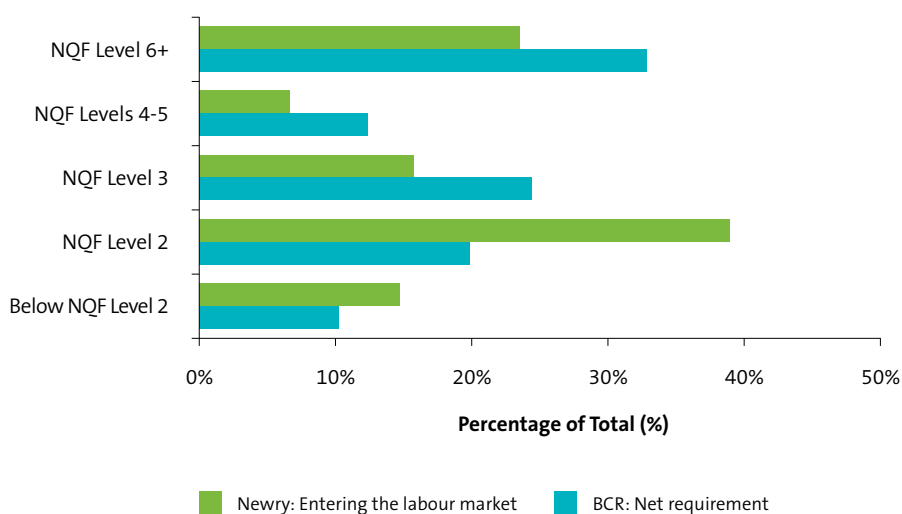
An oversupply of low-level skills (NQF level 2 and below) as 32% are demanded over the next decade but 48% are entering the labour market.

### Net Requirement vs Qualification Profile (NQF) of Labour Market Entrants, South (2017-2027)



Source: UUEPC

### Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants, Newry (2017-2027)



Source: UUEPC

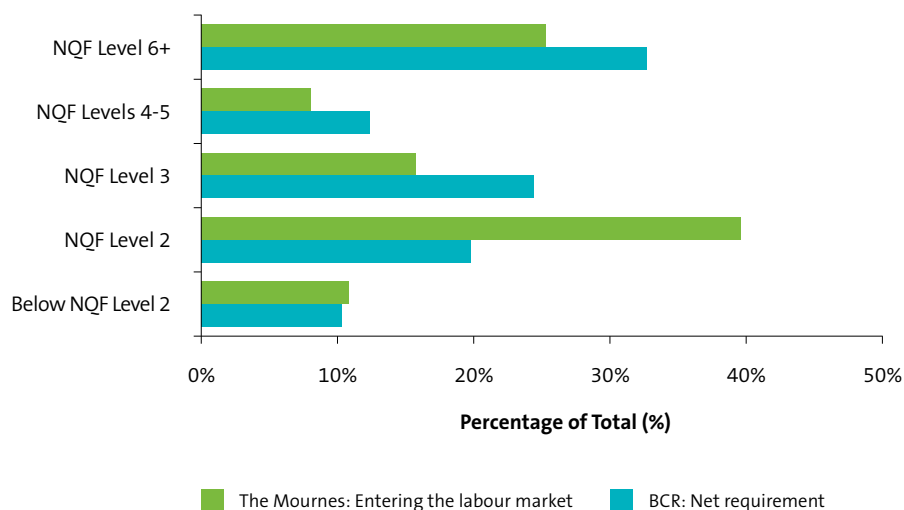
In 2019 the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) were commissioned by Belfast City Region (BCR) council areas to report on the future skill needs of the BCR area. The BCR is defined by six Local Government Districts (LGDs) of which Newry, Mourne and Down is one. The research analyses where the skills gaps are currently, where they are emerging and where they are likely to emerge over the longer term.

Analysis of net requirements of the BCR vs skills profile of labour market entrants (2017-2027) was carried out at DEA level for Newry, Mourne and Down and is graphed below.

Some key points include:

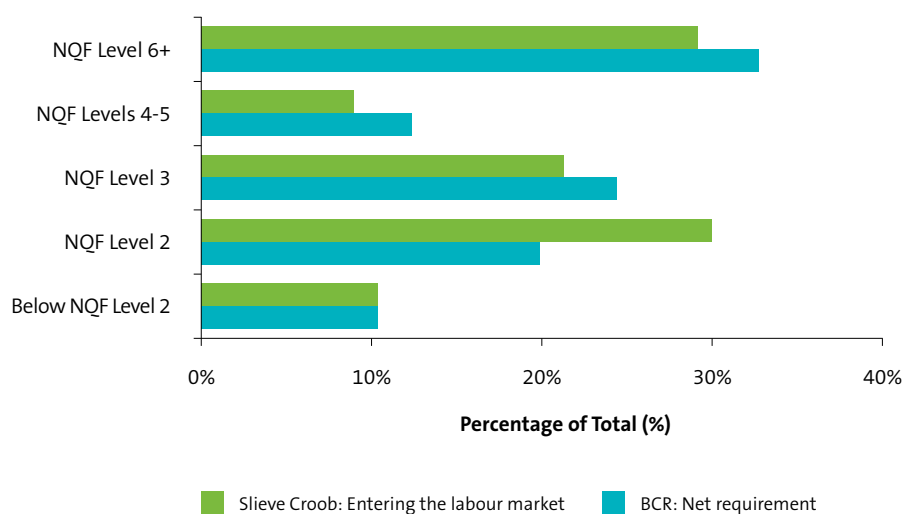
- All Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's DEAs are forecast to have an over-supply of labour market entrants in NFQ Level 2 when compared to the net requirement for BCR.
- All Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's DEAs will have an under-supply of entrants with NFQ Level 4-5 relative to the BCR net requirement.
- Both Crotlieve and Slieve Gullion will have an undersupply of entrants with qualifications below NFQ Level 2 for the net requirements of the BCR.
- Rowallane and Crotlieve will have the highest number of entrants with NFQ Level 6 and above to match the net requirements of the BCR.

Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants,  
The Mournes (2017-2027)



Source: UUEPC

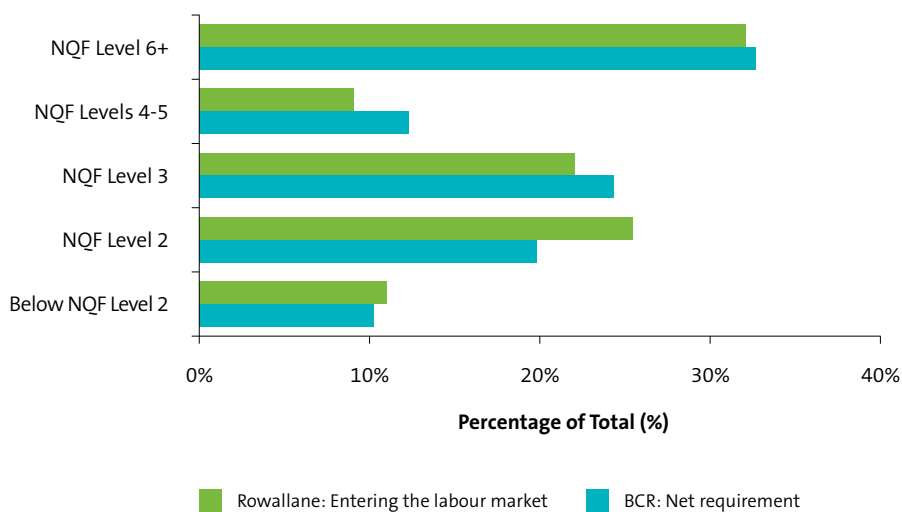
Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants,  
Slieve Croob (2017-2027)



