



# 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Consumer Council was established in April 1985 as a non-departmental public body (NDPB) under the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 (The Order).

We are committed to ensuring positive outcomes for consumers in Northern Ireland. Our principal statutory duty is to safeguard their interests and we operate under our sponsor department, the Department for the Economy, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

To ensure we protect consumers, we have a range of legal powers and duties, drawn from legislation, licences given to companies working in Northern Ireland, and cooperation agreements set in memorandums of understanding. The work we carry out also aligns with a number of the Articles in the Protocol of Ireland and Northern Ireland (NI Protocol).

### 2.1 About the Consumer Council

We are passionate about championing consumer interests and we put them at the heart of everything we do. As the consumer representative body of Northern Ireland, we are responsible for ensuring legislation and regulation for consumer protection works effectively for consumers here.

We are an insight-led evidence based organisation:

- Providing consumers with expert advice and confidential guidance.
- Engaging with government, regulators and consumer bodies to influence public policy.
- Empowering consumers with the information and tools to build confidence and knowledge.
- Investigating and resolving consumer complaints under statutory and non-statutory functions.
- Undertaking best practice research to identify and quantify emerging risks to consumers.
- Campaigning for market reform as an advocate for consumer choice and protection.

We have statutory functions in relation to consumer affairs, energy, postal services, transport, water and sewerage, and food accessibility. Our non-statutory functions educate, empower and support consumers against discriminatory practices in any market, from financial services through to food affordability and private parking charge notices.

We are the trusted, independent voice of Northern Ireland consumers. We achieve this by responding to enquiries, providing expert advice, investigating complaints, conducting independent research, advocating across consumer issues, delivering information campaigns, collaborating, influencing public policy, and advising government on matters of consumer rights and protection.

In everything we do, we prioritise consumers:

- who are disabled or chronically sick;
- who are of pensionable age;
- who are on low incomes; and
- who live in rural areas.

We have responsibilities under the Rural Needs Act 2016 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In this role, we aim to ensure government policies recognise consumer needs in rural areas, and promote equality of opportunity and good relations across a range of equality categories.

## Super-complaints

We are a designated super-complaints body set up under the Enterprise Act 2002 and the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 Order 2013.

Under both Acts, the Consumer Council can, if we believe any feature or combination of features of a market in the United Kingdom is, or appears to be, significantly harming the interests of consumers, raise a super-complaint on behalf of consumers to the following regulators:

- Civil Aviation Authority
- Competition and Markets Authority
- Financial Conduct Authority
- Office of Communications
- Office of Gas and Electricity Markets
- Office of Rail and Road
- Payment Systems Regulator
- Northern Ireland Utility Regulator
- Water Services Regulation Authority

Under the Gas and Electricity Licence Modification and Appeals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, we can appeal to the Competition and Markets Authority if we believe a modification by the Utility Regulator to the licence of a gas or electricity provider is detrimental to the interests of consumers.

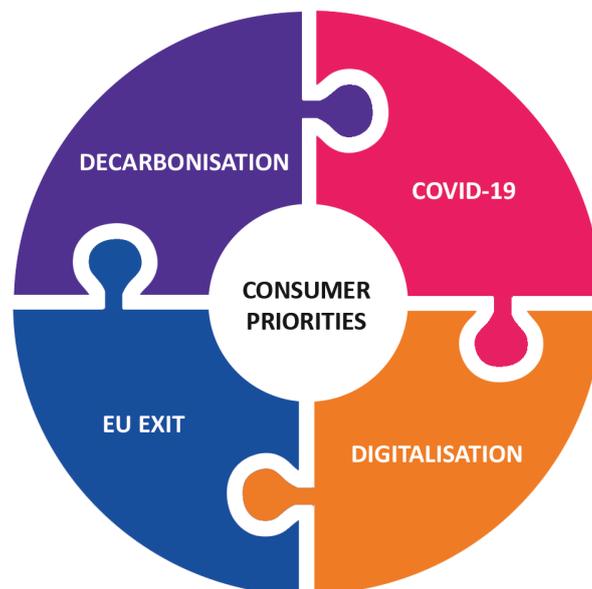
## SETTING THE CONTEXT

We support the outcomes identified by Northern Ireland Executive in their draft Programme for Government and [New Decade New Approach](#) to bring about sustainable recovery and achieve wellbeing across our society, alongside a number of supporting strategies including the [Energy Strategy - Path to Net Zero Energy](#) and [10x Economy](#).

### 2.3 The four consumer priorities

We understand consumers and their needs through our direct engagement, the insights obtained from our research and outreach programmes, and extensive ongoing engagement with stakeholders from government, academia, the advice sector, wider public sector and business community.

Using this evidence, we built our Corporate Plan 2021-2024 to address four consumer priorities: COVID-19, EU Exit, decarbonisation and digitalisation. In parallel, we sought to make markets work in the interests of consumers by ensuring service providers, government, regulators and other key stakeholders reflect consumer needs when developing policies and delivering services.



Despite the challenges we have experienced in the last 12 months, and will continue to experience, we believe addressing these remain most important to consumers in Northern Ireland.

They underpin our core purpose: to support, educate and protect them so they can overcome emerging challenges and plan for a better future. This is echoed by our stakeholders who agree they reflect our ambition of delivering inclusive societal and economic value.

We recognise the legislative reform that will be taken forward by the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government on competition and consumer policy, including protections in digital markets and the transition to net zero, and the impact this can have on consumer behaviours and confidence.

We will continue to conduct research, analyse and gather evidence and utilise intelligence on how well consumers and the Northern Ireland economy can respond to these reforms, now and beyond pandemic, and advocate on behalf of consumers, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances.

## COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on our economy and consumer detriment is inextricably linked. It brought unparalleled disruption to our lives and livelihoods, exacerbating structural and societal inequalities.

As we emerge from the pandemic and governments prioritise regionally-balanced economic recovery, changing labour markets, shifts in consumer behaviour and rising costs mean disparity of consumer experiences and increased poverty. Most affected are the vulnerable in our society with low-paid and part-time workers continuing to face uncertainty over their future employment.

