

Local Development Plan | 2030

Draft Plan Strategy

Evidence Paper 5: Tourism

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Executive Summary

- Antrim and Newtownabbey possesses a number of major attractions of regional significance in terms of visitor numbers and/or historic and cultural importance such as Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House. These sites attract significant and growing numbers, meanwhile the Borough's forests, activity sites, museums and theatres provide a regular and sustainable flow of tourists into the Borough, with the potential for growth.
- Tourist assets in the Borough are concentrated in several hubs. Antrim town provides a range of historic, cultural and activity tourism interests. Randalstown and Newtownabbey provide minor hubs, with the latter providing a more commercial leisure focus of tourism interests. Other assets are distributed evenly throughout the Six Mile Water Valley or are close to the A6 corridor.
- The Borough is located between two of Northern Ireland's most significant key tourism destination areas, namely Belfast and the Causeway Coast and Glens and has a strong hotel and conference facility provision. The Borough is home to the Belfast International Airport (BIA) which is defined as a Gateway in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035, and provides excellent access to the ports of Belfast and Larne.
- In addition, the Borough is home to Lough Neagh, one of Tourism NI's nine Key Visitor Destinations in Northern Ireland and the attractive Belfast Lough coastline. Tourism attractions in the Borough include: over 40 activity tourism sites and opportunities; 14 Natural Heritage and Nature Attractions; 11 Heritage and Historical Attractions; 4 Visitor Information Centres; and 3 Formal Designed Gardens.
- In 2015, there were 2,419 hotel rooms within certified accommodation available in the Borough offering 3,384 bed spaces.
- The Northern Ireland Census of Employment issued by the Department for the Economy in July 2018 advises that, in September 2015, employment associated with the tourism industry in the Borough amounted to 4,197 jobs, which accounts for 6.8% of the Northern Ireland total.
- The Borough continues to see significant tourism growth year on year as awareness of attractions, and promotion of locations increases. In 2015, the total number of visitors to the Borough was 448,886, an increase from 352,966 in the previous year.
- Tourism can make an important contribution to the economy, society and environment, both locally and regionally, particularly where tourism facilities and associated infrastructure can be introduced or enhanced.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of background papers and studies being presented as part of the evidence base to inform the preparation of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Development Plan 2030 (LDP). This paper draws together the evidence base used in relation to the topic of Tourism. The evidence in this paper was collated at a point in time and may be subject to further updates. Evidence papers should be read collectively.
- 1.2 In line with Departmental guidance, the Council has updated its evidence base to inform the next stage of the LDP known as the Plan Strategy. This paper updates the 'Facilitating Economic Development' baseline evidence paper, as it relates to tourism which accompanied the Preferred Options Paper (POP) published in January 2017.
- 1.3 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the draft Plan Strategy also forms the basis for additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the LDP preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 1.4 The tourism sector makes an important contribution to the economy and to quality of life, providing an increasing flow of income through spending by visitors; it contributes to increasing levels of private investment and a sense of community pride. Tourism is also a substantial provider of employment both directly and indirectly, particularly in rural areas. Whilst tourism provides an opportunity for communities in the Borough to develop, plans must recognise the need for a sustainable approach and not diminish those assets that bring the visitors to the area in the first instance.
- 1.5 Whilst tourism development and the service sector jobs that support it are an important part of the economic make up of Northern Ireland, the development and exploitation of those assets that tourism is built upon, such as heritage and natural environment attractions can have significant environmental impacts, if not managed sustainably. Whilst some sites and locations in the Borough can be further exploited to secure tourism growth, others have limited capacity and by their nature, scale and location, must be protected.
- 1.6 It is important to remember that many tourism facilities are also heritage sites and therefore have a limited capacity for development. Additionally, many tourism assets are activity-based and are predominantly rural in their locations; transportation between, to and from these sites is often the most significant issues to be addressed in any development.

2 Legislative Context

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

- 2.1 The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 2011 Act) is the principal planning legislation in Northern Ireland, which underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015. It introduced the Plan-Led system, where the LDP is the primary consideration for decision making on all new development schemes and proposals will be required to accord with its provisions unless, exceptionally other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.2 Under the new Planning System introduced in 2015, the LDP will comprise of two documents, a Plan Strategy and a Local Policies Plan that will be prepared in sequence. It also requires the LDP to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

- 2.3 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's new LDP is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedure of each stage in the LDP preparation process and Independent Examination.

The Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

- 2.4 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedures required. The Council published its SCI in January 2016 the purpose of which is to define how the Council will engage with the community in the delivery of the LDP. It is set within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and meets the requirements of the 2011 Act.

The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006

- 2.5 Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires all Northern Ireland Departments and Councils, in exercising their functions, to act in the way they consider best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Section 5 of the 2011 Act copper-fastens this duty by requiring those who exercise any function in relation to LDPs to do so with the objectives of furthering sustainable development.

Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

- 2.6 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 introduced a statutory link between a Council's Community Plan and LDP, and requests that the preparation of the LDP must take account of the Community Plan.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 2.7 The Council has a statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as a public authority, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity

between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

- 2.8 Council has engaged and will continue to engage with Section 75 groups throughout the LDP process, adhering to the Council's SCI.

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

- 2.9 The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 provides a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services and came into effect for Councils in June 2017.
- 2.10 Rural needs is an ongoing and integral component of the Council's LDP.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004

- 2.11 It is a statutory requirement that all plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant environmental effect must be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The European Union Directive '2001/42/EC' states that an SEA is mandatory and was transposed into local legislation in the form of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 (the EAPP (NI) Regulations). The objective of the SEA directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the Councils LDP, with a view to promoting sustainable development.
- 2.12 The SEA is an ongoing process and must be carried out in conjunction with, and integrated into the LDP process. Under the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Regulations, an Environmental Report is published with the LDP document.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995

- 2.13 The LDP is required to consider its impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites (these comprise Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and RAMSAR Sites) and will be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). Similar to the SEA the HRA is an on-going process, which will take place at key stages during the preparation of the LDP. The Regulations contribute to transposing the requirements of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives.

3 Regional Policy Context

Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016- 2021

- 3.1 The key aim of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) is to grow a sustainable economy through investing in the future, tackling disadvantage,

improving health and wellbeing, protecting the people and the environment, building a strong and shared community and delivering high quality services.

- 3.2 The delivery of many of the strategic outcomes will be the responsibility of central government, however, the LDP will play a supporting role in helping to deliver many of these. The draft PfG recognises that the tourism and hospitality industry is one of the region's key service sectors. It offers huge growth potential, and the best opportunity for Northern Ireland to strengthen its economy. A key indicator identified in the framework is 'improving the attractiveness as a destination' which is to be measured by the total spend by external visitors.

Sustainable Development Strategy Northern Ireland 2010

- 3.3 One of the key principles outlined in the Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) relates to 'Living within Environmental Limits'. This promotes the need to protect and improve the environment with emphasis on the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity and to ensure that finite resources are protected for future generations. One of the key priority areas relates to 'striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment'. This promotes sustainable land and marine management, better planning and management of development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.
- 3.4 Whilst none of the priority areas for action outlined in the SDS relate specifically to this topic, it is clear that tourism has a role to play in the building of a dynamic economy and the strengthening of society particularly with regard to job creation and the improvement of quality of life through experiencing, participating in, and accessing cultural and sporting pursuits.