Source: UUEPC

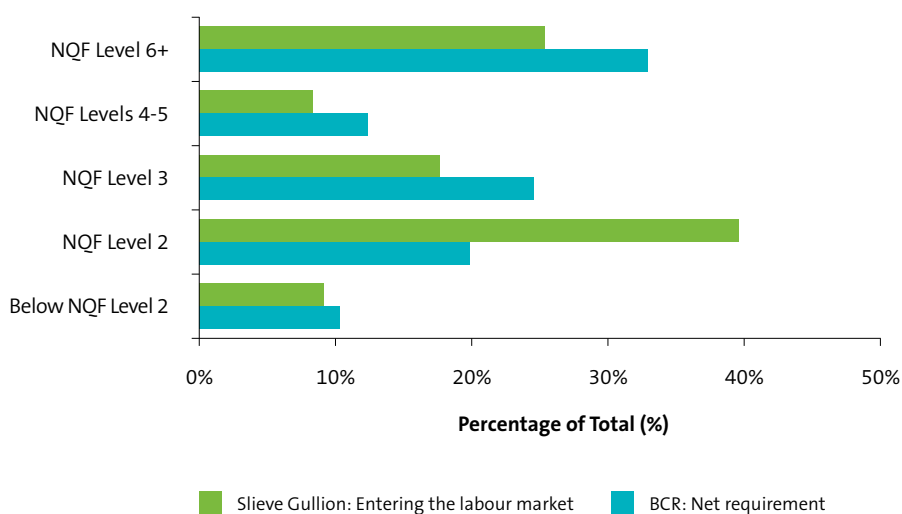


Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants,  
Rowallane (2017-2027)



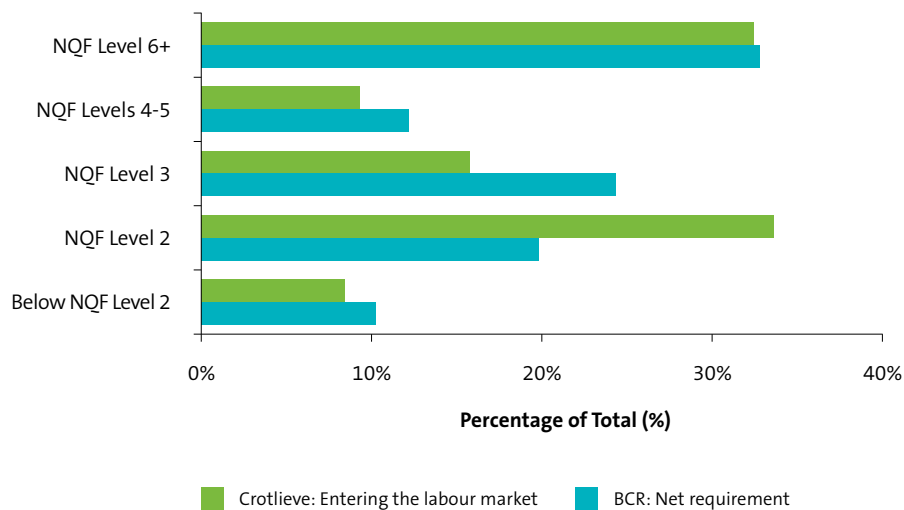
Source: UUEPC

Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants,  
Slieve Gullion (2017-2027)

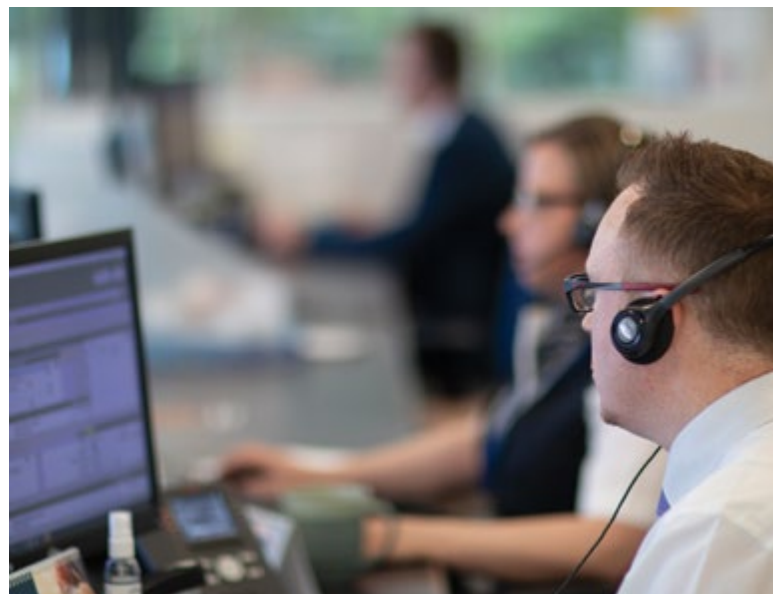


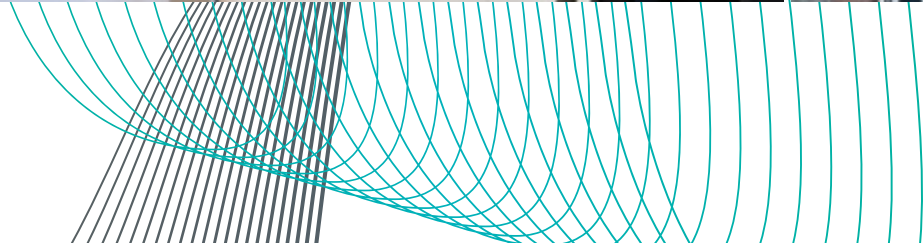
Source: UUEPC

Net Requirement (BCR) vs Skills Profile of Labour Market Entrants,  
Crotlieve (2017-2027)



Source: UUEPC









# 4.0

## Strategic and Economic Context

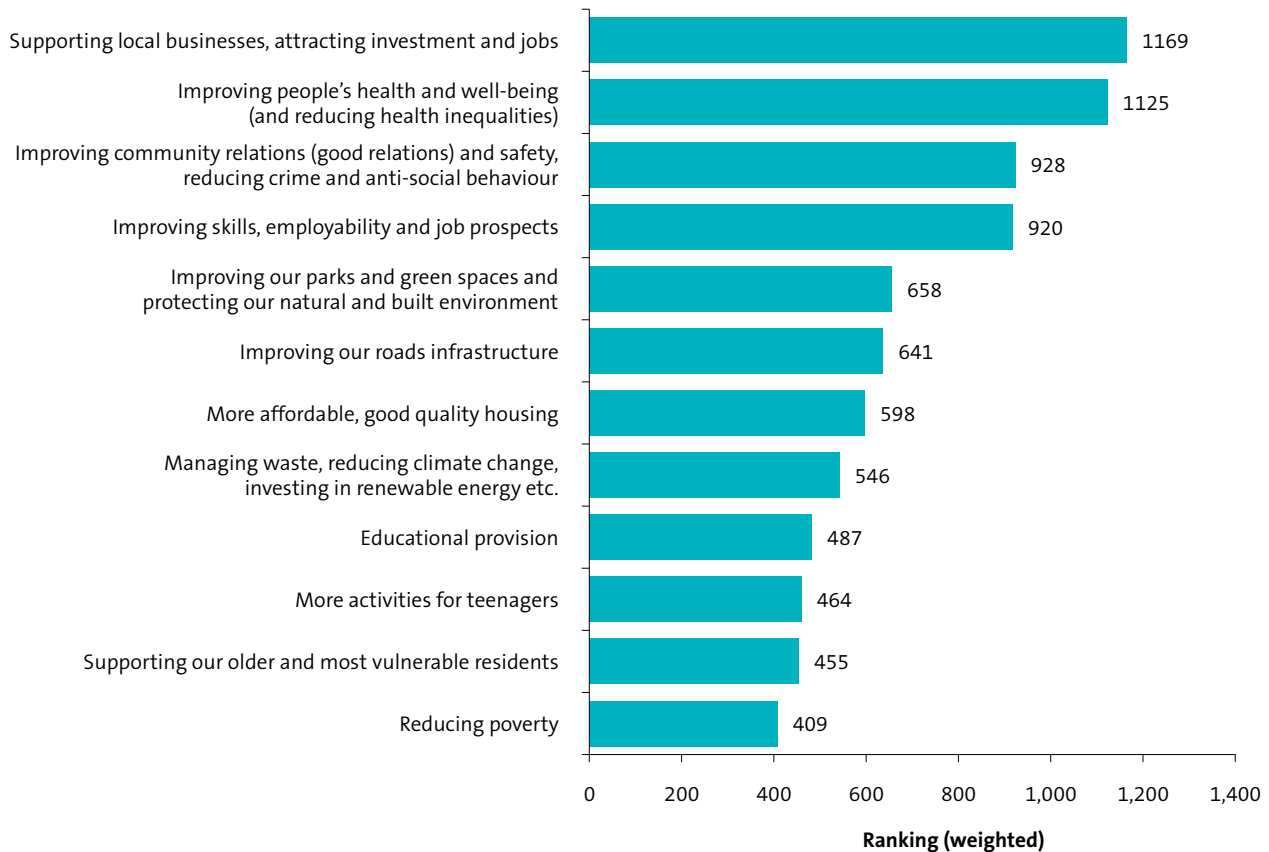
This Economic Development Strategy is set within a wider subregional and regional context and other policies and strategies and aligns with the draft Programme for Government 2016-21 and the NI Executive's Economy 2030, the draft Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland's overall Regional development Strategy.

