**TASTE ARDS AND NORTH DOWN**

**FOOD & DRINK NETWORK**

**GOVERNANCE, TERMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES**

**17 OCTOBER 2023**

1. Terms and Conditions
2. Types of Membership
3. Membership Application Criteria
4. Benefits of Membership
5. Code of Conduct
6. Network Committee
7. Member Suspension Process
8. Trade event costs and cancellation policy: *policy not approved by network committee. Await Update*
9. Use of Taste AND identity: *policy not approved by network committee. Await Update.*

**TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP STANDARDS**

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**Section A: Values**

The collective **Values** of the Ards & North Down Food Drink Network are a commitment to:

1. Convey a passion for our local food and drink products and their provenance.
2. Helping shape and guide the future strategic direction of the local food and drink sector.
3. Deliver on sustainability across the local food and drink sector from ‘field to fork’.
4. Being approachable and engage with other businesses to develop ideas and work on joint areas of concern.
5. Engender a collaborative working spirit.
6. Share best practice and to be innovative, flexible and adaptable in our approach to identifying and delivering projects.
7. Raising quality of service, product, and pride of place.

**Section B: Vision**

The **Vision** of Ards & North Down Food Network is:

1. For Ards & North Down to be recognised as a leading food tourism destination in NI/RoI.
2. For Ards & North Down food and drink companies to be a leading target for food and drink buyers.
3. For Ards & North Down produce and products to be the food and drink ‘of choice’ by local consumers.
4. For Ards & North Down food and drink to be perceived as authentic, high quality, premium products with great provenance.
5. For Ards & North Down food and drink tours and experiences to be rated as showcasing excellence.

**Section C: Mission**

Ards & North Down Food & Drink Network’s Mission is to:

1. Provide positive economic impact for all members.
2. Communicate a shared voice for food, drink and hospitality companies.
3. Inspire all to develop a cohesive and inclusive food and drink sector that is collaborative at its’ core.

**Section D: Main Membership Rules**

**These rules are general for all 2023 members:**

1. Members must have a primary registered business address within Ards & North Down
2. Members must not be a subsidiary of a multinational company.
3. Members must not operate as part a national (UK or Ireland) chain or be operated as a franchise.
4. Members who move their business base out of ANDBC area automatically leave the network and forfeit all rights to support.
5. Members must have **adequate insurance** cover for all activities relating to any involvement in network activity, i.e., attendance at trade shows, markets, hosting events, attending ANBC events and providing services to events & experiences.
6. Members who require a **food hygiene rating** to operate must have recorded a Grade 3 above and supply their certificate within the first three months of membership. If there is an ‘awaiting grading’ status this must be suppled.
7. Members must not indulge in any **trading or financial practices** that could bring the Taste AND network and brand into disrepute.
8. Members must not **misuse the name of the food and drink network** in communications inclusive of social media to further their own business interests.
9. Members must not **misuse their membership status** to confer a right to attend Ards & North Down events or festivals, event criteria will always take precedence.
10. Members must **engage in respectful communications** when in engaging with other members and supporting staff from Ards & North Down Borough Council.
11. Members must **notify the food officer of any change of ownership/personnel** in the interested of good communications.
12. Members can be **suspended from the network** by the network committee via a simple majority vote where it is felt they have brought the Taste AND name into disrepute or are disrupting the work of the network (see section 7 for detail)
13. Members must agree to and sign up to the **code of conduct** (see section 5)

**Rules applied to members who are food and drink producers to be classed as ‘producer members.’**

1. Producer members should provide copies of public liability insurance and food hygiene certificates ahead of any public activity with Taste Ards & North Down,
2. Producer members must receive a 3-, 4- or 5-star food hygiene rating (unless deemed non-applicable) before they can participate in trade shows, expos, Taste AND markets, food festivals or provide any services to experiences and activities that are run by ANDBC, or any events publicised under the Taste AND identity.
3. Any change in hygiene standard or insurance status that has the potential to impact on a members’ participation in any of the activities listed above requires the member to notify the food officer.
4. Producer members must accept the terms and conditions applied by external partners on trade events, where a subsidised place has been offered at any external event by ANDBC those producers will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of conduct, hygiene, and public safety. Failure to comply will mean replacement.

