

# **ARDS AND NORTH DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER, STRANGFORD ARMS HOTEL NEWTOWNARDS**

## **1. What makes your area unique?**

- Heritage – maritime, Christian, natural
- Horticulture/agriculture e.g. Comber spuds
- Proximity to City Airport
- Quality of life – e.g. golf courses, arts, boating, site for Olympic swimming pool
- Attractions e.g. Castle Espie, Exploris, Scrabo
- Arts and sport
- Events, concerts – e.g. Bangor Bay
- Spending power/relative affluence
- Home to a high percentage of decision makers – Public and Private sector
- Extensive coastline
- Strangford Lough- biodiversity
- Rail link to Belfast from part of area
- Few political tensions

## **2. How can this be developed to give a competitive edge to your area?**

- Education – exploit good record
- Tourism potential
- Lack of hotels – needs policy change
- Develop craft industry
- Arts development
- Use Partnerships e.g. East Border, SEED, Comet
- Improve public transport and parking
- Improve roads within district
- City region too Belfast-centric – decentralise
- Need more inward investment
- Lack of land for industry
- Update Area Plans, office policy too much geared towards Belfast
- Designate district as a growth area
- Realise & market the district's assets
- Address problems of town centres which have been adversely affected by out of town retail
- Resolve problems of Bangor seafront and Castlebawn in Newtownards
- Market area particularly Strangford Lough as a tourist destination.
- Develop B&B, Hostel and camping facilities for niche tourists
- Capitalise on potential for 'Green' jobs .
- Develop business clusters for niche market.
- Develop sailing recreational potential

**3. What skills underpin your area's businesses and how can these be improved to attract new business and encourage economic growth?**

- High percentage of graduates
- Need to improve skills of weak community sector
- Craft expertise
- Good construction related skills
- Farming and Fishing skills
- Expand vocational training and apprenticeships
- Training for Green collar jobs

**4. What opportunities might exist to co-operate with nearby towns/areas to improve your area?**

- Extend City airport
- Proper understanding needed of the role of Belfast City Region
- Tourism – develop potential
- Potential for multi venue tourism linking with other areas.

**5. Are there any particular equality or health issues in your area that need to be considered?**

- Bamford Report on mental health
- Paramilitary influence still exists
- Current health provision not meeting areas needs.
- Some very deprived pockets- housing quality
- Access to services in rural Ards peninsula poor
- Out of hours GP service could be improved
- Pockets of ageing population with associated care needs