



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA, Chairperson
Committee for Infrastructure**

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster Council
chief.executive@midulstercouncil.org

21 October 2021

Dear Adrian,

At its meeting yesterday, the Committee for Infrastructure discussed and welcomed the Minister for Infrastructure's decision to rescind the Policy Advice Note on the Strategic Planning Policy on Development in the Countryside. The Minister has advised that she wishes to take stock of the concerns raised and to further engage with stakeholders on this matter.

The Committee agreed to write to all local authorities urging you to engage with the Department in respect of the Minister's decision to reconsider the implementation of the Development in the Countryside policy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jonathan G. Buckley'.

**Jonathan Buckley MLA
Chairperson**

Committee for Infrastructure

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Councillor Paul McLean
Chair, Mid-Ulster District Council
chair@midulstercouncil.org

CORR-0397-2021
29 October 2021

**PROPOSED OPENING OF A MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT OFFICE IN BELFAST**

The previous Chair of Mid Ulster Council, Councillor Cathal Mallaghan, wrote to us on 7 April sharing a motion passed by the Council expressing concern at a proposed move by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to open an office in Belfast.

There is no agreed joint position on the matter.

We note your Council's position and intend to keep this matter under review.

PAUL GIVAN MLA
FIRST MINISTER

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER



Ms Adrian McCreesh,
Mid Ulster District Council Dungannon
Issued via email: adrian.mccreesh@midulstercouncil.org

22 October 2021

Dear Mr McCreesh,

The Commission for Victims and Survivors has recently completed a number of qualitative research projects and a quantitative Population Survey. The latter provides us with data on a council by council basis, and all provide material in relation to issues that may assist in thinking around social cohesion and good relations including issues related to community planning and areas of the display of identity, culture and tradition.

The Commission is keen to work more closely with Councils, Peace Partnerships and Council Officers on these particular areas, not least as we prepare for Peace Plus.

We presented a regional oversight of this to the TEO Committee in October and write to ask if you feel it would be helpful for us to schedule a presentation to your Councillors and/or teams of officers?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Andrew Sloan'.

Andrew Sloan
Chief Executive



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
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Department for
Commonities

Cllr Paul McLean
Chair Mid Ulster District Council

Paddy Rooney
Deputy Secretary
Work and Health Group
Level 9
Causeway Exchange
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e-mail: paddy.rooney@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: CST-1023-2021
9 November 2021

Dear Councillor McLean

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPLIFT

Thank you for your letter dated 4 November to Minister Hargey. As I have responsibility for the delivery of Universal Credit, your letter was passed to me to reply.

Throughout her time in office, Minister Hargey has repeatedly demonstrated her absolute commitment and determination to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. You will be aware that the Minister has stated many times that she is vehemently opposed to the uplift being removed and recognises the enormous hardship it will cause for people who are already struggling financially with job losses, reduced hours and less income.

The Minister's priority has always been for Westminster to retain the uplift. Indeed, she wrote to Therese Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on four separate occasions, calling for the uplift to be retained and made permanent. On two of these occasions, she was joined by her colleagues in the Scottish and Welsh devolved administrations.

In all of her letters, the Minister stressed the importance of retaining this critical support. She escalated the issue to the First and deputy First Minister who joined with the Scottish and Welsh First Ministers in making the same call to the Prime Minister at the end of September.

Disappointingly, despite the calls from Minister Hargey, the First and deputy First Minister and the Scottish and Welsh First Ministers, Therese Coffey confirmed that the uplift was temporary and it has now been removed.

You may know that the Minister submitted a bid for £55m in October monitoring to mitigate withdrawal of the £20-per-week Universal Credit uplift but this bid was not met by the Executive.

In terms of progressing long-term strategies to address poverty, I can confirm that development work began on the Department's Social Inclusion Strategies, including the Anti-Poverty Strategy, following Executive approval in September 2020.



Progress on the Anti-Poverty Strategy continues at pace. Minister is committed to the co-design process and wants to ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard and articulated in the development of the strategy. The Minister remains committed to delivering the strategy within this Assembly mandate.

