**Request to hold** **an Orange Victims Day event at Ward Park Cenotaph, Bangor, 7th September 2025**

**Draft**

**Equality Impact Assessment Consultation Report**

****

March 2025

Contents

[Preface 3](#_Toc193705707)

[Introduction 4](#_Toc193705708)

[Background to the policy 5](#_Toc193705709)

[Methodology 8](#_Toc193705710)

[Defining the aims of the policy 9](#_Toc193705711)

[Consideration of available data and research 10](#_Toc193705712)

[Assessment of impacts 30](#_Toc193705713)

[Consideration of measures to mitigate 34](#_Toc193705714)

[Consultation 36](#_Toc193705715)

[Conclusions 37](#_Toc193705716)

[Monitoring for adverse impact 38](#_Toc193705717)

[Appendix 1: Equality Scheme consultees 39](#_Toc193705718)

[Appendix 2: Section 75 profile of Ards and North Down Borough Council residents 40](#_Toc193705719)

[Appendix 3: Monitoring returns for Ards and North Down Borough Council employees 44](#_Toc193705720)

[Appendix 4: NI Life and Times Survey 47](#_Toc193705721)

# Preface

Under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Ards and North Down Borough Council gave an undertaking to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories.

This draft report has been made available as part of the formal consultation stage of the EQIA relating to the **Request to hold an Orange Victims Day event at the Ward Park Cenotaph, Bangor, 7th September 2025**, and the Council would welcome any comments which you may have in terms of this request by the Orange Order and this EQIA in general.

This EQIA consultation document is available on our website at www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/equality

This EQIA is being undertaken in accordance with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidance:

[www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/PracticalGuidanceonEQIA2005.pdf](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/PracticalGuidanceonEQIA2005.pdf)

If you have any queries about this document and its availability in alternative formats (including large print, Braille, disk and audio, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English), then please contact:

Equality and Disability

Ards and North Down Borough Council

City Hall

Bangor

BT20 4BT

Tel: 0300 013 3333

Email: equalityanddisability@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Deadline for comments will be 4pm on 19th June 2025.

Following consultation, the EQIA Final Decision Report will be made available by 1st August 2025.

# Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a duty on all public authorities to have due regard, in the carrying out of their functions, to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

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

Schedule 9 of the Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of this duty including the publication of an Equality Scheme and the conduct of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) of selected policies.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 also places a duty on all public authorities to have regard, in the carrying out of their functions, to the need to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

## Purpose of this EQIA

Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises that a request to hold an Orange Victims Day event in Ward Park,Bangor, could impact on residents of the Borough, visitors to the Borough and Council staff and as a consequence could potentially impact on various groups and individuals attached to Section 75 categories.

An equality screening exercise was carried out, and as a result a recommendation was made that an EQIA be undertaken.

This report sets out the updated position in terms of the actual and potential equality impacts attaching to the request to Council.

It is intended that this draft report will form the basis for formal consultation with the Council’s Equality Scheme consultees (Appendix 1) ANDBC Community Register, ANDBC Good Relations consultees other interested stakeholders and the general public.

A further final decision report, giving due regard to the comments made during consultation, will then be prepared for consideration by the Council.

# Background to the policy

## 2024 request

In August 2024, Ards and North Down Borough Council received an application from Bangor District Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) 18 to hold an Orange Victims Day event at the Ward Park Cenotaph on Sunday 8 September 2024.

The event would comprise music and a service. Its purpose was, ‘to commemorate the life of all Orangemen/Women lost during the Troubles, commonly known as Orange Victims Day’.

Section 10.2 of Ards and North Down Borough Council’s Lands Policy allows for the use of Council land for events and other purposes, ‘without prejudice to any planning, building control, environmental or other legislative or regulatory requirements’ and would extend to the Council’s Section 75 obligations.

Following internal consultation and equality screening, it was agreed that an EQIA would be required in order to determine any potential adverse impacts on groups and individuals attached to Section 75 categories.

The time required to prepare, consult and consider findings of an EQIA meant that it was not possible to make an informed decision on the land request in advance of the event on 8th September 2024. Rather, Bangor District LOL 18 was advised to reapply with adequate notice for the 2025 event.

An associated request to use of a flagpole was turned down. This decision was in line with the Council’s Flag Policy, whereby the Union Flag will only be flown at war memorials within the Borough on 15 designated days per calendar year for the period of Remembrance (around 11 November) or for a Remembrance Service for a period not exceeding two weeks.[[1]](#footnote-2)

## 2025 request

On the 18 February 2025, the Council received a request from Bangor District LOL 18 to hold an Orange Victims Day event at the Ward Park Cenotaph between 2pm and 3pm on Sunday 7 September 2025. The event will comprise music and a service. The organisers have estimated that between 50 and 100 people will be in attendance, consisting primarily of members of Bangor District LOL 18 and its band.

## The Orange Order

The Orange Institution is a membership organisation comprised of Protestants committed to the protection of the principles of the Protestant Reformation and the 1688 ‘Glorious Revolution’ (the deposition of James II and VII and accession of William III and Mary II as monarchs of England, Scotland and Ireland).

It was founded in 1795 following a series of confrontations between Protestants and Roman Catholic ‘Defenders’.

According to Wikipedia:

‘The Order sees itself as defending Protestant civil and religious liberties, whilst critics accuse it of being [sectarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sectarianism), [triumphalist](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/triumphalism), and [supremacist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supremacism). It does not accept non-Protestants as members unless they [convert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conversion_to_Christianity#Protestantism) and adhere to its principles, nor does it accept Protestants married to non-Protestants.’[[2]](#footnote-3)

## Orange Victims Day

The Orange Institution designated 1 September as Orange Victims Day, an annual event to honour, ‘the 338 Orangemen and one Orangewoman murdered by terrorists during the Troubles’ and ‘highlight the ongoing plight of the injured and bereaved’.[[3]](#footnote-4)

The inaugural Orange Victims Day took place on 1 September 2018. The date was chosen to mark the anniversary of an IRA attack on Tullyvallen Orange Hall, South Armagh, ‘the largest loss of life inflicted on the Orange Family from a single incident during the terrorist campaign’. [[4]](#footnote-5)

Orange Victims Day is also commemorated on other dates by local lodges. The first weekend in September was selected by Bangor District LOL 18 to commemorate the date of the loss of members of LOL 18.

Bangor District LOL 18 marked Orange Victims’ Day on 8th September 2024 with a parade that ended at Ward Park and with the private laying of a wreath on the Ward Park Cenotaph (see above).

## Ward Park

Ward Park is a 37-acre site located off Hamilton Road in Bangor and is surrounded by residential properties, a hospital, schools, a college, a public library and sports facilities. Gifted to the people of Bangor by the Ward family in 1909, the park is currently owned and maintained by the Council and includes a children's playground (recently upgraded), all-weather hockey pitches, a cricket pitch, bowling greens, a putting green and tennis courts. There is also a large war memorial or cenotaph located alongside the main gun from a [German](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire) [U-19](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SM_U-19_(Germany)) [U-boat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U-boat). Ward Park also has several small lakes providing wildfowl sanctuary.

Throughout July and August there is a free music concert at the bandstand each Sunday between 3pm and 5pm.

