

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting No 102

MINUTES

Thursday 29 January 2026

Using MS Teams

Members Present:

Councillor A Bennington (<i>Chair</i>)	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor E Thompson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor J Cochrane	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor C Blaney	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Alderman O Gawith	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor A Givan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Alderman M Morrow	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor M Goodman	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor H Cushinan	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor M Collins	Belfast City Council
Councillor A Groogan	Belfast City Council
Councillor E McDonough-Brown	Belfast City Council
Alderman S Skillen	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor G McKeen (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor R Quigley	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor T Andrews	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor J Brennan	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
H Campbell (<i>Secretary</i>)	arc21
K Boal	arc21
J Green	arc21
M Laverty	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
G Bannister	Ards & North Down Borough Council
K Patterson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
S Leonard	Belfast City Council
G Richardson	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
D Carey	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
S Murphy	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

A McCann	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
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Item 1 - Conflicts of Interest Statement

The Chair read out the Conflicts of Interest Statement, and none were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 2 - Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 3 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 101 held on 2 December 2025

The Joint Committee approved the minutes. Proposed by Cllr Givan, seconded by Ald Gawith, and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

Supplies – a question was posed at the last meeting regarding which officer within the NIEA might be responsible for authorising the movement of wastes into / out of Northern Ireland.

Ms Boal reported that in terms of the general movements between NI and GB, when the waste is non-hazardous material, there is no authorisation required and it is transported with an accompanying exchange of waste transfer notes / paperwork. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) would become aware of such movements through the quarterly returns that contractors must submit, which would indicate the geographical location from which the waste materials were being transferred. However, this information will not go into details such as specifying which customers produced the waste. The returns provide details about the areas of origin, including an appropriate European Waste Catalogue (EWC) code.

She mentioned that the Digital Waste Tracking (DWT) system, the first phase of which is scheduled to be introduced in October 2026 followed by full implementation the following year, is intended to monitor all waste movements comprehensively. Once operational, it should provide a complete picture of all waste movements, including hazardous waste and transfers between NI and the Republic of Ireland, as well as with other regions which are subject to the Trans-Frontier Shipment notification process. At present, there is no system in place that records these movements in real time.

Action: Noted

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move “*In Committee*” which was agreed. Proposed by Ald Gawith and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Matters of a confidential and commercially sensitive nature were discussed under these agenda items.

Following discussion on the commercially sensitive matters, the Chair recommended that the meeting would now return to the main agenda, which was approved, but whilst “*In Committee*” during this section of the meeting, there were four matters discussed.

Item 5 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 101 held on 2 December 2025 ‘in committee’ - approved

Item 6 - Matters Arising - noted

Item 7 - Residual Waste Treatment Project - noted

Item 8 - Commercially Sensitive Contract & Procurement Issues – approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Cllr Givan and seconded by Ald Morrow.

Item 9 - Outreach Report

Mr Walker presented a report to provide details of recent outreach requests, and to provide an update on an arc21-supported project from 2021.

He highlighted a live call from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council in the UK (EPSRC) inviting submissions concerning various initiatives associated with resources and waste management. Consequently, several universities had approached arc21 to inquire if we would partner or be a supporting partner in the development of the initial application.

The first approach was from Queens University, Belfast seeks to focus on circular metrics which involves data collection and analysis for measuring the circular economy and aims to create a collaborative consortium of councils, colleges, and universities in England. He noted that arc21 has been invited to participate as a partner in this initiative and in order to meet the tight timescale for submissions a supporting letter had already been agreed with the Chair and had been submitted.

The second approach was from Leeds University, which arc21 had previously partnered with on a project on the recovery of wind turbine blades. In this case, their project proposal focused on enhancing circularity in the built environment with the objective of exploring how to integrate circularity into the sourcing, recording, and management of building materials. Again, he noted that arc21 had been invited to participate as a partner and as the same timescale applied to that mentioned above, a supporting letter had already been agreed with the Chair and had been submitted.

He noted that both proposals were preliminary bids which would need to be accepted, at which point more comprehensive bids would be developed. He advised that the applications would be scrutinised by EPSRC and, as this is a competitive process, a funding award would not be guaranteed. Should these proposals be successful in gaining financial backing, they are scheduled to launch in 2027.

A question was posed regarding the degree of support required for these two proposals, and Mr Walker indicated that it would be minimal, with previous projects having been satisfactorily supported through online meetings or telephone conversations, usually on a quarterly basis or more infrequently.

He went on to report that arc21 had received notification of the conclusion of a previously supported project from Queen's University which focused on the industrial symbiosis opportunities and prospects for Northern Ireland related to the dairy industry and served as input to an academic publication [a Springer Book]. A summary of study was appended to the report.

It was recommended that Members retrospectively approve arc21's support to the following projects:

- (i) EPSRC CircularMetrics+: Integrating Data, Metrics and Policy Across the UK;
- (ii) EPSRC Call on Reimagining Circularity for Circularity in the Built Environment NetworkPlus (CUBE N+); and

to note the conclusion of the QUB Springer Book project.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee agreed to approve the recommendations. Proposed by Cllr Givan, seconded by Ald Gawith and agreed by all.

Action: Noted

Item 10 - Contracts & Operations Briefing Report

Ms Boal presented a report to provide the Joint Committee with an update in relation to contracts and operations.

Service Status

She reported that all services were operational and had run well during November and December. Arrangements for access to all sites to facilitate the holiday collections had been put in place, and additional site opening was also requested at some sites for those councils which had to pull-back services due to the adverse weather in January 2026.

