Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

10 November 2022

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Development Committee to be held in The Chamber, Magherafelt and by virtual meansCouncil Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, BT45 6EN on Thursday, 10 November 2022 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

A link to join the meeting through the Council's remote meeting platform will follow.

Yours faithfully

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive

AGENDA

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Notice of Recording
   This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site Live Broadcast Link
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
   Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
4. Chair's Business
5. Deputation - Lough Neagh Partnership

Matters for Decision

6.	Sports Representative Grants	3 - 6
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Matters for Information

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Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.

Matters for Decision

16. The registration of a Society under the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Matters for Information

17. Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 October 2022
18. Economic Development Report – November 2022 – CBFI

Report on	Sports Representative Grants
Date of Meeting:	10th November, 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Leigh Gilmore, Participation Manager Margaret McCammon Community Development Officer

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To present to Members the proposed community grant allocations for the range of: • Sports Representative Grant – Individuals (September & October 2022)
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Sports Representative Grants (Individual and Team) is a continuous rolling programme.
2.2	Previously in September 2022, Members approved the recommendation for the period up to August 2022.
2.3	Eligibility criteria compliance was completed by officers followed by grant programme assessment.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Detailed analysis of the proposed grant awards are attached with Appendix A for information.
3.2	Summary detail is as follows: The Sports Representative Grant: • 6 Individual application was received during this period • 1 Team application was received during this period • Proposal to award a total of £1,775 in respect of the above 7 eligible applications.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: The Sports Representative Grant is a continuous rolling programme with an annual allocation for 2022/2023 of £15,000. £1,350 was approved in May 2022, £450 in June 2022, £7,250 in September 2022, leaving a balance of £5,950.

	Should the grant recommendations contained within this report be approved, £4,175 remains available to be allocated for the remainder of this financial year until March 2023.
	Human: Officer time.
	Risk Management: In line with Council policies and procedures.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To note the contents of this report and give approval for the sports grant allocations as recommended within this report.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix A: Grant recipients and amount of grant award.

Appendix A: Grant recipients and amount of grant award.

Sportsperson Representative on eligible cost to a max of £250

Name		Project Title	Amount Requested	Band	Amount Awarded
Simon	Ferguson	Commonwealth Shooting Federation (European Division) Championships	£500	2	£225
Sam	Kelly	Commonwealth Shooting Federation (European Division) Championships	£500	2	£225
Andrew	Mylroi Lamont	World Waveski Surfing Titles 2022	£250	1	£250
Linton	Selfridge	Home International fitasc Clay Pigeon Championships 2022	£917	2	£225
Dana	Suitor	The Home Nations Powerlifting Championships 2022	£465	2	£225
Patrick	Swaile	Commonwealth Shooting Federation (European Division) Championships	£500	2	£225
Total					**£1,375**

Band	Amount
1	**£250.00**
2	**£225.00**
3	**£200.00**
4	**£175.00**
5	**£150.00**

Sports Team Representative on eligible cost to a max of £500

Name	Project Title	Amount Requested	Band	Amount Awarded
Cookstown Swimming Club	Irish National Swimming Competitions	£2,000	3	£400
Total				**£400**

Band	Amount
1	**£500.00**
2	**£450.00**
3	**£400.00**
4	**£350.00**
5	**£300.00**

Report on	Walk NI Consortium Proposal 2022-23
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Anne Reid, Parks & Countryside Development Officer