## EU Exit

The NI Protocol and corresponding grace periods continue to dominate political debate and media coverage, with clear impacts for consumers on how they work, live and do business.

Market access and supply chain disruption was coupled with criticism of the UK Government and European Commission handling of negotiations, impacting on businesses and communities. Future policy and legislation, and resulting regulations and standards, must safeguard against erosions to consumer rights, protections, accessibility and affordability, mindful of concerns from civic society.

## Decarbonisation

Delivering a more competitive, inclusive and greener economy has accelerated Northern Ireland's pathway to net zero energy by 2050 through the [Energy Strategy](#) and proposed [Climate Change Bill](#).

Achieving net zero emissions through a just and fair energy transition is essential for long term consumer protection, with education and empowerment critical to helping citizens through their changing energy future. Influencing consumer behaviour, consumption and affordability must also be prioritised, underpinned by access to trusted and independent advice, support and redress.

## Digitalisation

The shift to digitalisation, accelerated by the pandemic, is transforming consumer expectations and access, and amplifying the risk landscape and digital exclusion for many of our citizens.

The digitalisation of our economy is irrevocably changing consumer behaviour. Benefits include greater flexibility, choice, speed and ease of access and convenience, but this has led to the exclusion of consumers in vulnerable circumstances. Regulation and independent scrutiny must match the pace of innovation, with public policy ensuring all citizens are included and protected.

## 2.4 Our guiding principles

We use a set of eight guiding principles, developed by the United Nations to assess where the consumer interest lies, and to develop and communicate our policies, interventions and support.

The principles provide an agreed framework through which we approach regulatory and policy work and ensure we apply a consistent approach across our statutory and non-statutory functions, and in all our engagement with consumers and stakeholders.



They serve to protect consumers, setting out the minimum standards expected from markets when delivering products or services in Northern Ireland. They frame our policy position and approach to addressing emerging detriment, including in digital markets, and resolving consumer disputes with industry, offering a straightforward checklist to analyse and validate outcomes, in particular amongst vulnerable groups.

## 2.5 Our five strategic objectives

To support the emerging consumer priorities and our guiding principles, we have identified five strategic objectives: understanding consumers; influencing policy; representing consumers; protecting consumers; and empowering consumers.

Through these, we:

- Protect consumers.
- Build consumer confidence, resilience and welfare.
- Inform consumer policy, legislation and regulation.
- Educate consumers so they make informed choices.

### UNDERSTANDING CONSUMERS

#### Our aim

To understand the emerging risks, challenges and opportunities consumers in Northern Ireland are facing at a community, regional, national and international level.

**We will**

- Be an insight-led, evidence based organisation.
- Evaluate socio-economic trends that influence consumer behaviour and confidence.
- Review legislation and regulation to identify and mitigate consumer detriment within our vires.
- Develop comprehensive insights into the unique considerations affecting consumers.

**We do so through**

- Citizen and stakeholder consultations.
- Outreach and education programmes.
- Data and intelligence gathering.
- Bespoke research projects.
- Surveys and panels.

**We deliver**

Analysis of consumer issues with insights for the necessary protections, supported by recommendations for accessible and affordable solutions from industry and government.

**INFLUENCING POLICY****Our aim**

To influence any public policy that affects Northern Ireland consumers, ensuring it meets their needs, safeguards protections, is citizen-focused and supports inclusive economic recovery.

**We will**

- Advise on regional and national policy informed by the issues affecting consumers here.
- Work with regulators to hold industry accountable to more transparent and affordable access.
- Ensure policy and regulation, prioritise consumer affordability, confidence and welfare.
- Provide comprehensive evidence and insights to shape consumer policy.

**We do so through**

- Consultation responses.
- National and international forums.
- Committees, working groups and networks.
- Partner memorandums of understanding.
- Outcomes-led stakeholder relationships.

**We deliver**

Understanding of the challenges, risks and opportunities for consumers amongst regional and national policy makers across our statutory and non-statutory functions.

**REPRESENTING CONSUMERS****Our aim**

To be the trusted, independent voice of Northern Ireland consumers, particularly for those in vulnerable circumstances, through work to help them meet challenges and plan for their future.

**We will**

- Work with stakeholders and industry to improve service delivery to consumers.
- Support consumers to meet emerging priorities as the economy begins to recover.
- Advocate for accessible and affordable products and services for all consumers.
- Improve consumer engagement, satisfaction and advocacy.

**We do so through**

- Price control consultations.
- Complaint and accessibility audits.
- Impact analysis and market reviews.
- Campaigns to reduce consumer vulnerability.
- Benchmarking reports.

**We deliver**

Clarity on the needs of consumers with affordable access to markets, products and services, and advocate for enhanced protections and support around consumer vulnerability.

**PROTECTING CONSUMERS****Our aim**

To put things right by offering impartial dispute resolution and signposting services and guidance on consumer rights, and work in partnership with the advice sector to avoid duplication.

**We will**

- Advocate across consumer issues, highlighting areas of discrimination or detriment.
- Resolve consumer complaints by negotiating positive outcomes on their behalf with industry.
- Ensure essential public services offer accessible and affordable access to all consumers.
- Use research and policy analysis to highlight emerging areas of consumer detriment.

**We do so through**

- Dispute resolution.
- Consumer helpline on 0800 121 6022.
- Information and advice on consumer rights.
- Accredited complaint handling processes.
- Designated super-complaints body.

**We deliver**

Improved services and protections for all consumers through effective redress from industry, lobby for their rights, and super-complaint investigations with regulators.

**EMPOWERING CONSUMERS****Our aim**

To empower consumers by giving them information and advice about their rights and responsibilities, particularly given changing protections emerging from the strategic landscape.

**We will**

- Support consumers to make informed, confident and affordable buying choices.
- Work in partnership with stakeholders to develop information and tools for consumers.
- Encourage consumer protection within industry by informing them of their responsibilities.
- Develop education services about consumer rights and responsibilities.