I trust this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Paddy Rooney
Deputy Secretary Work and Health Group

From the Minister of Finance

*Paul McLean,
Mid Ulster District Council*

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2nd Floor
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303 Airport Road West
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Tel: 028 9081 6216
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Your reference: C214/21
Our reference: CORR-1395-2021

Date: 9 November 2021

Dear Paul

**CORR-1395-2021: MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL - UNIVERSAL CREDIT:
REMOVAL OF THE £20 PER WEEK UPLIFT**

Thank you for your letter of 4 November 2021, requesting that I liaise with Minister Hargey to uphold the uplift of £20 per week for those in receipt of Universal and Working Tax Credit for the remainder of the financial year and commit to a long term strategy to tackle poverty and social deprivation across Mid Ulster.

As you may know, my colleague Deirdre Hargey MLA, the Minister for Communities, along with the other devolved administrations, has written to the British Government Minister responsible, calling for this additional payment to be retained and to be made permanent. I fully support the Communities Minister in this initiative and in the first instance it is important that the devolved administrations, as well as Councils, continue to keep the pressure on the British Government to reinstate its uplift.

Minister Hargey also submitted a bid of £55m to continue the £20 per week uplift as part of October monitoring. After the £200 million was allocated to Health as part of the Monitoring Round there was only £23 million of Resource available. This was not enough to meet the DfC Universal Credit bid. Meeting the Universal Credit bid from the Monitoring Round would be incompatible with the public commitment of all Executive parties to prioritise Health. In addition, it would be important to replace the Universal Credit uplift on a long-term basis, not just until the end of March. The costs of this are expected to rise to £200m per year as people are migrated from legacy benefits to Universal Credit to maintain the £20-per-week uplift.

In order to adequately fund Health and Universal Credit I therefore set out the pro rata contributions needed from Departments other than Health to fund the Universal Credit uplift not just for this financial year, but also for future years. The Executive did not support this option.

On your wider point, the need for an Anti-Poverty strategy has never been more significant. Pre-existing inequalities in our society have been exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic and its impact on the economy. It is therefore essential that we focus on how to help those most in need and address inequalities across our society.

As part of the commitments under New Decade, New Approach and the Executive's Programme for Government it was agreed that a suite of strategies would be developed in relation to Anti-Poverty, Disability, Gender Equality and Sexual Orientation. These strategies will aim to address a range of barriers and inequalities not just in the Mid Ulster Council area, but across the North. The Department for Communities is responsible for driving the Anti-Poverty policy on behalf of the Executive and I will continue to endeavour to provide the financial resources necessary to assist that effort.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Conor Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C'.

CONOR MURPHY MLA
MINISTER OF FINANCE



From the Minister of Finance

*Councillor Paul McLean
Mid Ulster District Council*

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Your reference: C174/21
Our reference: INV-0354-2021

Date: 11 November 2021

Dear Councillor McLean,

**MEETING TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF RATE SETTING AND ONGOING
LEGAL PROCEEDINGS**

Thank you for the agenda and associated papers for the proposed meeting to discuss your Council's Judicial Review proceedings against my Department.

Given that legal proceedings have been initiated, it would not be appropriate for me in my role as Minister to meet your delegation to discuss these issues at this time.

However I am content that my officials meet with a delegation from your Council to discuss the issues raised in the agenda and I will ensure arrangements are made for that.

Is mise le meas

**CONOR MURPHY, MLA
MINISTER OF FINANCE**



the voice of local government

Councillor Paul McClean
Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
Dungannon Office
Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

11th November 2021

Dear Chair

As advised to your Chief Executive and your local authority's NILGA Executive members, earlier this year, I wish to formally confirm to Council that I will step down from the NILGA CEO role at the end of November 2021.

This follows a mutually agreed position reached following my need to assess some medical and non-medical advice and to act upon it.

Continuity, succession management and recruitment processes are all in situ with a replacement Chief Executive anticipated to be in post by March 2022.

I am sincerely indebted, and genuinely thankful, to all in Mid Ulster District, who have worked with and gained from cross-council, practical partnership on matters of common concern, whether council finances, strategic policies, a Vision & Programme for Local Government, the economy, learning & development, Stormont lobbying, Westminster negotiations, Planning workshops, Partnership Panel, Ulster in Bloom, and many more. The approach from Council – including the excellent office bearers of NILGA, past and present, has always been personable, innovative and thorough, leadership traits which I know will continue.

It has been a personal and professional privilege to work with your Officer Team and so many Elected Members, today and in the past 21 years of local government work, and I hope to engage with you and add value in the future in different ways.

My sincere good wishes to the Council for 2022 and beyond, and my renewed thanks for your continued collegiate and productive work with NILGA.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Derek McCallan', written over a horizontal line.

