

NILGA VALUE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN: #COUNCILSMAKEITHAPPEN

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nilga
Northern Ireland Local Government Association

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Councils are a vital part of every community, they are the most locally focused, locally connected part of government and this is something they have shown time and time again in their response to the pandemic.



With growing pressure on council budgets - rates and council finances are in focus this year, the #councilsmakeithappen campaign is about communicating to citizens across the region the key role that local government plays in their daily lives, the value of the services they provide and how councils across NI enhance the lives of every citizen.

The campaign will launch on the 8th February, you can show your support and join in the conversation on Twitter [@NI_LGA](#) and on Instagram [ni_lga](#) at [#councilsmakeithappen](#)

MINISTERS & ALL COUNCILS - PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING

The Partnership Panel will unlock policy change, investment and better recognition of councils as to the vital work they perform. It is a future plan tool also – what do we want as councils to make NI better, mindful of council elections scheduled for May 2022?



The reconvened Northern Ireland Partnership Panel held its first meeting of 2021 on 20th January. Chaired by the Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey MLA, the meeting focused on the partnership work required by all parts of government to deliver for our citizens both in terms of COVID-19 and future plans for council resources, waste management, sports, climate change and more. Members also developed joint working proposals by NILGA and the Executive Departments including the Shared Prosperity Fund & UK Environment Bill, tailored to N. Ireland's interests and ambitions. **Press Release [HERE](#) Meeting outcomes note [HERE](#)**



Photo from the Local Government Conference, February 2020

JUNIOR MINISTERS AT JANUARY 2021 NILGA EXECUTIVE

NILGA member councils joined together on 15th January to meet both NI Executive Junior Ministers to discuss economic recovery, the new Programme for Government, and the precarious financial position of local councils. While NILGA members used the virtual meeting to reaffirm their partnership approach, crucial in the current fight against the pandemic, they also expressed their genuine concerns for the sustainability of the local government sector. **Press Release [HERE](#)**

NILGA NETWORKS

Elected Member Development Network

The Elected Member Development Network met on 22nd January 2021. The Network will now drive the NILGA Regional Programme delivery for 2021/22, commencement of which will be June 2021, linked to the completion of councils AGM's.



JOINT MEETING - ECONOMY & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND THE HEALTH, SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING NETWORKS - 27TH JANUARY

At the recent joint meeting of the Economy & International Affairs and the Health, Social Environmental Wellbeing networks, members heard from NOW Group on the opportunities and benefits for councils in engaging with the social economy sector. NOW Group is keen to link with councils in relation to social enterprise, regeneration, inclusion and scaling up their business operations and to ensure the sector is engaged in City & Growth deals. NILGA is exploring how councils can do business with the sector and will be addressing inclusive towns & cities through its participation on the High Street Task Force. Members also heard from Northern Mutual on their plans to establish a community bank in Northern Ireland, how it differs from a credit union and how it can support local investment & growth. Members recognised how the mutual bank could unlock the social economy and support small businesses and community groups. **For further information on Northern Mutual please visit [HERE](#)**

EU TRANSITION



Issues & Opportunities for Councils

Now that the details of the trade agreement and future relationship have been agreed with the EU, NILGA & APSE have commissioned action research on issues and opportunities for councils arising from EU Exit. A round table will be held with members and officers on **8th February** to prioritise the areas for further action and the report will be completed in the Spring.



EU Committee of the Regions - UK Contact Group – NILGA ensures councils' voice here is heard

The 2nd meeting of the contact group took place on 11th January to address issues arising from the free trade agreement as well as the future for cross-border cooperation. EU firms were also struggling with the new border rules and there was a fear that post-COVID-19, when normal trade volumes resume, that the frictions will become more pronounced. Provisions in the future relationship agreement allow for consultation arrangements between MPs and MEPs, but there is no formal consultative role for local government, although civic society is provided for. EU reps called for the interim arrangement on data sharing to be resolved urgently. On cross-border cooperation all partners wished this to continue, it was noted that Welsh & Scottish parliaments would be exploring how they could participate in Interreg programmes.



Shared Prosperity Fund

The Shared Prosperity Fund remains a priority for NILGA, SOLACE and councils, with a call for joined up working between central and local government made at the Partnership Panel on 20th January. NILGA & SOLACE gave evidence to the Finance Committee on 20th January, highlighting the delay in announcing the criteria & themes for the fund as well as concerns over the level of funding.