According to the Council, Ward Park

‘is accessible to all ages and widely used by children going to and from school, by dog walkers, by families attending the play park and feeding the ducks, by residents and visitors enjoying free summer events, by sports groups including Park Run and North Down CC and by many who simply want to enjoy some fresh air in beautiful surroundings.’[[5]](#footnote-6)

# Methodology

An EQIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy to determine the extent of differential impact upon the groups within the nine equality categories and in turn whether that impact is adverse.

If it is decided that the policy has an adverse impact on one or more of the nine Section 75 categories then the Council must consider measures that may mitigate the adverse impact and alternative ways of delivering the policy aims which may lessen or remove the adverse impact on the relevant equality category.[[6]](#footnote-7)

In order to determine whether the policy has any adverse or differential impact, it is necessary to consider the people affected by the policy, their needs and experiences and the equality categories to which they belong.

The Equality Commission considers that EQIAs require seven separate elements.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step 1 | Defining the aims of the policy |
| Step 2 | Consideration of available data and research |
| Step 3 | Assessment of Impacts |
| Step 4 | Consideration of:   1. measures which might mitigate any adverse impact 2. alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity |
| Step 5 | Consultation |
| Step 6 | Decision by Council and publication of results of the EQIA |
| Step 7 | Monitoring for adverse impact in the future and publication of the results of such monitoring |

This EQIA has closely followed the methodology published by the Equality Commission in its Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

This Draft EQIA Consultation Report covers Steps 1 to 5 of the process.

# Defining the aims of the policy

The Council’s decision on the request for holding an Orange Order Victims Day event at the Ward Park cenotaph, Bangor on 7 September 2025 must aspire to be consistent with existing legislation, while taking into account the findings of the EQIA and including the views expressed by those consulted therein.

The Council must also ensure that it continues to keep in mind best value principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness while serving the needs and interests of ratepayers, residents and visitors to the Borough.

Bearing these considerations in mind, the overarching aim of the Council’s decision in relation to the request can be framed as:

‘Mindful of the Council’s ongoing duty to protect and promote equality of opportunity and good relations within the Borough, to have in place a decision with regard to the requested event that strikes an appropriate balance between respecting the rights of those who see this as a fitting act of commemoration while acknowledging that the event may have the potential to reinforce sectional community allegiance in the context of Northern Ireland.’

# Consideration of available data and research

## Statistical data

### Demographic profile of Ards and North Down population

On Census Day 21 March 2021, the usually resident population of Ards and North Down Borough Council was 163,659. This made it the fourth largest Local Government District, with an increase in population of nearly five per cent since the previous Census in 2011.

A full breakdown of the Ards and North Down Borough Council population by Section 75 categories is shown at Appendix 2. In summary, according to the 2021 Census:

* 68 per cent of the population of Ards and North Down Borough Council belong to or were brought up in a Protestant and Other Christian religion and 14 per cent belong to or were brought up in the Roman Catholic religion;
* 17 per cent were aged under 15 years and 22 per cent were aged 65 and over. The median age was 44;
* 49 per cent of the usually resident population were male and 51 per cent were female;
* 31 per cent of the population were single (never married or registered a civil partnership); 51 per cent were married or in a civil partnership; 11 per cent were separated or divorced; and 7 per cent were widowed or a surviving partner from a civil partnership;
* 91 per cent were straight or heterosexual and 2 per cent were gay, lesbian, bisexual or of another sexual orientation;
* 2 per cent of the population were from a minority ethnic community;
* 25 per cent had a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities;
* 12 per cent stated that they provided unpaid care to family, friends, neighbours or others.

### Demographic profile of Ards and North Down Borough Council employees

2023 monitoring returns that show that the Council employs 882 people. The make-up of Council employees by Section 75 category is included in full at Appendix 3.

In summary:

* 78 per cent of employees are identified as Protestant and 15 per cent Roman Catholic;
* The majority of employees are aged between 41 and 60;
* 68 per cent are male and 32 per cent are female;
* Over half of employees (51 per cent) are married or in a civil partnership;
* 71 per cent of employees identified as heterosexual. 28 per cent did not indicate their sexual orientation;
* 1 per cent identify as being from a minority ethnic community background;
* 4 per cent are disabled;
* 41 per cent have dependants.

### NI Life and Times

The NI Life and Times is an annual survey of the whole NI population that includes topics such as community relations. While views may differ between Councils and at smaller geographies, it is a useful barometer of general opinion.

Relevant findings are included at Appendix 4. In summary:

* 47 per cent of people surveyed in the 2023 NI Life and Times Survey felt that their own cultural identity was respected by society. People from a Roman Catholic community background were most likely to agree, while those with ‘No religion’ were least likely to agree.
* People from a Protestant community background were most likely to agree that their neighbourhood is a place where they can be open about their cultural identity.
* People from a Roman Catholic or Protestant community background were most likely to agree that where they live is a neutral space.
* People from a Protestant community background were also most likely to agreed that, ‘The culture and traditions of the Protestant community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society.’ People with ‘No religion’ were least likely to agree.

## Relevant Ards and North Down Borough Council policies and research

**The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 to 2032**

The Big Plan is Ards and North Down’s community plan. It provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that the Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years.

Its vision is that, ‘Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be.’

Its overarching, cross-cutting ambition is:

‘To have empowered, resilient individuals and communities, to reduce inequalities; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services.’

It contains five outcomes, ‘that we aspire to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032’:

* Outcome 1: All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential.
* Outcome 2: All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.
* Outcome 3: All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
* Outcome 4: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.
* Outcome 5: All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

**Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan 2025–28**

In accord with its Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan, Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to promoting equality and good relations for everyone in the Borough. Equality, inclusivity and diversity are placed at the core of all of the Council's services and actions, as it strives to work towards achieving a shared future for all.

The Council’s Good Relations Strategy outlines a plan to promote inclusivity, cohesion, and positive community engagement across the Borough in support of the NI Executive’s Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Its four key themes are:

* Our Shared Community
* Our Safe Community
* Our Children and Young People
* Our Cultural Expression

During the consultation to develop the 2025–28 strategy, stakeholders highlighted the need for shared spaces, improved youth engagement, community safety, and greater support for inclusive cultural expression. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of tackling socioeconomic disparities, addressing paramilitary influence, and creating more opportunities for intercommunity dialogue.

**Equality Scheme for Ards and North Down Borough Council 2020–25**

The Council’s Equality Scheme and Equality Action Plan[[8]](#footnote-9) detail the Council’s commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This includes screening of policies and procedures to identify if there are any adverse or potential adverse impacts on equality of opportunity or good relations; consultation on all Section 75 policy screening outcomes in accordance with the principles contained in the Equality Commission’s Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities; and annual reports on progress.

Priorities in its action plan include:

* Design, commission and deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of people and communities in Ards and North Down Borough.
* Attract, recruitment and progress a diverse range of employees in a culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion ensuring employment practises are fair and equal.
* Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.
* Shared spaces – provide an environment where all are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

### Estate Strategy for Ards and North Down Borough Council 2020–25

The Council’s Estate Strategy considers the land and property assets the Council owns and leases, ‘to ensure that they are aligned to our aspirations, optimised in terms of resource efficiency and organised to support the needs of our community.’ This includes becoming ‘more outcomes focused’ and managing the portfolio, ‘for the benefit of the community […] to serve both public and corporate priorities.’