Derek McCallan
Chief Executive

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Councillor Paul McClean
Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
Dungannon Office
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

Castle Buildings
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Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: INV/0729/2021

Date: 11th November 2021By email: Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.orgDear *Paul,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 November 2021, requesting an urgent meeting to discuss concerns that the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill may run out of time prior to approval in the current Assembly mandate.

I regret that I am unable to accept your invitation at this time. You will appreciate the priority currently being afforded to a number of urgent health issues requiring immediate Ministerial oversight including the coronavirus response which is expected to continue for some time.

However, I can advise that the second reading of the Bill took place on Monday 20 September 2021. The session concluded with the Assembly passing a milestone vote allowing the Bill to move to the next phase of the legislative process.

The Bill is currently in the Committee phase and the committee have advised that they aim to report back to the Assembly no later than 21 January 2022. Reporting by this date will ensure that the Bill can complete the remainder of the legislative process before the end of the current Assembly mandate.

I can assure you my Departmental officials are working to ensure plans are in place for flexibility in delivery timeframes where possible, by working with the Assembly Business office to expedite certain processes during the passage of the Bill, and they would be happy to meet with you to update you on this work. Please contact Ian Plunkett, Head of the Organ Donation Bill Team at ian.plunkett@health-ni.gov.uk to arrange a suitable time and date.

Yours sincerely

ROBIN SWANN MLA
Minister of Health



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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Depairtment fur
Commonities

From: The Minister

**Level 9
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Telephone: (028) 9082 3476
e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: SUB 0766 2021
Date: 11 November 2021

Councillor Paul McLean
Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
Council Offices
Circular Road
DUNGANNON
BT71 6DT

Via e-mail chair@midulstercouncil.org

Paul, a chara,

DISSOLUTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION

In July 2012, the Department of the Environment initiated a review of the Local Government Staff Commission (Commission). Following consultation, the Minister of the Environment concluded that, although the Commission had performed well in a necessary and challenging role for 40 years, other developments meant that a statutory body of that type was no longer required. As a consequence, in 2014, the Executive agreed that the Commission should be dissolved on 31 March 2017.

Given the passage of time that has evolved since the review in 2012, I have decided to carry out a follow-up consultation in order to ascertain if there are any reasons that the Executive decision to dissolve the Commission should be reconsidered.

Therefore, I would appreciate your views on whether there are any reasons that the Executive decision in 2014 to dissolve the Commission should be reconsidered.

I would be grateful if responses could be forwarded to Jeff Glass (jeff.glass@communities-ni.gov.uk) by 26 November 2021.

Is mise le meas,

**Deirdre Hargey MLA
Minister for Communities**



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
Nichola Mallon MLA

Councillor Paul McLean

Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org

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Your reference: XXXX
Our reference: INV-0528-2021
16 November 2021

Dear Paul,

UTILITY ROAD WORKS MID ULSTER

Thank you for your letter of 4 November regarding the management of utility street works in the Mid Ulster Council area.

I acknowledge the disruption these essential works can cause and the need to manage them with due regard to the constraints and circumstances at a given location. I am also aware that there are many street works ongoing within your district to put in place enhance telecommunications and mains gas supplies, and while it is acknowledged there may be disruption at times, this is to be welcomed and will bring significant benefits to the community and public.

There are well-established procedures in place to manage street works on public roads and I am aware that your Council has also been consulting with utility companies directly. In the circumstances I have asked my officials to make themselves available to discuss any concerns you may have. In this regard please contact Michelle Greer, Roads Western Network Maintenance Manager who can be contacted at michelle.greer@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk.

NICHOLA MALLON MLA
Minister for Infrastructure



From the office of the Chief Executive

By email only

Councillor Paul McLean
Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
Magherafelt Office
Ballyronan Road
Magherafelt
BT45 6EN

