

Causeway Coast and Glens Region

Growth Deal

Heads of Terms

*UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive and
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council*

April 2024



HM Government



Northern Ireland
Executive



Grow Causeway
Coast & Glens
Commission | Development | Innovation



Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council

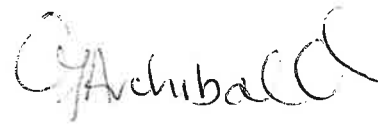
Our signing of this document confirms our joint commitment to achieve full implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal.
All signatories below acknowledge that this document is not intended to be legally binding.

Signature



**The Lord Caine
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Northern Ireland on behalf of the UK
Government**

Signature



**Caoimhe Archibald MLA
Minister for Finance
on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive**

Signature



**David Jackson
Chief Executive
on behalf of Causeway Coast and Glens
Borough Council**

Signature



**Steven Callaghan
Mayor
on behalf of Causeway Coast and Glens
Borough Council**

Introduction

1. This Heads of Terms Document is an agreement between the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, together with its project delivery partners.
2. It sets out a commitment to a Growth Deal to deliver on a suite of integrated and complementary catalyst projects in the areas of Tourism and Regeneration, Digital and Innovation and Infrastructure, all of which are derived from and contribute to the objectives of the region's strategic plans. It is underpinned by a cross-cutting commitment by the delivery partners to leverage the opportunity of the investment to further job creation, skills and employability and to develop and deliver the projects inclusively and sustainably.
3. The investment package in the region £100 million comprises a funding commitment by the UK Government of £36 million and £36 million match funding by the Northern Ireland Executive; plus a contribution in the region of £25 million by Causeway and Coast Glens Borough Council and project delivery partners (Ulster University, North West Regional College, Glenshane Community Development Limited, Grow the Glens CIC, Causeway Enterprise Agency and the Bushmills Trust).
4. The Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal will boost the economic potential of the region and support a more prosperous, united community and sustainable society. Investment will be prioritised to support the region's priority growth sectors and seeks to deliver the greatest economic impact, as well as helping to deliver on the shared visions of regional economic development and inclusive growth.
5. Sustainability and inclusivity will be key elements underpinning these transformative projects. The Causeway Coast and Glens delivery partners will work with Government to enable economic, social and environmental wellbeing in the implementation of the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal.
6. This is a truly exciting era for this region. The substantial £100 million investment provides an opportunity to boost the local economy and deliver change for the people of Northern Ireland and specifically, the Causeway Coast and Glens Region. The UK Government, the Executive, local council and stakeholders will continue to work together to deliver on this substantial investment.
7. This "Heads of Terms" document defines the broad activities that the Government funding hopes to support, subject to Government approval of business cases that confirm these activities are viable, value for money, sustainable and compliant with subsidy control¹ principles to the satisfaction of both the UK Government and the Department of Finance on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. This document is not intended to be legally binding, nor does it provide any legally enforceable commitment to provide future funding.

Causeway Coast and Glens Region

8. Causeway Coast and Glens stretches from Lough Foyle in the west to the Glens of Antrim in the east covering an area of 1,968 square kilometres. The area spans from Rathlin Island

¹ All subsidies provided by public authorities in Northern Ireland must comply either with the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 or the EU State Aid rules, if the beneficiaries are enterprises that fall within the scope of the Windsor Framework. Subsidies must also comply with the UK's commitments on subsidies in international trade agreements, including the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

in the north to the Sperrin Mountains in the south. This makes Causeway Coast and Glens one of the largest Councils in Northern Ireland in terms of land mass.