NILGA RESPONSES AND CONSULTATIONS

Name and Department	Action
DfI: Living with Water (Greater Belfast) - An integrated plan for drainage and wastewater management in Greater Belfast.	NILGA Response HERE
DAERA: Climate Change Bill – Seeking views on policy options for a Climate Change Bill for NI.	NILGA Response HERE
Health: consultation on NI's new Substance Use Strategy - "Making Life Better – Preventing Harm and Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use".	Deadline 5th Feb. 21 Response will be available on the NILGA website.
DAERA: Environmental Plans, Principles and Governance for NI - Department Discussion Document seeking views on many environmental governance issues that arise due to UK withdrawal from the EU.	Deadline 5th Feb. 21 Response will be available on the NILGA website.
DAERA: A new Clean Air Strategy for NI - Department Discussion Document in advance of developing the first Clean Air Strategy for NI.	Deadline 15th Feb. 21 Response will be available on the NILGA website.
Health: Draft Mental Health Strategy - Department is seeking views on a draft 10-year Mental Health Strategy designed to improve mental health outcomes for people in NI.	Deadline 26th Mar. 21 Response will be available on the NILGA website.

YOUR CODE OF CONDUCT - DEVELOPMENTS

NILGA welcomed the Department for Communities December 2020 draft response to the 'Synopsis of Responses and Departmental Response to the Consultation on a Revised Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors'.

NILGA in particular welcomed the recognition and commitment for the need for a full ethical standard review and looks forward to being part of this. **NILGA asserts that a small, timebound and modernisation driven group of central and local government members/officials can bring an innovative, worthy, and comprehensive modernisation Code ready for statute, no later than December 2021, drawing together benchmarks and the wealth of experience of the existing Code.**

TRAINING - NILGA LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The NILGA Leadership Programme completed its six-module accredited delivery in January 2021, with a number of councillors, at that stage making presentations of their own leadership context and how the learning has improved their understanding and skills to respond to challenges. The Programme covered leadership based on the various roles of councillors, leadership of people, place and with others. Leadership of outcomes and efficiency was also covered as well as developing your future leadership role and how to build supportive relationships and resilience in the face of stress. NILGA will now seek nominations from Councils for the 2021/22 delivery of the Programme with commencement in September 2021.

UK LOCAL GOVERNMENT CIVILITY CAMPAIGN

NILGA is working with the LGA, WLGA & COSLA to develop a guide to digital citizenship and guidance for councillors to help councils engage on social media. Further guidance on handling intimidation will be issued later in 2021.

YOUR EVENTS, MEETING DATES & TRAINING

NILGA Office Bearer Briefings drawn from All Council Executive Nominees continue to meet every Tuesday via Zoom, details will follow each Thu / Fri for invitees.

Updates from the previous meetings are available on the resources section of our website

<https://www.nilga.org/resources>

Date	Meeting	Contact
12 th February	NILGA Executive – Via zoom	s.little@nilga.org
22 nd February	Reform, Devolution and Improvement Network (RDI) meeting*	s.little@nilga.org
24 th February	NI Strategic Waste Partnership meeting	k.smyth@nilga.org
25 th February	Economy & International Affairs Network meeting	l.okane@nilga.org
3 rd March	Audit & Organisational Sustainability Meeting	d.anderson@nilga.org
12 th March	NILGA Executive – Via zoom	s.little@nilga.org

***RDI moved forward to Monday 22nd February 2021 @ 1330 as part of Programme for Government work!**

THE NI Local Government Conference, November 2021 – watch this space, www.nilga.org and @NI_LGA for final date, compliance and venue details!!

PARTNER UPDATES/EVENTS



COUNCILS ALERT: O2, THREE & VODAFONE AGREE DEAL TO ENHANCE NI'S RURAL COVERAGE

Mobile operators to build and share 11 masts in Northern Ireland to boost 4G rural coverage. NI is set to benefit from new investment to eliminate coverage deficits. This programme will deliver the **first stage** of the £1bn Shared Rural Network. **Further information** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/shared-rural-network>

NI'S FIRST FOOD FARMING AND LAND CONVENTION - 9TH & 10TH FEBRUARY

Online gathering of farmers, producers and policymakers to explore how food and farming can play a pivotal role in building a more resilient future in NI.

Special guests will include:

- the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food
- Diane Dodds MLA - Minister for the Economy
- Edwin Poots MLA – Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.



Details at www.foodfarmingland.co.uk/convention21

Please visit our website and Twitter for regular updates.

web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA #teamlocgovni

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