Regional Development Strategy 2035

- 3.5 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) aims to protect and enhance the environment for current and future generations. It recognises that Northern Ireland's environment is one of its greatest assets which has benefits in terms of the economy and quality of life. This is particularly the case where tourism facilities and associated infrastructure can be introduced or enhanced. The Strategy also recognises that the tourism industry has a role to play in creating employment opportunities in rural areas, particularly where they are integrated in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner.
- 3.6 Antrim is specifically identified by the RDS as a town where tourism provision can be enhanced. The location of the town and proximity to Lough Neagh and its tributary rivers provides the potential for tourism facilities such as water-based activities, scenic walks and angling. The strong hospitality sector in the Antrim area is likely to function as a lure to draw additional visitors to the town.

- 3.7 The RDS contains Regional Guidance (RG) and Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) policies. It promotes a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure in order to deliver economic benefits (RG4). Tourism is also indirectly associated with RG2 and RG11, which promote a balanced approach to transport infrastructure, and the conservation, protection and enhancement of the built heritage and the natural environment.
- 3.8 It also recognises that the expansion of rural tourism and associated development which is both sustainable and environmentally sensitive should be encouraged as it can provide further jobs and opportunities in rural areas (SFG13).
- 3.9 The RDS also identifies the hills around the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area as significant environmental assets that need protection from development. However, opportunities should be sought where appropriate, to increase access to them for residents and tourists, consistent with protecting their integrity and value (SFG5).

Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012

- 3.10 The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the strategy period. The RTS is a 'daughter document' of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2035, which sets out the spatial development framework for Northern Ireland up to 2035.
- 3.11 This Strategy was supported by three initiatives namely Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004, Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007.

Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004

- 3.12 The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) 2004 is the local transport plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) including Metropolitan Newtownabbey. This plan delivered a phased and costed implementation programme of transport schemes to 2015. This plan took forward the strategic initiatives of the RTS 2002-2012.

Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (2005)

- 3.13 The former Department for Regional Development (DRD), now the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) prepared the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) 2015. The Plan is based on the guidance set out in the RDS 2035 and the RTS 2002-2012. The Plan presents a range of multi-modal transport initiatives to manage, maintain and develop Northern Ireland's Strategic Transport Network. The Regional Strategic Transport Network of Northern Ireland comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.

Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007

- 3.14 The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) 2007 covers Antrim and takes forward the strategic initiatives of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012. The SRTP deals with the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the BMA and the rail and trunk road networks, which are covered, in the BMA and RSTN TP.

Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future – ‘A New Approach to Regional Transportation’ 2011

- 3.15 Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) was developed to build on the RTS for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 and to refocus and rebalance the investment in the future. Unlike the 2002 Strategy, Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) does not include details of schemes or projects. Rather, the Department has set three High Level Aims for transportation along with twelve supporting Strategic Objectives, covering the economy, society and the environment. The ESTF complements the RDS 2035 and contains high-level aims and strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. It sets out the approach to regional transportation and is used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015. Work is progressing on the implementation of the ESTF and the Council will ensure that any future transportation projects affecting the Borough are appropriately reflected in the LDP.

Forthcoming Transport Plans

- 3.16 The Department for Infrastructure is currently preparing new Transport Plans which will cover the Borough. This includes a new Regional Strategic Transport Network Plan for all of Northern Ireland and a new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan which will cover Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as well as Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is represented on the Project Boards for both plans along with other Councils.
- 3.17 As part of the preparation for the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Department is preparing a Transport Study for the greater Belfast area and the Council has taken the emerging study into consideration in the preparation of its draft Plan Strategy. Work will also continue to bring forward the next stage of the LDP, the Local Policies Plan, alongside the Department's Transport Plans.
- 3.18 Further information on the Transport Study and Transport Plans is available on the Department of Infrastructure's website <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/>.

Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040

- 3.19 'Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)' sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the Executive's long term goal of a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The Strategy recognises how planning can impact on flood risk and water quality and aims to ensure that existing water and sewerage infrastructure and investment proposals inform future planning decisions and the preparation of LDPs.
- 3.20 The Strategy sets out a number of matters that the Council's new LDP will need to take into account which are summarised below:
- Ensuring planning decisions are informed by up to date information on the risk from all significant sources of flooding;
 - Prevention of inappropriate development in high flood risk areas and ensuring that future development does not increase flood risk;
 - Exceptional development within high flood risk areas must make provision for adequate mitigation measures;
 - Ensure surface water drainage is adequately addressed; and
 - Planning policy should promote sustainable water and sewerage services by making appropriate space for water and sewerage infrastructure including sustainable drainage systems.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015

- 3.21 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) recognises the important contribution that tourism makes to the Northern Ireland economy in terms of revenues, employment, and the overall potential for economic growth. The Northern Ireland Executive has identified tourism as a major component in creating and supporting a sustainable economy and investing in the future. The contribution of tourism to the local economy is so vital, the Executive contains key strategic targets for tourism which ultimately aspire to develop tourism into a £1 billion industry in Northern Ireland by 2020.
- 3.22 The SPPS advises that sustainable tourism development be delivered through balancing the needs of tourists and the tourism industry with conserving the tourism asset. Through the application of planning policies, which identify appropriate development opportunities whilst safeguarding tourism assets, the planning system has a key role in managing tourism-related development. The SPPS seeks to contribute to regional economic growth whilst also sustaining vibrant rural communities through facilitating growth in tourism. It reiterates many of the recommendations of the Regional Development Strategy through the promotion of all tourism-related development provided it:
- Is sustainable and environmentally sensitive;
 - Protects the tourism asset from inappropriate development;

- Develops the tourism potential of settlements; and
 - Is of an appropriate nature, location, and scale; of a high standard of quality and design.
- 3.23 With regard to Regional Strategic Policy within the LDP, the SPPS requires that there is a general presumption in favour of tourism-related development located within settlements, subject to the acceptability of a proposal in relation to normal planning requirements. The SPPS states that tourism development must be managed carefully in the countryside, with development located within settlements preferred. However, it is acknowledged that this may not always be possible, and a methodology akin to a sequential approach to site selection is cited.
- 3.24 Reiterating the requirements of Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 16, the SPPS clarifies that a tourism strategy, which should form part of the LDP, should reflect wider government tourism initiatives and should address the following issues:
- How future tourism demand is best accommodated;
 - Safeguarding of key tourism assets;
 - Identification of potential tourism growth areas;
 - Environmental considerations; and
 - Contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.
- 3.25 Stemming from the tourism strategy, the LDP will be required to provide a policy framework, which manages tourism development throughout the Borough, with particular focus upon development in the countryside and the safeguarding of tourism assets such as built and natural heritage. In addition, this should also include policies for development such as tourist accommodation and amenities, together with a criteria for the consideration of proposals. It may also be necessary, given the direction of the SPPS to include guidance with regard to design considerations, particularly with regard to Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

Other Planning Policy

- 3.26 Current Operational Planning Policy with regard to tourism is primarily included within the following:
- Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI);
 - Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2: Natural Heritage;
 - PPS 4: Planning & Economic Development;
 - PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and Built Heritage;
 - PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation;
 - PPS 16: Tourism; and

- PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside.

