

Applicant Guidance



Freshen Up Grant



CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

INDEX	
	Our Vision
1	Introduction
2	Applicant Eligibility
3	Eligible Works
4	Statutory Consent
5	Risks and Insurance
6	Funding
7	Application
8	Application Assessment
9	Letter of Offer
10	Works Commence
11	Works Complete
12	Payment
13	Procurement
14	Timescales
15	Non-eligible and Unsuccessful Applications
16	Monitoring and Evaluation
17	Data Protection
18	Contact Information
19	Application Checklist

Terms of Reference

Ards and North Down Borough Council – The Council

Department for Communities – The Department

Business Owner(s)/ Property Owner(s) – The Applicant

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

Our Vision

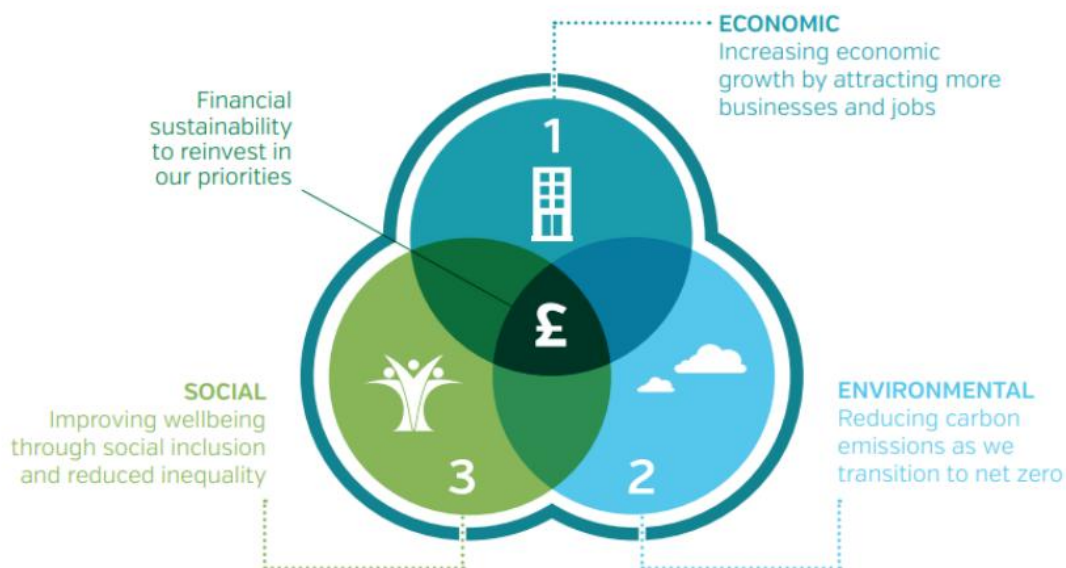
Our vision is that Ards and North Down will be a Sustainable Borough.

The Big Plan (Community Plan) uses an outcomes-based approach and seeks to enable all people in Ards and North Down to:

- Fulfil their lifelong potential
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
- Benefit from a prosperous economy
- Feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

The Corporate Plan aligns with the Big Plan with a vision for the Council to become a Sustainable Borough by way of three pillars: Economic, Environmental and Social.

Three Corporate Priorities align with these pillars of sustainable development:



Further information about the Council can be found on the Council's website at www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

1 Introduction

The Freshen Up Grant supports businesses to carry out cost-effective shopfront improvements of **power washing** and/or **painting**, to enhance visual appeal and create welcoming streetscapes in time for the summer season, with the aim to attract more visitors and boost local economic activity.

The Freshen Up Grant will provide financial assistance to commercial properties with an active business in the urban centres of Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards. Grants will provide 90% funding up to a maximum amount of £1,500 per property. A minimum 10% financial contribution is required from eligible applicants.

