

Down District Council

Annual Report 2008 - 2009





Our Mission Statement

Down District Council has confirmed its mission as follows:

Improving the quality of life
for all our people.

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Chairman



As Chairman of Down District Council, I have experienced first hand the wide range of expertise and talent the people of Down district use to improve not only their own lives but the lives of the people around them.

I have had the privilege and pleasure to attend events, celebrations and awards which encouraged, recognised and rewarded the good work, efforts and achievements of those involved, extending to every part of the district.

The St Patrick's Festival and Cross-Community Parade, recognised as one of the premier celebrations of St Patrick, brings together a wide range of organisations, fusing Italian, Chinese, Indian, Irish and Ulster Scots influences in a sea of colour, sound and happiness.

One of the highlights of my term in office was to chair a student council meeting with young people from our local schools. Within the setting of the Council chamber, the students participated in discussions about junior sports development, provision of recreational facilities, waste incineration and nuclear power. This event was part of my objective to encourage young people to become more involved and aware of local politics, Council procedures and activities.

The sheer scale of activities, partnerships, community involvement and projects both large and small that Down District Council supports, initiates and is involved in never fails to amaze me.

It has been a pleasure to represent the district as Chairman of Council allowing me first hand experience, and involvement with all sections of our community. I know with the continued good work of everyone living and working in Down district we can, and will, build on our past success and together address the many difficult issues which we will face in the future.

I thank everyone who welcomed, assisted and supported my year as Chairman and I thank my fellow Councillors, Council staff and people of the district for their good work during this period.

Councillor Colin McGrath
Chairman

Chief Executive



It has once again been a successful year for Down District Council, delivering a wide range of activities and improving the services offered to the people of the district throughout the year 2008 - 2009.

Key successes this year included:

- The Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie announced an allocation of £4 million to extend the Ballymote Centre in Downpatrick.
- Allocation of £96,045 to community and voluntary organisations in support of their activities.
- Launch of the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Inter-Estates Community programme to stimulate and support neighbourhood renewal and community activity.
- The St Patrick's Festival and Cross-Community Parade continued to go from strength to strength attracting 69 groups with a total of 1,500 participants.
- Continuation of work to encourage diversity amongst people of different backgrounds, for example, the highly successful Christmas celebrations in Castlewellan where carols were sung in Polish, Irish and English.
- The award of £5 million to the St Patrick's Signature Project, part of which will be used to upgrade the 15 key sites along the St Patrick's Trail.

- Down County Museum winning commendations for Best Exhibition and Best Local Authority Museum at the Museum of the Year Awards.
- Attendance of 3,850 children at Down District Council Summer Schemes which were held across the district to encourage children into healthy activity and to develop cross-community awareness.
- All the Council's Leisure Centres improved their Quest scores for the management of their facilities.
- Council staff dealt with over 700 stray dog complaints and 177 complaints of dog fouling. Officers carried out 906 patrols in known problem areas to deter and detect breaches of regulations regarding dog control.
- Supporting the reintroduction of rare Red Kites to the district with the release of 27 of these birds at Castlewellan Forest Park.

I have outlined a small selection of the activities undertaken and supported by the Council in 2008 - 2009. Further details on these and many other activities can be found in this report.

A major area of work was initiated with regard to the planned amalgamation between Down District Council and Newry and Mourne District Council as part of the Review of Public Administration.

A Voluntary Transition Committee was established comprising eight Councillors from each of the two Councils. The Committee meets on a monthly basis and it is envisaged that the Voluntary Transition Committee will be given statutory powers in 2010. From that point on it will take decisions and direct the two Councils as they progress towards amalgamation in May 2011.

The additional workload as a result of the impending merger along with the current economic recession will place added pressure on Councillors and employees. With their continued support and commitment I am confident Down District Council will continue to perform well, ensuring our customers continue to receive the quality service they have grown to expect.

John McGrillen
Clerk and Chief Executive

Honouring the People Who Work, Live and Contribute to Life in Down

Dermot Curran Young Achiever Awards

The enterprise and entrepreneurship of young people in Down district was celebrated in style at the prestigious Dermot Curran Young Achiever Awards, held at The Saint Patrick Centre, Downpatrick, on Friday 21 November 2008. An invited audience of VIPs and young people nominated for this year's awards came together to commend the achievements of local young entrepreneurs.

The overall Dermot Curran Young Achiever Award for 2008 was presented by Eddie McGrady MP, to Christopher Clarke of AJC Electrical in Newcastle, for his outstanding contribution to the economic development of the district. The following awards were also presented:

Award	Winner
Science and Technology Award	Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch
Health Awareness Award	St Mary's High School, Downpatrick
Culture and Citizenship Award	St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch
Down Business Centre Graduate Award	Gary Harper, Mourne Bathrooms
South Eastern Regional College (East Down) Most Promising Enterprise Student Award	William Quinn

The following nominees received Certificates of Commendation:

Highly Commended	Neil Logan, Bluestone Interior Solutions
Commended	Leanne Small, Hair Retro Conal Duffy, DJ Duff Discos Krissy Doyle, Kutz and Kurlz Eva McAlea, Eating Disorders Network



Down District Council Chairman, Councillor Colin McGrath and Chief Executive, Mr John McGrillen join staff from the Building Control and Tourism sections to celebrate their Charter Mark success.