Objectives include:

‘To support a refreshed focus on communities and people, economic regeneration and tourism, the quality of our environment and the core services provided by the Council, and is partners’

The effectiveness of the estate is measuring by benchmarks including:

* Demonstrating that property assets comply with statutory and regulatory requirements.
* Demonstrating that property is accessible for all service users and staff.
* Data relating to social outcomes

### Land and Property Policy

The Council’s Land and Property Policy provides the framework that the Council follows to manage its extensive portfolio of land and property including the granting of leases and licences and dealing with any associated land requests.

In the absence of an events policy, requests by third parties to run an event on Council land or property are also processed in accordance with this Land and Property policy. The policy states:

‘Permission granted under this policy to use Council land or property is without prejudice to any planning, building control, environmental or other legislative or regulatory requirements and it will be a matter for the person making the request to ensure that they apply for such other permissions as required.’

Council officers should also signpost applicants when a request is approved to the Council’s Event Management toolkit.

### Event Management Toolkit

Ards and North Down Borough Council’s Event Management Toolkit provides guidance on the safe management of events and contains event management plan and risk assessment templates.

The How to Manage your Event guide defines events as ‘organised activity open to members of the public to attend’ including community celebrations, cultural events, parades, processions and marches.

The guide states:

‘This document enables the Council to advise Event Organisers on:

* Key steps to planning an event.
* What legislation and byelaws apply to their event and how to find out information on these.
* Measures to protect the environment and surrounding landscape.
* Avoiding causing offence or discriminating against any group or individual.
* Adhering to relevant health and safety legislation at events.
* Finding organisations to assist with their event.’

In relation to equality, it states:

‘The Council carries out all its duties and responsibilities in compliance with Section 75 of NI Act 1998 and Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006).

‘This ensures all Council officers and others delivering services on behalf of the Council are made aware of their responsibility to be cognisant of the range of needs of those to whom they are providing services. There is a breadth and diversity of needs across all users which should be taken into consideration in arranging any event.’

### Equality screening of request to hold an Orange Victims Day at the Ward Park Cenotaph

Following the request received by the Council to use Ward Park to commemorate Orange Victims Day, the Council carried out an equality screening.

It considered that the request may yield positive benefits to groups attached to Section 75 categories relating to Religious Belief, Political Opinion and Men and Women generally, specifically ‘some of the Protestant community and those who associate with the Orange Institution’.

The screening further reflected that:

‘The observance of Orange Victims Day can raise awareness about the complexities of the conflict and the impact it had on some individuals and families involved […]

‘Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 formalises the shift from managing diversity and difference to promoting diversity and integration. It requires public authorities to take a pro-active initiating approach to contributing to a shared society, rather than responding to the effects of a divided one. In this regard having Orange Victims Day at a shared space in Ward Park, Bangor could have a significant impact on good relations between Protestant and Catholic communities.’

However, the screening also considers that as Ward Park:

‘is regarded as “shared space” [the request] may have a negative impact on the Catholic community as the request mentions Orangemen/women victims only.’

It continues:

‘An event that commemorates victims from one section of the community may highlight the existing divisions between unionists (predominantly Protestant) and nationalists (predominantly Catholic). It can serve to reinforce political identities and deepen divisions between these groups.’

The screening also considers in relation to equality of opportunity for disabled people:

‘The event management plan has no mention of those attending the event with disabilities, the land and property policy specifically states that the organiser must have due regard to the Disability Discrimination Order. It is unclear how this has been achieved in the event management plan submitted.’

## Relevant legislation and agreements

### The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement

In the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the participants endorsed the commitment:

‘that whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities.’

Also, in relation to national identity, Article 1 (xi) of the Agreement provides that the two Governments:

‘recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish Citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland.’

### Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998

Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998[[9]](#footnote-10) established the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland. The Act empowers the Commission, among other requirements, to:

1. promote greater understanding by the general public of issues concerning public processions;
2. promote and facilitate mediation as a means of resolving disputes concerning public processions;
3. issue determinations in respect of particular proposed public processions and protest meetings.

### Processions must adhere to the guidance and legislation provided by the Parades Commission.

### Parades and Related Protests: A Code of Conduct

The Parades Commission’s Code of Conduct[[10]](#footnote-11) aims:

‘to ensure that those participating in public processions can do so legally and peacefully while at the same time minimising disruption, annoyance or offence to those who work or live on or near the routes along which they pass.’

Compliance with the Code in taken in to account by the Commission when making decisions about public processions. This includes consideration of:

* Routes
* Timings
* Bands, including ‘standards of dress, performance, music and behaviour have the potential to enhance or diminish the public’s perception of the organisation’
* Stewarding
* Notice
* Preparation

The Code also includes guidance for anyone participating in a public procession including in relation to behaviour, dress, bands, music, flags and dispersal.

Further guidance applies to processions in the vicinity of sensitive locations including war memorials, where

* Only hymn tunes should be played.
* Behaviour should be respectful.
* Marching should be dignified.

### Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998

The Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998[[11]](#footnote-12) makes discrimination on the grounds of religious belief and political opinion unlawful, both in the workplace and in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

It also bans ‘harassment’ in the workplace on these grounds. Harassment is defined in Article 3A as:

‘(1) A person (‘A’) subjects another person (‘B’) to harassment in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of any provision referred to in Article 3(2B) where, on the ground of religious belief or political opinion, A engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of-

(a) violating B's dignity, or

(b) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.

(2) Conduct shall be regarded as having the effect specified in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph (1) only if, having regard to all the circumstances, including, in particular, the perception of B, it should reasonably be considered as having that effect.

(3) For the purposes of this Order a person subjects another to unlawful harassment if he engages in conduct in relation to that other which is unlawful by virtue of any provision mentioned in Article 3(2B).’

Section 28 makes discrimination unlawful in relation to access to and use of public buildings.

‘(1) It is unlawful for any person concerned with the provision (for payment or not) of goods, facilities or services to the public or a section of the public to discriminate against a person who seeks to obtain or use those goods, facilities or services-

(a) by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide him with any of them; or

(b) by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide him with goods, facilities or services of the same quality, in the same manner and on the same terms as are normal in this case in relation to other members of the public or (where the person so seeking belongs to a section of the public) to other members of that section.’

Examples provided under Section 28 include access to and use of any place which members of the public are permitted to enter; facilities for entertainment, recreation or refreshment; and the services of any local or other public authority.

Employers also have legal obligations to promote fair participation in employment and associated responsibilities to promote a good and harmonious workplace.

### Fair Employment Code of Practice

The Equality Commission’s Fair Employment Code of Practice[[12]](#footnote-13) provides general guidance to employers with regard to good practice in the promotion of equality of opportunity. In relation to the working environment the code states that employers should:

‘promote a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated because of his or her religious belief or political opinion e.g. prohibit the display of flags, emblems, posters, graffiti, or the circulation of materials, or the deliberate articulation of slogans or songs, which are likely to give offence or cause apprehension among particular groups of employees.

### Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment: A Guide for Employers and Employees

The Equality Commission guidance on promoting a good and harmonious working environment[[13]](#footnote-14) states that

‘A good and harmonious working environment is one where all workers are treated with dignity and respect and where no worker is subjected to harassment by conduct that is related to religious belief or political opinion.’

However, the Commission acknowledges that, ‘the very restrictive nature of a “neutral” environment may give rise to other problems for employers’ and

‘This of course does not mean that working environments must always be devoid of anything that happens to be more closely associated with one or other of the two main communities in Northern Ireland.’

It continues:

‘Consequently, employers may find it preferable to facilitate diverse expressions of identity in a sensitive way which does not disrupt a good and harmonious working environment. Such an approach should be founded on choices that are reasonable, fair and appropriate at that time and in that place.’

The Commission considers that, ‘There are many ways in which we convey our religious or political identity to others’. In the category of ‘Symbols which are not likely to disrupt a good and harmonious working environment’ when ‘displayed with decorum’ and ‘a sense of due proportion’ are:

‘emblems that may be associated primarily with one religion or community but are not directly linked to community conflict.

‘Such marks of identity are unlikely to be regarded as creating an intimidating or hostile working environment. There are many examples of such emblems, including:

* Marks of religious observance, insignia associated with organisations attached primarily to one religion, community or culture (e.g., crosses, crucifixes, ashes, kippot, turbans, Muslim veils, pioneer pins, Christian Union badge, fáinnes, dreadlocks)
* Marks of remembrance, celebration or commemoration (e.g., poppies, shamrock)’

Symbols the Equality Commission considers to have potential to disrupt a good and harmonious working environment include:

‘some individual emblems and symbols that, through their history and associations, and whether intended or not, have come to have a significance that has the potential to make those of a different identity feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.

‘In this category are likely to fall a variety of symbols and emblems with the potential to cause disharmony, and especially those that have been directly linked to community conflict in Northern Ireland and/or to local politics. These include […] Badges and insignia, e.g., Easter Lillies, Orange symbols’.

The guidance continues:

‘in many other contexts these and other symbols may be wholly acceptable – for example, football shirts worn at a football match, or political emblems displayed in the context of political events or institutions. However, within the workplace and at workplace organised events such emblems may have the potential to cause unnecessary tension and be divisive.’

The Guide advises that it is for each employer to reach an informed decision with regard to its policies and the context in which it is operating.

### Equality Commission Advice on Good Relations in Local Councils

In its Advice on Good Relations to Local Councils, the Commission presents eight key points for councils to consider when developing a good relations policy framework. This includes point six, whereby councils are to consider cumulative impacts on good relations and put in place appropriate mitigations. It provides an example:

‘a particular emblem or decision may have little adverse impact on the promotion of good relations when viewed in isolation or in the context of an environment that is otherwise generally welcoming to everyone, but might have a greater adverse impact if displayed in an environment in which it is merely one amongst a large number of similar items that are directed towards the interests of one particular community to the exclusion of others.’

### Protection from Harassment (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

Under this Order,[[14]](#footnote-15) not only may an individual be responsible at a criminal and civil level for subjecting someone to harassment on at least two occasions, but an employer may be vicariously liable for a course of conduct by one of its employees that amounts to ‘harassment’. The harassment may consist of bullying, intimidation or harassment, and does not need to be on a prohibited ground or discrimination.

### Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission’s 2013 report, The Display of Flags, Symbols and Emblems in Northern Ireland,[[15]](#footnote-16) notes that:

‘The display of flags, symbols or emblems in a public space may act as a territorial marker or a method of harassment, irrespective of the intention behind its erection. The ECt.HR has noted that expression, which is not, on its face, offensive, can be offensive in certain circumstances. Consequently, when public authorities make decisions pertaining to the erection or removal of a flag, symbol or emblem, a broader discussion of the rights of those who live in the vicinity and those who travel in or through the area for purposes of accessing services is required. The existence of such displays may have an impact on individuals from other communities, acting as a form of intimidation which creates an access barrier to the area. This may have consequences for individuals accessing health care services and for children in accessing public recreational spaces, both of which are protected by international human rights law.’

### Together: Building a United Community

The NI Executive launched T:BUC[[16]](#footnote-17) in 2013. Its vision is:

‘a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.’

T: BUC’s aims are:

1. Our children and young people: to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.
2. Our shared community: to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.
3. Our safe community: to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.
4. Our cultural expression: to create a community, which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

### Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition

Under the remit of T:BUC, the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition published their final report in December 2021.

The Commission differentiated between the individual expression of identity and civic identity, which, ‘might include local identities and a city identity, which is often the work of local Councils’:

‘The first aspect of shared space involves maximising the rights of individuals and groups to use and express themselves in public spaces. In this sense, shared space reflects people’s rights as citizens, their access to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and their access to the resources, facilities and amenities within our society. The state has a positive duty to protect these rights. The second feature of shared space is the creation of places of interaction and common experience. This involves the facilitation of events that are open, welcoming and that encourage diversity and learning. These will typically bring together people from different communities of interest and cultural identities at common events and impart a sense of belonging and a sense of place through the said event.’

It goes on to identify five key elements of shared space:

‘It is a physical public space where people from all backgrounds can live, learn, work and play together

‘It is a space that is free from symbols or displays of aggression, threat or intimidation that prevents a person entering and using the amenities within that space

‘It is a space that requires balancing the right to freedom of expression and assembly with rights to security, freedom of movement and to live free from fear and intimidation

‘It is a space that fosters interactions that move beyond joint access to or use of a particular space to create sustained connection and relationships between groups and individuals

‘It is a space where identity or political perspective is not suppressed or hidden, but a space where diversity, cultural expression and difference can be expressed, tolerated and celebrated.’

It continues:

‘The interface between shared space and good relations is therefore about the right to access areas, and the opportunity to experience the space together with other members of our diverse society. It does not deny or disallow differences, but rather provides for areas of commonality and binding ideas of citizenship. It is a place where expressions of cultural identity (that may have previously been grounds for threat or dispute) become grounds for tolerance and even celebration.’

### UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

#### Report on the importance of public spaces for the exercise of cultural rights

In her 2019 Report on the importance of public spaces for the exercise of cultural rights,[[17]](#footnote-18) the UN Special Rapporteur’s definition of public space is space that is:

‘publicly owned and accessible to all without discrimination, where people can share in the project of building a common society based on human rights, equality and dignity […] while still nurturing and expressing their own identities. […] The pursuit of social cohesion does not mean that controversies and debate cannot arise in public spaces. They are places where various, sometimes opposing, world visions can at times be expressed and where controversies can be debated in circumstances that respect the human rights of all.’

A potential problem is identified:

‘when a particular narrative or worldview, whether commercial, religious, political, national or exclusively reflecting the viewpoint of a majority group, becomes overly dominant and renders diversity invisible. The effect, intentional or not, is that public spaces may not be considered as shared spaces welcoming for all.’

Recommendations include:

* Adopting measures to ensure that all persons can effectively access, enjoy and contribute freely to public spaces, and facilitating such opportunities for groups facing obstacles in this regard;
* Providing training for relevant public officials on the concept of inclusive public spaces;
* Establish specialised, cross-disciplinary professional teams responsible for the design, maintenance and conservation of public spaces that are welcoming for all and create mechanisms for citizen participation in the management of such spaces.