Performance

Ms Boal provided an update on contractor performance across all the contracts in November and December and highlighted where some service credits had been applied for turnaround times, the number of overweight vehicles, reporting issues by contractors, and the bring contracts rectification requests issued and serviced.

Health & Safety

She reported that during November and December, three health and safety incidents or near misses were reported which could all have been fire related. Plans to engage with councils' recycling officers to discuss these incidents and improve public communication regarding disposal and fire prevention were covered. Additionally, a meeting focused on health and safety is being planned, inviting council operational staff, supervisory staff, and health and safety staff to review trends, and discuss best practices and potential improvements. She noted that efforts are being made to be proactive in these areas.

Ms Boal reported that the external health and safety audit programme continues with a recent visit to McQuillan's Environmental, which provides services to the councils' paper banks, and larger audits had been undertaken of the RiverRidge facilities at Craigmore and Mallusk, and Cookstown Textile Recyclers (CTR) at Randalstown, and the RiverRidge facility at Portadown.

She noted that all reports had been shared with the contractors with some actions identified and arc21 was working closely with all parties to complete these as soon as possible.

Rejected Loads

She reported that in November, one rejected load had been delivered to Bryson Recycling (Mixed Dry) and one in both November and December to the NWP Glenside (Organics) facility, again due to vehicles not being fully emptied before commencing the collection of other materials. arc21 continues to highlight this with the councils' officers at the monthly Steering Group meetings.

arc21 Contract Tonnages

Details of the tonnages delivered in November and December for the main contracts were provided, along with a comparison against the same period last year.

Supplies

A summary of the orders and deliveries of supplies for November and December 2025 was included in Ms Boal's report and she noted that there had been two non-compliances.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by Cllr Givan and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Action: Noted

Item 11 - Waste Tonnage Trends

Ms Boal presented a report showing the tonnage comparisons for material received through the arc21 contracts over the last four years, and she discussed the increases and decreases in the tonnage trends.

She noted that in terms of the textiles, November and December saw increased tonnages than at the comparative time in previous years, noting that it was possibly down to charity shops etc restricting intake due to the markets.

She advised that she would be meeting with the service provider, Cookstown Textile Recyclers, ahead of the next Joint Committee meeting after which she would draft a recommendation on future revenue share arrangements. She noted that the market had not picked up and arc21 is expecting some further easement in terms of the revenue shares to the councils from this contractor.

She also presented an analysis of the councils' performance against the waste diverted from a 10% landfill target, and their performance against a recycling target of 70% using information from WasteDataFlow from April to September.

Ms Boal noted that all councils were sitting below the 10% landfill target as their residual waste contracts had all been successfully migrated away from landfill and were now fully operational. In terms of the household waste recycled, the councils were averaging between 40% and 60% which was to be anticipated with the increase in organics during the summer months.

She noted that the DAERA waste strategy consultation on *Rethinking our Resources* would set the direction of travel of what arc21 and the councils need to achieve over the coming years.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Givan.

Action: Noted

Item 12 - Rethinking Our Resources: Northern Ireland Resources and Waste Management Strategy Consultation

Ms Boal provided a report on the *Rethinking our Resources* consultation which had recently been launched and was overdue.

She discussed the aims of the new Strategy, the targets and actions proposed over a number of waste streams, and an overview of the consultation questions that DAERA is seeking addressed.

She mentioned that some of the actions were similar to those consulted on in a previous consultation exercise (2024), and there did not appear to have been much advance on the thinking presented at that time. She also highlighted that some of the target appeared to be set for delivery in the near future (2027) which appears to be overly imminent and may need to be explored further with the Department.

She noted that the consultation period closes on 8 April 2026 and arc21 will be working with the councils' officers to prepare a draft response which represents a consensus view and that the aim would be to have this ready to present to the Joint Committee in February.

Following a brief discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Action: Noted

Item 13 - Outcome from Consultation on Landfill Tax Reform

Ms Boal presented a report to update members on the outcome of the consultation on the reform of landfill tax in England and Northern Ireland which closed in July 2025.

She mentioned that Government's response had recently been published, and the outcomes were briefly summarised. It was noted that many of the actions initially proposed were not being progressed at this time.

She noted that whilst it did not overly affect arc21, aspects of the consultation could have had a bearing upon one or more of arc21's contracts. However, the conclusion was that nothing is currently being advanced which would have an effect on the arc21 contracts.

Following a brief discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by Cllr Givan and seconded by Cllr Ald Morrow.

Action: Noted

Item 14 - arc21 Annual Webinar, Tuesday 31 March 2026

Mr Walker informed the meeting of the next arc21 annual webinar, scheduled for 31 March 2026.

He reported that he had pulled together speakers who will cover items such as an update on Extended Producer Responsibility, Circular Economy, and managing particular waste streams or planning for future infrastructural requirements.

He noted that further details would be circulated shortly and asked all Members to note their diaries accordingly.

The Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Ald Gawith.

Action: Noted

Item 15 - AOB

There was no business raised.

Item 16 - Next Meeting Thursday 26 February using MS Teams

The Chair advised that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 26 February 2026 using MS teams and all were encouraged to confirm their attendance with Ms Campbell in advance of the meeting.

Action: ALL

All officers were asked to leave the meeting for this matter, with the exception of Ms Campbell who remained to take minutes.

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move “*In Committee*” in order to consider one item which was agreed. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Givan.

Item 17 - Appointment of Chief Executive 2026-Recruitment Exercise - approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move out of “*In Committee*” which was agreed. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Givan.

Action: Agreed

Date: 26 February 2026

Chair:

A Bennington