**We do so through**

- Guidance, comparison tools and advisory events.
- Community engagement with Consumer Champions.
- Partnerships to reduce consumer vulnerability.
- Outreach and education programmes.
- Digital footprint and engagement.

**We deliver**

Higher levels of consumer confidence and welfare by using appropriate channels to educate all consumers about their rights and responsibilities.

## Appendix 1: 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme

Our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme details the activities we propose to deliver during the first year of our Corporate Plan 2021-2024.

To meet consumer interests and emerging priorities, we will monitor and review our external environment, through our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of EU Exit on NI consumers, and optimise and adjust our plans accordingly.

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Deliver outreach programmes to connect with consumers and communities to raise awareness of consumer rights, and the support and resources available from The Consumer Council.	Increase awareness and understanding of consumer rights and the support available from The Consumer Council.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Deliver a range of information and awareness campaigns in initiatives such as NI Savings Week, Be Ready NI, Get Online Week, National Customer Service Week, Gas Safety Week, Let's Get Going, and Water is Worth, linking into UK-wide initiatives such as National Consumer Week with Citizens' Advice and Online Shopping Safety Tips with NI Cybersecurity Centre.	Increase awareness and understanding of consumer rights, available mechanisms for redress, and the support available from The Consumer Council.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Grow size, reach and engagement of The Consumer Council's digital footprint and offering across all consumer and stakeholder groups, leveraging digital innovation where possible.	Increase awareness and understanding of consumer rights, available mechanisms for redress, and the support available from The Consumer Council.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Deliver the Christmas 2021 Campaign, targeting all households in NI, highlighting consumer rights, the importance of shopping around and being consumer savvy.	Increase awareness and understanding of consumer rights, available mechanisms for redress, and the support available from The Consumer Council.	Empowerment	December 2021
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Establish a network of Consumer Champions to connect with consumers and communities, offering advice and signposting on a range of current and emerging issues.	Strengthen understanding of regional and sub-regional issues affecting consumers across all communities, in particular those in vulnerable circumstances.	Empowerment	January to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Deliver the 2022 NI Consumer Week and regional Consumer Parliament events, targeting all consumer groups, using a combination of face-to-face and virtual delivery platforms.	Increase awareness and understanding of consumer rights, available mechanisms for redress, and the support available from The Consumer Council.	Empowerment	March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Develop advisory and educational programmes with government, local councils, industry, and community and voluntary organisations, focusing on consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Establish educational partnerships with key stakeholders to reach, educate and empower consumers, in particular those in vulnerable circumstances.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests at forums and working groups such as the Consumer Protection Partnership Intelligence Group, to ensure the needs of NI consumers are considered at a UK-wide level.	Ensure NI consumer needs are understood on a UK-wide platform and that evidence based decisions are being made.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain a range information, resources and tools about current and emerging interests and best practice guidance, available in a range of accessible formats.	Educate consumers on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Empowerment	April 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Deliver the 2021-2022 Annual Consumer Insight Survey, capturing the experiences and attitudes of consumers in NI, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Improve understanding of consumer experiences in NI and provide government and regulators with up-to-date data to inform future policy, regulations and protections.	Empowerment	February to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumers and micro and small businesses in NI, and identify their emerging needs.	Ensure emerging consumer and business issues, priorities and challenges are central to future policy development.	Empowerment	September 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Research consumer vulnerability in NI, and look to contextualise this in comparison to regional areas across the UK.	Understand and mitigate consumer vulnerability by ensuring key issues and challenges are central to future policy development.	Empowerment	September 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain a range of energy information, resources and tools, available in a range of accessible formats, for domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.	Educate domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Promote the benefits of renewable energy and low carbon equipment to domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations, such as photovoltaic panels, heat pumps, electric vehicles and other technology.	Educate domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations about renewable energy solutions and technologies, and the benefits this could offer them.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and deliver a Switch and Save campaign covering all energy suppliers for domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.	Help domestic consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations to reduce energy bills by finding the most competitive supplier.	Energy	October 2021
Empowering Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Develop and promote energy efficiency propositions for domestic consumers with partners such as Bryson Energy, National Energy Action, Energy Saving Trust, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Home Energy Conservation Authority.	Increase awareness and understanding of the range of available energy efficiency measures and help consumers to reduce their bills, and strengthen partnership working with key stakeholders.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Respond to relevant industry consultations and Code of Practice reviews, representing consumers' interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Protect consumer interests and safeguard necessary protections by ensuring public policy and industry takes account of consumers' needs.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Respond to relevant consultations and calls for evidence from government, by representing consumers interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Ensure government places consumer interests, protections, affordability and accessibility are central to its policy making and legislative and regulatory frameworks.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Contribute to the development of the new Energy Strategy for NI from DfE by providing consumer research and detailed insights to inform strategy and policy development and implementation.	Work with DfE, government departments, regulators, industry and other consumer bodies to ensure consumer protection, accessibility and affordability is central to government policy.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Work in partnership with DfE and other stakeholders to deliver a single consumer pathway for available advice, guidance and support (education, capability development and financial assistance) from government, in support of the new Energy Strategy for NI.	Deliver an accessible and optimised consumer journey that supports the decarbonisation agenda and places consumer behaviour, consumption and affordability at the heart of policy making.	Energy	March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests at Energy Advocacy Forums such as the Home Energy Conservation Authority Group, Energy Savings Week stakeholder Group and Fuel Poverty Coalition Steering Group.	Foster trusted partnerships to build effective coalitions that lobby for the necessary consumer protections, promote consumer empowerment, and ensure consumer interests are met.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests at energy industry forums such as the Gas Supplier Forum, Central Design Authority, Electricity Suppliers' Forum, Girona Battery Storage Group, COVID-19 Retail Forum and Energy Revenue Service Group.	Hold industry to account by representing the views and interests of consumers, and ensuring transparent and affordable access to products and services that meet consumer needs, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests at Energy Forums and Working Groups led by the UR such as the Consumer Engagement Advisory Panel, Electricity Retail Group, Consumer Vulnerability Working Group, Gas Metering Solutions Group, Gas Market Operating Group and Consumer Engagement Working Group.	Work with the UR to ensure consumer interests, protections, affordability and accessibility are central to the regulatory framework in NI.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Monitor how EU Exit will impact on energy use in NI and corresponding consumer behaviours, consumption and affordability.	Highlight issues of consumer detriment and discrimination to government, regulators and industry, and work in partnership to deliver the necessary corrective actions.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Proactively review energy complaints including data from The Consumer Council's frontline support, the Utility Regulator Complaints Audit and complaint data from energy suppliers.	Identify the main issues to consumers in energy complaints, highlighting consumer detriment to industry to improve service delivery and inform future policy development.	Energy	August 2021
Protecting Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Lobby government and regulators, using evidence of consumer detriment and discrimination, to develop an Energy and Fuel Poverty Strategy for NI, to protect and support consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Work with the UR and stakeholders to deliver an Energy and Fuel Poverty Strategy for NI, resulting in a reduction in those living in fuel poverty.	Energy	August 2021
Protecting Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Deliver the Energy Theft Awareness Campaign in partnership with industry and the UR, UK Regulators Network, and Police Service of Northern Ireland.	Increase awareness of the dangers and costs of energy theft amongst consumers, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances, and offer accessible pathways for redress and dispute resolution.	Energy	March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Work in partnership with the UR and other consumer bodies to develop and deliver the Consumer Protection Programme for NI, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Ensure consumers in vulnerable circumstances are better protected by regulation and the policies of energy suppliers are most responsive to their needs.	Energy	March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Research   Insight	Review national and international best practice in relation to dispute resolution and complaint handling within the energy sector, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Apply best practice models to dispute resolution and complaint handling to improve the consumer experience, minimise consumer detriment and increase consumer advocacy.	Energy	August 2021

