

This newsletter provides you and your council with information on key NILGA activities which have delivered tangible results for our sector. It includes information on pertinent topics—EU Fines, Winter Maintenance, NILGA's Conference, NILGA's AGM, Ministerial Meetings, Ulster in Bloom, NILGA Working Groups and the Annual Council Presentations.

NILGA VICTORY ON EU FINES

UK Ministers will be prevented from arbitrarily passing EU fines onto Councils under key concessions to the UK Localism Bill which have been secured by NILGA as part of the Local Government Group. In its original form the UK Localism Bill gave UK ministers sole power to force councils to pay fines levied by the EU against the UK Government for missing national targets, on issues air quality, public procurement and waste framework. Councils across the UK could have been forced to pay up to £1.2 billion in EU fines passed to the Government. NILGA and its sister local government associations placed bill amendments before the House of Lords during July, and after sustained lobbying, the Government made key concessions. These include the introduction of a statute which would define the conditions under which such fines could be reallocated through the devolved administration in Northern Ireland. NILGA will now be seeking to work with the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that councils will continue to be protected against punitive EU fines in the future.

WINTER MAINTENANCE

NILGA with SOLACE have engaged directly with the DRD Minister and his officials to determine a General Protocol for councils seeking to engage in any agreement with the Department. The guideline document has been designed to support councils and protect both their resource and legal interests and is a far cry from the position faced by councils prior to and during winter 2010/11. This General Protocol, to be confirmed by Roads Service, will trigger individual communication with councils in the weeks ahead. In the longer term, NILGA will aggressively campaign for culture change and for the necessary legislation coupled with educational and promotional activity to encourage independent self-help.

NILGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012

The NILGA Annual Conference 2012 is taking place at the **Hilton Hotel Templepatrick on Thursday 23rd February 2012**. Supported by the Energy Saving Trust, the Conference will focus on 'Energising Local Government' and is aimed at acknowledging achievements whilst encouraging local government to be pioneering in how they plan the future delivery of services to ratepayers. A conference pack will be distributed to all Council in the next few weeks.

NILGA AGM 2011

The NILGA AGM was held on 23rd September 2011 at the *Loughgiel Millennium Centre*. This AGM / Full Members meeting was also an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on our work over the year and to discuss how it supports NILGA's future delivery of critical work on behalf of Councils. Cllr Richard Kemp CBE, former Lib Dem LGA leader in England, spoke at the event in regard to innovative Council partnerships emerging with the Post Office to maintain services in rural and urban deprived areas lacking community and financial services.

MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AND FOLLOW UP

Representatives from NILGA continue to hold solutions driven meetings on behalf of the sector with the DoE and DRD. These meetings cover a number of items impacting on local government, with the main focus of the DOE meetings being Local Government Reform and the ICE programme. The DRD meetings centre on the future arrangements for the clearing of snow and the gritting of footways.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM, PLANNING ACT AND THE ICE PROGRAMME

At the meeting on the 21st July with DoE Minister Attwood, the Association reaffirmed local government's commitment to reform and reminded the Minister of the extensive work that has already been undertaken by councils. The delegation confirmed its commitment to working with the Assembly and its 11 support departments on all future public service reforms. The Minister is aiming to put forward a plan in the late autumn for the implementation of the Local Government Reorganisation Bill, which will then be taken to the Executive for approval. NILGA, on behalf of the sector, looks forward to working in close partnership with the Minister and his officials as well as OFMDFM and DFP to support and strengthen local government in Northern Ireland and is clear in its intent that local government is ready and an exemplary sector providing services cost effectively and doing so ever more collaboratively, acting as a benchmark for central government itself.

WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE

NILGA's Full Members and Executive confirmed the priorities for each of our action teams. These are now effective in line with the full complement of NILGA elected members. Each working group will provide reports to the Executive and Full Members and regular bulletins will be issued to member councils in line with the roles of each Group. Further information on the each of the working groups is available on the NILGA website www.nilga.org/Local-Government.aspx

NILGA Working Groups

Next Meeting

Agriculture and Rural Development Working Group	26th September 2011
Modernisation, Communication and Reform	6th October 2011
Waste and Environment	28th October 2011
Strategic Migration Partnership	18th November 2011
Inter-regional /European Union Policy & Practice	23rd November 2011
Planning Working Group	TBC

ULSTER IN BLOOM

The results of the 33rd Translink Ulster in Bloom competition were announced on Tuesday 6th September. The overall winners included: Derry City (City Category), Bangor (Large Town Category), Coleraine (Town Category), Ahoghill (Small Town Category), Broughshane (Large Village Category), Tobermore (Village Category) and Scarva (Small Village Category). Castlereagh Borough Council received the Crystal Award for outstanding effort and contribution throughout the council area. The 'Most Improved' title went to Larne while Lisburn City Council scooped the 'Roses in Towns' award. We would like to congratulate all 24 councils who participated in this year competition.

