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nilgaNews

The Local Government Association Newsletter - October 2026

Welcome to NILGA News!

Welcome to the October edition of NILGA News. This issue leads with highlights from NILGA's Local Government Conference and Exhibition, where elected members, council officers and public-sector partners explored how councils can protect services, strengthen public trust and deliver through financial and political uncertainty. We also feature the launch of **The Future of Local Government in Northern Ireland**, independent research commissioned by NILGA and produced with Pivotal, which calls for stronger central–local partnership, earlier council involvement in policymaking and greater flexibility over resources. Alongside these major developments, the newsletter includes the latest NILGA Executive update, learning and development opportunities, sector campaigns, forthcoming events and news from councils across Northern Ireland.

NILGA conference sets priorities for stronger local delivery



NILGA's Local Government Conference and Exhibition brought elected members, council officers and public-sector partners to Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn, on 8 October 2026.

Under the theme **The Politics of Delivery: Leading Through Uncertainty**, delegates considered how councils can protect services, strengthen public trust and deliver amid financial and political pressures. Priorities included earlier council involvement in policymaking, stronger central-local partnership, greater flexibility over resources and investment in sector capacity ahead of the 6 May 2027 election.

A key moment was the launch of **The Future of Local Government in Northern Ireland**, independent research commissioned by NILGA and produced with Pivotal. It describes local government as stable, resilient and vital, while highlighting constraints created by Northern Ireland's highly centralised system. The report calls for earlier council involvement in policy development and greater discretion over resources. It also recommends considering devolution, financial autonomy and new revenue streams,

development and partnership work as councils prepare for the next mandate.

NILGA Press Release









NILGA Executive Update - October

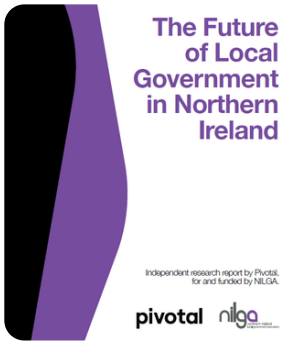
NILGA's Executive met on 9 October to consider a range of key issues affecting local government. Discussions included the Representation of the People Bill, an update from SOLACE, pre-election guidance, food waste research and current planning matters. Members also reviewed NILGA's latest consultation and policy work, including responses on regional balance, business rates, public transport services and fares, and the draft AI Strategy.

NILGA Resources

New research: The Future of Local Government in Northern Ireland

NILGA has launched **The Future of Local Government in Northern Ireland**, independent horizon-scanning research commissioned by NILGA and produced with Pivotal. The report provides an evidence base to inform sector priorities ahead of the 2027 election and support councils as they plan for the new mandate. It highlights the need for earlier council involvement in policymaking, greater flexibility over existing resources and sustained consideration of devolution, financial autonomy and new revenue streams.

Read the full report





AILG Website

AILG Autumn Training Seminar

NILGA President Alderman Hazel Legge attended the Association of Irish Local Government Autumn Training Seminar on 1 October. The Seminar focused on the Local Democracy Taskforce and the evolving role of councillors. The event provided a valuable opportunity to exchange learning with local government colleagues from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, and to consider how elected members can be properly supported and resourced as reform progresses across these islands.

East Border Region BRIDGE Project launch

Cllr Alison Bennington represented NILGA at the launch of the BRIDGE Project in Newry on 25 September. Led by East Border Region in partnership with the Irish Central Border Area Network, the three-year cross-border initiative will bring together 12 councils across Northern Ireland and Ireland. Supported by PEACEPLUS, BRIDGE will work with elected members and local government officers to strengthen governance, leadership and institutional capacity.

East Border Region - BRIDGE Project





Free LGIU Membership for Councillors and Council Officers

Through NILGA's partnership with the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), elected members and council officers across Northern Ireland can access valuable information, insight and professional support free of charge. Sign up now to receive the dedicated regional newsletter and unlock free access to LGIU's full range of resources, events, training and research.

Sign Up

Public Sector Cyber Security Northern Ireland

A public Sector Cyber Security Northern Ireland event will take place in Belfast on 7 December. Bringing together cyber security experts and industry leaders to explore practical solutions to current and future challenges. Through keynote speeches, expert panels, and interactive masterclasses, this event offers insight into how organisation can stay ahead in a constantly shifting landscape.

More Information





APSE Seminar - Smarter Decisions Through Data Insights

Tuesday 20 October 2026, 10.30-15.00
Theatre at the Mill, Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey

The programme will showcase case studies from across Northern Ireland and the wider UK, highlighting how digitalisation, customer service hubs, AI, and inspection apps are transforming local authority services. Delegates will also have the opportunity to engage in interactive workshops on digital technology, service transformation, and HR challenges.

More Information & Register

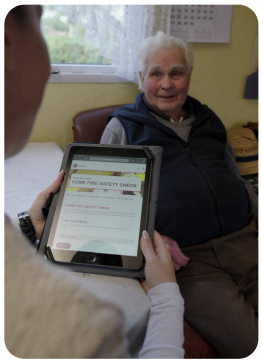
Local Government Updates, Campaigns & Events

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Fire Safety Week 2026

Almost 70% of people who lost their lives in house fires over the last 10 years lived alone

As Fire Safety Week 2026 begins, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) is encouraging everyone to 'Know the Room, Know the Risk, Know the Person'. The campaign asks people to recognise common fire risks in their home and look out for those who may be at greater risk from fire, including people who live alone, have a disability or impaired mobility.

