



SUSTAINING OUR COUNCILS WILL BUILD A BETTER NI – IN RECOVERY & BEYOND

As all 11 local authorities continue to work collectively through NILGA, together with SOLACE and via other initiatives, local governments *fragility and potential* are two constants. Fragility means finances. Whilst the fiscal impact of Covid varies per council, all need immediate cash resources throughout this full financial year.

Beyond this, until at least April 2023, Central and Local Government must rewrite the rule book and co-design a sustainability plan for public services, how they are funded, how they are delivered, transferring resources and local decision making to the local government sector, connect with the most vulnerable and better integrate with the wider community who need the public sector but pay for it too. This means working in results driven partnership to transform all institutions, including properly resourcing councils, giving financial guarantees, gaining necessary concessions from Treasury.

We are not alone, of course. Other sectors are fragile and our colleagues across these islands – some 450 councils - seek similar. NILGA will diligently take this message wherever it needs to be heard and applied. The Association is also supporting the all-Council and Ministerial Partnership Panel. Here are just a few comments from members and officers alike from its 20th August preparatory session:

“There needs to be new investment for the major loss if non-domestic rates and the other income losses which are not going to come in; the investment has to be across April 2020 – March 2023. As part of that we would be seeking that our colleagues in the Executive....that we get the communicated reassurances Members have referred to in this discussion re the Barnett consequentials; the allocation given to the NI Executive for local authorities proportionate to the services that we have is a lot more than our current received allocation. Constructive engagement to get that reassurance for this year as Stage 1 would be welcome.”

“A new business / income model for councils is needed.”

“The case being put is as much about what we can offer as it is what we ask for.”

“We welcome investment from central government to date; however there has also been sizeable investment in other sectors. What priority is central government putting on the development of councils as conduits of future enterprise, social and community cohesion, and similar?”

“We need to work together and get an underpinning policy of Treasury to underwrite as much as possible via Stormont and get them to inform the Executive of creative but accountable new borrowing models to spread the costs over 5 years, not just one rates setting year, even including Revenue, with councils able to make individual choices based upon individual circumstances.”

So, as we face into the autumn and the storms ahead, the work to keep our councils sustainable is just as big a priority now as it was in April and May. NILGA, SOLACE, and sovereign councils know that. The knowledge has to be passed to every single practical and political partner in NI, for the sake of our community, our councils, our public services and our prized, local democracy.

PARTNERSHIP PANEL

As our Leader column states, the Local Government side of the NI Partnership Panel met 20th August, with an almost full turnout of members, officers and departmental support officials. The outcome was sober yet strategic, constructive and collegiate. Nothing gets done without strong leadership, unity of purpose and factual evidence. All were embodied in the session, details of which have been published as an [Outcome Note](#).

MEETING WITH THE COMMUNITIES MINISTER

The NILGA, Council and SOLACE session above is a precursor to the first in four years meeting of the Panel itself, to be chaired by the Communities Minister, on 16th September. Prior to both sessions, NILGA President, Cllr. Matt Garrett has engaged with **Minister Carál Ní Chuilín** in the first of a series of scheduled recovery and resource discussions, details of which can be sourced [HERE](#).

NILGA NETWORK UPDATES

Place-shaping and Infrastructure

Network met 21st August to receive an update from Historic Environment Division of DfC on the recently published [Heritage Statistics](#), and the positive impacts that heritage developments can have for local economies and communities. It was noted that the work ongoing in NI aligns strongly with recently issued research and recommendations from the RSA and British Council, on [Heritage and Inclusive Growth](#).

Network members also took the opportunity to refine the forthcoming Place Shaping webinar programme on Delivering Quality Places, which will take place weekly commencing October (further detail September).

Health Social and Environmental Well-being

Further to the June meeting, progress has been made on support for childcare providers by the NI Executive, and this work is ongoing. The priority now is to reinvigorate work on a suitable childcare policy for NI. NILGA has been invited to attend the Assembly All Party Group on Childcare, and also to attend and participate in meetings of the Assembly All-Party Group on Climate Action.

Climate Action is one of the key priorities of this Network, which is keen to see appropriate action and resources emanate from the NI Executive to deliver the change necessary up to and beyond 2030. Work is ongoing across the 11 councils to develop climate action plans, the first of which was published recently by Derry City and Strabane District Council.

Next meeting is planned for 4th September, this is a joint meeting with the NILGA Economy and International Affairs Network, to look at the role of councils and the opportunities for local economies and communities through development of a more effective circular economy locally. Speakers will include Alan McVicker and Heidi Clarke from SIBNI, with participation from DAERA, DfE and DfC officials, and representatives from Business in the Community.