#### Report on memorialisation processes in post-conflict and divided societies

The 2014 report on the field of cultural rights addressed memorialisation processes in post-conflict and divided societies[[18]](#footnote-19) considers memorialisation as

‘a long-term process in which the State must play an active and decisive role. The authorities that adopt and implement memory policies should ensure that such policies properly represent the views of the victims and are established in collaboration with civil society, especially human rights organizations.’

Public policy should be ‘multidimensional’, including memorials, parks and public space with education and other ‘steps […] taken to build a culture of peace’.

The UN Special Rapporteur continues:

‘The memorialization of past times defined by violations of human rights and international humanitarian law provides an opportunity to reflect on the present and identify contemporary problems related to exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and abuses of power, which are often linked to toxic political cultures. Memorialization promotes the development of a culture of democracy and respect for human rights […] In transitional contexts, memorialization processes can be effective only if they pursue the political goal of establishing democracy and a culture of peace.’

However, it also considers that ‘too much memory, especially if presented in the form of irreconcilable versions of the past, might hurt rather than help a society’ and that there is a need to establish, a ‘delicate balance between forgetting and remembering.’

The Special Rapporteur concludes that an essential element for successful memorialisation is collaboration between the authorities, citizens and civil society, especially representatives of those directly affected by past events, providing ‘the necessary space for those affected to articulate their diverse narratives in culturally meaningful ways’.

## Other local council policies and practice

### Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Public Memorials: A Policy Framework

### In 2024, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council published its framework[[19]](#footnote-20) to support the erection of public memorials on council land and properties and other land throughout the Borough.

### Public memorials are defined in this context to include monuments, statues, markers, or other landscape features that honour significant historical figures or events.

The policy states that:

‘Council will consider the impact the proposed memorial/installation may make on equality of opportunity and good relations activity that focuses on providing “opportunities for civic and community leaders to promote the area as a model of best practice in developing respect, understanding and tolerance of the cultural, historical and traditional diversity of the residents.’

‘With regards to Council’s statutory obligations under Section 75 of the (NI) Act 1998, memorials and installations must be in keeping with good relations principles. Applications will not be considered if the memorial is seen to:

* Harden the attitudes and mindsets of one community over the other.
* Harden the boundaries between groups/communities.
* Appear to dehumanise or diminish one group/community.
* Appear as an imposition of one group/community over another.
* Erode the confidence of one group/community.
* Appear to undermine identity through negation of culture, language, and expression.
* Negatively impact or affect any member of the public.
* Serve to promote the values and rights of one group/community over another.

Each decision will be screened to identify potential adverse impacts.

### Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council’s Memorials and Commemorations: A Policy Framework[[20]](#footnote-21)

‘recognises the need to have in place robust decision-making procedures for dealing with contentious issues that can arise locally and can disrupt good relations within and across local communities.’

It continues:

‘The guide aims to provide employers and employees with practical advice to assist in promoting and sustaining a good and harmonious working environment. While the primary focus of the guide is on religious belief and political opinion in the workplace, there can be read-across to other contexts and other protected aspects of identity including race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and age.’

By way of example, it considers:

‘the potential to raise significant legal challenges in relation to decisions on memorials or commemorations [...] if a request to erect a memorial or hold a commemorative event is refused, will that refusal constitute unlawful discrimination? Alternatively, if the memorial is put in place or the commemoration event goes ahead, could members of the public or Council employees reasonably claim to be harassed?’

The policy continues to outline a process whereby applications for a memorial or commemoration are considered first by a cross-party Equality Working Group, which then reports to the Council’s Policy and Resource Committee prior to final decision making. The Council will consult with relevant stakeholders when reaching any decision. Each decision will be screened to identify potential adverse impacts, and where appropriate, an EQIA will be carried out.

The policy does not list potentially permissible memorials or commemorations ‘Given the large number of contested or politically sensitive issues in Northern Ireland’. Rather it considers that ‘local circumstances may dictate which memorials or commemorations are seen as contentious’, and the Council will exercise discretion in line with due process as outlined in the policy.

### Belfast City Council

#### Shared space principles

Belfast City Council’s Good Relations Strategy, published in 2019, identifies four ‘shared space principles’ based on an understanding that that shared space is not neutral space, but a place where identity can be expressed in an open and non-hostile environment.

Its principles are:

* Welcoming – where people feel secure to take part in unfamiliar interactions, and increase an overall sense of shared experience and community;
* Accessible – well-connected in terms of transport and pedestrian links within a network of similar spaces across the city and managed to promote maximum participation by all communities;
* Good quality – attractive, high quality unique services and well-designed buildings and spaces;
* Safe – for all persons and groups, trusted by both locals and visitors.

#### Decade of Centenaries 2012–22

The Decade of Centenaries commemorated a decade of key historical moments and events between 1912 and 1922 that shaped Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Belfast City Council’s Historic Centenaries Working Group drafted principles to be used to curate a programme of events and activities to be mark the Decade of Centenaries.

External event promoters seeking to use council premises such as City Hall were also required to abide by principles:

* The event should be based on historic accuracy, robust academic expertise and critical analysis and provide opportunities, where appropriate, to include a range of different perspectives and aim to increase understanding and appreciation of other perspectives and identities.
* The interpretation of events should be in a broad historical context and understanding of the national and European setting of the time.
* The event must not be triumphalist in nature, nor should it give rise to offense to any section of the community. It should not serve to deepen or harden existing divisions or belittle or demonise other groups.
* The event must seek to be inclusive and should be welcoming to all sections of our increasingly diverse community in Belfast.
* Organisers must ensure that at the event there are no commemorations or displays relating to recent paramilitary activities or organisations, cloaked in broader identity issues.
* The Council has a duty of care to our staff employed to work in supporting and servicing such events. Therefore, organisers of private events in the City Hall should avoid actions, behaviours or displays which would fall within the definition of harassment as outlined in Article 3A of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.
* The organisers should be aware of the Council’s agreed statement on diversity and ensure that the event is consistent with it.

#### Advice from the Equality Commission

In a letter dated 29 September 2011 to Belfast City Council from the Equality Commission in relation to their flag flying policy, the Commission considered:

‘The Commission recognises that for local Councils there would be a difference between the customer base at the headquarters and that in more localised areas.’

### Complaints

Following the decision not to approve the land request for Ward Park in 2024, there was significant political, public and media interest, both positive and negative.

One formal complaint was received from a member of the public via the Council’s formal complaints process from a member of the public. It stated:

‘Absolutely disgusting that you prevented Bangor LOL from entering Ward Park to commemorate those murdered by the IRA. If you prevent peaceful commemorations, you encourage illegal gatherings. Typical North Down.’

There have been no other relevant complaints about events or commemorations during the lifespan of Ards and North Down Borough Council.

# Assessment of impacts

In accordance with the EQIA process, having gathered information on the policy and those affected by it, the Council must:

1. assess whether there is a differential impact on one or more of the nine Section 75 grounds;
2. determine the extent of any differential impact; and
3. decide whether that impact is adverse.