In June 2018, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commissioned Social Market Research (SMR) to undertake a residents' survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide the Council with baseline data on resident opinion across a number of key areas, including the priorities and emerging issues that will need to be addressed by the Council in the future.

Residents were asked to think about their local area and say what needs improving to make it a better place to live. Using a weighted score approach (i.e. top ranked suggestion was scored a '5', second ranked scored a '4' etc. through to fifth ranked scored a '1') the graph below shows that 'supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs' was top ranked.



### Corporate Plan Residents Survey: Top Priorities for the District



A total of 23 priorities were ranked with 'supporting local businesses, attracting investment and jobs as well as 'improving skills, employment and job prospects ranked in the top 5 priorities for residents of Newry, Mourne and Down.

To address this, within the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council context, this strategy will complement, underpin and support the delivery of the strategic and corporate objectives of Council's Community Plan to 2030, new Corporate Plan 2019-23, Tourism Strategy 2017-21 and recently published Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2020-25 in relation to the shared goal of boosting economic development across the district.

The mission statement of the recently published Corporate Plan 2019-23 states its aim is:

**“To support and advocate for a welcoming District which is progressive, healthy and sustainable, providing better economic, environmental and social outcomes for all.”<sup>29</sup>**

The plan states that by 2022 the Council aims to see, “An increase in infrastructure investment that enables the future economic growth of the district”<sup>30</sup>, and wants to “create opportunities for local people and our communities to thrive by supporting economic development which is sustainable and helps them lead fulfilling lives”.<sup>31</sup> One of the key strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan is to, “Invest in and support new and growing businesses, job creation and

employment skills”<sup>32</sup>. The actions that flow from this Strategy will be key to the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan goals and objectives.

Regeneration is another key Corporate Plan commitment and a strategic priority for this Strategy. The Corporate Plan has a specific aim to... “Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages and rural communities”, recognising the importance of regeneration as a key strategic enabler of economic growth.

The District’s Tourism Strategy 2017-2021 recognises tourism’s place as a key economic driver in the local economy and highlights the importance of this key sector to the economic development and regeneration of the region. The recently published Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2020-25 also positions economic development as a key outcome, stating in its vision that by 2025 the District will be in a position where:

**“Our culture, arts and heritage create economic impact in our urban centres and bring benefits to all our rural communities.”<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>29</sup> Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s draft Corporate Plan.

<sup>30-32</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>33</sup> Culture and Heritage Strategy, p41

It also seeks to generate, “civic pride and economic impact into local communities by attracting international visitors from outside of the district to stay longer and spend more”<sup>34</sup>, which is an ambition this strategy will also support through its key themes and actions.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s Community Plan, entitled “Living Well Together: A Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down to 2030”,

was published in 2017. Many of its key indicators are closely linked with the remit of this strategy, such as creating prosperous communities, increasing levels of lifelong learning, connectivity, jobs and earnings, income and wealth and economic investment.<sup>35</sup>

At a wider Northern Ireland level, economic development is at the core of the draft Programme for Government 2016-21:

**“Improving well-being for all – by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.”<sup>36</sup>**

Some the key indicators in the draft PFG which are relevant to this strategy include reducing economic inactivity, increasing the size and competitiveness of, and innovation in, our economy, improving the skills profile of the population and improving the regional balance of economic prosperity through an increase in employment.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.42.

<sup>35</sup> *Community Plan*, p21 to 25.

<sup>36</sup> *Draft Programme for Government 2016-21*, p12.

## 4.1 Brexit

Brexit will change our economic development landscape and present new challenges as well as creating new opportunities. The uncertainty created by the decision to leave the European Union adds additional impetus to Council's need to bring forward this new economic development strategy at this time and to focus our activities on those areas which will deliver maximum economic outcomes and real growth.

Council will continue to provide advice and support to business and we will develop and deliver initiatives aimed at improving the capability of our micro businesses and SMEs in key

areas including skills, leadership and management, innovation and sales. Council will carefully monitor Brexit developments and react accordingly to ensure continuity of business and delivery of Council services, as well as providing guidance, signposting and support to businesses, in collaboration with our economic development partners. Council will ensure that this strategy will be sufficiently flexible to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to our post-Brexit situation, adopting an agile approach in direct response to the implications arising from Brexit, once these become clearer.

## 4.2 Belfast Region City Deal

The UK Government's approval of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) will see £350 million of investment from Westminster, matched by £350 million from the NI Executive and £150 million from BRCD partners and private sector investment, bringing the total investment into the region of £850 Million.

BRCD investment will be in strategic projects across tourism and regeneration, infrastructure, digital and innovation and employability and skills. For this District, that funding will deliver a suite of projects in areas including the construction of the Newry Southern Relief Road, the regeneration of Newry City, the Mourne Gateway project, improvements in rural broadband infrastructure, digital capability and skills initiatives.

The City Deal investment will deliver against inclusive economic growth, stimulating 20,000 new and better jobs and increasing GVA by £400 million p/a.





# 5.0

## Vision and Strategic Priorities

### 5.1 Our Vision

This strategy will define the actions for delivery against the Council's corporate ambitions:

- An increase in infrastructure investment that enables the future economic growth of the district.
- Creating opportunities for local people and helping our communities to thrive by supporting economic development which is sustainable and helps them lead fulfilling lives.
- Supporting businesses adopt in their response to Brexit, and Covid-19 recovery.
- Invest in and support new and growing businesses, job creation and employment skills.
- Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages and rural communities.

### Delivery of Our Vision

Collaboration with business, education and economic development stakeholders is core to achievement of this strategy, and to ensure the creation of a welcoming, successful region where enterprise flourishes, firms maximise their potential and achieve high levels of business growth.

We will develop strong industrial sectors where businesses demonstrate high levels of productivity, innovation, employ well-paid, highly skilled staff and compete successfully in external markets.

This will be supported by a modern infrastructure with strong road, transport and digital connectivity networks and a revitalised prosperous

city, towns and villages, making our region a sought-after location to live, study, visit, work and invest.

Based on our ongoing work, research and consultations with businesses and stakeholders, Council has identified the below strategic aims and priorities upon which this strategy will focus.

## 5.2 Our Strategic Aims

- 1 Achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- 2 Address economic inequalities.
- 3 Create more and better jobs.
- 4 Stimulate productivity through new technologies and innovation.
- 5 Develop the infrastructure and regeneration required to support economic growth.
- 6 Become more internationally competitive through export growth and developing a more outward-looking economy open for investment.