Council staff Margaret Quinn and John Northrop receive awards for 25 years service from the Chairman and Chief Executive.



Councillor Jackie Crowe and Council Chairman at the launch of the award winning Sustain and Build website.



The 2008 Dermot Curran Young Achiever Award was presented to Christopher Clarke of AJC Electrical, Newcastle. Also pictured are winners from the Assumption Grammar School, SERC and Down Business Centre.



Down County Museum received two commendations at the Museum of the Year Awards 2008 - 2009.

Quality Improvement for Leisure

Down District Council's four main Leisure Centres have continued to make improvements on their assessment scores for 'Quest'. This comprehensive recognised national award for the management of leisure facilities is now integral to the delivery of Down District Council's leisure services to over 700,000 users per annum.

Best Kept Small Town

Newcastle clinched the title of 'Best Kept' Small Town in the annual Best Kept Awards organised by the Northern Ireland Amenity Council. Newcastle will proceed to the all-Ireland competition organised jointly by the Northern Ireland Amenity Council and the Department of the Environment, Dublin which aims to encourage communities north and south of the border to improve and sustain their local environments.

Staff Awards

On Friday 29 May 2009, Down District Council's Chairman, Councillor Colin McGrath presented awards to Council staff.

Three members of staff received an award for having completed 25 years service with Down District Council, and 121 awards were presented to staff who have not had a day absent from work during the past year.



Down District Council Chairman presents Awards to local press photographers. Also pictured is Ms Veronica Keegan, Marketing Manager.

Double Commendation for Down County Museum

Down County Museum scooped two commendations at the Museum of the Year Awards for 2008-2009 in Dublin. The Awards were organised to highlight and celebrate the achievements of museums and their staff. Down County Museum was highly commended in the categories of Best Exhibition for its 'Down Through Time' exhibition, and Best Local Authority Museum.

The award recognised the high standard of the 'Down Through Time' exhibition, opened by Time Team's Tony Robinson in October 2006. Museum visitors have enjoyed exploring the new galleries and their 1,100 objects, dating from 7000 BC to the present day.

The award in the 'Best Local Authority Museum' category placed Down County Museum second in Ireland, acknowledging the range of services provided by the Museum to local people, schools and tourists.

Press Photographers Awards

Down District Council's annual Press Photographers Awards were presented at a lunch-time reception on Friday 12 June 2009.

The Press Photographers competition recognises and rewards the outstanding work of Down district's press photographers.

Congratulating the winners of the heavily contested Awards, Down District Council's Chairman, Councillor Colin McGrath, paid tribute to the photographers for their substantial contribution to local news.

Environmental Management Scheme

Down District Council Grounds Maintenance section joined Environmental Health and Environmental Services in achieving ISO 14001.

ISO 14001 is an Environmental Management Scheme designed to address the delicate balance between maintaining services and reducing environmental impact. The Environment is defined as 'surroundings in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans and their interrelations'.

Sustainability Website a Winner

The environmental multimedia website 'sustainandbuild.com' which was developed by Down District Council in conjunction with partner Councils in the East Border Region, received a number of key awards including the NILGA President's Award for Sustainability and was highly commended in the National ASPE Awards for 2009.

The website was praised for being 'truly innovative and making use of modern multimedia features to provide independent advice on energy conservation, best practice construction and sustainable energy sources'. It facilitates development, in a sustainable manner by promoting cross-border working and brings together information from all the key agencies involved in construction into one place, to protect and enhance the unique character of our district.

Charter Mark Success

Down District Council's Building Control department and Tourist Information Centres in both Newcastle and Downpatrick celebrated their success in retaining the coveted excellence award, Charter Mark.

Working in Partnership

£4 Million Ballymote Scheme Gets Green Light

Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie announced a multi-million pound scheme to extend the Ballymote Centre in Downpatrick. The centre, based in the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Area, first opened in 1994 and currently comprises a community hall, office space, a supermarket, and other retail outlets. The new scheme will provide much needed additional commercial and community facilities and will include a separate multi-use sports hall, with specific provision for young people, at an overall cost of almost £4 million.

The project is made possible by successful partnership working between Down District Council, the Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, Down Lisburn Trust, Sport NI, International Fund for Ireland, East Down Rural Community Network, Ballymote Community Project Ltd, the Flying Horse Community Forum and the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership.

The scheme, which commenced in August 2009, is due for completion within three years.

Peace III

Down District Council worked with Ards and North Down Councils in submitting a Peace and Reconciliation Plan to the Special European Programmes Body. The plan was developed using the underpinning principles of community planning: participation; openness; shared ownership; representation and mutual respect.