The Freshen Up Grant is funded by the Department for Communities and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

2 Applicant Eligibility

Any business or building owner with an active business operating from a commercial property within the city/town centre boundary and is paying commercial rates is eligible to apply for the grant.

In cases, where a building houses multiple commercial businesses with separate commercial rates, each individual business is eligible to apply separately.

1. The applicant must own or occupy the commercial property for which the application is made for. (Commercial property is deemed as a property paying business rates).
2. The property applied must have an active business operating at the time of submitting an application.
3. The property applied must be located within the city/ town centre boundary of Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards. Only businesses located within the boundary will be eligible to apply.
You can view the city and town centre boundary maps at Appendix 1.
- 4. The works will be limited to power washing and/or painting only.**
5. Applications must be submitted by the business owner(s) or the building owner(s).
6. The applicant is the named person to receive grant. The applicant must remain the same throughout the process and will be the person responsible for making and receiving payments.

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

7. Applications are limited to a maximum grant of £1,500 per property over the lifetime of the scheme.
8. A minimum 10% contribution is required from the applicant.

3 Eligible Works

Only power washing and/or painting to the exterior of the commercial property are eligible.

The proposed works must enhance the shopfront to assist with achieving the following outcomes:

- encourage footfall
- improve the appearance of the streetscape
- provide a welcoming and vibrant shopfront

All works must comply with all statutory obligations and consider Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Applicants should consider sustainable methods of shopfront enhancements such as eco-friendly materials.

Works to the side or rear of a building will only be funded if they are within the boundary of the town/city as per the maps provided in Appendix 1.

Any business or building owner with an active business operating from a commercial property within the city/town centre boundary and is paying commercial rates is eligible to apply for the grant.

In cases, where a building houses multiple commercial businesses with separate commercial rates, each individual business is eligible to apply separately.

Grant funded works are strictly limited to the premises applied for.

It is recommended that applicants of various businesses within the same building collaborate to ensure a cohesive approach to the shopfront.

Non-commercial properties, such as domestic properties, are excluded unless operated as a business, such as AirBnB (evidence of registration may be requested).

4 Statutory Consent

In most cases, power washing and painting will not require planning consent. However, applicants are responsible for enquiring and ensuring that all necessary statutory consents are in place before works begin.

Properties located in Holywood and Donaghadee, which are designated Conservation Areas, or buildings that are listed, may require Planning Permission and/or Listed Building Consent, even for cleaning or painting works.

Advice can be sought from Ards and North Down Borough Council Planning Department.

Where murals or artwork are proposed on shopfronts, Advertisement Consent may also be required. Applicants will be required to seek confirmation from the planning department at application stage.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all statutory approvals required are lawfully complied with.

A Letter of Offer will only be issued when statutory consents are clarified.

A claim for grant funding will only be released when evidence of statutory consent is provided (where applicable).

The Freshen Up Grant operates independently of statutory consent(s) and any Offer in Principle does not imply in any way that statutory consent(s) will be forthcoming.

All Letters of Offer will be conditional on the applicant securing the statutory consent(s) (where applicable).

Note – Consultancy and statutory application fees for obtaining necessary approvals are not grant eligible under this scheme.

Relevant contacts:

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Planning Department, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AP

Tel: 0300 013 3333 Email: planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Mon-Fri 9.00am – 3.00pm

[Planning Applications Information - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

During application assessment, if required, officers will request the applicant to provide evidence that they have contacted the relevant agencies. A copy of

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

correspondence may be required to verify the need for statutory approvals. It is suggested that enquiries are made via email.

5 Risk and Insurance

The applicant, agent and/or contractor is responsible for all risks in connection with public or employer liability associated with the works.