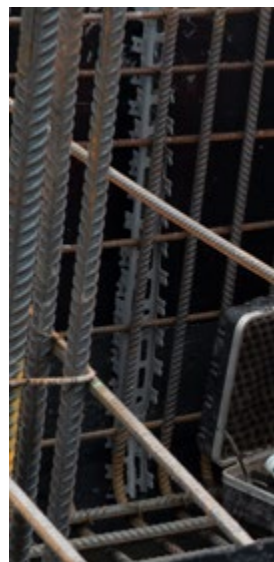
## 5.3 Our Strategic Priorities

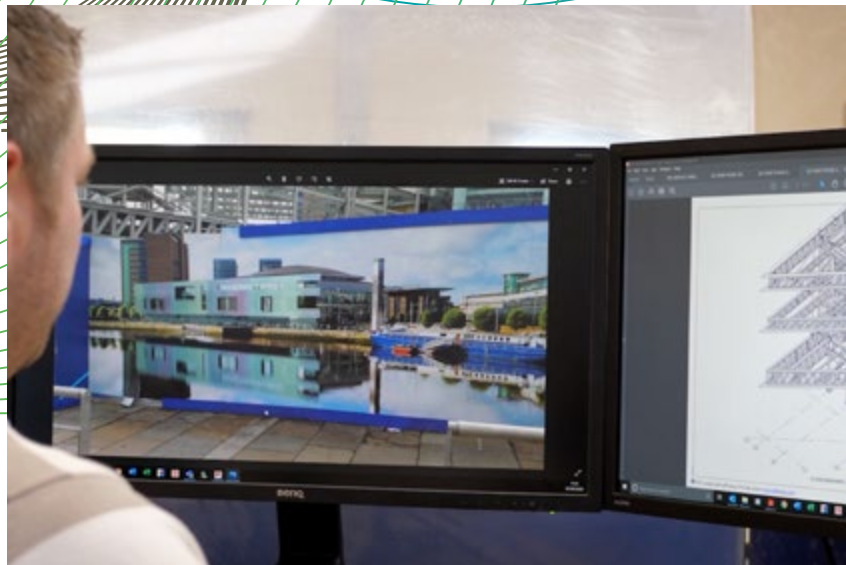
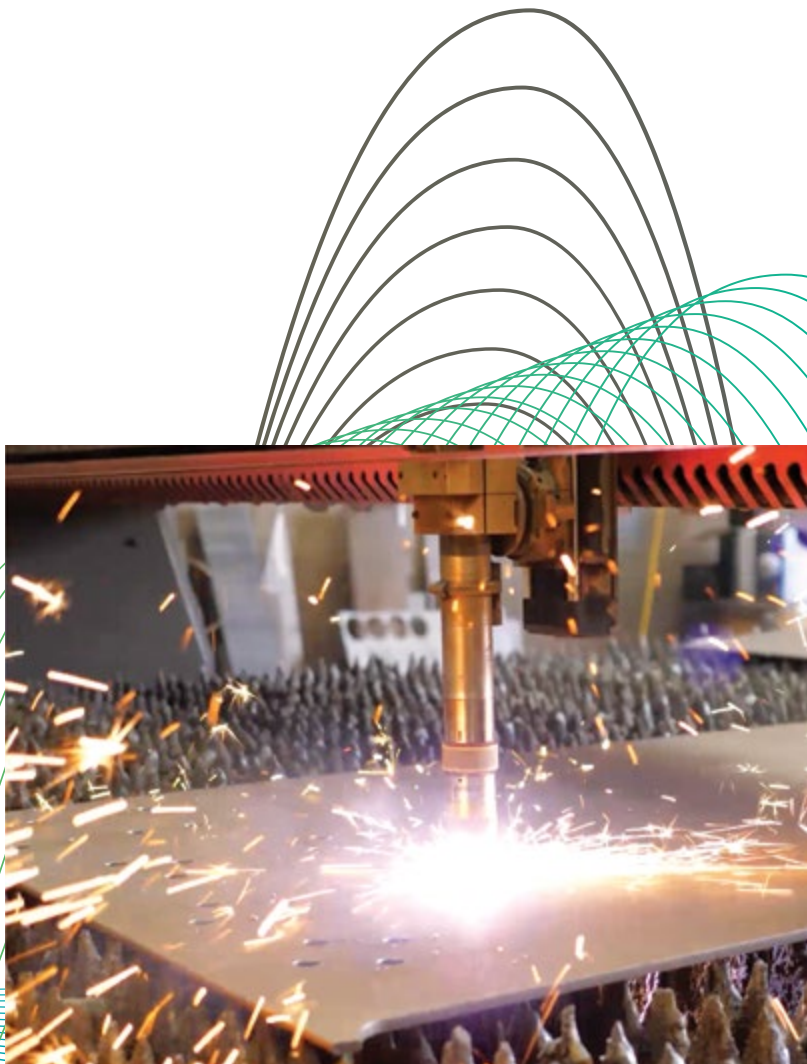
Underpinning the delivery of this strategy are three strategic priorities:

- 1 To support Entrepreneurship, Business Growth and Innovation.
- 2 To improve Employability and Skills.
- 3 To invest in Regeneration and modern Infrastructure and Connectivity.

## 5.4 Measures of Success (2020–2025)

- 1 To support the growth of 1,500 businesses.
- 2 To support, through business planning support, 400 new business starts.
- 3 To support the retention or creation of 1,000 employment positions.
- 4 To support 100 people back into employment.
- 5 To support the delivery of 10 business, skills or employability focused initiatives.
- 6 To progress the delivery of strategic investment initiatives that delivers a more sustainable, connected and regenerated District.









# 6.0

## Strategic Actions

### 6.1 Supporting Entrepreneurship, Business Growth and Innovation

#### Support Growth and Creation of New Business Starts

While Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area has a number of large, successful and world leading firms in growth sectors including advanced engineering and manufacturing, ICT and pharmaceuticals, the local economy (like the rest of Northern Ireland) comprises mainly small and micro businesses.

Council has an important role to play to build the capability of our SMEs and support their business growth, regardless of the size and stage of development of these firms.

Council's role has been recognised in directly providing a service that ensures a supportive environment is in place for business start-up, growth, innovation and attracting investment and FDI. Encouraging new businesses to be formed, and existing businesses to grow, will ensure the Council area has a rich and diverse economy, supporting employability skills, local wealth, inclusive growth and contributing towards the achievement of a prosperous economy.

It is recognised that economic growth of the District is influenced by the development and growth of strong clusters and sectors. There is a need for the Council to adopt a flexible approach that will:

- 1 Stabilise and develop existing sectoral strengths:
  - Construction
  - Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
  - Agri-food & Fishing
  - Technology
  - Retail & Services
- 2 Support new and emerging sectors:
  - ICT & Digital Technologies
  - Professional Business Services
  - Tourism
- 3 Support growth in innovation and emerging technologies



### Existing Sectoral Strengths

The Council area currently benefits from the presence of several large, successful, globally competitive businesses, strong cohorts of established, profitable SMEs, as well as a mix of younger firms at an earlier stage of development but with significant growth potential.

In collaboration with Invest NI, InterTradeIreland, Colleges and other stakeholders, the Council will seek to build on existing sectoral strengths by developing a deeper understanding of sectoral needs, responding to sector-specific skills issues and by developing the capability of smaller businesses

through the delivery of tailored business development programmes. Through these programmes the Council will help improve the stability, growth and competitiveness of SMEs to be better able to engage in supply chain activity locally and in external markets.

### New and Emerging Sectors

The Council area has increasing numbers of SMEs with high growth potential in emerging and growth sectors. New and emerging sectors are less developed but are where significant global market opportunities exist for future development.

As these sectors continue to grow, the Council will explore opportunities to develop and deliver new initiatives and programmes to address sector specific challenges, improve business capability and help exploit emerging market opportunities. We will work closely with Invest NI and sector bodies to feed into wider sector development activity and to promote the Council area on the international stage as capable and ready for the development of trade and foreign direct investment opportunities.

## Supporting Growth in Innovation and Digital Technologies

The Council will work with relevant partners to progress the availability of technologies required to position the area as an innovative and connected region where innovators, start-ups and existing firms can experiment, test, and collaborate to develop new products and services.