9. The area is comprised of 40 wards and the seven District Electoral Areas of Bann, Ballymoney, Benbradagh, Causeway, Coleraine, Limavady and The Glens. The Borough contains the main town hubs of Coleraine and Limavady and the local town hubs of Ballycastle and Ballymoney.
10. The area's population in 2021 was estimated at 141,700 (7.4% of Northern Ireland's population). Between 2001 and 2021, the population of the Borough increased by 10,326 persons, a growth rate of 7.3% which is below the Northern Ireland average of 12.9%.
11. Life expectancy at birth for both females and males within the Borough are above the Northern Ireland average at 83 and 79 respectively. Out of the 11 measures available for Causeway Coast and Glens, four were better than the median (life satisfaction, feeling life is worthwhile, happiness and low levels of anxiety).
12. Peak pre-pandemic visitor numbers were achieved in 2018, when a total of 2,538,877 visits to visitor attractions in the Causeway Coast and Glens area occurred. The most popular visitor attractions were the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site (1,039,243) followed by Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (491,947) and Roe Valley Country Park (310,000).
13. The Council area also offers Northern Ireland's only World Heritage Site, 31 historic parks and gardens, 15 national nature reserves and four outstanding areas of natural beauty as well as a number of Blue Flag beaches.
14. These attractions are complimented by events and activities within the Borough which are internationally recognised, respected and supported:
 - The **North West 200** International Road Race which attracts over 100,000 spectators annually to the area;
 - The **British Open Golf Tournament** in 2019 hosted by Royal Portrush Golf Club with the Borough becoming a focal point for golf on the world stage and a return of the highly prestigious event again in 2025. An independent evaluation in 2020 confirmed a total economic benefit of £45 million and a destination marketing benefit of £61 million, giving a total economic benefit to Northern Ireland of £106 million; and
 - Northern Ireland's only **International Airshow** hosted bi-annually within the Borough.
15. The characteristics of the Borough's economy as provided by Invest Northern Ireland² are as follows:
 - In 2021, Causeway Coast and Glens contributed £31.75 Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked – up from £31.23 in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic (compared to the UK average of £38.33).
 - The area has a similar business demographic to the rest of Northern Ireland. It is a Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) driven economy, with 89.6% of businesses under 10 employees in 2022.
 - In 2022 there were a total of 6,280 registered companies in the CCGBC area, an increase of 8.6% from 2017 (5,760 registered companies).
 - In 2022, 69.9% of those aged 16-64 living in the Borough were economically active and 28.4% were economically inactive. This compares with 73.7% economically active and 32.3% economically inactive for Northern Ireland.

² Invest Northern Ireland Council Briefing August 2023 - <https://www.investni.com/sites/default/files/2023-01/investni-performance-council-area-causeway-coast-and-glens.pdf>

- In 2022, the 16-64 employment rate in the area was 67.6% (Northern Ireland rate = 71.9%).
- In 2022, the median annual earnings for residents of Causeway Coast and Glens was £24,825 compared with £26,182 for Northern Ireland, 5.3% lower.
- In terms of employment by sector, Public Admin, Education and Health (26.7%) was the largest in the area, followed by Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (18.9%) and Banking and Finance (11.3%).
- In 2020/2021, 52.9% of school leavers in the area left with 3 or more A-levels at grades A* - C or equivalent, 82.5% (female) and 73.1% (male) school leavers achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths (89% of all Northern Ireland students achieved at least grade C).
- DAERA Agricultural Census³ recorded 144,394 hectares of farmed land in the area in 2023 the region has 2,631 farms, representing 10.0% of the Northern Ireland total.
- The majority of land in the Borough is used for grazing rather than crops, with only 5.4% of farmland used for crops compared to 6.0% in Northern Ireland.
- Sheep farming is the dominant farming category, with 415,590 sheep farmed in 2023, 20.3% of all the sheep farmed in Northern Ireland, reflecting the extent of high land and rough grazing.