The Council and the Department does not and will not accept liability or responsibility in respect of the grant aided work carried out to the applicant's property; accordingly the applicant should not rely on the inspection or payment of grant monies by the Council as any proof or guarantee that the contractor engaged to execute the works has completed the said works to a proper standard prior to payment; the applicant is strongly advised to satisfy themselves that the works have been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

A list of local paint contractors who have expressed an interest in supplying their services to applicants of this scheme is available at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Freshen-Up-Grant> The painting contractors listed have registered their valid insurance certificates with the Council.*

Applicants may choose to use a contractor from this list; however, applicants can also choose to use a contractor of their choice and will be required to provide copies of all relevant and valid insurance certificates.

***Note – The list of pre-approved contractors has been compiled through an Expression of Interest which included a valid insurance policy check only. The applicant is responsible for verifying that the preferred contractor can complete the works to the required standard. The Council and the Department accept no liability or responsibility regarding the quality of workmanship.**

6 Funding

The grant offered will fund 90% of project costs up to a maximum grant of £1,500. A contribution of 10% will be required from the applicant.

Note - There is no minimum level of grant award.

Example:

Total Cost of Project	Grant Award	Applicant Contribution
£500	£450	£50
£700	£630	£70
£1,000	£900	£100

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

£1,500	£1350	£150
£2,000	£1,500	£500

The grant will **not** fund any items other than power washing and/or painting.

The grant will not fund VAT where the applicant is VAT registered.

Should you have any queries regarding eligible items for funding please contact:
freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

7 Application

The application can be accessed at

<https://engage.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/regeneration/freshenupgrant>

In order to apply for the Freshen Up Grant, applicants must complete and return the online application and submit the supporting documentation no later than **12noon on Friday 29 May 2026**.

In order to consider your application, the Council requires the following documentation:

1. Completed online Application Form > access by following the link:
<https://engage.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/regeneration/freshenupgrant>
2. Submission of supporting documentation – this should be emailed to freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk following the submission of your application.

Supporting documentation must include:

- a. Quotation
- b. Contractor Insurance
- c. Before Image
- d. Consents as required

IMPORTANT:

Applications are only deemed as submitted in full when both the online application form has been completed, and the supporting documentation has been received.

In instances where the supporting documentation has not been received by the closing date, your application will be deemed ineligible.

Officers may request further information during application assessment. 7 working days from the date of request will be permitted for this information to be submitted. In instances where the information is not received within the 7 working days, your application will be deemed ineligible.

You must submit:

1. **Completed online Application Form** – including a description of the works that you intend to carry out
2. **Written quotation** - it is the applicant's responsibility to undertake procurement by obtaining quotations for all labour and materials to demonstrate that value for money is being achieved. Written or email costs must be dated and include the supplier's name and contact details. Please refer to Section 13 for further details on procurement.
3. **Insurance certificate(s)** – a copy of all relevant and valid insurance certificates for each contractor is required. Please note – this is not required if you are using a paint contractor from the list provided at [Freshen Up Grant - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)
4. **Before photographs** of the current shopfront to demonstrate the need for works. Council officers will also conduct a site visit.
5. **Relevant consent** – if the applicant is the tenant applying, you must obtain permission from the building owner(s) to carry out any works to the building. If the applicant is the building owner applying, you must obtain permission from the active business tenant. A signed and dated consent notice must be provided (email confirmation is eligible).

8 Application Assessment

Applications will be assessed on the following basis;

1. First-come first-served basis* where all documentation is provided, this includes the completed online application and all supporting information submitted to freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
2. Ability to achieve the works within the scheme timeframe.
3. The applicant has clearly demonstrated how the proposed works will enhance the shopfront, contribute to the visual appeal of the business and streetscape.

Incomplete applications at the closing date will be rejected and the applicant will be notified by email.

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

**Completed applications will be assessed on a first come basis until the total grant is allocated. The date and time of the submission of application and supporting information will be recorded.*

Applications will be considered and assessed as soon as possible following receipt.

9 Letter of Offer

Applicants **cannot** start works until a 'Letter of Offer' for the grant has been issued and the acceptance form is returned to the Council.

The Council will **not** retrospectively fund projects.