Newcastle Shop Front Improvement Scheme

Down District Council delivered a shop front improvement scheme in Newcastle with Interreg III funding from the East Border Region Tourism Partnership. A design guide was produced indicating appropriate frontages and 50% grants were made available to property owners. 30 shops carried out refurbishment schemes representing an investment of approximately £500,000.

Community and Health Development

Down District Council delivered the final year of its District Health Improvement Plan, which was based on the Investing for Health Strategy. An important activity included a partnership with the Health Sector and the Department for Social Development to provide funding to employ three Community and Health Development Workers. The workers have engaged with the local community to identify their health and social needs so that appropriate programmes can be developed to meet these needs.

The project covers the areas of:

- Greater Newcastle including Castlewella, Dundrum, Clough and Aughlishnafin
- Greater Ballynahinch including Crossgar, Killyleagh, Drumaness and Spa
- Greater Downpatrick including Ardglass, Killough and Strangford



Council Chairman is joined by students from Down High School, Blackwater Integrated College, St Malachy's High School and Assumption Grammar School to experience a day in the life of a Councillor.

Release of Red Kites

Down District Council, in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has part funded the release of 27 Red Kite birds through the Landfill Tax Credit Grants Scheme. The Northern Ireland Red Kite is the first species to be reintroduced as part of an all Ireland project to bring these birds back to our shores following a 200 year absence. Project partners include the Welsh Kite Trust, The Golden Eagle Trust, Forest Service and the RSPB.

Community Relations and Development

Awareness of community relations issues was raised amongst voluntary, community, business and statutory organisations through liaison with a wide range of representatives.

To mark Community Relations Week, Down District Council hosted a talk entitled 'Dealing with the Past' by Ruth Moore of Healing Through Remembering.

A total of 72 grants amounting to £90,742 were provided to 42 community and voluntary organisations via the Community Grant Scheme and 23 grants, amounting to £5,303 were provided to 20 community and voluntary organisations through the Community Relations Grant Scheme.

Language Links

Down District Council worked with Lecale Gaelic Society to deliver a Language Links Event which encouraged people to find out more about the Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Polish languages. Events included language taster sessions, music sessions, a display of art and a ceilidh.

Ballyhornan Community Centre Official Opening

On Friday 28 November 2008 local people in Ballyhornan celebrated the official opening of their new Community Centre.

The centre consists of a modern meeting and training room, kitchen, large multi-purpose hall and toilet facilities and is the result of the good work of the Ballyhornan Steering Group established in 2004. The group worked in partnership with the Council, Ballyhornan and District Community Association, Department for Social Development, Rural Development Council, International Fund for Ireland, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, East Down Rural Community Network and the Down District Local Strategy Partnership to regenerate the rural area and facilitate its social and economic development.

Anti-Racist Workplace Week

This annual event was supported by Down District Council through the provision of funding for the Down District Home Accident Prevention Group to undertake a one day programme of Diversity Training.



Marian Park Playground Opening.



Opening of the Eclipse Cinemas in Downpatrick.

Inter-Estates Community Programme Launched

Down District Council supported the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Inter-Estates Community programme which was officially launched on 12 June 2008. The programme is designed to stimulate and support community activity in the neighbourhood renewal area. As well as general community activity, it includes a range of arts activities, murals, photography, creative writing and music making.

The Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal area includes the Flying Horse, Model Farm and New Model Farm estates, Kennedy Square, Meadowlands, Marian Park, Bridge Street, Mount Crescent and the town centre links between these areas.

Christmas in Castlewellan

A cultural concert entitled 'Celebrating Christmas Together' was organised in partnership with Castlewellan Regeneration Committee and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.

The event featured music and carols from different traditions performed by local groups. A selection of light music and Christmas carols were played by the Castlewellan Accordion Orchestra, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Annsborough Pipe Band with carols being sung in Polish, Irish and English.

Young People Take Over the Council Chamber

20 students from four schools in Down district, Down High School, Blackwater Integrated College, St Malachy's High School and Assumption Grammar School were invited by Down District Council Chairman, Councillor Colin McGrath to experience a day in the life of a councillor.

The Chairman's initiative aimed to encourage young people to become involved in local politics, democracy and citizenship, and included a meeting in the Council Chamber chaired by Councillor McGrath. The Chairman explained the format and procedures followed during Council meetings, and students took the opportunity to discuss and take decisions on a range of topical matters.

Play for All

Down District Council in conjunction with Barnardo's, Down Lisburn Trust, and Belfast City Council supported the Play for All project which aims to create inclusive recreational opportunities all year round for children and young people with a disability who wish to participate in sport, drama, walking, art and music.

Down District Council:

- Recruited support play leaders to assist over 50 children and young people with a disability to participate in the Council's Soccer Funweeks, Arts Centre Summer School and Leisure Services Summer Schemes.
- Provided training to play leaders covering community relations and equality, disability awareness, disability inclusion, autism, managing challenging behaviour, child protection and inclusive play.