**Rules applied to Farm Shops & Independent Artisan Food Retailers to be classed as ’retailer members.’**

1. Retailer members must be independent or local chains based in Ards & North Down.
2. Retailer member must be able to demonstrate that they support a variety of local producers from Ards & North Down and County Down generally.
3. Retailer members must have insurance cover that includes public and product liability cover, as standard, to ensure the core risks associated with your business are covered. This will enable participation in food tours and guides.

**Rules applied to Restaurants, Cafés, Licensed Premises & Other Hospitality Members to be classed as ‘hospitality members.’**

1. Hospitality members should have a **minimum food hygiene** of 3 obtained on or before the 1st of May 2022 in order to retain annual membership.
2. **Businesses deemed ineligible** for membership include: take-away only establishments (under normal trading conditions outside), national chains, regional chains, restaurants operated under franchise, and premises were a membership payment is applied. Local chains based in Ards & North Down are accepted,
3. Restaurant members must be able to **demonstrate that they support a variety of local producers** from Ards & North Down and County Down generally in their application form.
4. Restaurant members must have **adequate insurance cove**r, as standard, to ensure the core risks associated with all business operations are covered. This will enable participation in food tours, guides, and promotions.
5. **Licenced premises** who are found to be in breach of laws will have their network membership withdrawn and the right to use the ‘Taste AND’ identity withdrawn.

**Rules applied to Markets, Food and Drink Experiences & Food and drink related Attractions. Hereafter known as ‘Activity Members’**

1. **Core of business** activity must be based in ANDBC (all).
2. **Markets** must have at least 50% food and run at least once a month May to October.
3. **Experience provider**s must be **bookable online** and provide details of relevant insurance cover and food hygiene where appropriate.
4. **Attractions** with a primary focus away from food are accepted provided the facility includes a café/restaurant that supports use of local food (facility may be assessed).
5. **Cookery Schools** are accepted provided the facility is committed to supporting Taste AND promotions and hosting events.
6. **Licensed members** in this category must be in full compliance with the laws relating to alcohol licensing. Those premises who are found to be in breach of laws will have their network membership withdrawn and the right to use the ‘Taste AND’ identity withdrawn.

**Specific Rules for Associate Members**

1. Associated Members should be able to demonstrate in their membership forms how they can assist the development of the food network or provide a service that supports the development of the food and drink destination.

**Membership**

There will be three types of membership status: full, new/provision and associate/supporter.

**Full**

For established food and drink businesses who qualify through the application of the full set of criteria that they actively contribute, through their business operations, to the local food and drink sector as well as actively contributing to the development of the food and drink network.

Businesses eligible are:

* ‘Field to fork’ producers.
* Farmers who supply direct to consumers
* Restaurants & Bars
* Accommodation that incorporates a restaurant
* Farm shops including butchers and bakeries
* Independent grocery stores
* Independent off licenses.

Ineligible businesses are takeaways, caterers, food trucks, street vendors, online retailers, freelance chefs, and food box delivery services.

**New/Provisional**

For any food and drink businesses that is less than two years old or new to the Borough offering a contribution to the local food and drink sector but lacking the sufficient record meets the criteria of a full member.

Applicant businesses will be able to join the network at any time of year as a new/provisional member. This is a temporary status, as these members should progress to full or associated status within 24 months of joining the network.

**Associate/Supporter**

A business that cannot meet the criteria set for full member status - but have operations that support the development of the food and drink destination in some capacity either through their expertise in food and drink or in the provision of a food and drink service that compliments the role of full members.

Businesses eligible for this form of membership are:

* caterers
* food/drink trucks
* street vendors
* freelance chefs
* local food box delivery services
* local tour guide companies
* freelance tour guides
* food and drink academics
* cookery schools
* experience providers
* food markets
* venues and attractions

Businesses that are ineligible for this form of membship zare ‘Field to fork’ producers, Farmers who supply direct to consumers, Restaurants & Bars, Accommodation that incorporates a restaurants, farm shops including butchers and bakeries, independent grocery stores Independent off licenses.