We recognise the importance of “Digital Hubs” – locations which provide incubation and growth space for new start-ups and early stage companies in the technology and digital sectors. This concept could link to existing business incubation and grow-on spaces and would include the ability to provide additional specialist “wrap-around” support, expertise and know-how in emerging digital technologies, ongoing mentoring support and advice from experienced business mentors and/or tech entrepreneurs. This initiative is still at an early concept stage and will require further appraisal and feasibility testing before a business case can be brought forward. It is also important to note that successful implementation of Digital or Innovation Hub concepts will likely also require consultation, collaboration and co-funding from our local colleges, universities, Invest NI, the private sector and other Belfast Regional City Deal stakeholders.

## Building International Relations

To achieve economic growth, it is essential that the Council has a reach that is global and outward looking. It is important the Council develops strong international linkages that will generate real opportunities for growth and development in trade, foreign investment, tourism and skills and employability.

It is acknowledged the Council has already established international linkages. Together with a number of companies with international connections, the Council has strong international connections to draw upon and showcase the diversity and quality of businesses and the attractiveness of the region as an investment location.

Success in achieving economic benefit from the Council's International Relations work will be dependent, not just on the international linkages established and created, but primarily on the Council's ability to develop and maintain strong collaboration with a range of other local partners who are involved in Northern Ireland's international relations. These partners will include the Executive Office, Invest NI, Tourism NI, InterTradeIreland, NI Connections, our Universities, colleges, Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade and a range of stakeholders with shared ambitions to boost external sales, attract tourism and investment to Northern Ireland and the Newry, Mourne and Down District.

Establishing a global diaspora is a key step for enabling international business connections. It also offers a platform to raise awareness on an international level of the business opportunities available in the Council area, promoting talent, innovation and investment opportunities.

Building successful international relations takes time, resources and concerted effort. Maximising our current relationships however will take priority. The recent signing of a Friendship Agreement with Changchun represents a significant opportunity to build new links with the world's second largest economy. Maximising the outcomes from the Council's China connections will be an important focus, building on established links to deliver tangible economic benefits including increased trade, investment, skills linkages and tourism revenue.

## Strengthening Business Engagement

Council also recognises the need to be more proactive in developing closer working relationships with our business base, partners and stakeholders, to collectively identify growth potential and need, and to work together to support local business growth and development.

During our consultations, it was made clear that there are a large number of business support organisations in Northern Ireland with a range of support initiatives available to SME's. However, a difficulty faced by many SMEs is where to access the most appropriate support for their needs. To help address this, Council acknowledges its role in providing a central point of contact for local business queries and referral for support either through a direct Council service or referral to partner organisation.

Feedback from businesses and stakeholders has also highlighted the importance of Council to facilitate an Economic Forum which is wider than one of high level discussion or a Council communication platform. The potential of the Forum was highlighted as one that should operate as a vehicle to facilitate debate, focused decision-making and action planning with tangible and specific outcomes, on the key strategic economic development issues affecting our Council area.

Positioning the District as a place to invest, visit, shop and work is important, and engaging with our business base to sell the strengths of region will be important. Initiatives such as Make it Local and Purple Flag campaigns have established business and stakeholder engagement, and will provide a good foundations to build upon through the period of this strategy.

Supporting Entrepreneurship, Business Growth and Innovation		
Sub Theme	Action	Measure
Supporting growth and creation of new businesses starts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Support pre start-up and start up activity through Go for It and other start-up initiatives, targeting aspiring entrepreneurs from school age upwards.</li> <li>2 Ensure support structures are in place to support businesses be effective in response to challenges arising from Covid-19, and Brexit.</li> <li>3 Support businesses to innovate, and overcome barriers to growth through the delivery of initiatives developed in response to business requirements, i.e. platforms to reinvigorate business/leadership.</li> <li>4 Improve the competitiveness of SMEs to be better able to engage in supply chain activity locally and in external markets: i.e. East/West and North/South sales, early exporters support.</li> <li>5 Develop a deeper understanding of sectoral strengths and requirements, and deliver initiatives which support new and emerging sectors.</li> <li>6 Support business innovation programmes that improve efficiencies, open up access to new markets and key growth sectors.</li> <li>7 Engage with strategic partners to ensure access to land, premises and infrastructure required to meet industry growth needs, i.e. roads, rail, ports, Tel Communications.</li> <li>8 Support the social economy sector to improve their capability and overcome barriers to growth through a tailored package of support i.e. practical business advice, mentoring and group workshops.</li> </ol>	<p>Increase in the number of business births.</p> <p>Business survival rates.</p> <p>Growth in business turnover, business size and exports.</p> <p>Growth in the social enterprises (turnover and employment).</p>
Supporting growth in innovation and digital technologies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Enable access to digital infrastructure and expertise that position the District as an innovative and connected region where innovators, start-ups and existing firms collaborate to develop new products and services.</li> <li>2 Explore the creation of a new “Digital Hub”, providing innovation space for start-ups and existing businesses to expand in the technology and digital sector.</li> </ol>	
Building international relations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Develop international partnerships that offer the potential to maximise opportunities for exchanges in trade, investment, tourism and skills and employability.</li> <li>2 Engage with global diaspora to build a network of ambassadors who can strengthen and leverage international linkages, enabling trade, tourism and investment opportunities.</li> <li>3 Implement effective marketing communications which position the District internationally as an attractive region for investment and co-operation across a number of key sectors.</li> </ol>	
Strengthening business engagement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Strengthen linkages and communication channels with key stakeholders and employers across the district, positioning the Council as the vehicle for providing support, signposting and collaborating, ensuring a joined-up approach to the facilitation of business growth and informing recovery to Covid-19.</li> <li>2 Delivery of high profile business events and initiatives which seek to support, inspire and develop the local business base.</li> <li>3 Facilitation of an Economic Forum as a vehicle to facilitate debate, focused decision-making and action planning with tangible and specific outcomes, on key strategic economic development issues.</li> </ol>	<p>Increase in level of business engagement.</p> <p>Increase in number of businesses accessing support via Council or referral to partner organisations.</p>

## 6.2 Improving Employability and Skills

The Department for the Economy is currently (2019) undertaking a strategic review of the economy's skills needs which will inform a new all-encompassing skills strategy for Northern Ireland. The draft Programme for Government and the draft Industrial Strategy - Economy 2030, recognise that appropriately skilled people are integral to productivity growth, competitiveness and our future economic prosperity. The Skills Barometer for Northern Ireland, developed by Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre, has carried out detailed analysis and modelling to forecast the level and nature of our future skills needs, identify supply gaps and outline the implications and challenges for economic growth. From studies into skills supply and skills gap in NI, it is understood that over the next 10 years, the demand for skills will outweigh supply.

The consensus is Northern Ireland is facing key challenges regarding the supply of suitably skilled labour to meet the future demands and needs of industry. There is a widely

acknowledged need for a "whole of government" approach to our entire skills system that needs to incorporate primary, secondary and third level education, employability training, upskilling, re-training and lifelong learning across the business base. This is particularly relevant, as the Council itself has little direct influence on local employability and skills challenges, and any positive impact will require partnership work with other organisations and departments.

In response, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council has identified the following priorities within the Employability and Skills theme. It is recognised that the implications of these challenges are far-ranging and will require a strong focus on achieving better strategic coherence and concerted long-term effort across government and the private sector. Many of the findings of this strategy have been echoed through the feedback and comments received from the businesses and stakeholders consulted.

### Integration Between Education Providers and Industry

There is an immediate requirement to establish better integration between education providers, training providers, employers and other relevant stakeholders required to identify the challenges, share best practice and plan for future skills and employability needs. A Forum which engages players will ensure that our District is adopting a strategic approach, underpinned by practical initiatives and collaborative action to deliver solutions that ensure the skills system is fit for purpose and future focused, satisfying the needs of students, employees and employers.

## Identify Specific Skills Gaps and Address Future Skills Needs

We will engage with local employers, the Department for the Economy, Invest NI, our local colleges and Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to carry out further sectoral analysis and research to determine in more granular detail where local demand and shortages exist and what our specific skills needs are. This is of particular relevance, as many businesses will have adopted practices in response to both Covid-19 and Brexit, and as such may have identified new skill requirements.

This work also needs to be cognisant of the global dynamics driving change including emerging disruptive technologies such as robotics, automation, artificial intelligence, 3D Printing, the emergence of the “Gig Economy”, new ways of working and the impact on the “Future of Work”.