CCTV Monitoring Station for Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle

Community Safety

Down District Council Community Safety Partnership activity included:

- Providing the small grants programme to organisations to promote community safety initiatives.
- Provision of annual running costs to Community Safety Forums.
- Continued support for NI Fire and Rescue Service LIFE Scheme.
- Continued support for the Good Morning Down project.
- Introduction of the Down Secured Project.
- Continuation of the HandyVan Scheme.
- Adoption and upgrade of the town centre CCTV system in Ballynahinch and linked to existing systems in Downpatrick and Newcastle.
- July and Halloween Schools Bonfire Safety Competition.
- Supporting Women's Aid 'One Stop Shop' in Downpatrick.
- Supporting 'Safe and Well' programme for the elderly.
- Implementation of an action plan to tackle anti-social behaviour in Ballymote, Ballykinlar and Crossgar.
- Active encouragement of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, for which Down district continues to have the highest number in Northern Ireland.
- Acquisition of additional funding to develop a Bonfire Beacon Scheme in Down district.
- A successful Anti-Drink Spiking Scheme in bars and clubs throughout Down district.
- A research programme with young people in conjunction with the Down Youth Advisory Committee.
- Summer and Halloween Splash programmes encouraging young people to take pride in their own local communities.
- Worked in conjunction with the District Policing Partnership to develop stronger links with the local PSNI.

Mourne Activity Challenge for Youth

Down District Council, in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Ards Borough Council, delivered the Mourne Activity Challenge for Youth. The programme, which was undertaken by eight post primary schools and 144 young people from the Down district and Ards areas, involved a series of challenge activities and discussions.

Play Provision

Funding was secured from the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership for new play provision in Marian Park and Bridge Street in Downpatrick.

Down District Policing Partnership (DDPP)

Throughout the year the DDPP continued to monitor police performance against the Local Policing Plan, with overall crime in the district showing a decrease of 5.5%.

Public attendance at DDPP meetings grew by 59% over the year, highlighting the continued interest of local communities in policing issues, and identifying anti-social behaviour as one of the key issues for people in Down district.

Promoting the Area in Which We Live

St Patrick / Christian Heritage Signature Project

A successful application to the Comprehensive Spending Review resulted in an award of £5 million to the project, of which £3.5 million will be used to develop projects which will enhance the St Patrick / Christian Heritage Signature project. As part of the project the St Patrick's Trail has been sign posted and a site and interpretation audit of the 15 key sites along the trail has been undertaken.

Mournes Signature Project

£4 million was awarded from the Programme for Government to support Down District Council and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to work with private business and Mourne Heritage Trust to recognise and develop key projects to enhance visitor experience in the area.

Down Arts Centre

An application was made to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for the renovation and extension of Down Arts Centre which will cost in the region of £600,000. The proposed plans were submitted to the Planning Service.

Workshops and Exhibitions

A 'Personal Taste of Tuscany', the first major exhibition of the Newcastle born artist Shaw Harper attracted an audience of over 100.

A number of very successful one day workshops on jewellery batik, flower arranging and singing were held in Down Arts Centre.

A selection of new, established and emerging artists from Down district and beyond were invited to submit pieces of work for an exhibition entitled 'Selection Box'. The successful exhibition showcased 46 pieces of work from 20 artists and encompassed oil, watercolour, batik, willow, ceramic and bog oak wood carvings.

Soccer Funweeks

Down District Council's popular programme of Soccer Funweeks returned during July 2008, organised in partnership with the Irish Football Association. The programme saw 868 boys and girls aged from 5 to 14 years of age attend soccer coaching sessions held across the district in Saintfield, Crossgar, Killyleagh, Downpatrick, Castlewellsan, Ballykinlar, Dundrum and Newcastle.

Summer Scheme

Down District Council's Summer Scheme promotes cross-community co-operation and understanding among children from different backgrounds whilst providing healthy and diversionary recreational and social activities. A total of 3,850 children took part in the 2008 Summer Scheme held in Centres across Ballynahinch, Killyleagh, Downpatrick, Newcastle, Castlewellsan and Drumanness.



Soccer Funweek, Castlewellan.



The MacDonald Bros launch Christkindl Festivities in 2008.

Saturday Clubs

Over 20 disabled children aged 10 years and over benefited from Down District Council's Saturday Clubs held in Down County Museum and the Newcastle Centre. The clubs provided a setting where disabled children, who had not participated in any existing group or club, could have fun with their non-disabled siblings and friends by trying out new experiences in an inclusive group environment.

Active Communities

Down District Council started work on a new Sports NI initiative, Active Communities. The programme provides funding over five years and will be delivered across the new Council area of Down, Newry and Mourne.

Armagh Down Tourism

The strategy for Marine, Coast and Water Sports Development was completed and a portfolio of customer orientated literature produced to promote Down district.

Velodrome

Down District Council continued to promote the district as the area of choice for the proposed new Velodrome, a world class All Ireland cycling facility.