**The Membership Process**

Full and Associated membership applications and renewal will open on **1 November** and close on **9 January,** this allows for a substantial period of 10 weeks for businesses to submit their applications.This will be known as the ‘annual membership refresh’. **New/provisional membership applications will now be open year-round.**

The food and drink officer will convene a panel that will score applications applying the set criteria. The business names of applicants, not the applications themselves in view of GDPR, will then be brought to the first network committee of the calendar year to sign-off. Only those applications scoring 60% or above in each membership type will be admitted.

**Admittance of New/Provisional Members**

New businesses will be able to apply for this type of membership at any time of year.

The food and drink officer invites the candidate business to apply, once received the application is assessed and the network committee are notified. A majority of network committee members can reverse the decision to admit or block the application of a provisional member via a simple majority vote.

**Elevation from Provisional Member to Full Member**

In the membership refresh period, which runs from November to January, any new provisional member from the calendar year can apply for full or associated membership.

Committee members can propose a provisional member be granted full member status which will be put to a vote at the network committee, a simple majority is required. A formal meeting is not required and the vote with by anonymous.

**Change from Full Member to Associate Member and Vice Versa**

Permissible once a year during the membership refresh period only.

**3. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION CRITERIA**

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The criteria used to assess membership applications is framed to ensure members are able to contribute to the objectives of the food and drink development plan and contribute to the development of the network itself.

The four key criteria:

1: Applicant’s Food Story

2: Provenance of produce or use/support of local produce

3. Contribution to the food destination

4. Contribution to the food and drink network.

New/Provisional applicants only need to address criteria 1 & 2.

Applicants with more than one business can opt to complete one overall application however they should clearly state this in the submissions.

**Scoring your answers**

Answers to criteria 1 to 4 will be scored from 0 to 5 by a panel of Visit AND staff members and given approval by the Taste AND Committee in February 2025.

**Criteria Guidance**

**Criterion 1: Your Food Story (0-5 points)**

Give a brief overview of the background to your businesses, essentially a summary of your’ food story that you yourself would use in marketing. Consider covering ANY of following:

* When was the business established?
* Why did you start the business?
* How has the business evolved?
* What is your offering to customers?
* What is your business ethos?
* Producers: what is your range?

No more than 250 words

**Criterion 2: Provenance of Product/Use of Local Produce/Support of Local Produce (0-5 points)**

**Producers** **may consider covering the following:**

* Is your product fully field to fork or glass or tide to table?
* Where do you source ingredients?
* What skills do you have?
* Are your suppliers local?
* What is so special about your recipes?

**Restaurants may consider covering the following:**

* What is the authenticity of your offer?
* Does your menu signpost use of local produce?
* What is your relationship like with local producers?
* Can you list at least five local suppliers? \*
* Does your business offer something unique?

**Retailers may consider covering the following:**

* What kind of local produce does your business offer?
* Can you list at least **seven** local suppliers? \*
* What is your relationship like with local producers?

**Other businesses may consider covering the following:**

* What is your connection with local produce?
* How does your business engage with local producers and/or restaurants?
* What skills does your business offer in local food and drink.
* What role does local food tourism play in your business?

**Criterion 3: Contribution to the Development of the Food & Drink Destination**

* Outline any **previous role** you have played in Taste AND Markets, food tours, food experiences and local food festivals to date.
* What **future role** can your business play in developing the area as a food destination? Think about showcases, experiences and events.
* How does your business promote the food and drink offer of Ards & Down?

**Criterion 4: Contribution to Taste Ards And North Down as a Network**

* How actively involved have you been in the development our network?
* How would you see your business helping the development of our network?
* Will you actively engage in network meetings, training, workshops and events?
* Would you wish to participate in working groups or the network committee?
* What are you giving back to the Taste AND network through your attendance and development? Are you actively supporting the development of ANDBC as a food destination? Active participation in network activities etc.

**Additional Evaluation**

**Criteria 5: Awards/accolades in past year (Bonus +2)**

Please list any awards your business has won during 2023.