It is important that our strategy also considers our aspirations for our district’s future sectoral growth and how the world of work, employment and skills needs will change in the future, driven by digitalisation and

what is now commonly referred to as the “4th Industrial Revolution” - as rapidly emerging technologies converge, integrate and are seamlessly embedded in every aspect of modern life.

The nature and pace of technology change also increases the need for new, dynamic models of upskilling, retraining and lifelong learning since, to remain competitive and survive, businesses and employees must keep up with and embrace a world of constant flux and accelerating change.

## Promote Employment Opportunities at a Local Level and Further Afield to Attract Appropriately Skilled Labour to The Area

Discussions and consultations with local businesses and education providers have indicated a need to raise awareness of the career opportunities available across our District. An extensive survey of businesses and schools commissioned by Council in 2018 also confirmed the mutual desire and recognised need for better communication, interaction and engagement between businesses, school students and teachers. As a result, Career teachers and young people studying at school and making key decisions about choice of subject and career path options are not aware of the breadth of training and employment opportunities available locally.

The Council believes that it also has an important role to play, alongside other stakeholders such as our Chambers, Colleges and Invest NI, to increase awareness, identify and promote employment and career path opportunities and provide outreach support to help “bridge the gap” between local schools and employers.

Though Council’s more proactive business engagement and our ongoing programme of business support and events, we will create opportunities for local businesses to raise their profile across the wider community and engage more closely with schools and colleges.

## Address Economic Inactivity and Barriers to Employment

Economically inactive people are those without a job who are not seeking work and/or are not available to start work within a two-week period. The main economically inactive groups are students, people looking after family and home, long term sick and disabled, temporarily sick and disabled, retired people and discouraged workers.

Since our district has a persistent, higher-than-average (32%) Economic Inactivity Rate, we need to do more to work in collaboration with partners to reduce this rate over time and to encourage and support more economically inactive people into employment. The economically inactive can be a potentially useful source of labour to help address skills shortages within our district. Previous work by Ulster University Economic Policy Centre estimated that around a quarter of all the economically inactive in NI are in the “want to work” category.

## Upskill / Reskill Those in Employment, Unemployed, Underemployed or Economically Inactive

We will share our skills analysis and collaborate with our local employers and colleges to identify opportunities for developing Skills Academies in direct response to identified skills needs and where employers have confirmed the existence of new job opportunities. Based on ongoing work and recent consultations, potential areas of interest and need are diverse and may include engineering, tourism/hospitality, financial services and software development, as well as emerging digital technology areas.

As part of our strategy to reduce Economic Inactivity, Council proposes to develop Employment Academies aimed at providing training in sectors where Council has identified existing employment opportunities. The academy will provide the relevant training, licenses, and qualifications needed for employment and try to match participants with employers who are seeking to recruit new staff. The Council will consult businesses, sector organisations, training providers and local stakeholders to explore opportunities for Employment Academies initially in the construction, hospitality & tourism and/or social care sectors as these have been cited as existing areas of need.

## Promote Alternative Pathways for Employment

In line with the new skills strategy, Council will help promote and encourage the development and uptake of alternative pathways to employment, including greater use of Apprenticeships and Higher-Level Apprenticeships as an alternative learning, skills development and valuable career path opportunity. We will actively participate in UK-wide National Apprenticeship Week, and the delivery of the locally focused apprenticeship events.



Improving Employability and Skills		
Sub Theme	Action	Measure
Address skills gaps and future skills needs, through education to industry engagement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Undertake a sectoral analysis which informs where employability and skills shortages exist, and what the requirements are for future growth.</li> <li>2 Facilitate a forum, comprising local businesses, education providers, Government Departments and other skills stakeholders, to lobby and deliver against key actions for overcoming skills and employability challenges.</li> </ol>	<p>An effective forum, representative of education and industry.</p> <p>Greater knowledge of skills need.</p>
Promote employment opportunities and attract appropriately skilled labour to the area.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Facilitate opportunities for local businesses to raise their profile and increase awareness of job opportunities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers Fairs.</li> <li>• Representation at Skills and Employment Forums, events and initiatives.</li> <li>• Collaboration with the private sector in events: Innovation Nation Conference, Enterprise Week and Apprenticeship Week.</li> <li>• Development of career story boards, testimonials and role models of successful, young, business people employed in high growth businesses.</li> <li>• Enhanced career guidance aligned to local sector opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	District positioned as an attractive location for employment opportunities.
Upskill / reskill those in employment, unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Deliver initiatives, in collaboration with partners, which focuses on the re-engagement of the economically inactive back into employment.</li> <li>2 Facilitate the delivery of employment programmes that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote reskilling and upskilling in response to identified skills need and where employers have confirmed the existence of new job opportunities.</li> <li>• Promote Employment Academies aimed at providing training to the unemployed in sectors where Council has identified existing employment opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3 Promote initiatives, in collaboration with partners, that break down barriers to accessing employment (i.e. childcare, transport).</li> </ol>	<p>Reduction in number of unemployed.</p> <p>Reduction in the number of economically inactive (over the long term).</p> <p>Reduction in vacant posts.</p> <p>Alignment between skill need and supply.</p>
Promote alternative pathways for employment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Promote apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeship as an alternative learning, skills development and valuable career path opportunity</li> <li>2 Lobby and engage with relevant Departments, Colleges and Industry to further develop apprenticeship and HLA offering on a sectoral basis</li> </ol>	Increase in the uptake of apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeship.

## 6.3 Investing in Regeneration and Modern Infrastructure

Regeneration of our city, towns and villages is critical to ensuring the District realises its full potential as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Investment in regeneration is also an investment in our local economy, supporting construction, local jobs, and stimulating other investments.

The expanse of the District means that each area has unique opportunities and challenges. The Council has in place a suite of Master Plans and Village Plans that seek to set out actions which are appropriate and unique to the growth and development of each area, supporting them to achieve their full potential.

In addition, modern, well-designed and robust roads, transport and telecoms infrastructure is a key enabler of economic development and growth. The Council recognises the important role

we must play in working closely with our partners to regenerate our villages and towns across the District, and to revitalise our City to help stimulate economic growth and realise our ambition to make our District a great place to live, study, visit, work and invest.

This Strategy will sit within the context of Northern Ireland's overall Regional Development Strategy and Council's new Local Development Plan (LDP). The new LDP will set out the overall planning framework to support economic and social needs in the District to 2030, in line with regional strategies and policies, including recommendations and preferred options for the use of land for economic development and business use. Ongoing work on preferred options for the use of land for business use confirms Council's desire to:

- Increase by 20% the land available for use by small businesses and non-Invest NI clients.
- Achieve a broad balance of land for business use and tourism development across the whole district including rural areas.

Council will also ensure our Planning function is well aligned, resourced and enabled to provide an efficient and responsive service that effectively addresses business needs, and supports and contributes to the economic development priorities and actions outlined within this strategy.

## Digital Transformation: Creating a Connected Region

A key objective of this Strategy is to ensure that our Council leads the way in supporting our businesses and residents to exploit the opportunities that digitalisation will bring in areas such as Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things. The "4th Industrial Revolution" (as it is now being referred to), will see the seamless and pervasive integration of digital technologies throughout all sectors, businesses and daily life and will completely transform society and how we communicate, work, study, spend our leisure time, transact business and live.

To achieve our goal we firstly need to create ultra-modern, future-proofed digital infrastructure. We then need to ensure that we exploit this by deploying and providing products and services to our businesses and residents across the district to transform how we communicate, work, carry out business, spend our leisure-time and go about our everyday lives.

Full Fibre Northern Ireland (FFNI) is a consortium of 10 rural councils across NI, whose main objective is to establish across NI a Gigabit speed "full fibre" communications network and state of the art digital infrastructure. This consortium will be a critical enabler to

the achievement of this priority.