Differential impact suggests that a particular group has been affected differently by the policy (either favourably or unfavourably), while adverse impact is an indication that the effect is less favourable (i.e. negative) and is potentially unlawful.

In order to determine whether the policy has any adverse differential impact, it is necessary to consider the people affected by the policy, their needs and experiences and the Section 75 categories to which they belong.

## Differential impact

The evidence suggests that the policy may have a differential impact on three Section 75 grounds in particular, i.e. religious belief, political opinion and ethnic origin (including national identity). This impact would relate primarily to the different perceptions of the Orange Order by the two main communities in Northern Ireland, in turn related to considerations of national identity and allegiance.

While the focus is likely to fall primarily on these grounds, there is the possibility that age and disability may also come into play (see below). There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed request is likely to have a differential impact with regard to the other Section 75 grounds (i.e. marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with dependants and persons without).

## Adverse impact

The decision may have the potential to adversely impact people primarily with regard to religious belief, political opinion and national identity but the precise extent of this impact has not yet been determined, both locally and more generally. It is therefore necessary to use the EQIA process, and in particular the public consultation and stakeholder engagement, to consider further the tangible impacts of the request in terms of:

1. the promotion of good relations generally across the Borough;
2. the promotion of a good and harmonious working environment for those who are employed by the Council, including those working in Ward Park; and, more generally
3. the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations to all employees, users and potential users of Council facilities and premises within the Borough, including Ward Park.

In writing the Draft EQIA Consultation Report, at this time the following potential adverse impacts have been identified.

### Access to services

When set against the range of Council policies and guidance documents from relevant agencies advocating a shift towards a shared future and shared spaces, it is difficult to see how the request furthers this aspiration.

At the same time, since 2018 events attached to Orange Victims Day have featured regularly in early September across many parts of Northern Ireland, and especially those areas characterised by significant PUL (Protestant / Unionist / Loyalist) communities - including Ards and North Down. Furthermore, a cenotaph is an appropriate location for a service of remembrance of this kind.

However, these matters aside, given the exclusive membership principles attaching to the Orange Order (see p.5), it cannot be ignored that the proposed service at the cenotaph may have the potential to create a ‘chill factor’, and hence adversely impact on users and potential users of Ward Park on the afternoon of Sunday September 7th. In particular it is likely to impact adversely on those users of the park from a Roman Catholic and/or Nationalist and/or Republican background’, or perhaps those from a religion other than Protestantism, or with no religion.

While focus is likely to fall primarily on the groups listed above, there is the possibility that an adverse impact may also extend to the following;

* Younger people with no experience of the Troubles who may prefer to look towards a shared future and the promotion of shared, open and inclusive environments;
* Older people with memories of the troubled history of Northern Ireland who may wish to avoid further reflection and instead focus on a shared future and in a shared space;
* Those who are, have been, or are responsible for those who have been injured or disabled by events that are remembered in different ways by the two communities;
* Those with a disability attending the event whose particular needs have not been addressed.

### Good and harmonious working environment

The proposal may have the potential to have an adverse impact on employees from a Roman Catholic and/or Nationalist and/or Republican background, or those who do not identify with any religion or community background, by not aligning with the promotion of a good and harmonious working environment. This will be especially relevant to those who work in Ward Park itself.

**Promoting good relations**

Over several years the Council has sought to put in place a suite of policies designed to promote good relations across the Borough, alongside policies and procedures designed to manage public spaces and events in an inclusive, dignified and respectful manner.

At first glance it is not easy to see how this request sits comfortably alongside these initiatives and aspirations including those contained within the Council’s ‘Big Plan’, its Good Relations Strategy and the Event Management Toolkit.

Instead, the proposed single identity event may have the potential to have an adverse impact on residents, visitors and employees from different backgrounds including those from Roman Catholic, Nationalist and/or Republican communities, or those who do not identify with the Orange Order or Protestantism more generally.

Over time Ward Park has been developed by the Council as a shared space, and now incorporates a range of facilities and amenities to cater for those of all ages and from diverse backgrounds and communities. In essence the request asks that the aspiration for the park to be a shared space should be placed on hold for a limited period of time on the afternoon of Sunday September 7th 2025 in order to accommodate this single identity event.

While the event itself may be appropriate, the location of the event in Ward Park undoubtedly places the Council in a dilemma, on the one hand acknowledging the Orange Order’s legitimate desire to honour those members who lost their lives during the Troubles, while simultaneously endeavouring to ensure that Ward Park is seen as a welcoming shared space for those from all communities.

Guidance from government agencies and including the Equality Commission on these matters is not clear cut but recognises the need for discretion and sensitivity when reaching any decision. Likewise, the work of the Parades Commission implicitly acknowledges that some events, by their nature, inevitably will be single identity and that a range of local circumstances must be taken into account when reaching any determination on if and how these events should take place. The Commission also outlines a code of conduct to ensure that principles of dignity and respect are maintained at all times, and in particular for events staged at war memorials.

In the present case, the extent to which a single identity event of this nature is welcomed or tolerated by the wider community across the Borough has yet to be tested. Undoubtedly the current round of public consultation will help determine attitudes and opinions locally and regionally, and will inform the Council’s decision-making.

# Consideration of measures to mitigate

The EQIA process requires that, if it is determined that the Council’s decision regarding this request may have an adverse impact on one or more of the nine Section 75 grounds then a series of alternatives should be put forward for consideration, and an assessment of the possible impact of these alternatives undertaken.

In other words, the Council must consider measures that may mitigate any identified or perceived adverse impact and then identify alternative ways of delivering the policy aims that lessen adverse impact on the relevant Section 75 ground or that better promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Equality Commission Guidance on this section advises that the Council should give consideration to options/measures which may mitigate any adverse impact, and to alternatives which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity. The guidance states:

‘The consideration of mitigating measures and alternative policies is at the heart of the EQIA process. Different options must be developed which reflect different ways of delivering the policy aims. The consideration of these measures is intertwined with the consideration of alternative policies. Mitigation can take the form of lessening the severity of the adverse impact.

‘Ways of delivering policy aims that have a less adverse effect on the relevant equality category, or which better promote equality of opportunity for the relevant equality category, must in particular be considered. Consideration must be given to whether separate implementation strategies are necessary for the policy to be effective for the relevant group.’

In light of the above, and in order to help the Council reach a decision in relation to the proposed service, the following options are offered for consideration at this time:

**Option 1:** Decline the request for an event at the Ward Park Cenotaph.

**Option 2:** Decline the request for an event at the Ward Park Cenotaph but arrange an alternative venue within the Borough.

**Option 3:** Agree to the request for an event at the Ward Park Cenotaph, with no conditions attached.

**Option 4:** Agree to the request for an event at the Ward Park Cenotaph, with conditions attached to help maintain a good and harmonious environment.

Should the Council agree to the request then it may still be appropriate to consider ways in which any potential adverse impact may be mitigated. By way of example this could include one or more of the following:

* Ensure that information is readily available for those visiting the park in order to explain the nature and context of the event;
* Arrange for those Council employees in Ward Park who have concerns with the event to avoid working while it is taking place;
* Liaise with LOL 18 to ensure that the event at the Cenotaph, including music and movement within the park to and from the Cenotaph, is dignified and respectful;
* Put in place appropriate arrangements to meet the needs of those with a disability attending the event.