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 seek Council approval to commit to Walking NI Marketing Consortium Campaign for 2022-23.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	WalkNI.com is delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), a not-for-profit organisation with the vision 'To create a happier, healthier society where enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors improves wellbeing.'
2.2	Its work was previously directed and funded by its four 'core funders' namely Sport NI, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Tourism Northern Ireland and Inland Waterways Unit of the Department of Infrastructure.
2.3	With significant cuts in government funding, this is no longer the case, with ORNI delivering its strategic not-for-profit role under a number of new arrangements including delivering for Strategic Partnerships, Consortia, Service Level Agreements and on a project by project basis.
2.4	In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the WalkNI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of WalkNI.com. The consortium is therefore entering into its sixth year and it could be argued that by continuing to contribute to the WalkNI Consortium, local authorities can reap the following benefits: **Solid Foundation:** Significant investment has already been made to establish a website, e-marketing and social media channels **Engaged Visitors:** As indicated by 'WalkNI Key Stats' the website / brand has a strong engagement from the target market. **Combined Resources:** The small investments from a number of local authority partners can be combined to produce an outcome greater than the sum of its parts. **Cross Sell:** There will be opportunities to cross sell between destinations i.e. visitors to the Mourne Mountains will be able to learn about the Causeway Coast and Glens and vice versa. **Redeveloped Website:** A redeveloped WalkNI.com was launched in October 2019**.** The new look website provides an enhanced user experience, be responsive across platforms (mobile, tablet, desktop) and can avail of the latest interactive mapping.

2.5	Within Mid Ulster District Council – WalkNI.com and Outmoreni.com incorporates detailed information on 29 walks, ranging from short walks of under 5 miles to longer walks over 20 miles.
2.6	Further details on the WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal is contained within Appendix A.
2.7	Previously in June 2021, Members at the Development committee resolved to approve Mid Ulster Districts Council's participation as a regional partner for the 2021/22 year with financial support totalling £3,445 (minute reference: D107/21). Annual report for 2021/22 are included in Appendix B.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Funding from DAERA (NIEA's) Environment Fund ensures that all Councils receive free walk listings on WalkNI.com. Councils that wish to proactively promote their walking offer to the local population and tourist can avail of the activity of the WalkNI Marketing Consortium. Councils can choose to avail of a specific package of support as outlined below: **(1) Regional Partner** This package seeks to support an area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of: • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is a key part of a wider itinerary Partners in the past have included: • Ards & North Down Borough Council • Belfast City Council • Fermanagh & Omagh District council • Mid Ulster District Council **(2) National Partner** This package seeks to support an area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of: • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is key part of a wider itinerary • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is the primary reason to visit • Walking Clubs from Republic of Ireland Partners in the past have included: • Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council • Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
3.2	**Delivery Costs for the WalkNI Marketing Consortium 2022/23:** In order to continue the proactive marketing activity for Regional and National Partners, ORNI will dedicate staff time through a combination of ORNI's Marketing Manager and a Marketing Officer. The anticipated contributions for both options for the 22/23 year are as follows: **Partner Level** **2022/23**

3.3 3.4	(1) Regional £3,617 (2) National £7,235 Leading on from previous Council commitment towards this partnership for the 21/22 year, it is recommended to continue the partnership with the regional package with a Council contribution of £3,617 for the 22/23 year. The WalkNI.com consortium will be managed by ORNI's Marketing Manager who will: • Agree an annual work programme including KPIs • Provide Quarterly progress reports • Hold two meetings per year to report on progress, discuss campaigns etc.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Proposal to contribute £3,617 as a participating Regional Partner (increase of £172 compared to the 21/22 year). Can be derived from existing revenue budgets.
	Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To note the contents of the reports and give approval for Mid Ulster District Council to participate as a Regional Partner with the Walking NI Marketing Consortium with a contribution of £3,617.00 towards the 2022-23 campaign.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix A: WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2022/2023 Appendix B: WalkNI Consortium Year in Review 2021/22

WALK | NI
WALKING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

APRIL 2022

WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2022/2023

Introduction:

WalkNI.com attracted 584,239 users from the 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022, a 29% increase on 2019-2021 (the most comparable time period outside of 2020-2021 when figures are skewed because of Covid-19). This increase confirms WalkNI's position as the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland.

With 60% of visits from Northern Ireland, 23% from Great Britain, 11% from the Republic of Ireland it is clear the website is an important platform for locals and tourists alike.