The demand for new approaches is the result of the ongoing rapid technological disruption of existing businesses and sectors. Our Council's priorities focus on the economic benefits and opportunities for growth using digital technology and infrastructure such as:

- Accessing affordable digital and knowledge infrastructure, enabling Council, our businesses and residents to become more efficient and productive.
- Attracting and growing high technology businesses and investment.

## Regeneration of Our City, Towns and Villages

An important element of delivering economic growth for our District will involve the economic regeneration of our city, towns and villages. To achieve this Council will be dependent on strong partnership working and funding from key partners in other government departments, agencies and the private sector.

Council proposes to undertake a comprehensive programme of regeneration activity through a range of programmes and delivery of several key strategic projects.

- **Public Realm & Environmental Improvement Schemes**

Council will continue to work in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC), with local Chambers of Commerce, businesses and community representatives to invest in, design and deliver environmental public realm improvements within our towns, villages and city.

- **Investment in Our Rural Towns and Villages**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Department for Communities play a significant role in growing our rural areas. Council will continue to collaborate with DAERA and DfC to help shape policy and inform any future interventions for investment. Continued investment in our urban and rural towns and villages is critical to ensure that they remain attractive and encouraging places to live, visit and invest, and to support the continued growth of our rural businesses.

- **Heritage Regeneration**

Council recently completed a highly successful project for the restoration and regeneration of Warrenpoint Municipal Park benefiting from £850k of funding secured through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). Council is currently taking forward an ambitious project with funding from DAERA and NLHF to restore and regenerate the heritage and natural beauty of the historic Castlewellan Forest Park including re-development of the Grange, Walled Garden and National Arboretum. We will continue to seek other opportunities for the restoration and regeneration of further key heritage sites across the district.

- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)**

Within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council there are three AONBs - Mourne, Ring of Gullion and Strangford Lough and Lecale. Through the AONB Action Plans 2017-22 which receive funding from the Environment Agency, Council will continue to deliver outcomes for natural, built and cultural heritage as well as outdoor recreation and sustainable tourism.

- **Master Plans and Village Plans**

In partnership with the Department for Communities, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has developed a series of masterplans and village plans outlining project proposals for the future development of towns across the district. Masterplans have been completed for Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newry City and the South East Coast which includes the towns of Kilkeel, Newry and Warrenpoint. We will continue to take forward key projects identified within masterplans and village plans, working in close collaboration with our regeneration partners.

## Strategic Investment Proposals

- **Eastern Economic Corridor**

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will continue our current collaboration with county councils in Dublin, Belfast, Louth, Lisburn & Castlereagh, Meath, Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon and Fingal to develop a strategy and specific actions to promote and exploit new opportunities to further develop the Eastern Economic Corridor. This collaborative initiative will seek to identify opportunities for future economic growth, maximising the corridors position as a key gateway to GB, EU and international markets.

- **Downpatrick Former PSNI Station Regeneration**

Downpatrick PSNI Station, in the ownership of DfC, presents a significant regeneration opportunity in the centre of Downpatrick. Council, working with DfC and the local business community, will position and promote this site as an investment opportunity, stimulating Downpatrick and the surrounding areas.

- **Regeneration of Warrenpoint Baths**

A strategic site in Warrenpoint town centre, the Warrenpoint baths presents an opportunity for redevelopment for commercial or tourism purposes. Council, working with strategic partners and the local business community, will position and promote this site as an investment opportunity.

- **Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD)**

The UK Government's approval of the BRCD will see around £850 million investment in an integrated set of projects aimed at developing physical and digital infrastructure, creating world-class tourism experiences, boosting productivity, innovation and skills and accelerating inclusive economic growth for all six BRCD collaboration partners. Newry, Mourne and Down will benefit directly by the progression of the following major infrastructure and regeneration projects which will create jobs, bring significant economic investment and increase tourism for our district. (Other BRCD initiatives include digital/innovation initiatives and skills/employability initiatives).

- **Regeneration of Newry City**

Investment in the regeneration of Newry city centre including a new Civic Centre, theatre and conference facility, Grade A office accommodation, public realm development and the Albert Basin Park. As our District's only city, the regeneration of Newry will be an important catalyst for our whole region.

During our consultations key employers and stakeholders have stressed the importance of making Newry a modern city capable of attracting workers, new businesses and investment – a revitalized city where people are proud to live, work, study and visit.

- **Gateway to the Mournes**

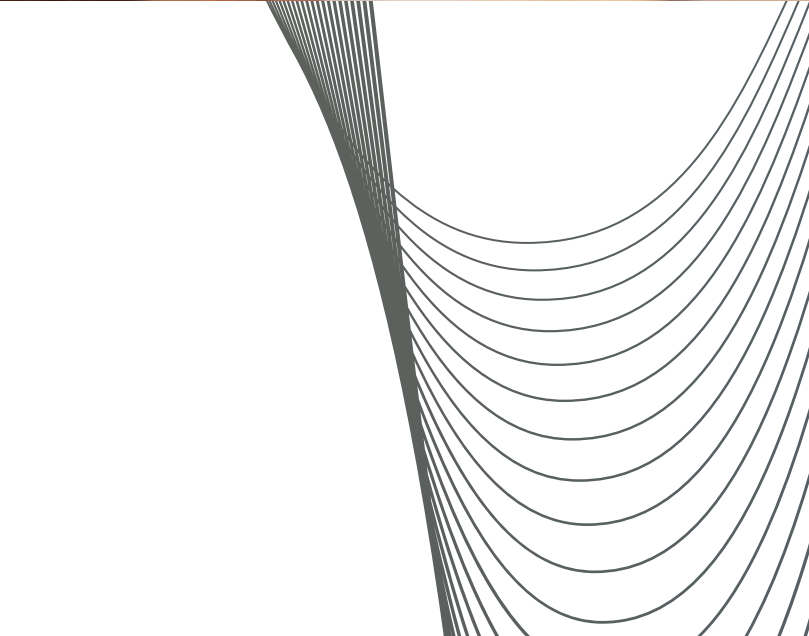
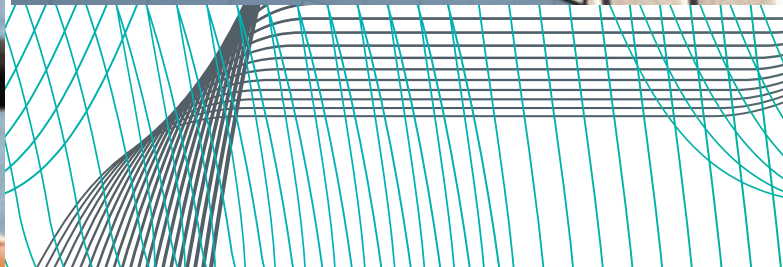
This project will see the enhancement of the tourism infrastructure in Newcastle including a unique and spectacular signature visitor experience that will provide direct access to the beautiful Mourne Mountains and surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This will be a key project for our Tourism Strategy to create world-class visitor experiences and will add strength to our aspiration to apply for UNESCO Global Geopark designation for the wider Mournes Gullion region.

- **Development of the Southern Relief Road**

Led by the Department for Infrastructure, this project will develop a new strategic road, linking the A1 Newry bypass with the A2 Warrenpoint dual-carriageway. The new Southern Relief Road will directly link the busy port of Warrenpoint with the key Dublin to Belfast eastern corridor, easing traffic congestion in Newry and opening a major North South transport gateway.