Grant funding must be accepted within 7 working days of the date of the Letter of Offer.

10 Works Commence

The Council will contact the applicant via email following the receipt of the completed Acceptance Form to confirm that works can commence.

11 Works Complete

Works must be completed in accordance for which a Letter of Offer has been issued. Where alternative works or additional works is undertaken no payment will be made unless the Council's approval has been obtained prior to works commencing. The grant may be reduced or withheld if the grant eligible work proves to be less than estimated.

12 Payment

Grant funding will only be released for payment following inspection of works by the Council. It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify the Council once works have been completed so inspection can be arranged. Inspection will be arranged within 7 working days of notification.

The applicant will be responsible for paying all supplier(s) and/or contractor(s) directly following completion of the work. The applicant will then be required to complete a Claim Form to recover the grant funding.

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

Grant funding will be paid directly to the applicant within 28 days of receipt of the applicant's completed **Claim Form** along with the following documentation:

- Original invoice(s)/receipt(s) for works and materials which must be dated and provide the supplier/contractor details.
- Copy of cheque/ BACS/ bank transfer/ debit card/ credit card payment to contractor(s) and/or supplier(s) showing associated payment leaving the applicant's account.
- Where a credit card is used to make payment, a copy of the statement showing the transaction and a copy of the relevant bank statement reflecting the amount being paid to the credit card will be required for verification.

Applicants must provide all the evidence required. If all of the above documentation is not supplied, payment will be withheld. Please do not apply for funding if you cannot supply these items.

Payment of grant will be made to the applicant via direct BACS payment.

Payment from the applicant to supplier(s) and/or contractor(s) must be made via cheque/ BACS/ bank transfer/ debit card/ credit card. The payment should be clearly referenced.

Cash payment is not acceptable and will not be eligible for refund from the Council – this is also applicable to deposit payments.

Applicants are responsible for paying the contractor(s) and claiming back VAT, if applicable.

13 Procurement

Applicants should engage a minimum of two contractors to provide a quotation to ensure best value for money is secured.

Applicants will only be required to submit one quotation from their preferred contractor for each item applied, the quotation submitted must demonstrate best value for money for the works to be undertaken.

The process must be open and fair. The successful contractor(s) must be properly qualified to undertake the works, meeting health and safety requirements in relation to the individuals performing the works and for members of the public.

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

The applicant will be responsible for any additional costs over and above the maximum grant threshold (£1,500).

The quotation(s) for each element of the proposed works must be submitted via email to freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Each quotation must be dated* and include;

- Supplier name and contact details
- Detail of each Item(s)/Works to be undertaken, such as item description, quantities, size, finish required etc.
- VAT where applicable.

*Quotations dated from the 01st May 2026 (when the scheme was publicly advertised) will be accepted.

All quotations received must meet the works description as per the application.

If you, or a business of which you are an owner/ partner/ director, or a family member, intend to supply works for the project for which you have been offered funding, please contact the Council immediately for advice. Failure to comply with this requirement will deem your process as ineligible.

Any proposed changes to the agreed grant eligible works must be agreed by the Council in writing before the work takes place (including any changes to the contractor). The applicant cannot deviate from the works and costs provided; this will render the application as invalid.

In the instance where you have not followed the above procurement instruction, you must provide the rationale and justification within the supporting information. This should only happen if there are exceptional circumstances such as the market has been tested and there is no other supplier. In such circumstances the Council will review your request.

14 Timescales

The following timescales will be adhered to for this grant:

Freshen Up Grant - Open for Applications	9.00am on Friday 1 st May 2026
Freshen Up Grant - Close for Applications	12noon on Friday 29 th May 2026

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

Grant Notification	Within 7-10 working days of a fully completed application submitted (an application is only deemed complete when all supporting documentation has been received)
Acceptance Form	Must be completed and returned within 7 working days of receiving Letter of Offer
Final date for all works to be completed and claims to be submitted	Friday 28 th August 2026

The Freshen Up Grant will open for applications from **9am on Friday 01st May 2026**.