It is clear that walking brings significant tourism and local participation benefits:

Local Participation:

- 7 in 10 adults visit the outdoors each week[1]
- 91% of the most common activities taken in the outdoors is for short walks and dog walks[2]

Tourism:

[1] People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland 2020-2021, ORNI

[2] People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland 2020-2021, ORNI

- Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips[3]
- Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.[4]
- During 2019, of all estimated external overnight trips to NI, 25% of overnight trips were from residents of the Republic of Ireland[5]

WalkNI.com Key Stats:

The followings statistics clearly highlight the reach and engagement level of WalkNI.com:

- 584,239 users (2021-2022)
- 1,608,018 pageviews (2021-2022)
- 34,942 social media subscribers (across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram)
- 24,495 e-newsletter subscribers

Rationale and Benefits:

WalkNI.com is delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), a not-for-profit organisation with the vision 'to create a happier, healthier society where enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors improves wellbeing.'

In recent years, ORNI has transformed from an entirely core funded position to now delivering its strategic not-for-profit role through a variety of arrangements including delivering for Strategic Partnerships, Consortia, Service Level Agreements and on a project by project basis. In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the WalkNI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of WalkNI.com. The consortium is therefore entering into its sixth year. By continuing to contribute to the WalkNI Marketing Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:

Solid Foundation:	Significant investment has already been made to establish a website, e-marketing and social media channels
Engaged Visitors:	As indicated by 'WalkNI Key Stats' the website / brand has an extremely strong engagement from the target market
Combined Resources:	The small investments from a number of local authority partners can be combined to produce an outcome greater than the sum of its parts
Cross Sell:	There will be opportunities to cross sell between destinations e.g. visitors to the Mourne Mountains will be able to learn about the Sperrins and vice versa
Redeveloped Website:	A redeveloped WalkNI.com was launched in 2019 providing an enhanced user experience, responsiveness across platforms (mobile, tablet, desktop) and availing of the latest interactive mapping which has recently been updated. A new mini website has also been developed for the Ulster Way which now includes interactive mapping, suggested itineraries, trail updates and more.

[3] Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism 2018, NISRA
[4] External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2016, NISRA
[5] External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2019, NISRA

Why Outdoor Recreation NI?

The benefits of ORNI delivering the project are:

Not–for–profit: ORNI's not-for-profit status means that all the investment will be retained within this project

Product Knowledge: ORNI has significant knowledge of Northern Ireland's walking portfolio gained through its strategic role in walking development, management and promotion since 1999 and more specifically since the launch of WalkNI.com in 2006

Track Record: ORNI has been successfully delivering the MountainBikeNI Consortium since 2012 and the WalkNI Marketing Consortium since 2016

For more information on Outdoor Recreation NI see www.outdoorrecreationni.com

Partnership Approach:

Funding from DAERA (NIEA's) Environment Fund ensures that all Councils receive free walk listings on WalkNI.com. Councils that wish to **proactively promote** their walking offer to the local population and tourists can avail of the activity of the WalkNI Marketing Consortium. The two available packages are outlined below:

Regional Partner
Definition: An area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of: • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is a key part of a wider itinerary

National Partner
An area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of: • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is key part of a wider itinerary • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is the primary reason to visit • Walking Clubs from Republic of Ireland

Marketing Activity

All Councils receive WalkNI.com Website Listings which also includes:

- Annual audit of all route listing information on the website
- Regular content management of the website e.g. news items, events etc.

However, those investing in the WalkNI Marketing Consortium receive proactive inclusion within the following marketing activity. It is this key activity which drives visitors towards specific sections of the website and therefore to visit specific areas of Northern Ireland.

Marketing Activity	Regional	National

Northern Ireland Promotional Activity
 	
• Inclusion within:
  o WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/
  o WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 11,866 NI contacts
  o WalkNI Social Media Posts
• PR in Regional and National Press via WalkNI Awards and other initiatives such as the launch of the new Ulster Way website
• Liaise with relevant social influencers to raise the profile of WalkNI.com with their followers
	Y	Y

Republic of Ireland Visitors Promotional Activity
 	
• Inclusion within
  o WalkNI Blogs - http://walkni.com/blog/
  o WalkNI E-zines - min 12 e-zines per year to 3,465 ROI contacts
  o WalkNI Social Media Posts
	Y	Y*

Walking Club Promotional Activity • Promotion via the Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs to their 34 walking clubs	N	Y

*** National Partners will receive double the level of inclusion within promotional activity than Regional Partners**

Accountability:

The WalkNI.com consortium will be managed by ORNI's Marketing Manager who will:

- Agree an annual work programme including KPIs
- Provide Quarterly progress reports
- Hold two meetings per year to report on progress, discuss promotional activity etc.