Challenges

16. Causeway Coast and Glens is primarily a rural Council area which presents several challenges including access to key transport links, educational underachievement, poor broadband connectivity, and access to healthcare.
17. An additional challenge facing this Council area is the inherited debt following the Review of Public Administration that resulted in four Council areas merging to form Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, currently the debt stands at £56.5 million. This level of borrowing is one of the highest per head of population in Northern Ireland and has been brought down from over £80 million by implementing a strict regime of only externally funded non-essential capital projects since 2016. This inhibits Councils ability to invest in large-scale capital projects that would accelerate economic prosperity in the area.
18. According to figures from Census 2021, there has been a noticeable shift in the local demographic trends. The most noticeable increase is in the number of 65 plus, with a 55.4% increase versus a 40.4% across Northern Ireland. In addition, the proportion of those aged 16-39 has decreased by 7.7% compared to 1.1% at a Northern Ireland wide level. These trends of an aging population impact on a range of issues including the availability of labour and consumption patterns in the area.
19. Causeway Coast and Glens suffered a 15% reduction in export sales, with sales of £394 million in 2019 down to £335 million in 2022.⁴
20. Causeway Coast and Glens had the highest resident unemployment rate in 2023 at 3.1% compared with Northern Ireland average of 2.9%.

³ DAERA Agricultural Census 2023 - <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/agricultural-census-northern-ireland-2023>

⁴ Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Economic Development Strategy 'Recovery and Renewal' - https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Causeway_Coast_and_Glens_Socio_Economic_Profile_2020.pdf

21. Approximately, 14% of the residents in Causeway Coast and Glens have no or low levels (max. Level 2) of educational attainment². This results in a skills gap in the available workforce, to meet the demands of high-skilled jobs anticipated as a direct result of the Growth Deal investment.
22. Causeway Coast and Glens is ranked fifth out of the 11 Councils when it comes to early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (2019-2021)², meaning that as a Borough, we are not excelling in providing job opportunities, increasing our competitiveness and productivity, developing innovative technologies or adding to the overall national income.
23. In 2020, Causeway Coast and Glens productivity was 4% lower than the Northern Ireland average².
24. Causeway Coast and Glens accounts for 8% of all businesses in Northern Ireland (2022) but 98% are either micro (91%) or small (7%) and only 0.2% of businesses employ over 250 people². Only 7% of companies in Causeway Coast and Glens achieved a turnover greater than £500,00 in 2022 with the region ranked ninth out of the 11 Northern Ireland Councils for the amount of business support received from Invest Northern Ireland (229 businesses).
25. Multiple deprivation, rural isolation, unemployment, crime, low wages and sectarianism are all evident across the Borough. The most deprived wards are primarily concentrated around the main settlements of Coleraine, Limavady and Ballycastle
26. As of 2022, the median annual earnings based on people living in the area was £24,825 compared with the Northern Ireland average of £26,182².
27. The house price to earnings ratio measures house prices in relation to median annual wage. An increase in the ratio indicates reduced affordability. Causeway Coast and Glens remains Northern Ireland's least affordable area with the highest house price to earnings ratio in Northern Ireland⁵. This is again reflective of the low wages realised in agriculture and hospitality which are the primary employment areas in the Borough.
28. In short, Causeway Coast and Glens has an ageing demographic, low levels of educational attainment and a higher proportion of smaller businesses which do not pay as well.
29. The proposed Growth Deal projects will help to deliver a fundamental change to the region's competitive importance, in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. This will be achieved through the investment in high-value innovation projects and regeneration and infrastructure projects that will attract visitors to new areas of the Borough, encourage longer stays and create opportunities for more economic activity. This reflects the DfE Minister's recent comments about achieving regional economic balance⁶.