16 November 2021

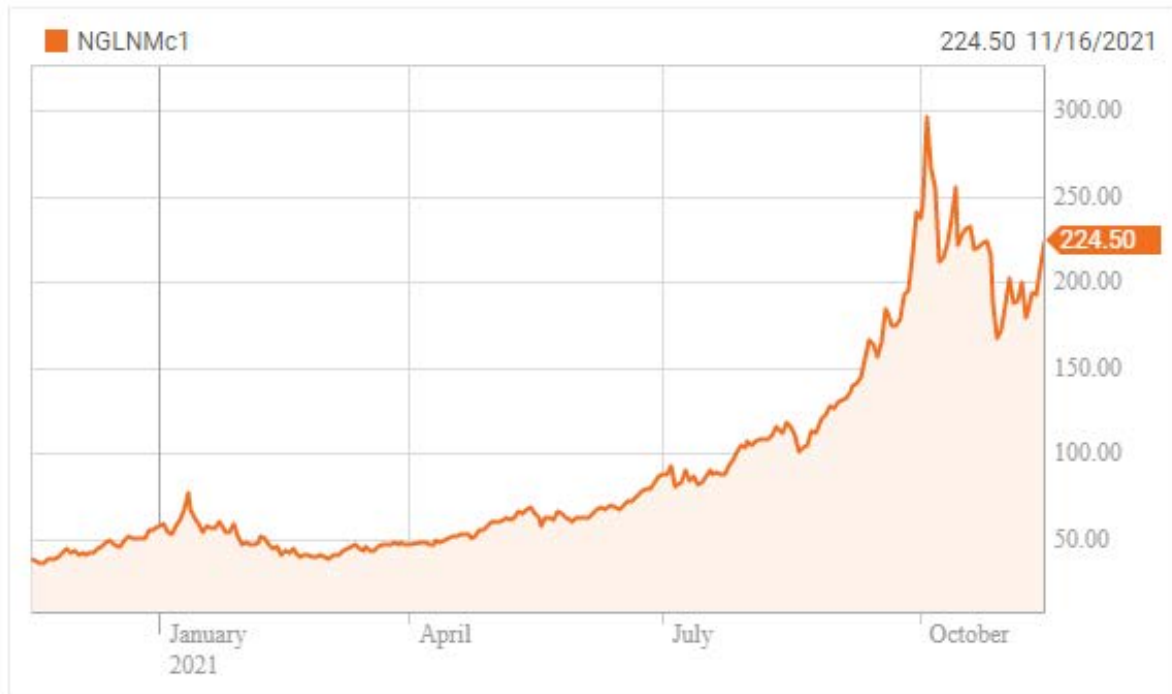
Dear Mr McLean,

Thank you for your letter of 9 November 2021 detailing the recent council motion in relation to the increases in the cost of energy and support for consumers.

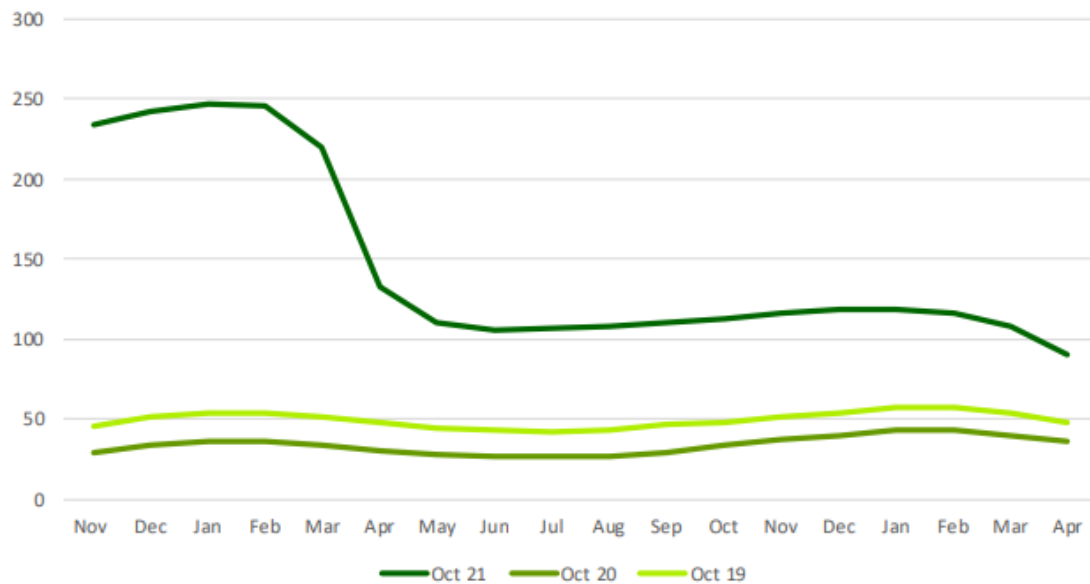
Unfortunately, the tariff increases have come about due to unprecedented rises in international wholesale energy market costs widely reported across not just Northern Ireland, but the UK and across Europe. Wholesale gas prices have reached record levels in recent months. We have seen particularly steep increases since July 2021 with wholesale gas trading at almost five times the level it was back in March 2021.