St Patrick's Festival and Carnival Parade

Over 50 cross community and cultural events ensured the continued success of Down district's annual St Patrick's Festival with talks, exhibitions, church services, concerts, comedies and ceilis entertaining the thousands who attended.

Visitors to Down County Museum, Down Arts Centre, The Saint Patrick Centre and the Downpatrick and County Down Railway enjoyed Ulster Scots music, Irish traditional and folk music, Irish dancing, exhibitions, storytelling, crafts and circus style entertainment. The parade itself showcased 69 entrants and 1,500 people.

Christkindl

St Patrick's Square was full to bursting for Downpatrick's 2008 Christmas Lights Switch On, a highlight of Down District Council's Christkindl Festival. Radio Ulster's John Toal guided the packed audience through the night's proceedings as they were treated first to a combination of traditional and contemporary Christmas songs performed by local schoolchildren from Cumran Primary School, Bunscoil Naomh Pdraig and St Patrick's Grammar School, followed by the dramatic arrival of Santa on board a fire tender, complete with flashing lights and siren!

As Santa made his way through the crowd, the MacDonald Bros took to the stage amidst the roars and screams of an appreciative audience, who immediately began clapping and singing along to some well known favourites including 'Shang A Lang' and '500 Miles'. The brothers were then joined on stage by Councillor Colin McGrath, Chair of Down District Council, John Toal and Santa for the lighting ceremony providing a fitting end to another successful Christkindl event.



Brian and Eithne Vallely receive the 2008 Celtic Fusion Contribution to Traditional Culture Award.



St Patrick's Festival 2009.



Radio Ulster's Alan Simpson gets into the festive spirit during the 2008 Halloween Festival.

Celtic Fusion

The seventh annual Celtic Fusion Festival drew to a close following eight days of the most incredible mix of traditional and contemporary Celtic music.

The stellar musicians of Moving Hearts provided a phenomenal opening to the festival at the Slieve Donard Resort and Spa, Newcastle in July, supported by the captivating Cara Dillon. A string of performances from world-class musicians followed throughout the week, including North, Session A9, Marian Bradfield, Thom Moore, Michael McGoldrick, Karan Casey, The Vallely Brothers and the legendary Hothouse Flowers to name but a few.

A programme of sessions also took place in Savage's Bar and King's Inn during the festival, bringing talented young musicians together with seasoned session musicians to create a musical feast for all to enjoy.

Brian and Eithne Vallely, leading lights in the world of Irish traditional music, were presented with the coveted Celtic Fusion Contribution to Traditional Culture Award.

Newcastle Summer Season

The Newcastle summer season attracted record numbers of people with 2,000 tickets sold for evening performances and over 1,000 spectators and participants attending the daytime sketching, drumming and dancing classes.

J&W McCall Supplies of Clough was the title sponsor for 2008, providing holiday entertainment to the community. A family fun day was held featuring local performers at the McCall premises in Clough which received funding from Arts and Business. The event was also short-listed for the annual Allianz Arts and Business awards in the category of Arts, Business and Employees.

Hallowtides

Newcastle once again hosted Down District Council's Hallowtides Festival which was organised in conjunction with Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, and offered over 30 events featuring live music, theatre, storytelling, comedy, street entertainment, dance and magic.

The festival was a phenomenal success, with event after event drawing large numbers into Newcastle and surrounding towns in the district. The festival opened with Dracula: The Panto and the Lost Trains to Newcastle Slideshow on Wednesday 29 October, followed by the Search For A Star Live Final on Thursday 30 October. 25 young hopefuls made it through auditions and excitedly took to the stage to amaze and astound the sold-out audience. Such was the diversity and quality of each act, that the judges found it an almost impossible job to choose the winners.

Halloween night saw thousands descend on Newcastle's promenade for the Hallowtides 'Spooky Seaside Shindig'. Visitors and locals alike got into the spirit of Halloween by dressing up in their most weird and wonderful costumes.

The huge crowd could be seen bouncing and swaying to the fabulous sounds coming from the festival stage courtesy of the Whole Hog and Abba Re-Bjorn. Radio Ulster's Alan Simpson added a comedy element to the evening, and had the crowd performing the 'Newcastle Wave' on numerous occasions, rippling through the masses of people from the Cone of Light right back to the Tropicana. Fox Bats, Ice and Fire Dragons, Helter Skelter Ladies and Rainbow Fairies were just some of the characters that could be found towering on stilts above the crowds singing and dancing along to the sounds of the seventies. The evening was rounded off with a fantastic fireworks display, lighting up the Mountains and high tide.

Protecting the Public and our Environment

Enforcement

Enforcement Officers based within the Environmental Health Section proactively addressed the issue of anti-social behaviour. Working in partnership with statutory partners and community organisations a number of successful initiatives took place, including the Flying Horse and Dunwellan Action Plans.

Enforcement Officers were involved in ASCERT's 'Proof 18' campaign against under-age drinking by carrying out compliance checks at licensed premises.