Project Proposals

30. The following objectives have been set for Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal:
 - Position Causeway Coast and Glens as the 'go-to' region for business and pleasure;

⁵ Ulster University Economic Policy Centre – Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Economic Outlook Spring 2023 -

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Causeway_Coast_Glens_Borough_Council_pdf.pdf

⁶ C Murphy, MLA Ministerial Statement on 19th February 2024 -

<https://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-19-02-2024.pdf>

- Regenerate some of the area's smaller settlements into thriving and sustainable rural economies;
 - Attract, support and grow more business, with a focus on export;
 - Improve key elements of the tourism transport network and tourism destinations; and
 - Work with education and employers to improve employability and skills.
31. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has agreed nine projects for inclusion within this Heads of Terms agreement with Government. These nine projects span three pillars:
- Digital and Innovation (increasing '**Innovation**');
 - Tourism and Regeneration (improving the '**Destination**'); and
 - Infrastructure (more '**Connection**' of economic opportunity across the Borough).
32. The project proposals have the potential to deliver additional jobs, increase GVA, drive growth in output and wages and provide a population magnet as further people are attracted to come to the region. These economic benefits will be quantified within the Outline Business Cases (OBCs) for the individual projects.
33. The Council's commitment to addressing the 'Climate Emergency' will be core to its Growth Deal through the implementation of its current policy that all new Council buildings and major refurbishments should target operational net zero.

Digital and Innovation (increasing '*Innovation*')

34. The three digital and innovation projects are aimed at supporting growth in sectors of industry and research where the Borough already has a strong track record or where market failure is evidenced in the Borough and/or Northern Ireland-wide. Innovation is not like most other business functions and activities, in short, innovation is anything but business as usual. Collectively these projects will provide the systematic approach which makes innovation within our local businesses a reality, not just a concept.

Project 1: Centre for Food and Drug Discovery at Ulster University Coleraine Project Promoter: Ulster University

35. The Centre for Food and Drug Discovery will be a Northern Ireland-based consortium, leveraging existing research excellence to provide a single-site, preclinical hub for the biopharmaceutical and food industry delivering capability, capacity and expertise at all key stages of the discovery pipeline. With expert scientists, strategic partners and state-of-the-art equipment, the centre will enable industry, academia, healthcare providers and regulators to work collaboratively in order to address global health challenges and maximise technology opportunities within the food, drug discovery and medicine supply chain. Supporting the growth of this sector in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough will release a unique economic opportunity.
36. In Northern Ireland alone, the biopharmaceutical industry employs 13,900 and adds £910 million to the UK economy⁷, reflecting its importance within the Northern Ireland Life Science sector. SMEs are key drivers of medicine innovation, holding two-thirds of the early-stage pipeline and increasingly progressing development of new drug candidates in-house rather than selling these assets to big pharma during clinical development. SMEs are heavily reliant on service providers and often outsource many steps in the drug discovery pipeline; from synthesis of an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API)/ drug, formulation and dosage, pre-clinical toxicology, clinical trials and regulatory support.

⁷ ABPI Northern Ireland - What is the value of the pharmaceutical industry to Northern Ireland?
<https://www.abpi.org.uk/about-the-abpi/abpi-northern-ireland/>

37. There is a clear need for a bespoke business solution which can address the common challenges across the biopharma and food industries, enabling a more agile adoption of innovative processes that reduce risk, cut costs and save time, leading to a healthier society and an improved economy.
38. The integration of these key strengths in this custom-designed venture will provide the platform for enhancing expertise in drug and food discovery, with tangible benefits for the Northern Ireland economy including increased prosperity, employment, innovation and sustained future development.

Project 2: Business Innovation and Incubation Hub at Atlantic Link Coleraine
Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

39. Consultation with key stakeholders across industry and academia indicate there is a general agreement that wet lab provision is an important service gap in terms of innovation. This view is consistent with the findings of a review of the enabling factors and technologies to support the Minister for the Economy's four priorities of:
 - a. Good jobs;
 - b. Regional balance;
 - c. Productivity; and
 - d. Reduction of carbon emissions.
40. Consultation with existing innovation hubs and Invest Northern Ireland identifies strong demand for these spaces, as many have been approached by local and international enterprises looking to locate research development facilities in Northern Ireland.
41. With consultation indicating a definite need for wet labs⁸ and food grade units, along with the food and health sectors as potential areas of growth, it is clear that the existing provision model is structured to create new entrepreneurs but lacks support for medium-term growth. It is the period, one to three years post business start-up, which is considered the critical time for SMEs to survive. The Growth Deal has identified these national needs and is promoting the development of a Business Innovation and Incubation Hub (BIIH) that will help satisfy some of the unmet demand for wet lab provision and food incubation space across Northern Ireland. By providing these facilities supported by tailored business mentoring and technical support through strategic partnerships at the Atlantic Link site, the Business Innovation and Incubation project will help support business growth and job creation.
42. The Atlantic Link site has emerged from an independent site options analysis as favoured site. There is also strong potential for significant synergies between this project, the proposed Centre for Drug Discovery.