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Protecting Consumers	Research   Insight	Carry out research to identify the experiences, behaviours and attitudes of consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations, in terms of energy and the decarbonisation agenda.	Establish a deeper understanding of what consumers need from the energy market, inform policy development across the energy sector, and develop appropriate interventions from The Consumer Council.	Energy	June 2021
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Represent consumer interests at regulated tariff reviews with electricity and gas suppliers such as Power NI, Firmus and SSE Airtricity Gas.	Work with industry to ensure consumers have access to fair, affordable and transparent pricing models for their electricity and gas supplies.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Represent consumer interests at network operator energy price controls to ensure these meet consumer needs and consumers pay a fair price for their supply of energy.	Work with industry to ensure consumers have access to fair, affordable and transparent pricing models for their electricity and gas supplies.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Respond to government, regulatory and sectoral consultations and calls for evidence, representing consumer interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Work with government, regulators and the sector to ensure consumer protections, accessibility and affordability are central to future policy development.	Energy	April 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Carry out research to understand the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on energy consumers, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations.	Provide government, regulators and industry with insights on the impact of the pandemic and ensure action is taken to reduce consumer detriment, and influence future policy making.	Energy	May 2021
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Survey consumers on the levels of customer satisfaction, trust and confidence with energy suppliers.	Increase accountability and performance of energy suppliers by providing consumers with robust insights so they can make an informed choice when deciding selecting a supplier.	Energy	September 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain up-to-date information, resources and tools about the impact of EU Exit as new information emerges, particularly at the end of the three month grace period.	Educate consumers and the advice sector on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to up-to-date and jargon free information across a range of consumer topics.	EU Exit	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Chair the North-South Consumer Working Group to gather market intelligence and share best practice, bringing together representatives from the European Consumer Centre Network, Trading Standards Service, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, the CMA, Advertising Standards Authority, Consumers Association Ireland and the DfE Consumer Affairs Branch.	Work with partners in the UK and Ireland to ensure consumer interests, protections, affordability and accessibility are central to future policy development.	EU Exit	April 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Produce an EU Exit Report with recommendations for future policy development based on findings from consumer research completed in March 2021.	Ensure NI consumer concerns and experiences shape policy development and delivery of empowerment activities.	EU Exit	April to June 2021
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Monitor and report on financial resilience and spending behaviours through cost comparisons of household goods in NI compared to GB.	Understand how anticipated price increases resulting from the EU Exit and NI Protocol will impact consumers' financial resilience and shopping behaviours.	EU Exit	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Education   Advocacy	Produce a series of briefing papers on the Consumer Economy outlining the importance of consumer spend to the overall NI economy.	Ensure the central role consumers play in economic recovery is understood by The Executive Office and other policy makers, putting consumer needs on a par with that of the business sector.	EU Exit	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Advise government, regulators and partner organisations on consumer detriment resulting from the impact of EU Exit through briefing papers, impact analysis and market reviews.	Work with government and regulators to ensure consumer protections, accessibility and affordability are central to future policy development.	EU Exit	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Deliver an educational campaign on sources of free debt advice and alternative forms of borrowing, targeting consumers on low incomes and those in vulnerable circumstances.	Increase awareness and knowledge of free debt advice and alternative forms of borrowing amongst consumers on low incomes and those in vulnerable circumstances.	Financial Services	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop blended learning materials on safe borrowing for primary schools that can be delivered in the class room or remotely via digital platforms.	Ensure primary schools across NI have access to materials to inform pupils about safe borrowing and where to get help.	Financial Services	December 2021
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop learning materials on safe borrowing for Pathways and Cadets, in particular young people attending Pathways residential programmes.	Increase awareness and knowledge of safe borrowing and sources of help amongst young people outside the school setting.	Financial Services	December 2021
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Pilot partnership with Stranmillis University College to test secondary school materials on safe borrowing for NI schools.	Ensure secondary schools across NI have access to materials to inform pupils about safe borrowing and where to get help.	Financial Services	March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop a financial education programme with supporting materials and resources for rollout to all NI schools.	Improve levels of financial education and literacy amongst children in primary and secondary schools.	Financial Services	March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Work with partners in the advice sector to deliver Train the Trainer workshops to increase awareness of the issues and impact of illegal money lending.	Develop a network of community-led advisers with increased awareness and understanding of the impact of illegal money lending.	Financial Services	March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Advocate for financial accessibility, affordability and inclusion for NI consumers through membership at the LINK Consumer Council, UK Finance, Financial Conduct Authority Insights Forum, and Money and Pensions Service.	Work with the industry, regulators and government to ensure consumer interests, protections, affordability and accessibility are central to policy development and service delivery in NI.	Financial Services	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Chair the Responsible Lending Forum to highlight and promote awareness of alternative forms of credit and free debt advice services.	Foster trusted partnerships with key stakeholders to improve access to affordable credit for consumers and promote awareness of free debt advice.	Financial Services	April 2021 to March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop information, resources and tools about the dangers of illegal lending and safer borrowing to community groups and work places, available in a range of accessible formats.	Educate consumers of the risks of illegal lending and the alternative sources of lending and help available.	Financial Services	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Protecting Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop a banking programme for prisoners in NI, similar to the scheme available in England, in partnership with UK Finance.	Improve financial inclusion by offering people being released from prison access to an affordable banking scheme.	Financial Services	December 2021
Protecting Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Develop an alternative lending scheme with the Irish League of Credit Unions to support consumers on low incomes struggling to access affordable credit.	Improve financial inclusion by giving consumers on low incomes access to affordable credit.	Financial Services	March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Respond to government and regulatory consultations and calls for evidence, representing consumer interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Work with government and regulators to ensure consumer protections, accessibility and affordability are central to future policy development.	Financial Services	April 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Commission a market review of Child Benefit loans for credit unions in NI.	Improve financial inclusion by giving NI consumers on low incomes access to affordable credit.	Financial Services	December 2021