Online applications and supporting documentation must be returned as soon as possible as grant funding is allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

The closing date for applications is 12noon on Friday 29th May 2026 (or sooner should all funding be awarded)

This scheme is an online process. If you are unable to complete your application and provide the supporting information online, please make contact via email to freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk to arrange alternative method.

Application supporting documentation to be sent to:
freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Eligible applicants will receive a Letter of Offer as soon as possible following the assessment of their application.

Applicants will be required to have completed and paid for all grant eligible works by Friday 28th August 2026 (ensuring compliance with all terms and conditions of the grant Letter of Offer). Claims for grant payment should be made immediately and no later than 10 working days of all works being completed.

Claims for grant payment received after Friday 28th August 2026 will not be accepted.

15 Non-eligible and Unsuccessful Applications

Non-eligible

- Applicants who have previously received funding that was not managed satisfactorily or was not completed.

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

- Applications (including all essential supporting documents requested) that are not fully complete or submitted after the grant closing date.
- Projects which are not compliant with the grant's aims and objectives.
- Retrospective expenditure where works/items have already been obtained and paid for prior to a Letter of Offer
- The grant cannot be used for the purpose of, or in any way be connected with the promoting of any political party or religious viewpoint. No aspect of the activity being funded should be party political in intention, use or presentation or likely to be perceived as discriminatory.

Unsuccessful

If your application is incomplete or not eligible, you will be notified by email, and the reasons will be outlined. Should this happen, you are eligible to reapply if within the application timeframe.

A review process is available.

16 Monitoring and Evaluation

Applicants will be required to provide monitoring information and complete a post grant evaluation form following the completion of works. This will be in the form of an online survey and will be required to be completed at the time of submitting your claim for grant payment.

Applicants should be aware that before and after photographs will be required. Before photographs must be submitted at the application stage and after photographs must be submitted with your claim for grant payment.

An officer will also conduct a before and after inspection visit.

17 Data Protection

Ards and North Down Borough Council value your right to personal privacy. We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 / UK General Data Protection Regulation, ensuring that information is collected fairly and lawfully, is accurate, adequate, secure, up to date and not held any longer than necessary.

The personal information provided will be used for the purposes of managing the Grant, including sending of letters of offer and processing claims.

This information will be held for seven years from the conclusion of the program when it will be securely destroyed. Information you provide may be shared with

CLOSING DATE: NO LATER THAN 12NOON ON FRIDAY 29 MAY 2026

external statutory or regulatory bodies, such as the Northern Ireland Audit Office or relevant Government Department, when there is a necessary and legitimate need to do so, but any personal information you provide to the Council is held securely and used only for Council purposes.

For further information, our Privacy Statement can be viewed at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/privacy-and-cookies> or contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

18 Contact Information

If you have any queries regarding an application or would like assistance in ensuring that you can obtain all the required information, please contact:

Email: freshenupgrant@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 013 3333 Ext 40376

19 Application Checklist

- Fully completed online application form submitted
- Supporting documentation includes:
 1. Before Photographs
 2. Consent Notice (dependant on applicant status i.e. business owner, property owner)
 3. Dated quotation for each item applied
 4. Copy of preferred Contractor(s) valid insurance (if not registered on the list of pre-approved paint contractors available at [Freshen Up Grant - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#))
- Where required, confirmation from the Planning Department as to whether your project requires statutory approvals – evidence may be requested.