Project 3: Innovation Hub at North West Regional College (NWRC) Limavady
Project Promoter: NWRC

43. Having considered a range of options the Council has agreed to work with NWRC to develop a project proposition (via an OBC to deliver 'innovative' business support at its Limavady campus. This is an approach that has already proven successful at the NWRC Campus at Strand Road in Derry-Londonderry with their 'Foodovation' offering and the new project will seek to replicate this approach to innovation, with outreach and potential benefits

⁸ A wet lab is a laboratory space designed to test chemicals, biological matter, and drugs. In other words, all experiments in a wet lab deal with liquid substances. Due to the nature of these types of experiments, wet lab equipment and design places a high priority on safety.

for the entire Borough.

Tourism and Regeneration (improving the 'Destination')

44. The Causeway Coast and Glens tourism destination extends from the Foyle Estuary at Greysteel, eastwards to the Glens of Antrim at Garron Point and south to the River Bann and River Roe Valleys. The region is Northern Ireland's most visited tourism destination outside Belfast and in 2019 the Borough attracted over 1 million overnight visitors, generating £192 million for the local economy.
45. Causeway Coast and Glens has an established and attractive offer that includes breathtaking natural beauty, rich heritage, unique culture, soft adventure activities, world class golf courses, stand-out attractions, a World Heritage Site and an emerging reputation for artisan food. Traversed by The Causeway Coastal Route, regarded as one of the world's best road journeys, the region offers experiences linked to its unique history, natural environment, and cultural heritage.
46. However, despite strong demand, the area suffers limits to the growth of tourism that result from a limited number of 'super attractions', poor road and parking infrastructure, limited availability/uptake of public transport and the attractiveness of some of our towns and villages. As a result of these inhibiting factors, there are areas in the Borough that have yet to feel the growth benefits that tourism can help realise. This leaves some local communities suffering the life inhibiting impacts of multiple deprivation.
47. Through the Growth Deal, there is a real opportunity to develop the visitor offering and build upon the successes already achieved. Aligning to the Department for the Economy's emerging Tourism Strategy⁹, we endeavour to foster a region where tourism and hospitality businesses thrive, our towns and villages regenerate, and visitors come throughout the year, stay longer and spend more.
48. There are five projects within the Tourism and Regeneration pillar:

Project 4: Bushmills Connected: Regeneration Project

Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Causeway Enterprise Agency.

49. Despite being the nearest settlement to the World Heritage Site at The Giant's Causeway, the Carrick a Rede Rope Bridge, the Dark Hedges, Dunluce Castle and many of the other tourist 'honey pots' of North Antrim, Bushmills has, as yet failed to realise its potential as an economic driver for the region.
50. The planning for the regeneration of the Bushmills has been an ongoing and iterative process. It commenced in 2015 with a public engagement process which sought to establish a vision for Bushmills and to identify a range of projects which could deliver on an agreed vision as set out in the Bushmills 2020 Village Plan¹⁰. However, up until the opportunity presented by the Growth Deal, there has never been funding available to begin the implementation of the agreed vision.
51. Taking advantage of the Growth Deal and using the Village Plan framework, it is anticipated that through investment in public realm and infrastructure improvements the project will:

⁹ Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland: 10 Year Plan - [Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland | 10 Year Plan \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ Bushmills Village Plan -

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Bushmills_2020_Village_Plan.pdf

- Improve the economic performance of Bushmills as an important gateway settlement in the Causeway visitor offer; and
- Contribute to the economic performance of the Borough; especially in relation to jobs creation and increasing median wages and salaries.