3.27 These PPSs, as well as the SPPS, have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the detailed development management policies, which are contained within the draft Plan Strategy documents.

3.28 Whilst the majority of policies contained within the PSRNI have been superseded by provisions contained within subsequent Development Plans or Planning Policy Statements, the strategic policy objectives of the Strategy prevail. The key aim of PPS 16 is to manage the provision of sustainable and high quality tourism developments in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment. It sets out planning policies for tourism related development including tourist attractions and amenities, and associated accommodation.

Departmental Guidance

3.29 The LDP has been prepared taking account of Departmental policy and guidance, which is available by contacting the Department for Infrastructure.

3.30 The Development Plan Practice Note 7 'The Plan Strategy' published in 2015, guides officers and relevant users through the key requirements for the preparation of the Plan Strategy and deals primarily with procedures as well as good practice.

3.31 The supplementary planning guidance, 'Living Places – An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland' (DfI, 2014) Design Guide aims to clearly establish the key principles behind good place making. It recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in the stewardship and design of these important places, be they existing or newly proposed.

3.32 The supplementary planning guidance 'Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside' (DfI, 2012) primary aim is to support the essential needs of vibrant rural communities, to conserve rural landscapes and natural resources, facilitate a sustainable rural economy and promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development in the countryside.

Belfast City Region Deal

3.33 The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) comprises the six Councils of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

3.34 The BRCD is designed to deliver a step change in the region's economic fortunes and help achieve the vision of inclusive growth, agreed by all Council partners. The central goal of the BRCD is to deliver more and better jobs, accessible to people from all communities focusing on employability, skills, innovation, infrastructure and in particular, tourism.

Northern Ireland Regional Tourism Strategy 2020

- 3.35 The need for a Regional Tourism Strategy was borne out of the Hunter Review, an independent review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and wider tourism structures, which commenced in December 2013. The Strategy is an opportunity to change mind-sets and recognise the economic importance of tourism, set the direction for the tourism industry and government and develop tourism into an internationally competitive sector.
- 3.36 The absence of a Northern Ireland Executive however has delayed public consultation, and therefore finalisation of, the draft Strategy within the original timescale. Consideration is now being given to extending the draft Tourism Strategy period to 2030.

Northern Ireland Regional Tourism Accommodation Policy

- 3.37 The Department for the Economy's Tourism Liaison Branch has undertaken a consultation on tourism accommodation policy, and a draft policy has been prepared. Currently undergoing appraisal to ensure compliance with the development of a strategic vision for tourism in Northern Ireland, this new policy is awaiting public consultation.

Lough Neagh Management Strategy 2002

- 3.38 The Lough Neagh Management Strategy sets out recommendations for the future integrated and sustainable management of the environmental, economic and social resources of the area.

4 Local Policy Context

Legacy Development Plans

- 4.1 The following is a list of the legacy development plans that apply to the Borough:
- Antrim Area Plan 1984-2001 and its alterations (AAP);
 - Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP);
 - Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001¹ (CAP);
 - Draft Newtownabbey Area Plan 2005 (dNAP); and
 - Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP).
- 4.2 It should be noted that the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan adopted in September 2014 was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgement of the Court of Appeal delivered in May 2017. As a consequence, the BUAP is now

¹ Insofar as it relates to that part of the legacy Carrickfergus Borough Council area at Greenisland that transferred to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough in 2015 under Review of Public Administration (RPA).

the statutory development plan for the Metropolitan Newtownabbey area of the Borough, with dBMAP remaining a material consideration.

Community Plan – Love Living Here 2017

- 4.3 The Council's Community Plan, 'Love Living Here', sets out a shared vision and agreed outcomes for the area up to 2030. The successful implementation of the Community Plan will be marked by a demonstrable improvement in how services are delivered across the Borough and the quality of life our citizens experience. As such the Community Plan is an important document and has been taken into account in the preparation of the Council's LDP.
- 4.4 The Community Plan sets out four outcomes which are as follows:
- Our citizens enjoy good health and wellbeing;
 - Our citizens live in connected, safe, clean and vibrant places;
 - Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity; and
 - Our citizens achieve their full potential.
- 4.5 It also sets out one wildly important goal requiring that our vulnerable people are supported.

Corporate Plan – Our Borough Your Vision 2019-2030

- 4.6 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a vision for the Borough and identifies what it needs to do between now and 2030 to achieve this. The Vision for the Borough up to 2030 is defined as,
- 'A progressive, smart and prosperous Borough. Inspired by our people; Driven by ambition'.*
- 4.7 The Corporate Plan sets out a number of objectives in relation to Place, People and Prosperity. The LDP has a key role to play under the objective of 'Place' and the Corporate Plan states:
- 'We will have succeeded if: People take pride in their surroundings. People feel safe. Our environment, natural habitats and built heritage are protected and enhanced. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. We have an efficient planning process that promotes positive development and sustainable growth'.*

Council Masterplans/Village Plans

- 4.8 Through the Village Renewal Scheme as supported by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, the Council benefited from funding to devise and update plans for the development of villages in the Borough. Whilst these plans are non-statutory, they have been prepared in close conjunction with local residents and identify a range of potential projects to improve the settlements. These range from short term goals to long-term aspirations. The village plans alongside the masterplans relating to the Borough will be considered in the preparation of the LDP where relevant.

4.9 The **Antrim Town Centre Masterplan and Implementation Strategy 2010** identifies a range of potential redevelopment/regeneration sites in Antrim Town Centre. It outlines the numerous challenges with regard to encouraging tourism, and promotes a co-ordinated approach to develop the potential of Antrim's tourism sector.

4.10 The **Newtownabbey Regeneration Strategy 2011** provides guidance as to the location and form of development opportunities in Ballyclare and Glengormley over a twenty-year period from 2011. Within this Strategy, Ballyclare is seen as a destination of choice for shopping, leisure opportunities and tourism. Both centres have tourism potential as well as a range of leisure and entertainment provision, shopping and financial/ professional services.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Tourism Strategy 2017-2022

4.11 The Council, in partnership with Tourism NI, finalised its draft Tourism Strategy in July 2017. This document details a range of visitor servicing provision and activities offered throughout the Borough, and identifies potential opportunities for investment and growth. A five-year Action Plan forms part of the overall Strategy, which outlines how the Council can support and grow and local tourism sector. The Strategy's priorities include:

- Enhancing the Visitor Experience and Product Development including developments under: Culture and Heritage; Natural Heritage; Outdoors; Festival and Events; Business Tourism; Accommodation; and Food and the Evening Economy, each supported by the development of clusters and corridors; and engaging with visitor markets activates;
- Improving Access and Infrastructure including development under: Visitor Information Centres; Transport Facilities; and Services Directional and Interpretative signage; and
- Effect People and Skills Development.