ANNUAL PLAN COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCILS

We welcome the opportunity to speak to you directly and put forward our framework of engagement. To support this, since April, NILGA has delivered its Annual Plan presentation to 12 councils through Derek McCallan, CEO and a NILGA Office Bearer. We plan to complete presentations to councils by the end of this calendar year and with this in mind, we will make contact with remaining councils over the next few weeks to confirm suitable dates.

Completed council presentations

Ballymena Borough Council	Carrickfergus Borough Council	Coleraine Borough Council
Down District Council	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	Fermanagh District Council
Larne Borough Council	Lisburn City Council	Limavady Borough Council
Magherafelt District Council	Newtownabbey Borough Council	North Down Borough Council

Council presentations to be confirmed during October, November and December

Ards Borough Council	Antrim Borough Council	Armagh City & District Council
Banbridge District Council	Ballymoney Borough Council	Castlereagh Borough Council
Cookstown District Council	Craigavon Borough Council - 19th Dec.	Derry City Council
Moyle District Council	Newry & Mourne District Council - 13th Oct.	Omagh District Council
Strabane District Council - 4th Oct.	Belfast City Council	

UPCOMING MEETINGS

23rd September 2011 - NILGA Full Members Meeting and AGM
27th September 2011 - NILGA Chief Executive meeting Junior Minister Martina Anderson MLA to discuss priorities for local government's EU and related policies and practices.
28th September 2011 - NILGA and SOLACE supported event - <i>Policing & Community Safety Partnership Implementation - The Strategic Role of Councils</i>
14th October 2011 - NILGA Executive, NILGA Offices
11th November 2011 - NILGA Executive, NILGA Offices
25th November 2011 - NILGA Full Members, Glenavon Hotel

NILGA ALERTS

Legislation and Consultations NILGA is resolved to provide DoE with an opportunity to act a "gateway" Department for councils, recognising that around **twenty** pieces of legislation have been passed since November 2010 which demonstrably impact on councils, their budgets and resource plans. Matters such as fly tipping, welfare of animals and planning are sharply in focus and NILGA is keen to see the 'gateway' policy put into practice to enable more professional negotiations and an early warning system for pending consultations and transfer of functions. There are a large number of consultations currently out with councils, with response dates in late September or early October. Recently issued consultations include: High Hedges Guidance (DoE), Statutory Nuisance and Noise Guidance (DoE). A consultation document will be published by DoE in the near future on an economic appraisal of local government waste management delivery, and the future delivery of waste management more widely within Northern Ireland. Again, NILGA and its specific Working Group will challenge to get the best protection and investment for Councils—see Policy Update below.

New EU Products and Programs NILGA will attend the Brussels Open Week during 10th - 12th October, supporting Cllr Maeve McLaughlin, Chair of the Inter-regional/European Union Policy & Practice Working Group. Additionally, local government opportunities and threats for the 2014 – 2020 Structural Funds phase will be the focus of options sought by the DFP, from NILGA, during the last quarter of 2011. NILGA will be informed by the sector's vast experience of managing EU funds effectively for the period 2007-2013 and it will be pushing for more cost effective locally accountable and managed funding spread across all Council areas, of clear benefit to ratepayers.

Policy Update The NILGA Waste and Environmental Working Group gave evidence to the Environment Committee on 22nd September in relation to the ongoing Tyre Disposal Inquiry, and will be meeting with the Chief Executive of the NI Environment Agency on 19th October regarding the flytipping protocol and the lack of guidance surrounding the biodiversity duty. NILGA and SOLACE will jointly be giving evidence to the Regional Development Committee on 5th October regarding salting and gritting of footways. A workshop is in the early stages of development, at the behest of the NILGA Planning Working Group, to enable a proactive discussion between central and local government on the best way to progress planning reform and transfer, while we wait for RPA decisions.

Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership The Partnership held its second meeting in Dungannon on 16th September. The Partnership brings together representatives from government departments, local councils, public services, the voluntary and community sector, and the UK Border Agency to provide a regional voice on migration policy, supporting planned and co-ordinated approaches to migrants from the perspectives of economic and social benefit to local economies. NISMP takes a strategic approach to the issues surrounding migration. It joins 11 other regional strategic migration partnerships around the UK, and is part of a wider recognition in Europe of the importance of such approaches to migration and integration at local level to inform bigger, central agencies and their policies.

Member Development NILGA has directly supported four pilot projects and in November **Belfast CC** will be the first council to be assessed. NILGA seeks further support through the DoE and the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) to support Member Development going forward.

We welcome your feedback on this newsletter, please send to Derek McCallan, NILGA Chief Executive,

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NILGA - "Your Local Government Association"