**4.** **BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP**

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**General Benefits**

**Identity:** use of the Taste AND logo which represents our ‘local standard’ or ‘AND provenance’, this can only be used by full members - a use policy will be applied.

**Online Listing:** your profile on our new Taste AND business page.

**Taste AND Facebook Group**: Access to the very latest local food and drink news in the private members group.

**Business Updates:** You will be added to the Tourism Ezine Updates in addition you will receive any relevant sector updates from the Food & Drink Officer.

**Trade Week**: Opportunity to participate in business-to-business engagement in the local food industry trade week.

**Social Media**: enhanced opportunity to feature in Visit AND online promotion.

**Tourism Trade Events**: Enhanced business profiling and promotion at tourism trade events such as World Travel Market.

**Partnership Expertise**: Our membership of *Food NI* and *NIFDA*, as well as our partnering arrangements with *Hospitality Ulster* and the *Ulster University Business School*, means annual updates and access to their support and advice.

**Networking:** at least six opportunities per annum to meet and collaborate with others at our network meetings.

**Workshops & Training Events**: access to scheduled sessions covering a range of topics throughout the year, members receive free or heavily discounted places. Access to all the latest training opportunities across Northern Ireland

**Awards:** The annual Taste AND Local Food Hero Awards which is our celebration of businesses who have achieved regional, national and international accolades. These awards are now extended to include food retailers and restaurant who are ANY status if member.

**Restaurant Opportunities**

**Fam Trips:** Opportunities to host fam trips for trade and take part in learning journeys.

**Food Trails:** (in development) Inclusion in proposed new food trails which includes *The Tide and Turf Food & Drink Trail* and others*.*

**Taste Trails:** Inclusion in one-day ‘taster trails’ to accompany festivals like Sea Bangor.

**Walking-Food Tours**: Priority locations are Holywood, Comber, Donaghadee and Bangor for 2024

**Local Food Showcases:** Host showcase dinners that spotlight local producer and include meet the maker.

**Restaurants Working Group:** New working group to explore opportunities to develop enhanced membership benefits and incentivise staff.

**Producer Opportunities**

**Trade Shows:** Subsidised places at local shows such as The Balmoral Show, Love Your Food Show, Garden Show Ireland.

**Local Festival Priority:** Prioritised entry for trading space allocation at Comber Earlies and Tide & Turf Portavogie Main Events.

**Subsided Workshops and Training:** Membership NIFDA and Food NI provides greater scope for training in AND area.

**Local Food Showcases:** Featured producer places at local restaurants

**Awards Lab:** Annual opportunity to test produce and gain feedback ahead of the main awards season helping businesses submit their best produce.

**Learning Journeys:** opportunity to participate in planned learning journeys focused on production, product development and

**Experience Programme**: Enhanced opportunity for additional income via the AND experience programme and/or assistance to trial a new experience with support from tourism development.

**5. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

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To whom the Code extends:

Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises that the majority of members join the Taste AND network solely to avail themselves of networking activities and the agreed benefits available to them as business owners/staff.

However, Taste AND is also fortunate to have a community of members who have become actively involved in our developmental activity at a local and regional level as key partners.

Building Taste AND into a locally recognisable identity/brand with local residents, businesses, partner bodies and politicians alike, it is imperative that Taste AND protects its brand from damage. In order to achieve this end, Taste AND requires that ALL members adhere to a Code of Conduct.

This code is intended to direct the conduct of members in relation to their interaction with other Taste AND members, employees of ANDBC and any third party where the member is perceived to be acting in the name of Taste AND or where they or their business purports to be in some way associated with Taste AND in addition to being a member.

The code does not extend to the interaction between Taste AND members and their customers/clients or any other third party where the Taste AND member is not acting in the name/as a representative of Taste AND.