A workshop was held 27th August, this was attended by over 30 councillors and council directors from across the 11 councils, to assist in formulating view on the recently published DAERA Discussion Document on the Future of Recycling. Forming part of a wider series of more technical workshops taking place over a two week period, this event was organised by DAERA and WRAP at the request of NILGA, specifically to better enable elected members to engage in the development of what will be critically important policy for local government.

Reform, Devolution & Improvement

Cllr. Mark Glasgow, Chair, has approved a new post Covid direct consultation with the 11 councils on "Re-thinking Councils" which will issue during September 2020. This will ask each corporate body to look ahead, from sustainability, transformation and ambition perspectives. All three are needed for councils to survive and prosper. **Next meeting 24th September 2020.**

Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP)

Human Trafficking

NISMP attended The Human Trafficking NGO Engagement Group 25th August. The Group which is chaired by the DoJ provides a forum where organisations can share information and co-ordinate their efforts to tackle human trafficking and modern slavery. As raised at the meeting, Anti-Slavery Day falls on 18th October and marks an opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery in our local areas. If there are any social media activities your Councils or PCSPs are taking forward, please tag in [@MigrationNI](#) & [@NI_LGA](#)

Migration Advisory Committee's Shortage Occupation List Review

NISMP recently provided evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Shortage Occupation List. The response highlighted the wage differential in NI (approx. 20% lower than the rest of the UK) and called for regular reviews especially given the current economic decline and uncertainty. [Full Response](#)

Elected Member Development

NILGA Condensed Planning Training

NILGA coordinated and delivered (18th August) a condensed session of the wider accredited Local Planning Leadership Programme, taking 35+ participative elected members through the key aspects of the NI planning system. The event focused on improving understanding and confidence in planning decisions, plan making, place shaping, the statutory appeals system as well as maladministration charges to the Ombudsman and Judicial Reviews. [Press Release](#)

Such learning and development programmes improve councillor competence and confidence in decision making in the interests of their local areas and communities and ensure council is targeting resources cost effectively. Feedback provided evidence that this was an informative, beneficial, learning and development opportunity. The presentations from the session are available on the NILGA website [HERE](#)

Finance Scrutiny & Training for councillors, co-designed with ALGFO and SOLACE, will ensure councillors fully understand the sector's deeply challenging current financial context as well as appreciate the potential of councils to drive post-Covid social and economic recovery. Details of dates and content will be made available in the coming weeks.

The NILGA **Leadership Programme** resumes on 17th September, picking up at Module 2 of the six-module accredited Programme, delivery of which was deferred during the lockdown. Outstanding modules will be delivered virtually over the coming months using technology in a creative way to recreate the enthusiasm and interaction experienced in Module One, and members are engaging in this format well, although “physical” learning for other types of sessions will of course be planned.



Councillor Charter - Making the most of Councillor Development

Any council that is serious about improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their communities must be committed to developing its councillors. The Charter provides a robust, structured framework designed to help councils enhance and embed councillor development in councils. Charter is available for councils in Northern Ireland provided by the NILGA. [Full Details](#)



CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE CAMPAIGN

NILGA collaborating with its sister organisations in the rest of the UK developed a joint Civility in Public Life campaign. The programme of work aims to address the growing levels of intimidation directed at councillors and those in public life and the negative impact this is having on democracy for everyone.

A work programme will be rolled out across the UK, to include: a councillor and senior officer survey to understand the nature, severity and impact of intimidation; development of resources and training packs for councils and councillors; raising the profile of the impact of intimidation through the **#debatenothate** online campaign; government lobbying to ensure online harms to councillors are understood and taken account of and that defending democracy can be upheld. At the meeting of the UK Forum 7th August, the 4 Local Government Associations agreed a Joint Statement on Civility in Public Life. [Press Release](#)

EU TRANSITION

The EU Transition Delivery Board, which is chaired by the Minister for Housing, Communities & Local Government, Robert Jenrick, has recently been reconvened. NILGA and the other three UK local government associations are represented on this Board, which offers an opportunity to engage with Whitehall on planning for the end of the transition period, the future EU relationship and successor arrangements on funding and representation. At the meeting in July, Cllr Martin Kearney (NILGA Vice President) highlighted concerns around the impact on GB-NI trade, the impact of migration policy on local recruitment and uncertainty around the replacement of EU funding in the form of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

PEACE PLUS

At the meeting of the Peace Plus Programme Development Steering Group in July, NILGA’s representatives (Cllr Steven Corr, Cllr Jim McKeever and Cllr Jenny Palmer) were appraised of the initial themes for the programme which are:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities • Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation • Empowering and Investing in Our Young People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy and Inclusive Communities • Supporting a Sustainable Future • Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration |
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Commenting on the indicative actions, Cllr Corr welcomed that the local authority action plans will allow councils to link regeneration to peace building & leadership and looked forward to seeing how the small grants programme would be administered in order to reduce bureaucracy for groups. He also indicated that NILGA has experience & expertise in developing capacity in institutions and among councillors, particularly through our elected member development programme and offered to share this with councils and Regional Assemblies in Ireland.