4.12 In addition, an emphasis on collaboration between government, tourism agencies, Council's and the private sector have been outlined to support the delivery of this draft Tourism Strategy.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Tourism Marketing Plan 2015-2016

4.13 This Marketing Plan was an outcome of workshops held by the Council with key stakeholders, including service providers in an attempt to outline how tourism in the Borough can be improved. It outlines tourism performance both regionally and locally, investigates current market themes and segments, and identifies potential clustering and/or development opportunities. An Action Plan, which forms part of the Marketing Plan, sets out key activities that should be addressed in order to further develop the tourism sector in the Borough. This relates to a number of key areas including Strategic Development (incorporating a Tourism Strategy and maximising branding/promotion),

Product Development, maximising the use of social media, and the marketing of the Borough's tourism assets.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Tourism Action Plan 2016-2017

- 4.14 This Action Plan builds upon the Tourism Marketing Plan 2015-2016, and focusses upon building capacity within the local tourism sector, and maximising the impact of marketing and branding with relevance to the Borough.
- 4.15 Both areas involved establishing crucial working relationships with a variety of key stakeholders in order to identify issues and develop opportunities with regard to tourism in the Borough. Capacity building involves investigating the potential to hold tourism masterclasses for service providers in the Borough; the promotion of tourism assets; the promotion of tourism assets on the Council's website; and the improvement of access to the Borough's tourism assets.
- 4.16 Marketing and branding endeavours to ensure that tourism assets in the Borough are promoted at both local and regional levels. A Visitor Guide has recently been published, which provides details of accommodation and attractions throughout the Borough. Entitled, 'It's in Our Nature: Antrim and Newtownabbey Visitor Guide', it also provides examples of itineraries, and information with regard to travelling around the Borough.

ANBC Local Tourism Forum

- 4.17 The Council established a Local Tourism Forum with representatives from the local tourist industry. The Forum meets quarterly to discuss and review tourism developments and to bring together key stakeholders within the Borough.

Cross Boundary Policy Context

- 4.18 In considering the local policy context, it is important to note that the Borough does not sit in isolation. Accordingly, it will be important to take account of our neighbouring local authorities comprising Belfast City Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Mid Ulster District Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- 4.19 Neighbouring Council's Preferred Options Papers (POPs), supporting evidence base and draft Plan Strategies have been taken account of, as these are regarded as the main cross boundary documents to be considered in addition to regional guidance.
- 4.20 Table 1 indicates each Council's position in relation to the topic of tourism as set out in their POP and draft Plan Strategy documents.

Table 1: Cross Boundary Tourism Policy Context

Council	Document
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (ACBCBC)	ACBCBC published its POP in March 2018. The Council's preferred option is to, 'Support a sustainable approach to rural economic development in line with existing policies and regional direction, tailored to meet local circumstances, including in relation to facilitating the apple orchard / cider tourism experience.
Belfast City Council (BCC)	BCC published its draft Plan Strategy in August 2018. Contained within this document is a range of draft tourism planning policies including supporting tourism leisure and cultural development, existing tourism leisure and cultural facilities and assets; overnight visitor accommodation; and evening and night-time economy.
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC)	LCCC published it's POP in March 2017. The Council's preferred options included: Promoting Hillsborough Castle as a Key Tourism Destination; Promoting the Lagan Navigation as a Key Tourism Destination; and Protecting and Promoting the Lagan Valley Regional Park as a Key Tourism/Recreation Opportunity Area Lagan Valley Regional Park.
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC)	MEA published its POP in June 2017. The Council's preferred options include to, 'Retain current strategic policy approach set out in PPS 16: Tourism (with minor amendments) for accommodating tourism development in both settlements and the countryside and bring forward bespoke policy tailored to the tourism potential of Vulnerable, Sensitive and Opportunity areas within Mid and East Antrim Borough'.
Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC)	MUDC published its draft Plan Strategy in February 2019. Contained within this document is a range of draft tourism planning policies. These include: Protection of Tourism Assets and Tourist Accommodation; Resort Destination Development; Tourism Accommodation; and Other Tourism Facilities/Amenities and Attraction.

- 4.21 The Council has responded to neighbouring Council's POP and LDP documents as they are published. In addition, the Council is also represented on a number of working groups and project boards to discuss cross boundary issues. This includes the Metropolitan Area Spatial Working Group and the Belfast Metropolitan Plan Project Board.
- 4.22 In terms of growth across the region, the Council view is that no neighbouring Council's growth strategy should have a negative impact on the Council's

LDP in terms of resources for infrastructure provision delivered by statutory providers.

- 4.23 In consideration of neighbouring Council's documents as well as regional policy, it is the opinion of the Council that it's draft Plan Strategy is sound and is not in conflict with neighbouring Council's emerging LDPs.

5 Preferred Options Paper

- 5.1 The Council's Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published in 2017 and was the first formal stage in the preparation of the LDP for the Borough and was designed to promote debate in relation to key strategic planning issues arising in the area. The POP set out a range of strategic options in relation to how and where development should be located within the Borough. It included options for our settlements, our centres, employment land and housing locations, as well as a number of other key planning issues.
- 5.2 In addition, the Council asked the public for their views on a range of planning topics and issues. A total of 148 representations were received which were considered during the development of the draft Plan Strategy document and, where relevant, these will also be considered during the preparation of the Local Policies Plan. Details are set out in the Council's published 'Preferred Options Paper Public Consultation Report 2019'.

6 Soundness

- 6.1 The LDP is prepared to meet the test of soundness as set out in the Department for Infrastructure's Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017).

7 Economic Role of Tourism in Northern Ireland

- 7.1 The tourism industry accounts for approximately 5% of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Given the vital contribution of tourism to the Northern Ireland Economy, the Northern Ireland Executive aspires to create a £1 billion industry by 2020. With regard to tourism related employment, the most recent Quarterly Employment Survey (September 2016) advised that as of June 2016, there were 57,310 employee jobs in tourism and leisure industries in Northern Ireland.
- 7.2 Northern Ireland Tourism Statistics relating to the twelve-month period from July 2015 to June 2016 were updated in November 2017. According to this data, there were 4.9 million overnight trips in Northern Ireland, resulting in 16.9 million nights spent in the region. Some £926 million was spent in Northern Ireland because of tourism – an increase of 9% on the preceding 12-month period.

- 7.3 During the same period, the number of rooms sold in hotels and other commercial accommodation amounted to 2.7 million, of which 85% were in hotels. The average occupancy rate in Northern Ireland hotels in 2017 was 73%, with 2.1 million rooms sold, representing an increase of 6% on the previous year. With regard to guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, and guest accommodation, the average occupancy rate for 2017 was 37% compared to 27% in 2016. This information indicates that 2017 was a positive year for hotel accommodation, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts and guest accommodation and reflects the statistical year on year increase in occupancy rates since 2013.
- 7.4 There were 19.8 million visits to Northern Ireland's visitor attractions in 2017. Excluding country parks, parks, forests and gardens, the most popular visitor attractions were the Giants Causeway (1 million visits), Titanic Belfast (0.76 million visits) and the Ulster Museum (0.53 million visits), all of which lie outside of the Borough.
- 7.5 Individual aspects of tourism, with particular relevance to the Borough, including employment, overnight trips, stays and expenditure, room occupancy, and visitor numbers, are explored later in this section.