Project 5: Dungiven Regeneration

Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Glenshane Community Development Ltd.

52. In 2020 the Council commissioned an independent consultant to work with the local community to scope a Dungiven and Benbradagh Visioning Report. The purpose of this piece of work was to establish a high-level understanding of the local communities' aspirations and vision for the social and economic development.
53. As a result of the opportunity created for capital investment via the Growth Deal and the new bypass around the village, the Council has worked with the local community to identify the capital projects that would best fit with the Growth Deal objectives and deliver key aspects of the Visioning Report¹¹.
54. The proposed Dungiven Regeneration project involves two components:
- A digital hub, and
 - Public realm improvements.
55. Overall, the aim is to make the village a nicer place to live, work, visit and navigate; and to position it as the base for exploring the wider area's cultural heritage and scenic landscape. The project will also connect with and catalyse local private sector developments by stimulating the economic conditions required for investment.

Project 6: Cushendall Innovation Centre

Project Promoter: Grow the Glens

56. The Cushendall Innovation Centre involves the development of an extension to the main building. Extending the former police station will provide more scope for open spaces, larger offices, training suites as well as meeting and function rooms that will supplement the existing offer and make the hub more sustainable. The increased rental revenues from a larger footprint will support a 'Business Mentor/Project Manager who will help realise the anticipated economic benefits of the project. It will also allow more flexibility as to usage, design, aesthetic, and energy efficiency options that were not possible with the original station.
57. Through investment in this project, it is anticipated that there will be a re-generational impact on Cushendall and its hinterland with more local jobs, improved business collaboration, increased community engagement, an improved village-scape and environmentally less impactful lifestyles with fewer daily commutes.

Project 7: Coleraine Leisure and Wellbeing Centre

Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

58. A project to replace Coleraine Leisure Centre (CLC) has been an agreed Council priority for many years. The aging facility is situated on Railway Road which is an area of the town

¹¹ Dungiven and Benbradagh Visioning Report 2025 - https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Dungiven_and_Benbradagh_Visioning_Report_2025.pdf

suffering from significant deprivation. The DfC Master Plan for the town¹² identifies the leisure centre as a key project and a catalyst for the regeneration of the town. This project, alongside other projects close by, such as a new £50 million Further Education College, the recently announced UK Government 10-year, £20 million investment in the regeneration of the town (as part of UK Government's Long Term Plans for Towns), and the new digital co-worker space in the refurbished Chronicle Building, will help achieve a regenerative tipping point where the private sector sees economic opportunity in further investment. When combined with a new Leisure Centre, these projects have the potential to create a regenerative tipping point for this area and its local communities.

59. The planning for the redevelopment of CLC commenced in 2016, however, more recently, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and the Council have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding to redefine the project from a pure leisure facility into a Leisure and Wellbeing Hub.
60. The objectives for the project include aspirations to:
 - address local market needs and demand for health promoting physical activity within Coleraine and its hinterland;
 - address social, economic, equality, health and deprivation challenges; and
 - create financially and environmentally sustainable facilities.

Project 8: Connected Causeway Traffic and Parking
Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

61. The Connected Causeway Traffic and Parking project proposes to enhance travel solutions, supported by real time parking information across the North Antrim Coast. The aim is to build an integrated transport system to service the significant tourism attractions of the area and so reduce congestion and enhance the visitor experience.
62. There has been early engagement with a range of stakeholders with the aim of identifying sites that will facilitate a viable interconnected public transport service to the tourist sites and will serve to drive economic benefits at key resorts.
63. Through this project the Council aims to achieve a range of benefits for the economy, the environment and for local communities who, at peak season, can be negatively impacted by the inadequacy of the existing transport infrastructure. New miles of greenway will promote greater use of sustainable transport, active travel and public transport.
64. The improved parking and transport infrastructure, and associated services, will ensure a modal shift to more economically and environmentally sustainable networks for getting visitors to and around the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough. This project will in turn support growth in the visitor economy through better planning, design and integration of tourism and transport services and will help address the risk of 'visitor attrition' from competition with other destinations where the transport experience is better integrated.