Press Release





[More Information]

Good Relations Week underway across all 11 council areas

Good Relations Week is taking place this week, with a record programme of 381 events being delivered across all 11 council areas in Northern Ireland. Councils are supporting activities that bring communities together, celebrate diversity and promote positive relations. The programme also reflects the work of community groups, schools, charities and volunteers who strengthen connections in their local areas throughout the year. Good Relations Week 2026 is taking place until Sunday October 18.

Launch of the '5 Steps to Be Ready' Campaign

The Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) project, with support from DfI Rivers, has launched the regional **'5 Steps to Be Ready'** campaign to help households and communities across NI prepare for emergencies.

Drawing on good practice from Local Resilience Forums in England and Scotland, the campaign was developed with partners and members of the public across Northern Ireland. It will be promoted throughout September, Preparedness Month, as part of the **#BeReadyNI** campaign.

[More Information]





Power to Change
Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has launched Phase 2 of **Power to Change**, continuing its partnership with The Executive Office and the Department of Justice to challenge the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that contribute to violence against women and girls.

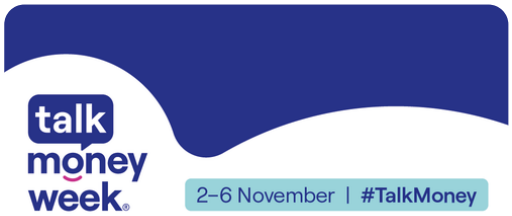
[More Information]

Talk Money Week 2026

Taking place next month, 2–6 November 2026

Talk Money Week returns with the theme ***It All Counts***, highlighting how realistic, manageable actions -however small - can help people feel more informed, confident and in control of their finances.

[More Information]



Department of Justice

[Press Release]

Hate Crime Awareness Week

The Justice Minister has made a "call to action" on hate crime. Speaking during Hate Crime Awareness Week, the Minister reaffirmed her commitment to creating a fair, just and safe community which is inclusive and welcoming to everyone in our society. One of the Minister's priorities has been to strengthen the law and to improve the criminal justice experience for victims of hate crime. The Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill and Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill will modernise hate crime law in Northern Ireland and provide a more robust system to hold offenders to account.

Help shape research on accountability in planning system

part in a survey examining accountability within NI's planning system. The survey takes around 15 minutes and responses are confidential and anonymised.

Please read the participant information sheet before taking part.

Complete the Accountability in the Planning System Survey by 30 November and help inform future planning reform.

SONI
System Operator Northern Ireland

To attend, please contact Claire Moss at Claire.Moss@soni.ltd.uk

Online Briefing for Council Planning Teams.

SONI is inviting Heads of Planning and Senior Planning Officers to an online briefing on 20 October, 10.00–11.30am, exploring how stronger collaboration between SONI and council planning teams can support delivery of the grid infrastructure needed for NI's future energy needs. The session will provide an overview of SONI's work and grid delivery process, highlight projects progressing across council areas and provide an opportunity for planning teams to share views on improving collaboration.

Dates for your Diary

19 & 20 October

Committee of the Regions – UK Contact Group Meeting NILGA Office Bearers invited to attend. Stormont Parliament Buildings.

For more information, please email: events@nilga.org

10 November

NILGA Strategic Policy Network Meeting 10.30 AM – 12.30 PM. Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

For more information, please email: events@nilga.org

13 November Executive

NILGA Executive Meeting 10.00 AM registration (10.30 meeting commences) The Braid, Ballymena, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

For more information, please email: events@nilga.org

Further details of NILGA meetings and events

Council Updates



Celebrating a decade of funding for community and voluntary groups!

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is celebrating over a decade of supporting community and voluntary groups through its community grants programme. Since 2015, ABC Council has awarded more than 6,000 grants and invested £13.6m in the local community and voluntary sector through the Financial Assistance Programme.

Press Release

Belfast Region City Deal reaches major milestones

During 2025/26, the Belfast Region City Deal reached major milestones with Studio Ulster, AMIC, and the UK Digital Twin Centre now operational, construction progressing on iREACH Health and Momentum One Zero and more than £674 million of investment

Panel received the latest programme update at their September meeting, hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council in Bangor.

Press Release





Connexus using digital technology to connect communities

Connections between rural communities in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Leitrim County Council and Sligo County Council are being strengthened by a €2.46 million (£2.12 million) investment from PEACEPLUS. Connexus, is a project supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body, (SEUPB). The new cross-border programme is a partnership between the three councils to connect 22 rural communities over the next three years.

Press Release

Greenhouse Launch for Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's new Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy was launched at Castlewellan Forest Park's world famous Arboretum surrounded by an internationally renowned garden of plants. The event brought together councillors, Council staff, community representatives and climate and sustainability organisations from across the region, with the unusual launch setting deliberately chosen.



Press Release



New 'Game Changing' Innovation Centre Officially Opens Following £10m Council Investment

A major new Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre has officially opened in Antrim and Newtownabbey, marking a significant investment in the future of advanced manufacturing and economic growth across Northern Ireland. The Centre is expected to create up to 1,500 jobs across Northern Ireland, contribute £1.3bn to the economy and support the training of 300 apprentices by 2050.

Press Release

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