8 Tourism in Antrim and Newtownabbey

- 8.1 The Borough is served by some of the best road, rail and air transportation infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The M2 motorway gives quick, safe access to all the major points of entry including Belfast Harbour, the Port of Larne, Belfast International Airport and George Best Belfast City Airport. The Borough is a gateway to the Causeway Coastal Route, set against a dramatic coastal backdrop, with spectacular views of the Irish Sea. Strategically located within the Borough, Belfast International Airport is the main point of access into Northern Ireland, with over 6 million passengers a year. The Council is also strategically located beside the Port of Belfast where future plans are for further capacity to berth more cruise ships, continuing the influx of visitors into the region.
- 8.2 The Borough is strategically located between two of Northern Ireland's most significant key tourism destination areas, namely Greater Belfast and the Causeway Coast. These areas, together with the accessibility provided by public transport hubs and corridors, means that existing tourism assets have the ability to contribute to a more sustainable form of tourism.
- 8.3 The Borough attracts a significant 212,000 visitors annually and a new tourism brand has been developed to reflect the diverse and unique range of tourism experiences that visitors can enjoy and can expect. The brand's strapline 'It's In Our Nature' encapsulates three key tourism themes: Outdoors & Nature, History & Heritage and Loughs & Waterways. It reflects the professional and

memorable customer service experience that local tourism provider's offer and the welcome that people can expect.

- 8.4 Lough Neagh is one of Tourism NI's nine Key Visitor Destinations in Northern Ireland. The Borough has approximately 30% of the 125 kilometre shoreline of the Lough, including Ram's Island, the largest of all the Lough Neagh islands, and a site significant historic built and natural heritage importance. Traditional attractions within the environs of Lough Neagh also includes Shane's Castle, Randalstown; a working Estate consisting of about 800 acres of farmland and a 1000 acres of woodland.
- 8.5 The Council continues to invest in the tourism sector throughout the Borough from its leisure centres and golf courses, as well as attractions around Lough Neagh and Belfast Lough. One regionally significant visitor attraction is the new Gateway Centre at Antrim Lough Shore Park which is expected to become a regional landmark and serve as a 'honey pot' attraction for visitors to Lough Neagh, one of Northern Ireland's most important natural assets.

9 Tourism Assets in Antrim and Newtownabbey

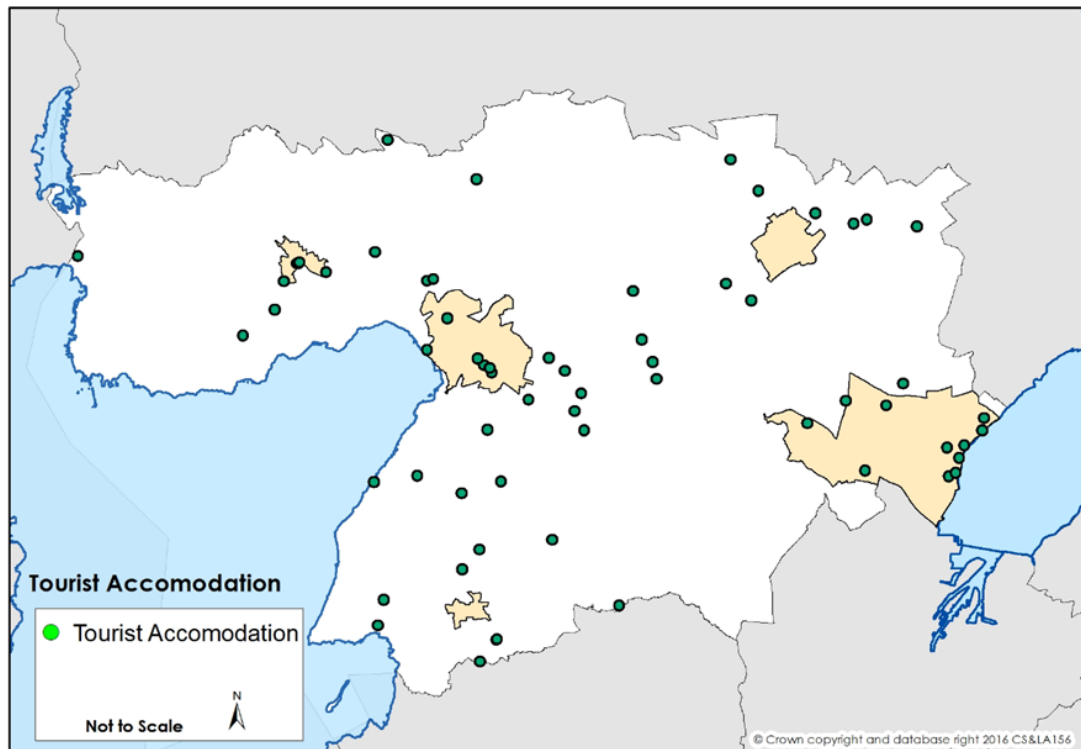
- 9.1 There are approximately 147 tourism assets located throughout the Borough, including places to stay, places to visit and a range of activity-based tourism. The tourism offer in the Borough provides in the region of 65 places to stay and 82 places to visit or things to do. Tourism attractions in the Borough include:
- Over 40 activity tourism sites and opportunities;
 - 14 Natural Heritage & Nature Attractions;
 - 11 Heritage & Historical Attractions;
 - 4 Visitor Information Centres;
 - 4 Cultural & Arts Attractions; and
 - 3 Formal Designed Gardens.

10 Tourist Accommodation in Antrim & Newtownabbey

- 10.1 Tourism NI accommodation stock information shows that the Borough has a variety of traditional forms of visitor accommodation providing approximately 7% of all Northern Ireland stock in 2017. With regard to room occupancy in Northern Ireland during 2017, the Borough is ranked third out of the eleven Local Government Districts, with an average rate of 56%. In comparison, Belfast City and Mid and East Antrim Borough Councils achieved average occupancy rates of 76% and 60% respectively.
- 10.2 The Borough's accommodation stock includes:
- 11 hotels;
 - 6 guesthouses;
 - 22 bed and breakfasts; and
 - 14 self-catering units.

10.3 Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of tourist accommodation throughout the Borough. This incorporates accommodation that is currently registered with Tourism NI and detailed accordingly in their literature, and those locations that are not registered, but have been identified through research by the Planning Section.