Support Required:

Partner Level	2022-2023
National	£7,235
Regional	£3,617

If you have any questions or queries regarding this proposal, please contact:

Beverley Magowan
Marketing Manager
Outdoor Recreation NI
beverley@outdoorrecreationni.com
028 90 303 938

WALKNI CONSORTIUM

KEY STATS 2021/2022

WEBSITE

- Website visitors
  - WalkNI visitor numbers reached 584,239 in 2021-2022 – a small 10.8% decrease from the previous year of 655,427.

  This year has seen a lot of changes and impacts on the website. Some major changes this year include removal of the IAT Ulster-Ireland webpage from within WalkNI as well as the ongoing impact of COIVD 19 which saw a surge in 2020 as people emerged from COVID. **We therefore are best comparing to 2019-2020 where we can see this year's figures (based against a more comparable year) are up by 29%.**

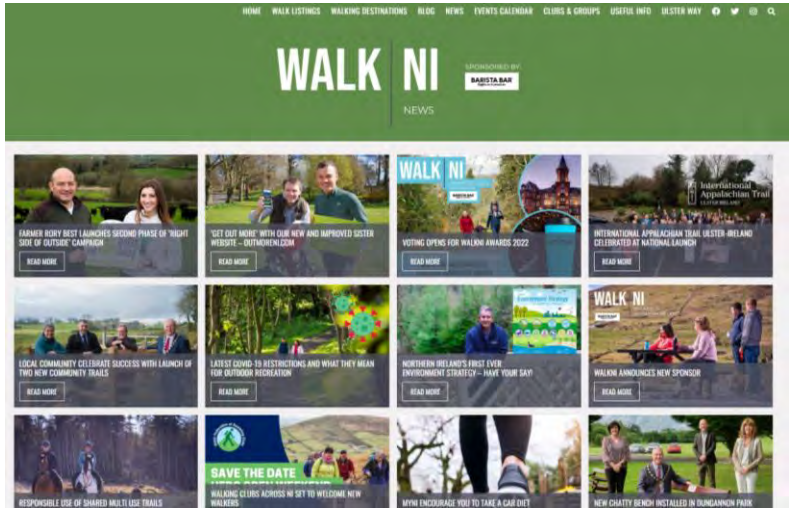
- Website visitor by location:
  - NI – **316,207**
  - GB – **210,043** (significant increase in visitors to the website from Scotland 144% increase, Wales 144% increase and the Isle of Man 48% increase on previous year)
  - ROI – **66,156** (increase of 1.5%)

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social Media followers:

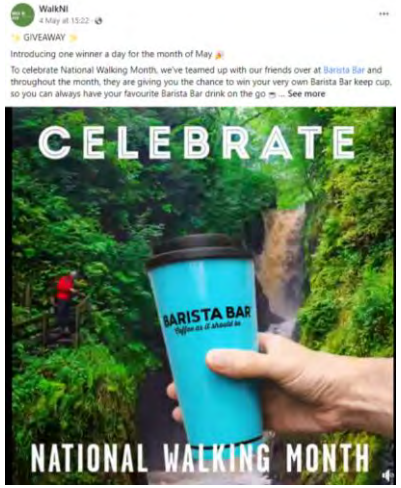
34,588 followers **(increase of 15.6% on previous year)**