Environmental Health employed three Seasonal Enforcement Officers who were based in the Newcastle area during the summer tourist season. The Officers concentrated on littering, dog fouling and consumption of alcohol in public places, conducting high visibility foot patrols of the Promenade, main streets and car parks of the town. The Officers contributed to Down District Council's aim of ensuring the district remains a pleasant and safe place to live and visit.

Food Control

A number of food incidents were notified to Down District Council throughout the year via the government's system of national food alerts. Environmental Health Officers were involved in ensuring that foodstuffs potentially affected by these alerts were promptly removed from sale to ensure public safety.

Officers continued to inspect food premises and to take samples of food to ensure the safety and hygiene of foodstuffs produced by businesses within the district.

Smoke-Free Legislation

Down District Council Tobacco Control Officers continued to carry out daytime, evening and night time inspections in premises for which smoke free legislation applies. Of 961 visits carried out, over 97% of premises were found to be compliant.

In September 2008 the legislation controlling the sale of tobacco products was amended to increase the minimum legal age of persons to which retailers may sell tobacco products to 18 years. In support of local retailers to comply with the law Council Officers carried out a campaign of awareness, visiting every tobacco sales premises and providing information and guidance on the changes in legislation. Officers conducted test purchases to check on compliance with the new requirements of the legislation. Four breaches of the legislation were detected during this initiative on which Council took appropriate legal action.



Home Accident Prevention Advice Information Day.



Enforcement Officers encourage responsible dog ownership.

Health and Safety

Down District Council Environmental Health Officers delivered a number of special Health and Safety initiatives with local businesses. Gas safety in catering premises continued to be a priority whilst the topic of slips, trips and falls in catering establishments was also addressed.

Down District Council endorsed a Joint Statement of Intent and Strategic Framework for Partnership Working drawn up by the Chief Environmental Health Officers Group (CEHOG) and the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HESNI) which is aimed at making the best use of collective resources and respective strengths to raise workplace health and safety standards and improve the overall economic and social well-being of the community.

Pollution Control

Noise nuisance continued to be a significant issue for ratepayers; 315 noise complaints were investigated, an increase of some 15% on the previous year. The majority of complaints were in respect of domestic noise and barking dogs.

Air pollution, primarily from traffic sources, continues to be monitored throughout the district's main urban centres. Premises permitted under the Pollution Prevention Control Regulations are required to ensure that their emissions are not detrimental to the local air quality.

Dog Control

The Schools Education Programme, 'Responsible Dog Ownership' continued to be well received. Delivered by the Council's District Warden, the initiative proved very popular with both teaching staff and pupils alike. Talks were delivered in eight schools and at a two day "Bee Safe" event, organised by the PSNI.

District Wardens followed up on over 700 stray dog complaints and the dog warden service investigated 71 reported attacks on people and 17 attacks on other animals. The Council received or detected 177 complaints of dog fouling and 906 proactive patrols were carried out in 'problem' areas.

Home Accident Prevention and Consumer Protection

Environmental Health was proactive in this field and chaired the Home Accident Prevention Group, a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies with the common aim of securing greater home safety. Advice stands were provided and staffed in two major supermarkets, at the BEE Safe event and at Saintfield Livestock Mart where members of the public received advice and literature on reducing home accidents. A Christmas Safety press release was issued with the aim of assisting families to have a safe holiday celebration and an advice stand provided at the switching on of the lights in Downpatrick.

A range of age-groups were targeted with fireworks safety talks delivered to three schools, presentations at three over 65's events and a garden safety event. An Officer from the Eastern Group was involved in the running of two summer schemes.



Pupils from Holy Family Primary School visit the arc21 education vehicle. Also pictured are Noel Lyons from arc21 and Down District Council's Environmental Services Officer Colette O'Rourke.



Council Chairman Colin McGrath pictured with winners of the Yellow Woods Recycling Competition, Downpatrick Nursery School, Ballynahinch Primary School, and Castlewella Primary School.

Waste Education Vehicle

The arc21 promotional vehicle facilitated direct contact with householders at roadshows held in shopping areas and at local events, explaining issues regarding the waste and recycling service.

The education vehicle was also used to promote recycling to more than half of all schools in Down district.

Commitment to Renewable Energy

Down District Council engaged a local renewable energy company, B9 Organic Energy Ltd, to generate and sell electricity produced through the utilisation of landfill gas being generated in the landfill site at Drumanakelly, Seaforde.

The electricity produced should be equivalent to that required for the domestic needs of a large village the size of Castlewella for up to 20 years with benefits for the Council and local ratepayers which include savings in the cost of landfill gas management, an annual royalty from the sale of electricity and the bonus of a substantial contribution to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Bann Road Household Recycling Centre

The Bann Road Household Recycling Centre, Castlewella has seen a marked increase in its numbers of users as it has become established. The purpose-built centre is bigger than alternative Household Recycling Centres within the district, and allows a greater range of materials to be recycled.