**This scheme is funded by the Department for Communities
and Ards and North Down Borough Council**



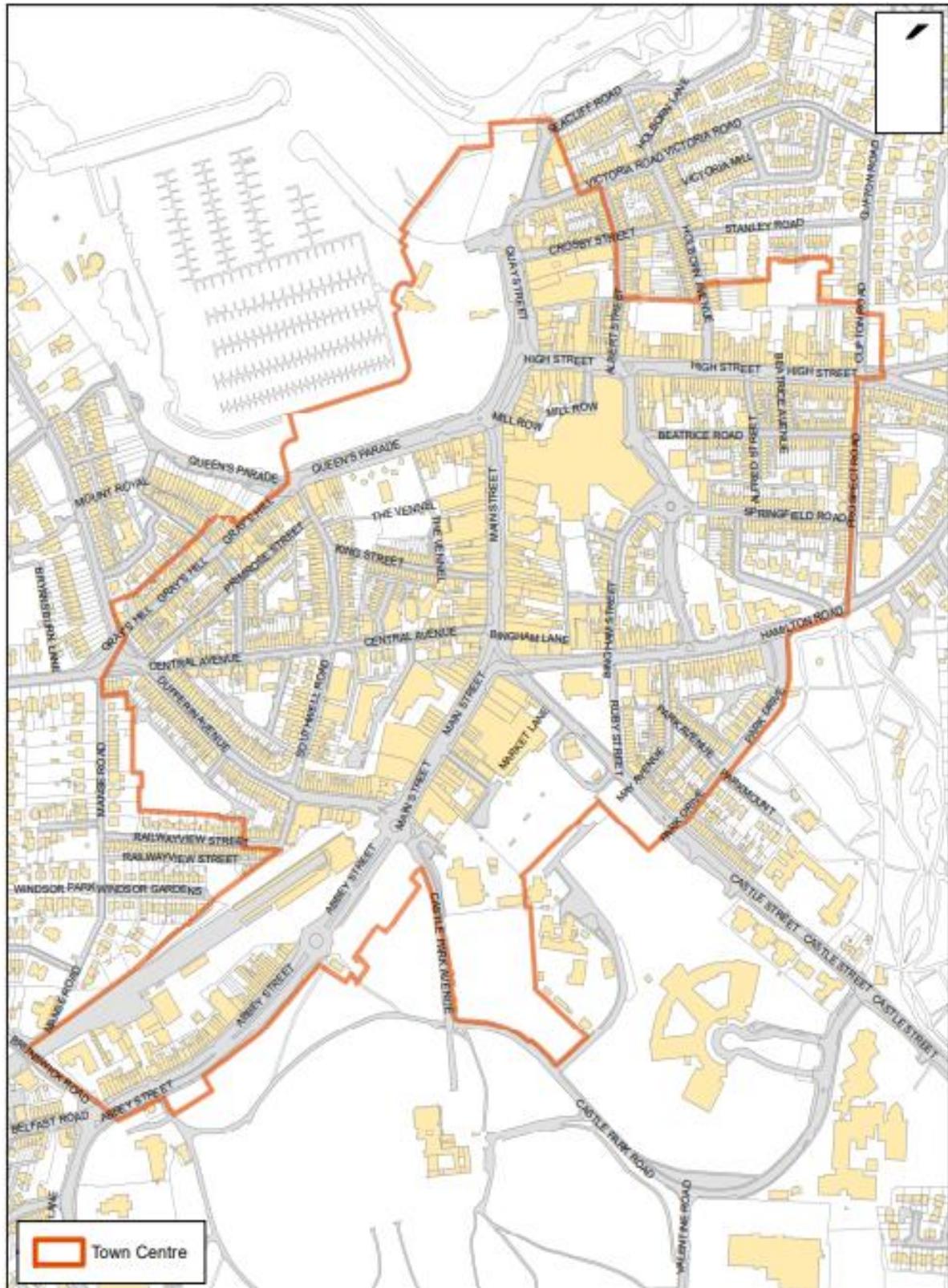
Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