The Council will seek views on the request and the proposed options through public consultation. The Council will then collate and analyse all comments received in relation to the proposed event and feedback will be used to inform its decision-making, including any mitigating measures or alternative policies if deemed appropriate.

The Council commits to remaining open to feedback and will respond in a positive manner to views expressed throughout the consultation process.

# Consultation

Chapter 3 of the Council’s Equality Scheme commits the Council to a consultation period normally lasting for a minimum of twelve weeks, to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view.

Mindful of this commitment, the present consultation period will run from **27th March 2025 until midnight on 19th June 2025**.

For the purpose of this EQIA, the Council has committed to carrying out a transparent and meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders in a range of formats and at selected locations.

The Equality Commission NI recommends that for an EQIA, all consultees listed in the Council’s Equality Scheme should be informed of the EQIA by email. Accordingly, the EQIA consultation document and accompanying questionnaire will be made available on the Council’s website consultation page at [www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/equality](https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/equality)The public consultation will include an online questionnaire, which will be made available through the Council's Citizen Space portal. Alternative paper copies and alternative languages will be available on request.

The questionnaire will have a covering explanation and request for completion as the Council aims to gather as broad a range of comments as possible.

The EQIA will be included as an agenda item for a special meeting of the Council’s Consultative Panel held in line with the Council’s Equality Scheme and within the agreed constitution.

A face-to-face public meeting will be held in Bangor City Hall on Thursday 22 May2025 from 7.00 to 8.30pm.

An online public meeting will also be held on Tuesday 27 May from 1.00 to 2.30pm.

Both these events will be advertised widely using social media and through the local press.

The EQIA will be advertised in the County Down Spectator, the Newtownards Chronicle and on the Council's social media platforms, as well as being emailed to all consultation groups within the Council’s Equality and Good Relations Sections.

The Council’s social media and website will be used to inform readers of the EQIA and the consultation period and how they may participate. Stakeholders will be informed as to how to participate in confidence should they wish to remain anonymous.

# Conclusions

Data from the consultation will be analysed along with all other information and will be presented in the final EQIA Decision Report.

This final EQIA Decision Report will be submitted to the Council in order to further assist their deliberations in respect of how to deal with the request.

The final EQIA Decision Report will be made available on the Council’s website following analysis of all responses and consideration of same by the Council.

# Monitoring for adverse impact

The final stage in the EQIA process is the establishment of a system to monitor the impact of the proposed revisions and /or any agreed mitigation, in order to find out its effect on groups within the Section 75 equality categories.

The results of the monitoring are required to be reviewed on an annual basis and published in the Council’s annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.

Where the monitoring and analysis of results over a two-year period show that the proposed changes have resulted in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arose which would allow for greater equality of opportunity and/or good relations to be promoted, the Council must ensure that the policy is further revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant Section 75 groups.

# Appendix 1: Equality Scheme consultees

Active Youth

Adapt NI

Andrew Muir MLA

Antrim and Newtownabbey Council

Ards Chamber of Trade

Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Council

Arts and Disability Forum

Aware NI

Bangor Alternatives

Bangor Chamber of commerce

Bangor Foodbank and community support

Belfast Butterfly Club

Branch Out

Camphill Community Glencraig

Carers NI

Children in Northern Ireland

Commission for older people

Community Advice

Connie Egan MLA

DEARA

Decorum NI

Department of Finance

Derry City and Strabane Council

Downs Syndrome Association

ECNI

Foras na Gaeilge

Hamilton Road Baptist Church Bangor

Helens Bay Presbyterian Church

Human Rights Commission

IMTAC

Irish Football Association

Kelly Armstrong MLA

Kilcooley Forum

Kings Church, Bangor

Local Government Staff Commission

Mae Murray Foundation

Men’s Advisory Project Northern Ireland

Mid and East Antrim Council

Millisle District and Community Association

MS Society

North Down Community Network

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

NOW Group

Open House Festival

Parkinsons UK NI

Peter Martin MLA

Positive Futures

Probation Board NI

Rare Disease

Redburn Loughview Community Forum

RNIB

Shore Street Church, Donaghadee

Stronger Together

The Link Centre

The Rainbow Project

Towerview Methodists Church

Ulster University

West Church (Presbyterian)

Whitehill Community Association

Women’s Aid Ards and North Down

You 2 Me Play

# Appendix 2: Section 75 profile of Ards and North Down Borough Council residents

On Census Day 2021, the usually resident population of Ards and North Down Borough Council was 163,659. This made it the fourth largest Local Government District, with an increase in population of nearly 5 per cent since the previous Census in 2011.

Numbers indicate the actual population with percentage breakdown relative to the total population in brackets.

All data is drawn from the NI 2021 Census unless otherwise stated.[[21]](#footnote-22)

## Religion or religion brought up in

At 68 per cent, Ards and North Down Borough Council has a higher proportion of people from Protestant and other Christian backgrounds than Northern Ireland as a whole (43 per cent). It also has a higher proportion of people for identifying as from no religion (17 per cent compared to 9 per cent across Northern Ireland).

In the settlement of Bangor itself, where Ward Park is based, 14 per cent of the population is from a Catholic community background and 68 per cent from a Protestant and other Christian community background.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Roman Catholic | Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related) | Other religions | None |
| NI | 869,753 (46%) | 827,545 (43%) | 28,514 (2%) | 177,360 (9%) |
| ANDBC | 22,262 (14%) | 111,175 (68%) | 2,237 (1%) | 27,984 (17%) |

## Political opinion

The following table shows the results of the most recent local council elections for Ards and North Down Borough Council in May 2023.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Party | Seats | Gains | Losses | Net gain/loss | Seat % | Votes % |
| DUP | 14 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 35.0 | 29.03 |
| Alliance | 12 | 3 | 1 | +2 | 30.0 | 26.59 |
| UUP | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20.0 | 15.60 |
| Independent | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7.5 | 11.16 |
| Green | 2 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 5.0 | 5.94 |
| SDLP | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.5 | 3.72 |
| TUV | 0 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 0.0 | 4.83 |
| Sinn Féin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1.66 |
| NI Conservatives | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.59 |

## Ethnic group

On Census Day 2021, 98 per cent of the population of Ards and North Down Borough Council was from a White ethnic background. This is similar to the Northern Ireland population as a whole (97 per cent). T

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | White | Irish Traveller | Roma | Indian | Chinese | Filipino | Pakistani | Arab | Other Asian | Black African | Black Other | Mixed | Other ethnicities |
| NI | 1,837,575 (97%) | 2,609 (0%) | 1,529 (0%) | 9,881 (1%) | 9,495 (0%) | 4,451 (0%) | 1,596 (0%) | 1,817 (0%) | 5,244 (0%) | 8,069 (0%) | 2,963 (0%) | 14,382 (1%) | 3,568 (0%) |
| ANDBC | 159,892 (98%) | 24 (0%) | 19 (0%) | 388 (0%) | 500 (0%) | 308 (0%) | 87 (0%) | 28 (0%) | 468 (0%) | 309 (0%) | 135 (0%) | 1,236 (1%) | 266 (0%) |

## Age

Arts and North Down Borough Council has a larger proportion of older people aged 65 and over than any other Council area. The median age is 44.