Plastic bottles, household batteries, car batteries, fluorescent tubes, ink cartridges, mobile phones, paint, tetra pak, cardboard, paper, cans/foil, wood, fridge/freezers, scrap metal, textiles, electrical goods, glass, spectacles, garden waste, cooking and engine oil can now all be recycled.

Recycling Bin Awareness

Down District Council introduced a 'door-step' campaign, to promote waste awareness and reduce contamination in blue recycling bins. Officers called to households and discussed recycling issues to positively promote recycling and the reduction of waste. Six problem areas within the district were targeted, resulting in a marked reduction in contaminated waste.

Yellow Pages Recycling Competition

13 local schools took part in the final year of this popular schools recycling competition. Over the years local schools have recycled thousands of yellow pages, and benefited from around £10,000 in prize money.

Environmental Youth Speak

School children from across Down district excelled as they linked waste created in their own homes, to the wider environment. They took part in 'Environmental Youth Speak', a public speaking competition supported through the partnership of Down, Ards, and North Down Councils. The competition encouraged environmental awareness among young people by giving them the opportunity to research and debate environmental issues.

Both primary and post primary children from across the district took part, with successful pupils going on to compete against regional finalists from all over Northern Ireland.



Launch of the Residents Flood Guide by Council Chairman, Councillor Colin McGrath and Ms Veronica Keegan, Marketing Manager .

Environmental Education Programme

The Environmental Education Programme delivered a number of environmental themes. School presentations were tailored to cover the national curriculum whilst promoting good practice such as utilising all recycling facilities and reducing waste.

During the year there was an increase in interest from adult groups ranging from Women's Institutes to pensioners' groups.

Energy Ratings

Down District Council has undertaken energy efficiency audits of all its key buildings. These are an important first step in a programme of improving the efficiency of Council facilities. The audits highlighted examples of good practice and identified steps which can be taken to improve the energy efficiency, not only of the built fabric, but also of the building services. When implemented, the improvements will reduce the amount of fossil fuel being consumed, the cost of heating Council buildings and the amount of carbon being emitted into the environment. The Council's main buildings each display Energy Ratings.

Launch of Flood Guide for Residents

'A wash out' is the term that comes to mind when we think of the summer of 2008. The summer floods in August 2008 brought to light how susceptible communities in Down district, and indeed across the province are to flooding.

Much of the flooding came not from what we would regard as 'a traditional flood' from rivers or the sea. Rather, huge volumes of water simply overpowered the surface water drainage systems of our towns and villages. The intensity and sheer amount of rain created a huge amount of run off and road gullies, sewers and drainage ditches were soon overwhelmed.

Following the dramatic events across the district last summer which were caused by extreme weather, Down District Council published 'A Resident's Flood Guide' in June 2009, to provide information which will help protect people and property in times of flooding.

The publication was delivered to over 2,500 homes in the district which were exposed to, or were at risk of flooding in August 2008. Copies are also available to any resident living in the Down District Council area by telephoning 028 4461 0853 or by email to marketing@downdc.gov.uk. The publication may also be downloaded from the Down District Council website at www.downdc.gov.uk

Renewable Energy Project

Down District Council has lodged an application for INTERREG IVA funding, for a new and innovative sustainability project consisting of six Exemplar projects. The Exemplar projects will see existing public buildings converted and upgraded, providing sustainability visitor experiences. Members of the public and local businesses can visit and see the effectiveness of the various methods.

Down District Under Construction

A number of flagship projects were completed across the district during 2008 - 2009, including the multi-million pound redevelopment of the Assumption Grammar School in Ballynahinch, the Downpatrick Cinemas complex, Phase I of the new Further Education College in Downpatrick and the new Downe Hospital.

Council Building Control received almost 1,000 applications for building projects; this represented a 17% drop from the previous year reflecting the current downturn in the construction industry. The average time for processing applications was 18 days.

The value of construction activity commencing within the district within the year exceeded £63 million. Of this, 314 new dwellings were commenced, a significant drop in domestic starts from the previous year where 666 new dwelling units were commenced.

In order to ensure these projects met the standards of safety and public protection to the environment over 6,800 inspections were carried out.

Dangerous Buildings

Building Control Surveyors continued to undertake a comprehensive 'winter' survey of the district to ensure that buildings fronting onto public areas were safe and the owners remained vigilant. In some cases, where the owners failed to act, Down District Council found it necessary to carry out emergency repairs and demolitions in order to safeguard the public.