Figure 1: Tourist Accommodation in the Borough



Visitor Accommodation

- 10.4 In 2015, there were 2,419 rooms in the Borough certified by Tourism NI as available accommodation, offering 3,384 bed spaces. This equates to approximately 11% of all rooms available in Northern Ireland, and 8% of all bed spaces. Antrim and Newtownabbey's share of overall room provision in Northern Ireland has fallen slightly since 2011; however, this is likely to be due to recent marked expansion of high quality hotels and serviced-apartments in Belfast City Council area.
- 10.5 Table 2 outlines the accommodation room stock within each of the eleven Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland, and their ranking in the context of the Northern Ireland total provision.
- 10.6 Based upon the number of accommodation rooms available, Antrim and Newtownabbey ranks in 3rd place with 2,419 rooms, whilst the sector is clearly dominated by Belfast City and Causeway Coast and Glens District Councils with 27.7% and 22.4% of the total room stock. It is important to emphasise that the Borough's rooms, service a great deal of business visitors and there is a

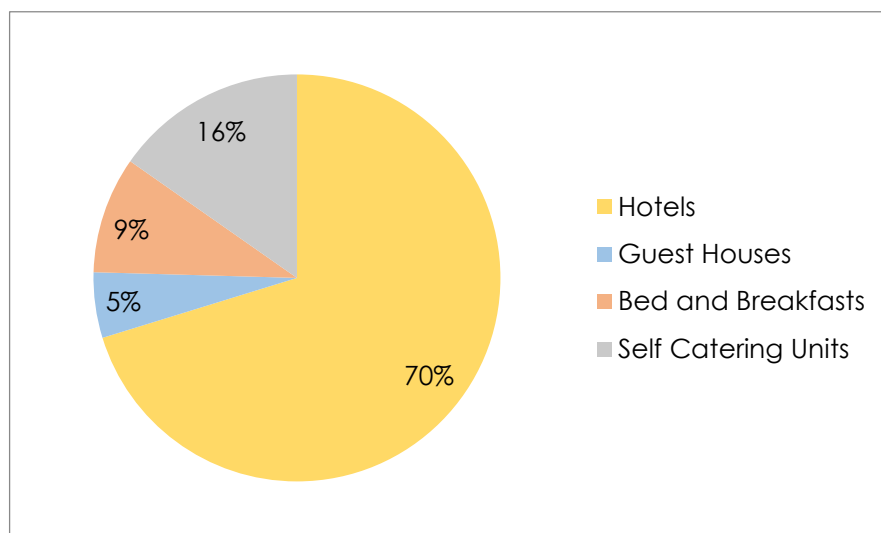
need to develop business conferencing and tourism accommodation together to support wider economic development opportunities.

Table 2: Accommodation Room Stock by Local Government District (2015)

Local Government District	Rooms Available	% of Total Rooms Available	Rank
Antrim and Newtownabbey	2,419	10.98%	3
Ards and North Down	867	3.93%	8
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	474	2.15%	11
Belfast City	6,097	27.67%	1
Causeway Coast and Glens	4,944	22.43%	2
Derry City and Strabane	1,710	7.76%	6
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,775	8.05%	4
Lisburn and Castlereagh City	479	2.17%	10
Mid and East Antrim	942	4.27%	7
Mid Ulster	509	2.31%	9
Newry, Mourne and Down	1,823	8.27%	5
Northern Ireland	22,039	100%	

Source: Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics, Department for the Economy/NISEA, July 2016.

- 10.7 Within the Borough, tourist accommodation is provided through a broad range of hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts and self-catering units. Between 2012 and 2018 there have been changes to the overall composition of accommodation stock. Guest Houses, Bed & Breakfast and Self-Catering have all experienced slight decreases in terms of units, room and total bed spaces. Hotel provision has increased in terms of total stock and improved in respect of quality grading through the Tourism NI accreditation scheme.
- 10.8 Quality of stock is improving, and the number of hotels in the Borough has increased from 8 in 2012, to 11 in 2019. There is one new 4* hotel while the number of 3* hotels has doubled to six in 2018. The number of unclassified/awaiting grading fell over the same period from four to three.
- 10.9 The range of tourism accommodation types (in terms of available bed spaces) within the Borough in 2017 is shown in Figure 2.
- 10.10 On average, tourist accommodation in the Borough offered 1.4 bed spaces per available room in 2015. This is below the average for Northern Ireland, which is 1.9 bed spaces per room. Guest houses provided the largest number of bed spaces per room (2.4), whilst self-catering accommodation offered the least (1.8). Hotels in the Borough offered 2.1 bed spaces per room whereas bed and breakfasts offered 2.2 bed spaces per room.

Figure 2: Tourist Accommodation by Available Bed Spaces (2017)

Source: Certified Tourism Stock NISRA, 2017

Overnight stays, Night and Visitor Spend

10.11 Table 3 outlines the estimated overnight stays, overall number of nights stayed, and the expenditure attributed to these stays with regard to the eleven Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland. With regard to Antrim and Newtownabbey, it is estimated that there were approximately 205,600 overnight trips in the Borough, resulting in a total of 727,600 individual nights accommodation. This brought in £32.8 million to the local tourism industry, equating to approximately 4% of the Northern Ireland total.

Table 3: Estimated Overnight Trips, Nights and Expenditure by LGD (2017)

Local Government District	Overnight Trips		Nights		Expenditure	
	No.	%	No.	%	£m	%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	205,611	4%	727,596	4%	32.8	4%
Ards and North Down	282,323	6%	1,340,258	8%	46.5	5%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	228,595	5%	780,583	5%	32.4	3%
Belfast	1,482,343	30%	5,030,857	30%	328.0	35%
Causeway Coast & Glens	1,063,989	21%	3,433,427	20%	193.6	21%
Derry City and Strabane	270,408	5%	822,313	5%	55.8	6%
Fermanagh and Omagh	342,847	7%	947,698	6%	56.7	6%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	150,837	3%	615,567	4%	26.6	3%
Mid and East Antrim	255,803	5%	964,131	6%	43.3	5%
Mid Ulster	136,626	3%	528,468	3%	20.1	2%
Newry, Mourne and Down	589,581	12%	1,675,229	10%	90.4	10%
Northern Ireland	5,008,962	100%	16,866,127	100%	926.1	100%

Source: Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics. Department for the Economy/NISRA, July 2018

10.12 It is estimated that £926 million was added to the Northern Ireland economy as a result of overnight trips. Expenditure in Belfast amounted to £328 million, whilst £194 million was spent in the Causeway Coast and Glens Local Government District. Together, these two areas accounted for 56% of the total tourist related expenditure in Northern Ireland.

Tourism Jobs in Antrim and Newtownabbey

10.13 The Northern Ireland Census of Employment, issued by the Department for the Economy in July 2018 advises that, in September 2015, employment associated with the tourism industry in the Borough amounted to 4,197 jobs, which accounts for 6.8% of the Northern Ireland total. This figure incorporates jobs in the following areas:

- Accommodation for visitors;
- Food, beverage serving activities;
- Transport; and
- Sporting and recreational activities.

10.14 Table 4 details the number of tourism related jobs throughout the eleven Local Government Districts, and with regard to Northern Ireland as a whole.