Infrastructure (more 'Connection' of economic opportunity across the Borough)

65. A new greenway between Portrush and Bushmills aims to encourage visitors and locals alike to choose active travel options over carbon producing motorised transport. It is also anticipated that this project will act as a new tourist attraction due to the unique, natural

¹² Coleraine Masterplan Review 2020 -

https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Coleraine_Masterplan_Review_Final_Client_Issue_1_4122020_LR.PDF

beauty and views along the proposed greenway, resulting in more visitors to the Borough with the associated economic benefits.

66. In addition, the Connected Causeway project, will also result in infrastructure improvements for the region.

Project 9: Portrush to Bushmills Greenway

Project Promoter: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

67. Portrush and Bushmills are two of the most important destination and gateway settlements for visitors to key attractions on the North Coast. The proposed 8.2km greenway route will connect Portrush with Bushmills via Portballintrae. This route has the potential to provide a key link in the overall greenway network and has been recognised as a priority by both the Council and the Department for Infrastructure, within its Strategic Plan for Greenways¹³.
68. The route will provide for active travel between the settlements of Portrush (6,150 inhabitants), Portballintrae (750 inhabitants) and Bushmills (1,400 inhabitants). These settlements are key holiday destinations for visitors from within these islands and worldwide with the population increasing fourfold during the peak holiday periods. This is a key element in creating an integrated active travel network in the region which will help take traffic off the roads, reduce congestion, reduce carbon emissions, promote health through physical activity and attract new visitors to the region. In doing so, the aspiration is to realise all the associated economic benefits of green tourism.
69. One example of how transformational this project could become relates to the key visitor destinations in the region such as the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre. The Giant's Causeway attracts close to 1.5 million per annum. This project will provide a realistic green travel solution from as far away as Portstewart. By combining this greenway project with a 'green ticketing' offer, by the National Trust and other operators, it will be possible to create modal shifts in how visitors arrive at key 'honey pot' sites on the north Antrim coastline.

Cross-Cutting Objectives

Job Creation, Skills and Employability

70. The Causeway Coast and Glens Region partners will work together with Government to develop an integrated programme for employability and skills to underpin and leverage the Causeway Coast and Glens Deal.
71. Over the next 15 years, four City and Growth Deals across Northern Ireland, will deliver a 'once in a generation' programme of investment that will bolster the economic strengths of Northern Ireland. It is essential that Causeway Coast and Glens, along with other key stakeholders, ensures that we are prepared to address the employment and skills needs emerging through these opportunities. This need will be addressed via the following:

Cross Deal Skills Group (CDSG)

72. The CDSG has been established to develop a Northern Ireland wide, cross-Deal approach to understand the potential labour market and skills opportunities and challenges to be created through the four Deals' investments. This group will assess to what extent the existing employability and skills system is positioned to respond to any identified gaps in provision, and to identify practical recommendations to addressing the issues within a

¹³ Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways - [Exercise Explore Enjoy - A Strategic plan for Greenways \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/exercise-explore-enjoy-a-strategic-plan-for-greenways)

defined timeframe.

73. The ambition will be to consider sectoral needs, in those areas in which City and Growth Deal investment is planned. This will be undertaken on a Northern Ireland wide basis, taking account of the many commonalities around the planned projects. A consistent methodology of skills assessments will be co-designed and applied, and the approach will continue to evolve as lessons are learnt.