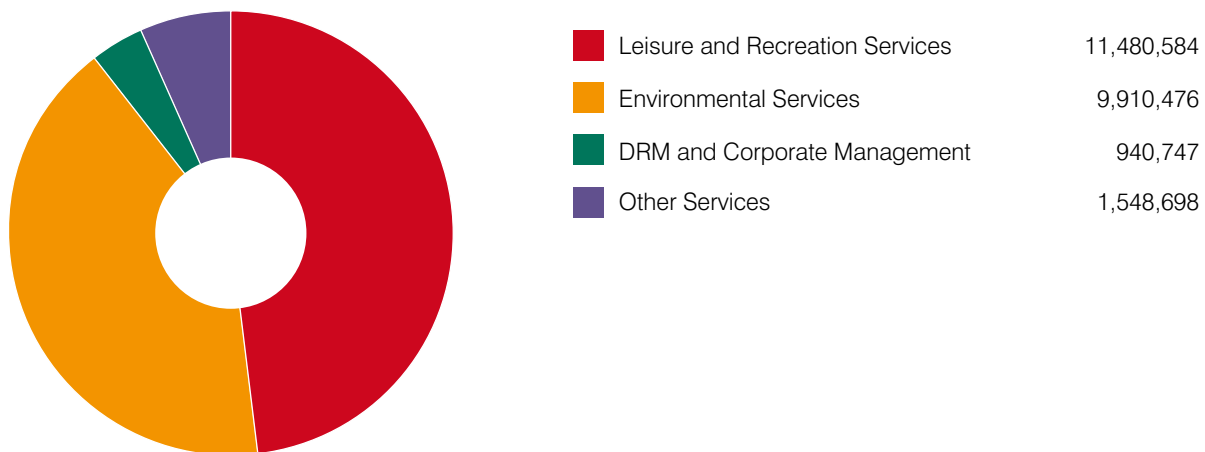
Safety of Public Entertainment Venues

To ensure the safety of the public, premises requesting an entertainments licence were visited by Council Building Control Surveyors. Premises were checked for safety in the event of a fire occurring, and that all the necessary precautions had been taken. These include an operational fire alarm system, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, fire doors and that correct management systems are in place.

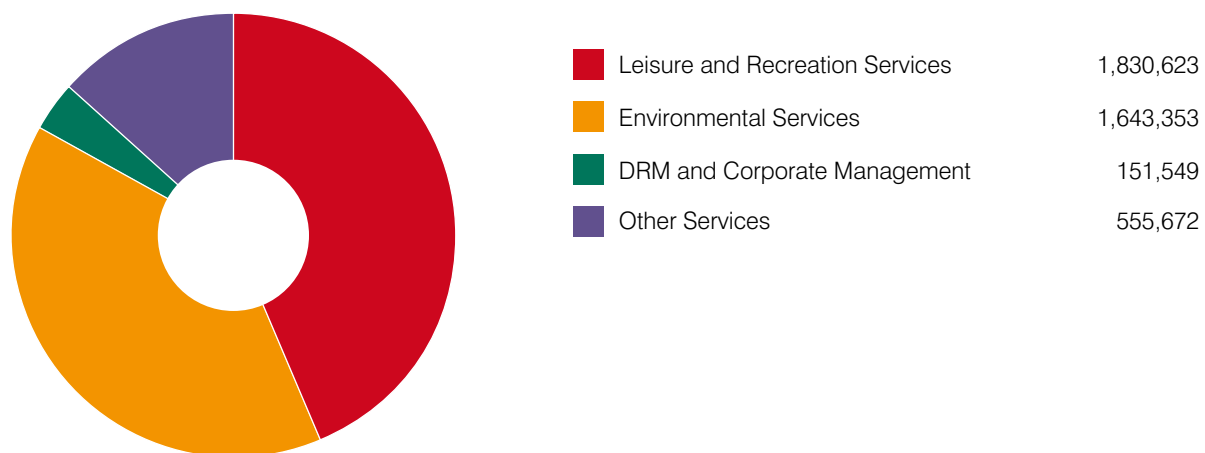
Where the Money Goes

	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
Leisure and Recreation Services			
Culture and Heritage	1,416,270	133,646	1,282,624
Recreation and Sport	6,186,675	1,224,922	4,961,753
Tourism	3,153,845	253,640	2,900,205
Community Services	723,794	218,415	505,379
Sub Total	11,480,584	1,830,623	9,649,961
Environmental Services			
Cemetery, Cremation and Mortuary	188,242	14,089	174,153
Environmental Health	1,151,899	58,435	1,093,464
Public Conveniences	300,552	163	300,389
Licensing	66,059	17,933	48,126
Other Cleaning	1,356,437	231,135	1,125,302
Waste Collection	2,734,661	503,731	2,230,930
Waste Disposal	3,185,901	304,412	2,881,489
Building Control	776,302	460,942	315,360
Minor Works	150,423	52,513	97,910
Sub Total	9,910,476	1,643,353	8,267,123
DRM and Corporate Management			
Democratic Representation and Management	687,424	3,679	683,745
Corporate Management	253,323	147,870	105,453
Sub Total	940,747	151,549	789,198
Other Services			
Trading Services	255,054	25,285	229,769
Economic Development	522,074	160,659	361,413
Non-Distributed Costs	62,143		62,143
Central Services to the Public	709,427	369,726	339,701
Sub Total	1,548,698	555,672	993,026
Net Cost of Services	23,880,505	4,181,197	19,699,308

Gross Expenditure £000's



Income £000's





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