Understanding consumers	Research   Insight	Research the impact the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial resilience of consumers and the issue of illegal lending.	Strengthen consumer financial resilience and ensure consumer interests are central to policy and service development.	Financial Services	March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Research if some consumers are adversely affected by a lack of choice and affordability offered by their local shops, and establish the causes for these so called Food Deserts.	Work with stakeholders, including Department of Health (DoH) and Department for Communities (DoC), to improve access to healthy and affordable food in NI.	Food	September 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Education   Advocacy	Produce a series of Vulnerability in 2021 reports examining issues facing disadvantaged consumers across each of our remit areas, which provide at a glance statistics and consumer insight.	Ensure stakeholders, the media and social commentators have access to a realisable resource, including our Hand to Mouth documentary, to help support and influence consumer debate.	Food	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Research   Insight	Produce a Conflicted Consumer blog aimed at helping consumers make ethical and environmentally sustainable choices.	Encourage consumers to reflect on their choices, guided by expert opinion across a range of consumer topics and signposting to trusted stakeholder resources.	Food	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent NI consumer interests at the All-Island Food Poverty Network attended by Safefood, Food Standards Agency, DoH, DoC, FareShare, Food Cloud, Economic and Social Research Institute, Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute, and Department for Children and Youth Affairs.	Work with partners in the UK and Ireland to gather intelligence, share best practice and highlight NI specific consumer issues.	Food	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain up-to-date information, resources and tools about consumer rights in relation to online delivery services, delivery scams and how to save money on postage costs.	Increase awareness and educate consumers about how they can shop safely online, save money on postage and avoid delivery scams.	Post	December 2021
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Represent NI consumer interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances, in Ofcom's Review of Royal Mail's Regulatory Framework.	Work with government and regulators to ensure consumer protections, accessibility and affordability are central to future policy development.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Respond to government and regulatory consultations and calls for evidence, representing consumer interests, in particular consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Work with government and regulators to ensure consumer protections, accessibility and affordability are central to future policy development.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Work with UK consumer advocacy bodies, Citizens Advice and Citizen Advice Scotland to develop solutions that provide marginalised consumers safe, secure and reasonable access to postal services.	Improve access and choice for consumers without an address, or who move frequently, or whose post may be intercepted.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Work with the UK Consumer Protection Partnership to address parcel surcharges for NI consumers, and lobby for a review and reform of the parcel market.	Rebalance the parcel market, ensuring NI consumers have fair and affordable access.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Publish a series of reports that outline the impacts of EU Exit on postal services and deliveries for consumers in NI.	Ensure consumer interests are fully considered in decision making and policy development around the NI Protocol.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Protecting Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Develop a Best Practice Guide for Parcel Selling, working in partnership with all parcel operators in NI.	Offer consumers improved, transparent and accessible terms and conditions, prior to purchase of parcel services.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Monitor the number and location of post offices in NI, representing consumer interests in post office relocation consultations.	Ensure consumers in NI continue to have fair and reasonable access to post office services.	Post	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain a range of information, resources and tools about transport and passenger rights, available in a range of accessible formats.	Educate consumers on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain up-to-date consumer information, resources and tools on the impact of EU Exit and the COVID-19 pandemic to transport choice, accessibility and availability.	Educate consumers on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Transport	July 2021
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Promote the role of The Consumer Council at key locations and on public transport.	Raise awareness of the advice, guidance and support available from The Consumer Council.	Transport	July 2021
Empowering Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Review the online consumer experience for the journey planners offered by Translink, George Best Belfast City airport, Belfast International airport and City of Derry airport.	Ensure an optimum customer experience for consumers using the online journey planners from transport providers.	Transport	March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Respond to relevant industry consultations, and industry Codes of Practice reviews, representing consumers' interests, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Protect consumer interests and safeguard necessary protections by ensuring public policy and industry takes account of consumers' needs.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Work in partnership with DfE and other stakeholders to deliver a single consumer pathway for available advice, guidance and support (education, capability development and financial assistance) from government, in support of the new Energy Strategy for NI.	Deliver an accessible and optimised consumer journey that supports the decarbonisation agenda and places consumer behaviour, consumption and affordability at the heart of policy making.	Transport	March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests through the Department for Transport Maritime Complaints Handling Body, the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), Airport Accessibility and Consultative Forums, and bi-monthly operational meeting with DfI and Translink.	Foster trusted partnerships to build effective coalitions that lobby for the necessary consumer protections, promote consumer empowerment, and ensure consumer interests are met.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Review bus licence permit applications in NI to ensure consumer interests and needs are met, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Hold industry to account by representing the views and interests of consumers, and ensuring transparent and affordable access to products and services that meet consumer needs.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent and protect consumer interests by working in partnership with Translink to develop a new Public Service Agreement, consult on the development of the Belfast Transport Hub and deliver the Ticketing Fare Review and Passenger Monitoring Survey.	Hold industry to account by representing the views and interests of consumers, and ensuring transparent and affordable access to products and services that meet consumer needs, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Carry out research to understand the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the transport sector, the resulting challenges to connectivity, accessibility and affordability, and how consumer behaviours could shape the future of the sector.	Provide government, regulators and industry with key insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure action is taken to reduce consumer detriment, and influence future policy making.	Transport	August 2021
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Carry out research to understand the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on transport and older consumers and the resulting challenges to connectivity, accessibility and affordability.	Provide government, regulators and industry with key insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure action is taken to reduce consumer detriment, and influence future policy making.	Transport	June 2021