Table 4: Tourism Employee Jobs by Local Government District 2017

Local Government District	Tourism Related Jobs	% of Northern Ireland Total
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4,197	6.8%
Ards and North Down	4,954	8.1%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	4,266	7.0%
Belfast	18,607	30.0%
Causeway Coast & Glens	4,823	8.0%
Derry City and Strabane	4,685	7.6%
Fermanagh and Omagh	3,524	5.8%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	3,806	6.2%
Mid and East Antrim	3,959	6.5%
Mid Ulster	3,489	5.7%
Newry, Mourne and Down	4,953	8.2%
Northern Ireland	61,263	100%

Source: Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics, Department for the Economy/NISRA, July 2018

11 Tourist Attractions/Infrastructure in Antrim & Newtownabbey

Visitor Information Centres

11.1 Visitor information centres are located at four locations across the Borough and are all co-located with other visitor/cultural/retail services at Mossley Mill, Antrim's Old Court House, The Junction Retail Outlet and Leisure Park, and Randalstown Local Information Office. The Council also has a partnership agreement with Visit Belfast who operate a Visitor Information Pod at Belfast International Airport to promote Northern Ireland and participating Councils.

Heritage & Historical Attractions

- 11.2 The Borough's heritage sites are amongst the most visited attractions. The industrial-past features include Patterson's Spade Mill, Randalstown Viaduct and at Museum at the Mill, Mossley. The Plantation of Ulster and modern Irish heritage attractions are found at the Green Flag Award winning Sentry Hill House, and Templeton Mausoleum Monumental Tomb and Gardens. Ancient Celtic and medieval heritage is offered at the White House in Newtownabbey, and Antrim Round Tower and Springfarm Rath, both of which are located in Antrim, with other attractions relating to Christian heritage distributed throughout the Borough, including Cranfield Church and Donegore.
- 11.3 Antrim Town provides the Borough's key hub of heritage interest at Pogue's Entry Historical Cottage and Craft Studio, Barbican Gate, The Old Court House, and Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House.

Natural Heritage & Nature Attractions

- 11.4 Lough Neagh and Belfast Lough along with the Six Mile Water and Three Mile Water rivers provide a resource for nature and natural heritage based tourism. The Borough's waterside locations at Toome Canal, Six Mile Water Race, Three Mile Water Park and Jordantown Loughshore Park provide good quality access to the Borough's blue infrastructure/waterways. National Nature Reserves (NNRs) at Randalstown Forest, Rea's Wood in Antrim, and the Lough Neagh Islands (incorporating Ram's Island) provide the most valuable assets as nature attractions in the Borough.

Formal Open Gardens

- 11.5 The Borough has 14 Green Flag award winning parks and open spaces, with Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House being one of the most visited gardens in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Statistics 2015, issued by the Department for the Economy and NISRA, details that this attraction ranked in 5th place with regard to the most visited country parks, parks, forests, and gardens. In 2015, approximately 0.46 million people visited Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House, reporting a 62% increase over the previous year. The Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Statistics 2017 had the Antrim Castle Gardens & Clotworthy House placed in 7th place with a slight drop in visitor numbers by 2% to 0.44 million.

Fun Parks, Open Farms and Animal Interests

- 11.6 The Borough has in excess of twenty-five fun parks with the most popular, V36 located at Valley Leisure Centre, Newtownabbey. Animals and birds feature at three locations with the most popular located at World of Owls in Randalstown. There are three 'open farms' in the Borough, which provide an all-round farming experience to the general public.

Cultural & Arts Attractions

- 11.7 Three theatres located across the Borough provide almost 700 seats. The Courtyard Theatre is set in the landscaped gardens of Ballyearl Arts and Leisure Centre, Newtownabbey. The 180 seat theatre offers a wide range of arts and entertainment throughout the year including drama, dance, comedy, musicals, family shows, concerts, community and amateur dramatics. The Old Courthouse in Antrim provides an independent film style Cineclub with seating capacity for 188 persons and also holds regular dance and music hall performances, and also offers regular crafts and design events. Theatre at The Mill, a 400 seat auditorium, located at Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey offers live performances and a wide programme of musicals, dance, comedy, concerts, family shows and workshops.
- 11.8 Exhibitions and gallery space are provided at Museum at the Mill (Mossley Mill) and Clotworthy House (Antrim) also provides occasional exhibitions and gallery opportunities for visitors.

Activity Tourism

- 11.9 The most significant provision in the Borough is activity-based tourism. Tourism NI maintains that activity-based tourism generally provides the most potential in growing visitor expenditure achieving longer visitor stays and creating more skilled jobs.

Cycling and Walking

- 11.10 The Borough has several cycling and walking routes of varying lengths; these either form part of, or link to, the Sustrans UK 'National Cycle Network'.

Antrim Town Loop focuses in and around the centre of Antrim and the Lough Shore linking heritage assets such as Clotworthy House with recreational attractions at Deer Park and the Town Centre. The route is 5 miles long and is considered an easy graded route.

Lagan & Lough Cycle Way is a 21 mile, level, mostly traffic free cycle ride or walk connecting Jordanstown with Belfast and Lisburn. The route is suitable for novice and family cyclists of all ages and abilities; and passes along the waterside environment of the Lagan Towpath and Belfast Lough.

Lower Bann Cycle Trail begins at Toome and links to Lough Beg before going on to Portglenone Forest, Coleraine and Castlerock. The total distance is approx. 44 miles from Toome to Castlerock and the route is being upgraded in sections.

Loughshore Trail is a continuous 128 mile cycle route around the shores of Lough Neagh and along Lough Beg, taking in 25 major sites of interest along the way including marinas, parks, nature reserves and local sites of archaeological and historical interest, taking in Shane's Castle, Antrim Lough Shore and Randalstown Arches. The Trail uses mainly quiet country lanes and is almost entirely flat terrain. Also known as Route 94 of the

National Cycle Network, the trail is clearly signposted with blue cycle way signs.

Newtownabbey Way, a green flag winner, is a relatively new route and is contained entirely within the Borough. It forms part of Route 93 of the National Cycle Network and extends from Global Point at Corrs Corner to the shores of Belfast Lough via Mossley Mill, and through Threemile Water Park, to Monkstown and Whiteabbey.

- 11.11 There are currently no cycle hire facilities in the Borough, nor are there any mountain bike or trail bike courses.

Fishing & Angling

- 11.12 Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles, provides a substantial offer for coarse angling. Toome Canal is a popular coarse fishery where Pike, Perch, Roach and Bream are abundant. Mossley Mill Dam, Lough Beg, and the Six Mile Water in Antrim also provide locations for licenced anglers.
- 11.13 There are four commercial facilities in the Borough providing fishing opportunities for tourists, these located close to Randalstown, (Craigmore Fishery and Creeve Trout Fishery), and in the Ballyclare area (Straid Fishery and Tildarg Fishery).
- 11.14 Salmon fishing in the Borough has increased significantly in the past two years.
- 11.15 Crumlin Glen has angling platforms which facilitate disabled access, and a fish pass exists beside the waterfall. A project is underway to develop the wider experience at this attraction.

Golf

- 11.16 The Borough has eight golfing facilities that provide a range of nine hole, eighteen hole, natural range and golf driving range facilities. The facilities available are both membership and 'pay as you use' suitable for tourists. The Borough has a sizeable resource for facilitating golf tourism with high quality golf courses such as Ballyearl Arts and Leisure and Allen Park (both with Council's ownership), Massereene Golf Club, Ballyclare Golf Club, Greenacres Golf Club, Burnfeld House, the Hilton Templepatrick and City of Belfast Golf Club, Mallusk. Golf hire facilities are available at several of these sites and golf tours now operate from Belfast International Airport across Northern Ireland.