Investing in Regeneration and Modern Infrastructure		
Sub Theme	Action	Measure
Digital transformation: creating a connected region.	1 Lead the way in supporting our businesses and residents to exploit opportunities arising from digitalisation.	Increase in availability of high speed connectivity.
	2 Lobby for ultra-modern, future-proofed digital infrastructure that delivers against future business & communication needs.	Growth in business turnover, business size and exports.
	3 Deliver initiatives that develop digital skills and equip businesses with the required technical expertise and resources.	Number of businesses involved in innovation.
	4 Promote the District as a digital destination with skills and infrastructure to necessary to stimulate growth.	Increase in FDI / Investment.
Regeneration of our city, towns and villages.	1 Continued investment in the design and delivery of public realm improvements within our towns, villages and city.	Investment in regeneration.
	2 Implement priority projects identified within masterplans and village plans, working in collaboration with partners to maximize regeneration potential.	Delivery of Masterplan priorities.
	3 Establishment of a Town Centre Taskforce to inform the future regeneration potential of the District's key urban & rural town centres.	
	4 To inform future investment in our rural towns and villages, ensuring that they remain attractive and encouraging places to live, visit and invest.	
	5 Continued prioritisation and investment in the protection, regeneration and development of our AONB natural, built and cultural heritage, and restoration and regeneration of key heritage sites across the district.	
Strategic investment proposals.	To further develop and implement key strategic projects and partnerships which promote and enable opportunities for future economic growth:	Increase in business base.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast Region City Deal</li> <li>• Regeneration of Newry City</li> <li>• Green Sustainable Transport Initiatives</li> <li>• Gateway to the Mournes</li> <li>• Southern Relief Road</li> <li>• Grade A Office Space</li> <li>• Hotel provision</li> <li>• Downpatrick Former PSNI Station Regeneration</li> <li>• Regeneration of Warrenpoint Baths</li> <li>• Port Development</li> <li>• Eastern Economic Corridor</li> <li>• Future use of town centres</li> <li>• Promotion and positioning of District for business and investment</li> <li>• Development of further BIDs</li> </ul>	Growth in business turnover, business size and exports.  Increase in FDI / Investment.









# 7.0

## Delivering Our Strategy

### 7.1 Partnership and Collaboration

Council acknowledges that this Strategy cannot be delivered in isolation or by working alone. Strong Partnership working across government departments, agencies, colleges, business support organisations and private businesses will be critical for our shared success.

The themes identified are complex and cross-cutting and will require joined up, co-ordinated and concerted efforts by all partners, if Council is to deliver the economic growth that is aspired to for the region.

The need to invest time and resources in strengthening partnerships is recognised. There is a need to establish strong business networks and forums that secure active participation from all partners, and commitment to action which overcome obstacles, address issues and exploit new opportunities. These will include creating a participative and active Economic Forum and Skills Forum that deliver real value and lead to actions and economic outcomes.

It is proposed that Council facilitates a meeting of an Economic Forum on a six-monthly basis, with Economic Forum sub groups meeting on a quarterly basis to progress actions on a thematic basis.

### 7.2 Flexibility and Agility

The Council District is facing significant local and global economic challenges and unprecedented change. As a result, this Strategy will need to remain flexible and agile, delivering in response to new priorities and challenges as they arise. Council will need to carefully monitor performance, ensure resources are adequate to change direction, respond decisively and act quickly in response.

### 7.3 Championing Newry, Mourne and Down

It is clear Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has a lead role to play in positioning, promoting and championing the District at both a local and international level, as a great place to live, study, visit, work and invest.

Achievement of this is not just through developing strong communication campaigns but also through ongoing partnership working and actions that will deliver real outcomes and tangible results that can be demonstrated and reported on.





# 8.0

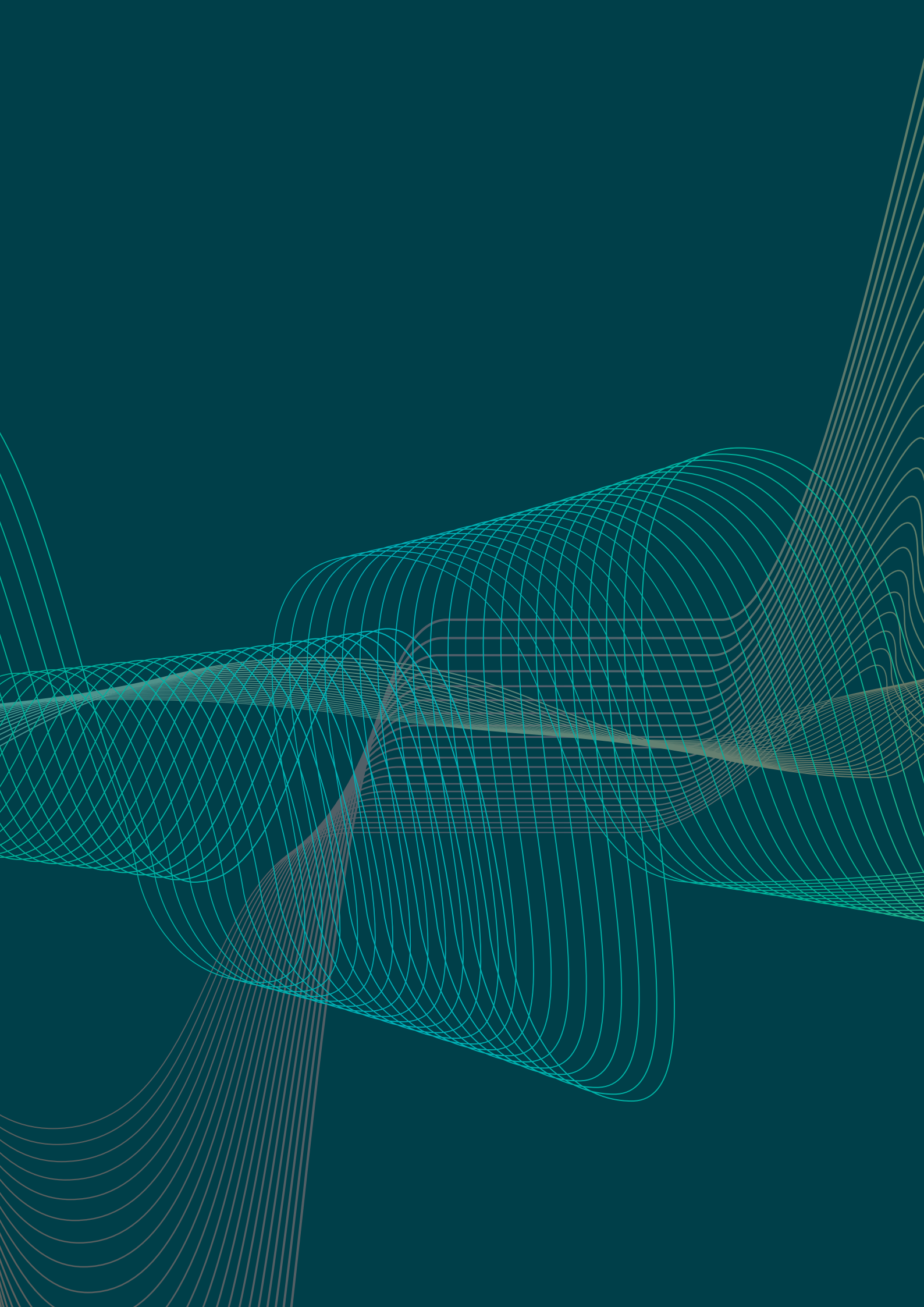
## Summary of Strategic Priorities and Sub Themes

		Project Lead	Support Partners
SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS GROWTH AND INNOVATION			
Sub Theme	Support growth and creation of new businesses starts	NMDDC / EER	Invest NI InterTrade Ireland Colleges Chambers of Commerce LEA's Business Representatives Relevant Sectoral Organisations
	Supporting growth in innovation and digital technologies	SRC, SERC	
	Building international relations	Invest NI	
	Strengthening business engagement	NMDDC / EER	
IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS			
Sub Theme	Address skills gaps and future skills needs, through education to industry engagement	NMDDC / EER	Invest NI Colleges DFE DFC Schools / Area Learning Co-ordinators Chambers of Commerce LEA's
	Promote employment opportunities and attract appropriately skilled labour to the area	NMDDC / EER	
	Upskill / reskill those in employment, unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive	SRC, SERC	
	Promote alternative pathways for employment	SRC, SERC	
INVESTING IN REGENERATION AND MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE			
Sub Theme	Digital transformation: creating a connected region	NMDDC / EER - FFNI	Invest NI DFC DFE DAERA Colleges Chambers of Commerce Newry BID
	Regeneration of our city, towns and villages	NMDDC / EER	
	Strategic investment proposals	NMDDC / EER	










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