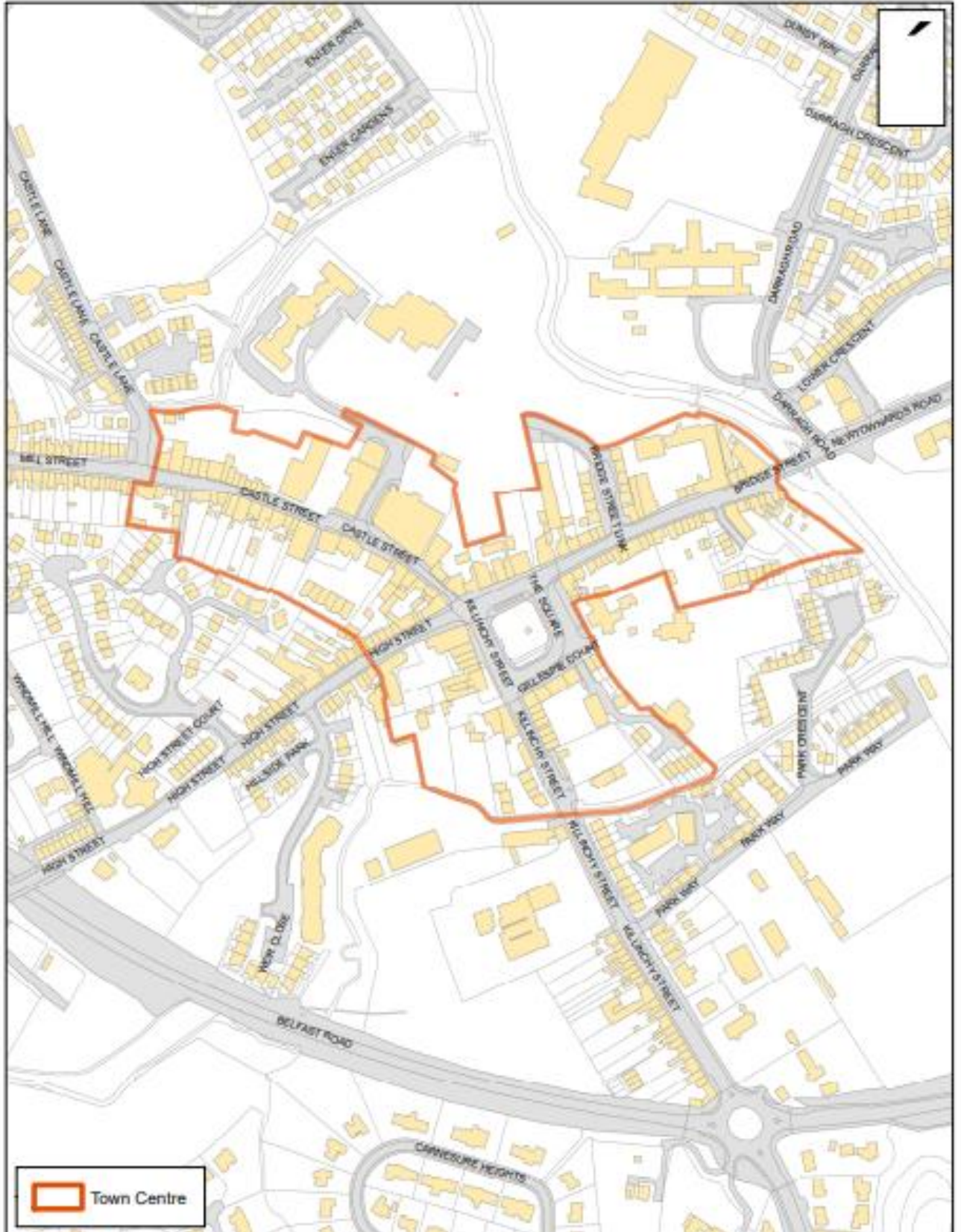
Department für
Commonities

Appendix 1

Bangor