Watersports and Boating

- 11.17 Boat tours and day (summer) cruises operate from Toome, Antrim Lough Shore with the Abháinn Cruises Scenic Boat Tours at Toome and the Maid of Antrim and Island Warrior Tours operating from Antrim and Sandy Bay Marina (Glenavy) respectively. Antrim Boat Club provides a significant watersports facility, which is soon to be joined by a new visitor centre. The Gateway Visitor Centre, a £2.3million investment at Antrim Lough Shore, will incorporate flexible activity space at ground floor level that will cater for a variety of

activities and events, whilst the first floor will facilitate a new dining area with views over Lough Neagh. In addition, the new centre will provide a new operational base for Lough Neagh Rescue.

Adventure and Motor Sport

11.18 Outdoor challenge adventure sites at Escarmouche, Randalstown and Breckenhill Outdoor Centre in Doagh provide facilities for visitors. A range of motor racing facilities are provided at Nutt's Corner, Need for Speed in Doagh and Indoor Karting at Ballyclare. Nutt's Corner Circuit is Northern Ireland's highest standard karting venue, with a track measuring over 2 kilometres.

Equestrian

11.19 The Borough has at least five equestrian centres that provide a range of activities from beginner lessons to trekking. These include:

- Beeches Equestrian Centre, Ballyclare;
- Ballyclare Equestrian Centre, Ballyclare;
- Connell Hill Riding Centre, Antrim;
- Laurel View Equestrian Centre, Templepatrick; and
- MacKenzie's Riding School, Antrim.

Visitors to Tourist Attractions in Antrim and Newtownabbey

11.20 Table 5 details the number of main tourist attractions in the eleven Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland, and their respective number of visitors. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of tourist attractions in Northern Ireland increased from 188 to 225 (an increase of almost 20%), and the number of visitors to these attractions increased by some 14% from 15.3million to 17.5million. With regard to the Borough in particular, there was a slight decrease in the number of tourist attractions (2), however, the number of visitors increased by almost 27% from 0.4million in 2014 to 0.5million in 2015. This increase is an indication of the growing appeal of the Borough to tourists and other visitors, through raised awareness of the range of facilities in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

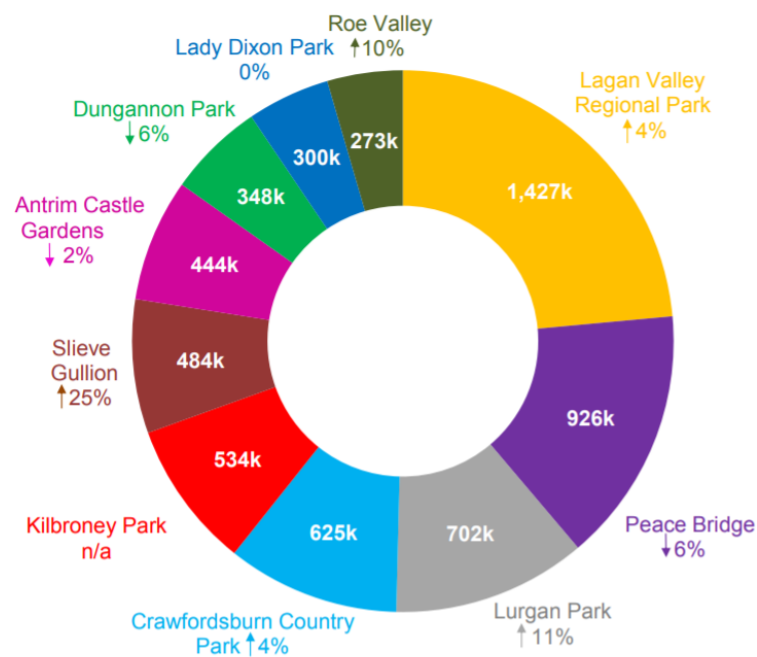
Table 5: Number of Visitor Attractions and Visitors by LGD (2014-2015)

Local Government District	2014		2015	
	Venues	No. of Visitors	Venues	No. of Visitors
Antrim and Newtownabbey	11	352,966	9	448,886
Ards and North Down	16	1,029,117	21	1,559,790
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	29	2,414,290	33	1,809,898
Belfast	21	4,066,914	35	4,824,897
Causeway Coast & Glens	19	1,817,164	23	2,104,094
Derry City and Strabane	20	2,165,027	27	2,122,480
Fermanagh and Omagh	21	941,604	20	932,104
Lisburn and Castlereagh	9	310,366	11	1,654,075
Mid and East Antrim	15	527,300	15	550,910
Mid Ulster	7	164,981	10	134,126
Newry, Mourne and Down	20	1,534,991	21	1,339,666
Northern Ireland	188	15,324,750	225	17,480,926

Source: Northern Ireland Local Government Tourism Statistics, Department for the Economy/NISRA, July 2016

11.21 The most popular attractions to visit in Northern Ireland fall into the category of 'Country Parks/Parks/Forests and Gardens'. This category accounted for 38% of all visitors to attractions in 2017 with approximately 7.4 million people travelling to such locations. As Figure 3 shows, of the top ten attractions in this category, Antrim and Newtownabbey has one site, namely Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House, which attracted approximately 444,000 visitors in 2017, which is in 7th place in its category in the context of Northern Ireland.

Figure 3: Top 10 Country Parks, Parks, Forests and Gardens in Northern Ireland (2017)

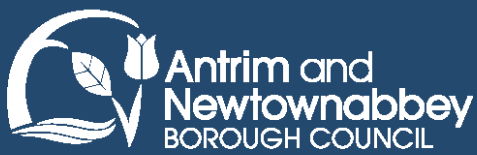


Source: Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics, Department for the Economy/NISRA, June 2018, Arrow indicates/decrease between 2016 and 2017

12 Key Findings

12.1 The evidence presented in this section has led to the identification of the following key findings:

- Tourism can make an important contribution to the economy, society and environment, both locally and regionally, particularly where tourism facilities and associated infrastructure can be introduced or enhanced.
- The Regional Development Strategy promotes a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure in order to deliver economic benefits.
- The Strategic Planning Policy Statement advises that a tourism strategy should form part of the Local Development Plan, and that it should reflect wider regional tourism initiatives, and should address the following issues:
 - How future tourism demand is best accommodated;
 - Safeguarding of key tourism assets;
 - Identification of potential tourism growth areas;
 - Environmental considerations; and
 - Contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.
- A new Regional Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland is being prepared by the Department for the Economy. Once published, this should be taken account of in the emerging Local Development Plan.
- Approximately 11% of Northern Ireland's total accommodation room stock is located in the Borough – the third highest of all eleven local Councils.
- In 2015, the tourism industry was worth £34.2 million to the economy.
- Tourism-related jobs accounted for 7% of the Borough's workforce (4,197 jobs).
- The number of people visiting the Borough has increased substantially over the past number of years, as awareness of attractions, and promotion of locations increases.
- Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House is the Borough's most visited attraction, with over 444,000 visitors in 2017.



**Antrim and
Newtownabbey**
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