Population projections show that the proportion of those aged 85 and over are expected to more than double within the next 25 years.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 0–14 | 15–39 | 40–64 | 65+ |
| NI | 365,213  (19%) | 594,361 (31%) | 617,125 (32%) | 326,475 (17%) |
| ANDBC | 27,763 (17%) | 44,206 (27%) | 55,466 (34%) | 36,225 (22%) |

## Marital status

The 2021 Census showed that 51 per cent of people over 16 years of age in Ards and North Down Borough Council were either married or in a civil partnership. This is higher than the NI population as a whole (46%).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | NI | ANDBC |
| Single (never married or never registered a civil partnership) | 576706 (38%) | 41434 (31%) |
| Married or in a civil partnership | 693250 (46%) | 68618 (51%) |
| Separated (but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership) | 57272 (6%) | 4466 (3%) |
| Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved | 91130 (6%) | 9860 (7%) |
| Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership | 96384 (6%) | 9611 (7%) |

## Sexual orientation

Statistics also show that 800 households in the Borough were living in a same-sex couple relationship on Census Day 2021.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NI** | **ANDBC** |
| **Straight or heterosexual** | 1,363,858 (90%) | 122,148 (91%) |
| **Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexual orientation** | 31,616 (2%) | 2,619 (2%) |
| **Prefer not to say or not stated** | 119,268 (8%) | 9,223 (7%) |

## Dependants

A person with a dependant is a person who has personal responsibility for the care of a child, for the care of a disabled person or the care of a dependent older person.

People in Ards and North Down Borough Council are slightly more likely to have caring responsibilities for a dependant than across NI as a whole (14 per cent compared to 12 per cent).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Provides no care | Provides weekly unpaid care |
| NI | 1,567,135 (88%) | 222,213 (12%) |
| ANDBC | 134,334 (86%) | 21,331 (14%) |

## Men and women generally

At 51 per cent, women make up a slightly larger proportion of the population of both NI and Ards and North Down Borough Council than men (49%).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Males | Females |
| NI | 936,132 (49%) | 967,043 (51%) |
| ANDBC | 79,705 (49%) | 83,951 (51%) |

## Disability

According to the 2021 Census, a quarter of the population of Ards and North Down Borough Council has a disability or long-term health condition that limits their day-to-day activities. This is similar to the NI population (24 per cent).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All usual residents: Day-to-day activities limited a lot | All usual residents: Day-to-day activities limited a little | All usual residents: Day-to-day activities not limited |
| NI | 217964 (11%) | 245057 (13%) | 1440158 (76%) |
| ANDBC | 18092 (11%) | 23252 (14%) | 122315 (75%) |

# Appendix 3: Monitoring returns for Ards and North Down Borough Council employees

According to October 2023 monitoring returns, Ards and North Down Borough Council has 882 employees.

Religious belief/community background

78 per cent of employees are identified as Protestant and 15 per cent Catholic.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Non-determined | 7% |
| Protestant | 78% |
| Roman Catholic | 15% |

## Ethnic origin

1 per cent of employees identify as being from a minority ethnic community background.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Black | 0% |
| Chinese | 0% |
| Other | 1% |
| White | 86% |
| No response/prefer not to say | 13% |

## Men and women generally

38 per cent of employees are female and 62 per cent male.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Female | Male |
| Percentage | 38% | 62% |

## Marital status

Over half the employee population is married or in a civil partnership.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Single | 21% |
| Never married | 1% |
| Married or civil partnership | 51% |
| Co-habiting | 5% |
| Divorced | 4% |
| Separated | 3% |
| Widowed | 0% |
| No response | 15% |

## Sexual orientation

71 per cent of employees identified as heterosexual. 28 per cent did not respond or preferred not to say.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Bisexual | 0% |
| Heterosexual | 71% |
| Homosexual | 0% |
| No response or prefer not to say | 28% |
| None | 1% |

## Disability

4 per cent of employees are disabled and 96 per cent are non-disabled.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| Does not have a disability | 96% |
| Has a disability | 4% |

## Dependants

41 per cent of employees have dependants

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Percentage |
| A child or children | 36% |
| A dependent elderly person | 2% |
| None | 32% |
| Other | 1% |
| Physical mental ill health/disability | 1% |
| No response | 27% |

## Age

The majority of employees are aged between 41 and 60.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Female | Male |
| 25 and under | 1% | 3.00% |
| Age 26 to 40 | 23% | 25.00% |
| Age 41 to 60 | 67.00% | 56.00% |
|  |  |  |
| 60+ | 10.00% | 16.00% |

# Appendix 4: NI Life and Times Survey

The following data is drawn from the 2023 NI Life and Times Survey.[[22]](#footnote-23)

#### Cultural identity

47 per cent of people surveyed in the 2023 NI Life and Times Survey felt that their own cultural identity is respected by society. People from a Catholic community background are most likely to agree, while those with ‘No religion’ are least likely to agree.

Respondents were also asked, ‘Thinking of the neighbourhood where you live, is it a place where you feel you can be open about your own cultural identity?’ People from a Protestant community background were most likely to agree, and people with “No religion” were least likely to agree.

#### Neutral space

Participants were also asked, ‘Thinking of the neighbourhood where you live, would you say that it was a 'neutral space'?’ People from a Catholic or Protestant community background were most likely to agree, while people with ‘No religion’ were least likely to agree that their neighbourhood is a neutral space.

#### Culture and diversity

Participants were also asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement, “The culture and traditions of the Protestant community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society.”

People from the Protestant community were most likely to agree, and people with ‘No religion” were least likely to agree.

1. https://ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1792/Equality-Impact-Assessment---Council-Flag-Policy [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange\_Order [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. www.goli.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. www.goli.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. https://ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1551/Ward-Park-Improvement-Scheme [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/together-building-united-community-tbuc [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. https://ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1791/Our-Commitment-to-Equality [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/2/contents [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. www.paradescommission.org/getmedia/a8135b81-eec6-45e3-8e1c-33b5d073b312/NorthernIrelandParadesCommission.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1998/3162/contents/made [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. [www.equalityni.org/FairEmployment](http://www.equalityni.org/FairEmployment) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment, A Guide for Employers and Employees, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, October 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/1180/contents [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. <https://nihrc.org/publication/detail/the-display-of-flags-symbols-and-emblems-in-northern-ireland2> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/together-building-united-community-tbuc [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. [www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/reports/2019/report-importance-public-spaces-exercise-cultural-rights](http://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/reports/2019/report-importance-public-spaces-exercise-cultural-rights) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/105/01/PDF/G1410501.pdf?OpenElement%20EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Documents/A_HRC_25_49_ENG.DOC&action=default&DefaultItemO%20pen=1> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. https://causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/assets/policies/MEMORIALS-POLICY-FRAMEWORK.-FINAL\_Updated-21.11.24.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/downloads/Commemorations\_and\_Memorials\_Policy\_Framework.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/results [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2023/ [↑](#footnote-ref-23)