Labour Market Partnership (LMP)

74. In 2022 Council undertook the task of local convenor of a partnership approach to employability interventions in the Borough. Causeway's Labour Market Partnership (LMP) seeks to address challenges in the local labour market for people who are unemployed, under-employed or needing to upskill. The Partnership also supports local employers who are looking to attract talent and fill vacancies. The three key strategic priorities of the Causeway LMP are:
- To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local LMP for the area.
 - To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally; and
 - To support delivery of Employability NI¹⁴.
75. By adopting a flexible, localised approach, Causeway's LMP will not only respond to local needs but also target interventions which will support our Growth Deal projects by developing a tailored action plan which reflects local labour market conditions.

Sustainability and Inclusivity

76. Sustainability and inclusivity will be key elements underpinning these transformative projects. The Causeway Coast and Glens Region delivery partners will work with UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive to enable social, economic and environmental wellbeing in the implementation of the Growth Deal. This will include the use of social value criteria in the award of contracts required to deliver the transformational projects.
77. The investments will be implemented in accordance with Council's Climate Strategy by assisting the transition towards a smart, low carbon, sustainable and inclusive economy. The investment will be channelled through circular, zero-waste and resource-efficient initiatives and climate change mitigations. The region's precious natural heritage and biodiversity will be promoted, protected, restored and enhanced.
78. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has recognised a climate emergency and agreed a policy which targets operational net zero for all new Council owned buildings. Where possible and practicable, the projects proposed for the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal will be delivered in a way that is consistent with these commitments.
79. Building on a community wealth building approach, partners will ensure that there is socially inclusive growth in the local economy and all sections of the community have the opportunity to prosper. Adopting a community development approach, delivery partners also commit to engaging with citizens in an ongoing, co-design and co-production basis.
80. Where possible and practicable, all procurement will include appropriate social clauses in compliance with the relevant Department of Finance policy at the time.

¹⁴ Work and Wellbeing Division in its previous structure within DfC developed a blueprint to deliver a new employment offer in Northern Ireland called Employability NI (ENI)

Governance and Assurance

81. Strong and effective leadership and governance is paramount to the successful implementation of the overall programme, and in providing assurance to the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Government, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and delivery partners.
82. Proposed projects under the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal have been developed through joint working between the Council, UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and local delivery partners who have engaged extensively to develop proposals and a governance approach that will deliver transformative and inclusive economic growth for the region.
83. The Executive and the UK Government funding commitments over the next 15 years are subject to:
 - approval of business cases for all projects (including any subsidy control principles);
 - development and agreement of a Deal Document and Financial Agreement;
 - establishment of clear and robust governance arrangements;
 - agreed project specific Contracts for Funding; and
 - the consent of delivery partners on their specific projects.
84. Project Promoters will demonstrate the value for money case for each of the projects through the OBC before any funding is made available. All project commitments in this document are subject to the approval of full business cases unless agreed otherwise by UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive.
85. Project Promoters will establish a model of regional governance that will align with the governance and funding arrangements which were agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive in May 2020 and which encompass the best practice approaches and structures identified.
86. In December 2021, Council approved a Growth Deal Governance Framework. These governance arrangements established a Growth Deal Executive Programme Board and Programme Management Office and Government Department Engagement Group which enabled discussion, positive collaboration and initial decision-makings relating to the development of the Strategic Outline Cases.
87. Council will agree detailed governance arrangements following the signing of these Heads of Terms to provide the necessary assurance to the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and delivery partners. Formal governance structures will provide clear lines of accountability for expenditure of public funds and demonstrate how local decision making will drive economic growth.
88. Project Promoters also recognise the need to develop new structures and approaches that will intensify direct engagement with the business sector, both to deliver co-investment and maximise economic benefits and job creation. Any non-Council delivery partners will establish robust frameworks for the development of business cases demonstrate value for money for each project and outline how projects will contribute to the vision of inclusive growth before funding is made available.
89. Satisfactory assurances will be required on effective accountability arrangements in respect of the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive's requirements for managing public money.