As you can see from the graphs overleaf, the cost of wholesale gas has risen by over 390% across the past seven months and continues to rise further as we head into the winter and across 2022. This is not a short-term problem. Unfortunately projections for forward prices of wholesale gas continue to forecast high prices for many months ahead.

The wholesale fuel cost makes up over 50% of the final bill paid by natural gas consumers. Natural gas also continues to be the dominant fossil fuel for electricity generation which makes up over 50% of the final consumer bill. These international wholesale fuel increases are therefore directly reflected in end consumer prices.



Gas Forward Prices Oct 21 v Oct 20 v Oct 19



It is the role of the Utility Regulator, in consultation with the Department for the Economy and the Consumer Council, to fully scrutinise the tariff submissions from the dominant gas and electricity supply companies to ensure they accurately reflect the costs they have incurred. We have no statutory powers to ask a company to sell gas or electricity below the market cost price.

Although we have no control over these international cost drivers, we are working alongside partners such as the Consumer Council, Department for the Economy, Department of the Communities and industry to see how we can work together to mitigate some of the effects of these increases.

In addition, we have written to all energy suppliers in Northern Ireland to remind them of their regulatory obligations in regards of consumers struggling with their bills. Our letter stressed to energy companies, the importance of clear communications with customers in debt and licence requirements that seek to protect consumers in times of difficulty.

If you feel it would be beneficial, I would be happy to attend a future meeting of the Council to provide further detail or address any outstanding questions. Please do let me know and we can facilitate arrangements.

All the very best,



John French
Chief Executive

From the Office of the Minister
Gordon Lyons MLA



Councillor Paul McLean
Chair
Mid Ulster District Council
Mail to: Eileen.Forde@midulstercouncil.org

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Our Ref: CORR-1360-2021

Your Ref: C213/21

17 November 2021

Dear Cllr McLean,

Work Life Balance and Four-Day Working Week

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 November informing me of the Motion which your Council carried at its October meeting regarding work life balance and which calls on my Department to establish working groups and pilot programmes that support employers to trial the concept of a four-day working week.

Employers and their workforces are free to develop and participate in such pilot schemes, or indeed adopt a four-day work week on a permanent basis, should they wish and agree to do so.

In addition, the current legislative framework to support flexible working and the individual right to request it, already facilitates a wide range of working patterns. This right has been available since 6 April 2015 to all employees who have worked for their employer for at least 26 weeks. Employers are obliged to consider such requests seriously.

I am aware of pilots being carried out and completed in other jurisdictions in relation to a four-day working week and it will be interesting, in due course, to consider the outcomes of these and to see the range of consequences such arrangements may have for workers and businesses. All employers can, however, choose to trial or implement a four-day working week but it is for them to determine which model best meets the needs of their business and the customers they support. In the meantime, I would encourage all employers and workers to make the best possible use of the existing framework of measures to support work life balance and staff retention.

My priority and focus at this time, however, is to protect jobs and rebuild our economy following the devastating impact of COVID-19, and the Economic Recovery Action Plan which my Department is delivering will help achieve this.

Yours sincerely,



GORDON LYONS MLA
Minister for the Economy

Chief Executive of District Councils
By email:

**Office of the Local Government
Boundaries Commissioner**
C/O Local Government Division,
Department for Communities,
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

19 Nov 2021

Local Government Boundaries Review

Dear Chief Executive,

I am writing to update you on my Review of the Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland.

Public hearings on my Provisional Recommendations were held in each of the 11 Local Government Districts in September and October this year, chaired by my Assistant Commissioners. I am now formulating Revised Recommendations in response to the written and oral submissions received.

It is my intention to publish these Revised Recommendations for a 6 week period of public consultation on 18th January 2022. You can access information on the Review including the timeline for completion on my website at www.lgbc-ni.org.uk. I should be grateful if you would share this information with your members. My team will provide some promotional material with you in advance of the consultation.

If you should wish to discuss this or any aspect of the Review with me please contact my team at info@lgbc-ni.org.uk to make the necessary arrangements.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully





Local Government
Boundaries Commissioner
for Northern Ireland

An Coimisinéir um
Theorainneacha Rialtais
Áitiúil do Thuaisceart Éireann

Mairches o Hamelt
Government Commissioner
fer Norlin Airlan

Sarah Havlin

Local Government Boundaries Commissioner

cc Jenny McGuigan, LGBC Office.