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Proactively review transport complaints including data from The Consumer Council's frontline support and Translink, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Identify the main issues in passenger and transport complaints, highlighting consumer detriment to industry to improve service delivery and inform future policy development.	Transport	March 2022
Influencing Policy	Research   Insight	Review Translink passenger complaints and deliver refresher training to its complaints handling team to mitigate consumer detriment and improve accessibility, affordability and service delivery.	Identify the main issues in passenger complaints, highlighting consumer detriment to improve service delivery and the complaints handling process.	Transport	March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Consultation   Review	Deliver Disabled Passenger Accessibility Audits of George Best Belfast City airport, Belfast International airport and City of Derry airport.	Improve consumer accessibility at NI airports, in particular for consumers with a disability.	Transport	March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain a range of information, resources and tools about transport and passenger rights, available in a range of accessible formats.	Educate consumers on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Transport	April 2021 to March 2022
Understanding Consumers	Research   Insight	Carry out research to identify the experiences, behaviours and attitudes of consumers in terms of transport, the new Energy Strategy for NI, and the wider decarbonisation agenda.	Establish a deeper understanding of what consumers need from the transport market, inform policy development across the transport sector, and develop appropriate interventions from The Consumer Council.	Transport	July 2021
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Review relevant NI Water policies and codes of practice to ensure consumer and business interests are adequately represented, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Protect consumer and business interests and safeguard necessary protections by bringing about improvements to NI Water service delivery.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Influencing Policy	Consultation   Review	Work in partnership with DfI to review the Long Term Water Strategy, aimed at delivering a sustainable water sector in NI.	Ensure consumer and business interests and the necessary protections, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances, are central when developing future government policy.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Influencing Policy	Partnership   Representation	Represent consumer interests through forums and working groups such as the Water Stakeholder Steering Group, Regional Community Resilience Group, Output Review Monitoring Group, Essential Services Access Network, Consumer Vulnerability Working Group, Consumer Engagement Oversight Group, UKWIR Working Groups, and UK Tripartite with Consumer Council for Water and Citizens Advice Scotland, and various drinking water and environmental quality groups.	Work with the industry, regulators and government to ensure consumer interests, protections, affordability and accessibility are central to policy development and service delivery in NI.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Protecting Consumers	Education   Advocacy	Develop and maintain a range of information, resources and tools about water rights, available in a range of accessible formats.	Educate consumers on their rights and protections, and provide easy access to available advice, guidance and support.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Conduct Water Bill Health Checks with non-domestic consumers to improve water efficiency and affordability.	Help businesses to identify savings and efficiency measures through 80 Water Bill Health Checks.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Deliver the Water Efficiency Project with NI councils to improve accessibility and affordability.	Help councils to reduce their water bills and introduce a range of efficiency measures.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Represent consumer interests by monitoring process against the new Price Control 21 consumer protection measures.	Work with NI Water and the UR to ensure consumers have adequate protections and support.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Review and increase awareness of NI Water's Care Register in line with Price Control 21 targets and cross-cutting developments to improve consumer support in line with the UR's Consumer Protection Programme.	Protect consumer interests and improve support and access, in particular for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.	Water	July 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Consultation   Review	Assess NI Water's contact handling protocols and procedures so customer service standards are met.	Ensure standards of customer service are met and consumer needs are supported.	Water	July 2021 to March 2022

