

Report on	Leisure and Outdoor Recreation - Covid19 Update
Date of Meeting	11 th June 2020
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure
Contact Officer	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure Nigel Hill, Head of Parks

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on the response from the Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Team to the Covid19 pandemic and the ongoing engagement and contact with customers and users of Council Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Services.
2.0	Background
2.1	As a result of the Covid19 pandemic, Members will be aware that all Leisure facilities such as indoor centres, outdoor pitches, tennis courts etc closed for public use at 2pm on the 16 th March 2020.
2.2	The impact of the Covid19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the delivery of Leisure Services, at a time when the Council would normally be preparing for a busy spring and summer period of programmes, activities and participation levels within its facilities.
2.3	Parks Service moved to close all council managed campsites, angling waters, children's play parks, public toilet facilities and face to face reception commencing from 20 th March the majority of which remain closed. The formal opening of OM Dark Skies Park & Observatory scheduled for 2 nd April was also postponed and all Parks Service Summer Event Programmes for 2020 were cancelled due to public gatherings lockdown restrictions.
2.4	DAERA-owned forests and angling waters closed on 25 th March, this applied to Mid Ulster District Council/DAERA pathership forest sites, Pomeroy, Knockmany, Davagh, Moydamlaght, Derrynoid, Iniscarn and angling waters at Carrick Lough, Creeve Lough, Enagh and Tullygiven Lough. However, Council's owned trails and open spaces remained accessible to the public, as a measure to provide one form of exercise every day as permitted under the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The majority of leisure staff have been furloughed with the exception of a small group of leisure staff who are maintaining key facility operations, developing plans for re-opening of facilities, ongoing engagement with customers and also the

	operation of the Meadowbank facility (venue in use for production of PPE) and Mid Ulster Sports Arena (venue in use as food distribution centre)
3.2	Parks staff numbers have been reduced by approximately 50% (24 staff) associated to the protection afforded to high risk groups and the later measure to furlough qualifying staff, where facilities have been closed. Remaining staff have been working as normal (under social distancing measures) and where possible, working from home solutions have been in operation.
3.3	As a result of the Executive's recent easing of restrictions on outdoor activities, including golf, Tobermore Golf Centre re-opened to the public on 26 th May 2020 with new booking and access arrangements in place, together with strict social distancing measures and enhanced cleaning regimes.
3.4	Wednesday 27 th May marked permitted access to MUDC/DAERA forest and angling waters and the reopening of car parks at council public parks that had been closed since 10 th April.
3.5	The Leisure and Outdoor Recreation department are actively reviewing other areas where activities can be resumed in line with the Executives announcements to include the phased re-opening of outdoor tennis courts from the 3 rd June 2020.
3.6	While the remaining leisure and Outdoor Recreation facilities remain closed to the public at this time, they continue to be inspected and checked by staff on a regular basis ensuring all required checks and servicing arrangements are in place to ensure buildings are prepared for eventual re-opening.
3.7	The developing and ever changing pandemic situation continues to be closely monitored across Leisure and Outdoor Recreation services within Mid Ulster and indeed in liaison with industry bodies and counterparts in other council areas to prepare arrangements needed to safely reopen facilities where possible as we move through the Executive's roadmap as published on the 12 th May 2020.
3.8	Although many programmes and activities have been unable to have been delivered as a result of the pandemic, staff are working on recovery plans to ensure citizens of Mid Ulster will be supported where possible in line with government and public health guidelines to safely resume physical activity during the recovery phase.
3.9	<p>While the majority of facilities remain closed to the public, in addition to supporting the PPE production at Meadowbank and the food distribution centre at Mid Ulster Sports Arena, there have been ongoing staff engagement initiatives with customers via website and social media to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication of a position on the suspension of membership direct debits and reassurance on the way forward regarding extensions of memberships for paid in advance and direct debit customers to reflect any time missed as a result of the closures. • Ongoing regular engagement posts on variety of social media pages with hints and tips to support physical and mental health and well being

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid Ulster virtual swim academy. • Recorded workout and educational videos produced by leisure staff to support citizens via social media channels. • Ongoing response to customer queries. <p>In addition to the above, some staff within Leisure Services have volunteered to be redeployed to support other key council services and initiatives at this difficult and challenging time.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Significant impact on ability to deliver key programmes and activities within Leisure and Outdoor Recreation services to include loss of ongoing income. While facility closures may result in underspend in certain areas, it should also be noted that income targets for the 2020/21 year will not be realised.
	Human: None
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policy and Covid-19 guidance
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policy
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with council policy
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note and update on Leisure and Outdoor Recreation service delivery during the Covid19 pandemic.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A