Cllr Palmer agreed that actions to support SMEs were heavily needed, particularly in the current economic context. She noted that actions on Smart Cities, Towns & Villages were innovative but stressed the absence of broadband would preclude areas from benefitting from this.

Cllr McKeever emphasised the importance of using the EU funding wisely and not replacing government money or replicating existing programmes. He also highlighted that councils are best placed to deliver on several of the potential climate actions.

5G UPDATE

The Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) has provided updated guidance to speed up agreements between the public sector and telecoms companies and provided a new plain English guide for councils to tackle misinformation about 5G safety. DCMS is calling for councillors to play a greater role in local digital strategies. More information [HERE](#).

NILGA will be engaging with the appointed contractor for Project Stratum and continues to work with OFCOM and Mobile UK on the Shared Rural Network and 5G rollout.

INSTITUTE FOR FISCAL STUDIES REPORT

Report points to “perfect storm” for neighbouring councils (LGA England)

NILGA Analysis: Sustainable Councils in NI - Lessons Must Be Applied!

NILGA asserts that this evidence – showing a **£2 billion deficit** this year alone despite substantial investment by central government in councils across England – provides a stark warning to our own councils and government more widely. We **MUST** stand together, receive essential investment for council services and workforce and co-design new models of delivery at ALL tiers of government here. **There will be multiple benefits for the community if this happens.**



The roles, resources and responsibilities of local councils in NI are changing right now and in the future. With practical and political help from national government and from Stormont, local democracy and the services councils provide can emerge as a huge benefit to the people of NI. **IFS Report**



RECYCLE WEEK 2020 - NORTHERN IRELAND

This year Recycle Week runs from 21st to 27th September 2020. The theme is about thanking the nation under the banner, 'Together - We Recycle'. Recycle Week 2020 aims to recognise the sacrifices that key workers and citizens have made to keep recycling going and create positive change in the world around us. **Free assets (strict embargo until 21st September) and a partner pack are available to download [HERE](#)**

EU WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES #EURegionsWeek

EU Week of Regions and Cities will take place online throughout October. There will be 500+ working sessions on Empowering Citizens, Cohesion & Cooperation and Green Europe. **Further Information**



NILGA, SOLACE & TWO COUNCILS SAY, “THANK YOU & FAREWELL” TO SENIOR FIGURES



Alderman Danny Kinahan (Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, NILGA Office Bearer) and Mr. Anthony Tohill (Chief Executive, Mid Ulster District Council, SOLACE) have recently announced their departures from local government and pastures new.

Ald. Kinahan has been appointed (as of 1st September 2020) to the role of Veterans Commissioner for NI. Anthony has joined, as a senior director, a prestigious Mid Ulster engineering firm.

Both departures are significant losses to local government, in terms of political / professional insights, strategic direction, diligence and a capacity for sustained, hard work. We wish them well in their new roles and will keep in touch as their successors emerge in the coming weeks and months.

NILGA VIRTUAL EVENTS, MEETING DATES & TRAINING

Date	Event Details	Contact
02/09/20	Audit & Organisational Sustainability Working Group	d.anderson@nilga.org
04/09/20	Joint NILGA Network meeting – Health, Social and Environmental Wellbeing & Economy and International Affairs	k.smyth@nilga.org t.okane@nilga.org
11/09/20	NILGA Executive - via Zoom	s.little@nilga.org
16/09/20	NI Partnership Panel meeting via Zoom.	a.kennedy@nilga.org
18/09/20	Elected Member Development Network	f.douglas@nilga.org
24/09/20	Reform, Devolution & Improvement Network meeting	s.little@nilga.org
24/09/20	NISMP Board Meeting	m.kerr@nilga.org
07/10/20	Code of Conduct awareness for councillors, in partnership with the Local Government Commissioner for Standards (2pm virtually)	f.douglas@nilga.org
09/10/20	NILGA Executive - via Zoom	s.little@nilga.org
15/10/20	Environmental Impact Assessment Essential learning and development, facilitated by expert, Josh Fothergill, with over 15 years' experience (10am virtually)	f.douglas@nilga.org

NILGA Office Bearer Briefings drawn from Executive Nominees: 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th September & 6th October - via Zoom, details to follow.

Partner Events

LGA virtual events: Climate change webinars in September. Details [HERE](#) Please see information on the booking forms reference, free to attend promo code.

APSE Policy Seminar – Climate and Ecological Emergency - Building Back Better: Building Back Greener - 9th & 10th September 2020 – Details [HERE](#)

Please visit our website and Twitter for regular updates.

web: www.nilga.org twitter: [@NI_LGA](https://twitter.com/NI_LGA) [#teamlogovni](https://twitter.com/teamlogovni)

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