Priority	Themes	Project Description	Anticipated Outcome	Lead	Timing
Representing Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Work with NI Water to develop proposals for service provision aligned with Price Control 21 consumer insight.	Deliver a consumer-centric model for future service provision.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022
Representing Consumers	Partnership   Representation	Develop community resilience plans, working in partnership with the Regional Community Resilience Group, for households at flood risk, supported by clear action plans and mindful of household flood insurance considerations.	Improve the support and protections available to households at flood risk.	Water	April 2021 to March 2022

### Corporate initiatives

Key to our success is adopting best practice and setting the highest operating standards. This provides confidence in our ability to deliver and actively demonstrates our commitment to the citizens we serve. To this end, we will:

- Pursue accreditations such as BITC Core Accreditation, Investors in People (IIP), Best Companies, and ISO 27001 Information Security Management, ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and improve our information management and customer relationship management systems, to increase efficiency, resilience, responsiveness and flexible working capability.

## 4. RESOURCING OUR PROGRAMME

To protect and empower consumers, we must be the best. We are a small organisation with limited resources playing a big role in Northern Ireland society and its economy.

### 4.1 Our ethos

In delivering our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme, we will focus on the following:



#### Culture

We are passionate about our people. They are at the heart of our success and go to extraordinary lengths to offer support, champion issues, resolve problems and find solutions. They embody our values and we will strengthen our inclusive culture by investing in their capability, competency and connections, as recognised by Customer Service Excellence, Investors in People and Best Companies.

We are committed to being an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the right people with the necessary expertise. We will support them to do the best job they can with continuous professional development and the right policies, practices, processes and technology. This ensures we help them build resilience and meet future challenges, and create an environment for them to grow and lead.

#### Advocacy

We give consumers a voice by promoting and protecting their interests. We do so through statutory duties in energy, post, transport, water and sewerage, and food affordability and accessibility, and

our non-statutory functions. We will seek out new duties in communications and digital services and other priority areas that emerge, following EU Exit and as economic recovery plans gain momentum.

We will increase our consumer research to provide the Northern Ireland Executive, UK Government and stakeholders with comprehensive insights into unique considerations affecting Northern Ireland consumers. This enables us to identify the current and most relevant issues and emerging risks, and advocate for policies and interventions that deliver the greatest value and impact for consumers.

### Partnerships

Representing 1.8 million people cannot happen in isolation. Given our cross-cutting remit, we will work in partnership with government, regulators, industry, consumer bodies, charities, elected representatives and other partners to deliver our objectives, interventions and outcomes. We will forge trusted relationships with new partners and leverage their connections and experience.

To avoid duplication, we will collaborate with our stakeholders and deploy our resources to make the greatest impact. Given the unique position Northern Ireland occupies, we will represent the interests of our consumers by sharing insights, building knowledge and developing solutions through representation on regional, national and international networks, fora and committees.

### Strategic influencers

We face continued economic volatility, affecting many lives and livelihoods here in Northern Ireland. In the midst of this uncertainty, the importance and value of our role in empowering consumers to make informed, responsible choices has grown considerably, reinforcing our reputation. We will build on this success in close collaboration with our funders and stakeholders.

We will continue to actively influence and shape government policy, and the societal and economic impacts affecting Northern Ireland consumers. Recognised as the trusted voice of consumers, we will do so through our work with the Northern Ireland Executive, UK Government, devolved administrations, the cross-government Consumer Protection Partnership and BEUC The European Consumer Organisation.

### Communication

Effective communication is key for the Consumer Council and we recognise this is a fast-moving space. We will evolve the way we work to better understand consumers and changing behaviours. We will grow our awareness, reach and engagement by identifying the most effective channels and leveraging digital innovation, without excluding consumers in vulnerable circumstances.

We will expand our outreach partnerships with like-minded organisations who share our goal of creating a fair and equal society. We will establish a network of Consumer Champions to connect with consumers in their communities, offering advice, tools and signposting on a range of issues, and strengthen our understanding of the grassroots issues affecting consumers at a sub-regional level.

### Funding

Over half our unique funding model is allocated to statutory duties, drawn from levies collected by the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. We prioritise supporting, educating and protecting consumers in these areas, meeting the highest standards of public accountability and corporate governance. This makes us agile as we can adjust spending should circumstances change.

We are mindful of the significant challenges to public sector finances over the next three years. To meet our future ambitions, we will use our resources effectively and identify potential mechanisms for revenue generation. We will use this to fund and deliver best practice research into the unique considerations affecting consumers, so government policy and intervention reflect these insights.

### **Sustainability**

We take full ownership of the societal and environmental impact our business decisions have on the wider environment. As a member of Business in the Community, we are working towards Core Accreditation, which focuses on: planet, people, place and core business. Through this process, we have identified areas for improvement and will address these over the corporate plan period.

We want to be exemplar in how we develop our people and adopt business practices that are ethical and environmentally sustainable. We will learn from others, encourage staff to share skills and knowledge, and embed relevant policies and practices within the organisation and with our staff. This will ensure we actively contribute to wider society and minimise our environmental impact.

### **Delivering value**

Much of our work focuses on the social value experienced by consumers. Measuring this is important because it tells the story of the positive change we bring about, and quantifies our impact and return on investment from the perspective of consumers. This also provides the necessary assurances to our funders and stakeholders so they can continue to invest in the vital work we do.

Eight consumer protection principles developed by the United Nations already guide our work. These are supported by various ISO standards and the British Standard for Inclusive Service Provision for identifying and responding to consumer vulnerability. We will also develop a framework to measure the social value and non-monetary impacts of our work across multiple policy areas.

## **4.2 How will we do it**

Our funding for the next 12 months will be confirmed following this consultation as part of the annual budget exercise and spending review. This will shape our final list of projects for 2021-2022.

We will resource our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme through our teams of committed staff and ongoing funding from the Department for the Economy, the Department for Infrastructure, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and HM Treasury.

Our relationship with our sponsor department, Department for the Economy, is governed by a Partnership Agreement setting out the functions, powers and duties of the Consumer Council, our Board and its sub-committees. Supporting this are policies, plans and performance measures that set out how we deliver against our strategic priorities and monitor progress.

We provide regular reports on progress including updates at cross-departmental governance committees covering budgetary responsibilities and risk management. Our governance arrangements are reported in the Annual Reports and Accounts. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive is responsible for safeguarding our public funding, for ensuring propriety and regularity of this funding, and the day-to-day operations and management of the Consumer Council.

We are committed to continuous improvement. We learn from and share our success and our progress, as well as our mistakes, with our sponsor department, funders and stakeholders. We will also continue to invest in our digital and cyber security infrastructure, and improve our information management and customer relationship management systems to increase efficiency, resilience, responsiveness and hybrid working capability.

Throughout the year, we will:

- Review operational plans to ensure we deliver efficiently, effectively and proportionately, and always through the lens of our statutory and non-statutory functions.
- Regularly monitor and assess our capability and capacity against consumer and stakeholder demand to ensure we meet consumer priorities and strategic objectives.
- Apply proportionate financial controls to our resources to meet governance standards and deliver value for money.