**The Code**

Taste Ards & North Down requires that members:

1. Act and always present themselves in a professional and courteous manner to all other all members, the employees of Ards & North Down Borough Council and our external partner organisations.
2. Where use of the Taste AND identity is permitted via qualified membership status, it does not in any way to suggest or imply that trading rights or food quality marks are conferred, the Taste AND identity and logo is not a professional qualification but denotes a standard acceptance of a ‘local AND provenance’.
3. Where it is not true, do not represent themselves as:
   1. being approved or endorsed by Taste AND/ANDBC in connection with their business activity or operations.
   2. having a trading relationship with or being an approved supplier sanctioned by Taste AND/ANDBC.
4. Do not claim to represent Taste AND/ANDBC in any capacity without having first obtained explicit written consent from the Council.
5. Must not misrepresent Taste AND at any trade events or external festivals.
6. You will comply with all statutory requirements, policy and legal procedure and in the event of being subject to legal proceedings notify a member of the network committee.
7. You will maintain confidentiality when required to do so and comply with the provisions of the prevailing data policies.
8. Your business and business representatives will conduct respectful online communications and not misuse and misrepresent their membership of Taste AND in the process.
9. In your association with Taste AND, you will not discriminate against any person because of a protected characteristic e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
10. You will not use threatening or abusive behaviour or language.
11. You will not make verbal or written statements which are contrary to the aims and objectives of Taste AND or the Food and Drink Development Plan.
12. You will not misuse any ANDBC property, resources, equipment or records for any purpose other than the purpose for which they are intended.
13. Do anything or omit to do anything which is prejudicial to the interests of Taste AND or bring the name of the network into disrepute adhering to the membership rules stated in section 1.

**6. NETWORK COMMITTEE**

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**Structure and Key Terms**

* The Network Committee will consist of 11 members.
* Network Committee will be composed of 10 full members and one associated member. Committee members are considered ‘representatives of the wider network.
* Network Committee should be reflective of the wider membership composition, i.e. If 50% of members are restaurants then five members of the committee should be restaurant representatives.
* Committee Members will be able to serve up to five years,
* Committee Members can resign at any time.
* Committee Members can have a colleague deputise for them at meetings with notice. Notice should be given by 8am on date of meeting.

**Nomination**

After each membership refresh period, all those committee members who wish to roll their tenure forward are proposed by the food and drink officer as a single group to the wider network. The wider network then has yes/no vote.

If the vote is ‘no’ a fresh round of nominations for all network reps needs to open at the same meeting. If the vote is ‘yes’ the group is reinstalled for another year. Following this only committee vacancies are then filled with fresh nominations. Nominations can be either self-nominated or member nominated. A private vote follows where there is more candidates than positions.

**Committee Votes**

Committee Votes are completed by simple majority and individual names will not be recorded against ANY vote. Where there is an even vote in the absence of one of the committee members, the chair’s vote will be worth two votes.

**Chairs**

There will be one chair and two vice chairs. All three are interchangeable between meetings and a vice chair can take on chairing responsibilities of a meeting. Chairs are voted into position by the whole network committee.

**Committee Responsibilities**

All network committee members can:

* Test and challenge information presented by the food and drink officer or other ANDBC staff at meetings.
* Speak in the interest of their membership group as a representative.
* Bring motions and papers to committee with advance notice.
* Seek committee votes to establish agreed committee positions.
* Sponsor a new/provisional member to be elevated to full membership, however they must present their reasons in full,
* Bring a case for member suspension to committee.
* Approve the annual member refresh list.
* Propose a block on a business applicant becoming a member.

**Other Roles**

The food and drink officer acts as secretary to the committee.

Alex Irvine (ANDBC), Wendy Smiith (ANDBC) and Lindsay Ainley (UU) can sit in meetings to act as advisors.

**7. MEMBER SUSPENISON PROCESS**

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1. Where a member business or a someone representing a business is considered to have broken rules or infringed upon the code of conduct, they can be suspended from network either temporarily or permanently.
2. Network Committee representatives can bring any case for suspension to a committee. The representative should provide evidence on how the member has broken rule and reference the rules broken.
3. The network committee will consider case and come to a resolution on the type of suspension with a vote. The vote will be determined by simple majority and no names will be recorded in the minutes against votes.
4. The secretary of the network will notify the member of the terms of their suspension.
5. Where a member has avoided suspension through a vote of the committee the secretary will issue a warning letter to the member with a reminder of the rules.
6. **TRADE EVENT COSTS AND CANCELLATION**

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**Policy not approved at this time.**