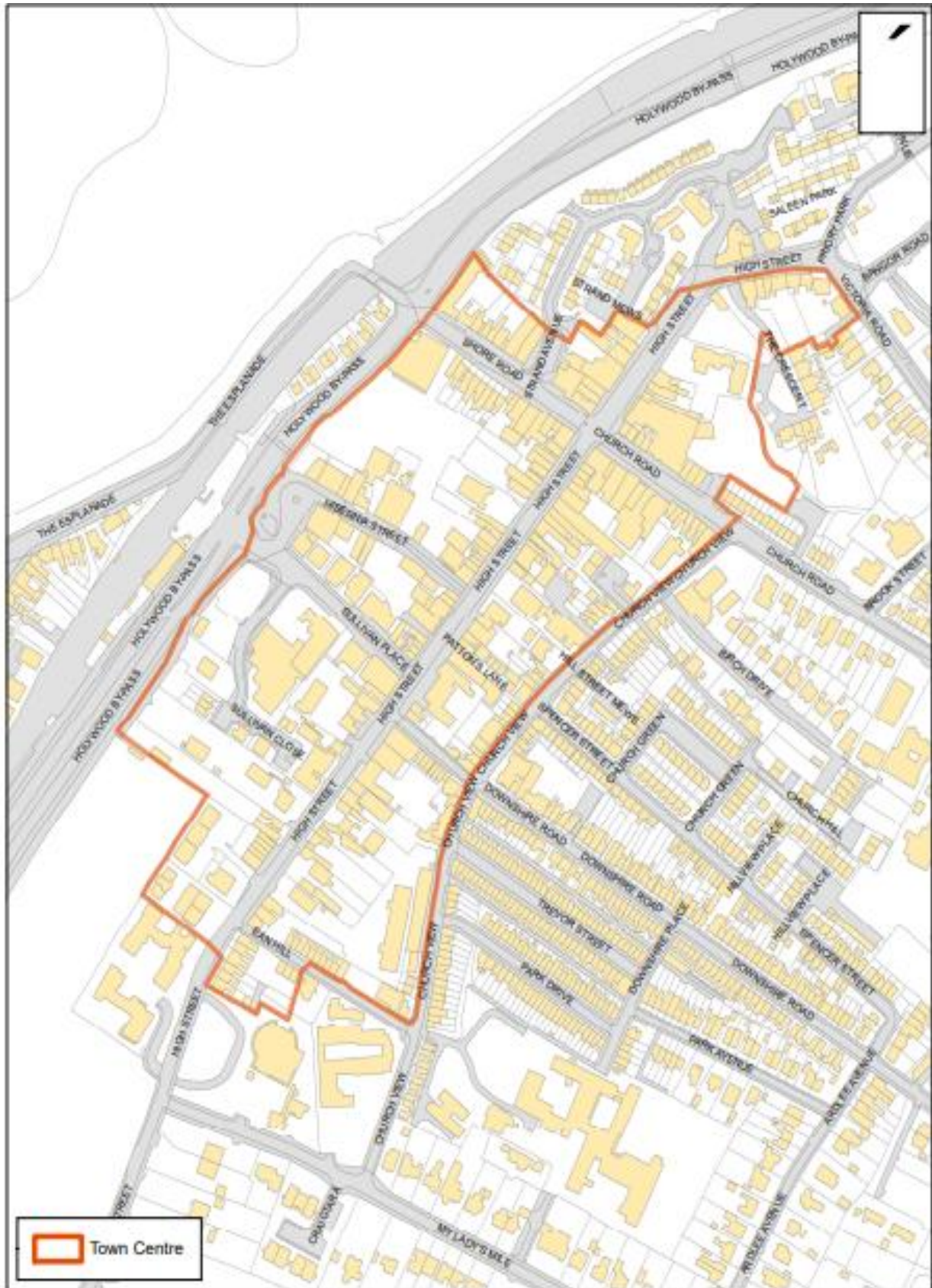
Comber



Donaghadee



Hollywood



Newtownards

