



December 23rd, 2025

Chairperson: Councillor C Kemp

Vice Chairperson: Councillor J Harpur

Aldermen: J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, M Gregg and A McIntyre

Councillors: K Dickson, J Gallen, A Gowan, J Lavery BEM, D Lynch, U Mackin, A Martin, C McCready and T Mitchell

Ex-Officio: The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman A Grehan
Deputy Mayor, Alderman H Legge

Notice Of Meeting

A meeting of the Regeneration and Growth Committee will take place on **Thursday, 8th January 2026 at 6:00 pm** in the **Council Chamber and Remote Locations** for the transaction of business on the undernoted agenda.

DAVID BURNS
Chief Executive
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Agenda

1.0 APOLOGIES

2.0 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- (i) Conflict of Interest on any matter before the meeting (Members to confirm the specific item)
- (ii) Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest (Member to complete the Disclosure of Interest form)

📎 *Disclosure of Interests form Sept 24.pdf*

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3.0 REPORT FROM HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 EU Trade Programme (NI-NL Trade Initiative)

For Decision

📎 *1. FINAL EU Trade Programme (NI-NL) - Comm Item - Jan2026 V3 (003).pdf*

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4.0 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & GROWTH

4.1 Letting of Pitch 5i, Lough Moss Leisure Centre

For Decision

📎 *2Confid FINAL Letting of Pitch 5i Lough Moss Leisure Centre.pdf*

Not included

4.2 Consultation for the Proposed Listing of a Building

📎 *3Confid FINAL Consultation on proposed listing of a building.pdf*

Not included

4.3 Estimates 2026/27

For Decision

5.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS



Committee:	Regeneration & Growth Committee
Date:	8 January 2026
Report from:	Head of Economic Development

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	EU Trade Programme (NI-NL Trade Initiative)

1.0 Background

1. In December 2024, the Council approved the Business Case for the development of a new EU Trade Programme, focusing on export opportunities in the Netherlands. This programme would build on previous successes in fostering trade relationships through the NI-NL Forum and would provide a valuable platform for local businesses to expand their presence in the Dutch market. Delivery is planned to coincide with the proposed reactivation of the NI-NL Forum.
2. The NI-NL Forum was a trade and export society for businesses from both Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. It was formed by the Council and Invest NI, with in-kind support from NI Trade Consultants in the Dutch market, to support and encourage bilateral trade between the two regions, with the Council bringing particular focus to opportunities for Lisburn and Castlereagh businesses. Each year the Forum staged a number of networking events in both countries on an alternating basis, the largest of which was a New Year Trade Dinner for companies and their customers that usually took place towards the end of January.
3. Changes in Invest NI's funding priorities, and the onset of the Pandemic meant that the NI-NL initiative lost momentum and has been dormant over recent years. As has been previously reported to the Committee, officers have been active in encouraging Invest NI to re-establish financial support, and indications are positive that Invest NI once more will provide support for the New Year's Trade Dinner in early 2026.
4. Since the approval of the Business Case for the EU Trade Programme, the opportunity has arisen to provide Department for the Economy funding support towards some of the operating costs as part of the new LEP (Local Economic Partnership) Action Plan. This position was agreed by the LEP and then by the Council in November 2025 when the Action Plan was agreed.

The Department for the Economy has indicated that the initiative would be eligible for part-funding as per the submitted three year Action Plan. The Action Plan was agreed by the Department on 15 December 2025, and confirmed in the Letter of Offer for £3.51million for the period to the end of March 2028, which was subsequently received and accepted by the Council.

Key Issues

1. The initial procurement exercise for the delivery of the EU Trade Programme was unsuccessful. However, the availability of potential funding towards the initiative has allowed the cost profile to be revisited, and for the scope of the programme – to scale up the number of participating businesses – to be extended. This revised Programme was re-tendered and successfully awarded at the beginning of December 2025.
2. Officers are therefore working with the successful delivery organisation to now bring forward the proposed EU Trade Programme centred on the Netherlands. The exact methodology and timeline is being developed at time of writing. It is likely that the New Year Trade Dinner would be staged as the first event of the NI-NL Forum in 2026, and the EU Trade Programme would run alongside this.
3. It is anticipated that the Trade Programme will involve circa 6 – 12 (depending on the LEP funding outcome when it is formalised and received by the Council) participating businesses receiving one-to-one support to help them access commercial opportunities in the Dutch market and develop new sales or trade opportunities over 1 - 2 trade visits. The NI-NL New Year Trade Dinner historically would have involved circa 100-130 participating Dutch and Northern Ireland businesses and stakeholders, and it is proposed that it will take place in the Netherlands on a date yet to be confirmed in the final quarter of 2025-2026.
4. It should be noted that scope exists within the current Economic Development Budget Estimates to deliver the EU Trade Programme and NI-NL Forum without funding from the LEP, but the availability of funding will allow the initiative to be delivered to more companies on a larger scale.
5. The detailed programme of activities for the event is currently under development. It is proposed that final approval will be considered as part of the agreed delegated authority arrangement for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Growth. This was agreed in September 2025 to provide officers with a degree of flexibility to allow the LEP Year 1 funding objectives to be achieved. This would also involve the Committee providing retrospective approval for the updated Business Case when complete, which was also confirmed previously in September 2025 as part of the agreed position.
6. Given the international profile of the NI-NL Forum, it is suggested that it would be appropriate for a cross-party delegation of Elected Members to take part in the New Year Trade Dinner event. Nominees will be sought through the Party Group Leaders. This approach was utilised in previous years for the Westminster and GB Trade Programmes.
7. To allow officers to meet the necessary timeline for successful delivery it is proposed that this matter be agreed by the Committee in advance of all of the details being finalised.

2.0	<u>Recommendation</u> It is recommended that the Committee agrees: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the EU Trade Programme and NI-NL Forum are scaled up in line with the agreed LEP Action Plan. 2. To delegate authority for the approval of the final programme to the Chair and Vice Chair in consultation with the Director. 3. That the EU Trade Programme be progressed as outlined in the report. 4. 	
3.0	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> The Economic Development Budget Estimates includes provision for the EU Trade Programme and NI-NL Forum. The LEP Action Plan includes provision for funding to support a scaled-up version of this initiative (subject to receipt of a letter of offer).	
4.0	<u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	Yes
4.2	Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions or rationale why the screening was not carried out Equality and good relations screening carried out under the international trade programme 2025-2026 – No key issues identified.	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	Yes
4.4	Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions or rationale why the screening was not carried out. RNIA carried out under the international trade programme 2025-2026 – No key issues identified.	

Appendices:	
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