### **4.3 Equality considerations**

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

We support diversity and inclusion. We operate in an increasingly diverse society and the people who provide and use our services have diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations. Understanding and valuing these differences can result in greater participation.

It will help bring about success at an individual, team and organisational level. We are committed to creating an inclusive working environment where individual differences are valued and respected, and in which each employee is able to fulfil their potential and maximise their contribution.

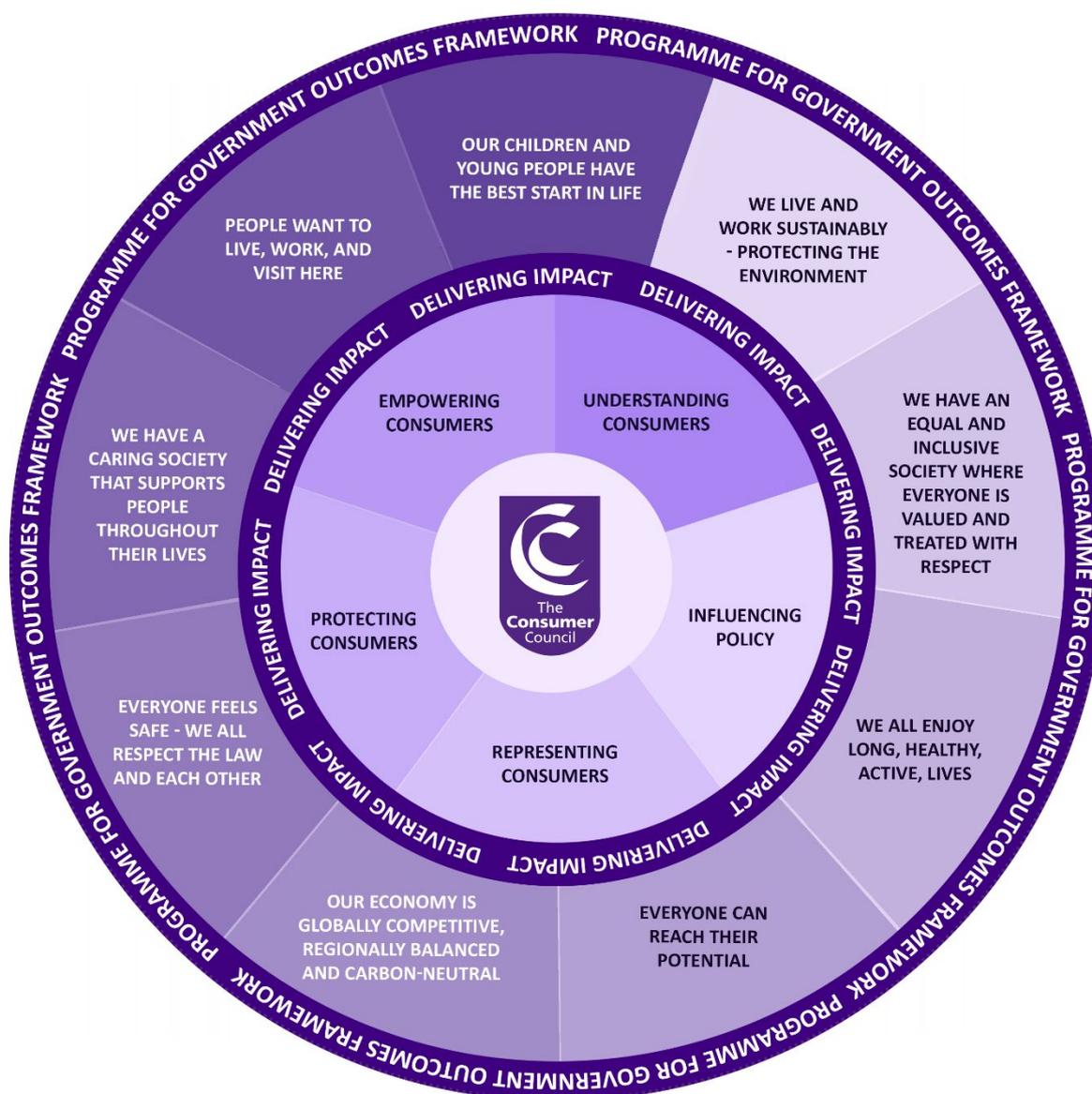
## 5. DELIVERING IMPACT

In developing our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme, we prioritised the most relevant consumer issues, guided by our strategic priorities, statutory and non-statutory functions, and the draft Programme for Government and supporting strategies.

### 5.1 Programme for Government Outcomes Framework

The [Programme for Government Outcomes Framework](#) focuses on achieving outcomes of societal wellbeing and delivering real and positive change in people’s lives, and reflects the messages contained in [New Decade New Approach](#).

We are committed to supporting its outcomes through our five strategic objectives: understanding consumers; influencing policy; representing consumers; protecting consumers; and empowering consumers. Each one connects with and depends on the outcomes of the others, and collectively, they deliver positive impact for the citizens of Northern Ireland.



## 5.2 Developing our performance measures

Following the consultation, we will develop a set of key performance measures with our sponsor department, the Department for the Economy. These set out how we track and report on progress in achieving our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme and the supporting operational plans.

They will form the foundation of our annual corporate scorecard and risk register, and set out the framework we will use to demonstrate progress against each of our five strategic priorities, provide a clear account of the impact we make, and highlight how our delivery contributes to Northern Ireland's sustainable economic recovery and future growth.

This will only tell part of our story. Engagement and collaboration with partners, organisations and individuals with the aim of coalescing to support and protect Northern Ireland consumers in multiple markets and across current and emerging detriment, and understand them better, is equally important to advocate and further consumer interests in order to deliver the societal and economic change we seek to achieve.

We will also continue to capture data and evidence, including from our frontline services, on the impact of our work in order to refine and improve our approach, so we learn from our experiences and better serve Northern Ireland consumers and our stakeholders to public benefit.

## 6. CONTACT US

If you would like to discuss our 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme please contact us.

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