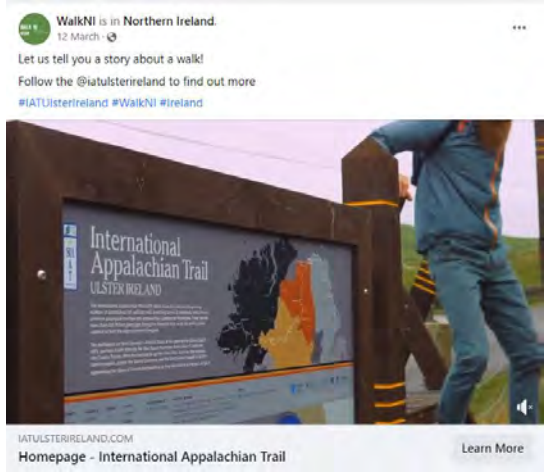
- Following by channel:
  - Facebook – 23,596 followers (16% increase on previous year)
  - Twitter – 6,898 followers (16% increase on previous year)



E-ZINE

- Monthly themed e-newsletters including bespoke campaign emails.
- Significant pause on e-zines to ROI database due to lockdown restrictions impacting on travel.





CAMPAIGNS & PROMOTION

- ‘Danders Aroon’ with Graham Little and the Ulster Scots
- ‘Right Side of Outside’
- International Appalachian Trail Ulster-Ireland
- WalkNI Sponsorship – Barista Bar
- WalkNI Awards 2022 – 1,300 public votes
- National Walking Month – May 2022
- Launch of OutmoreNI Campaign

WALKNI COVID COMMUNICATION

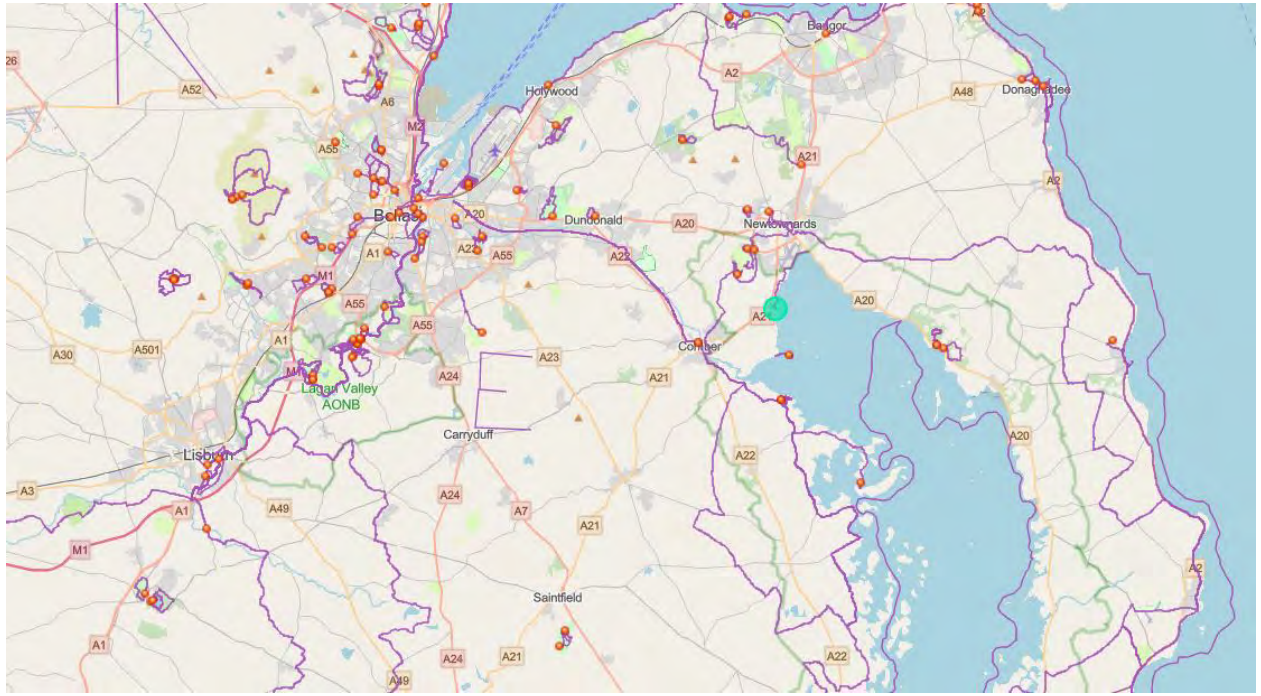
- Communication about location restrictions and their impact on walkers has been an ongoing update on WalkNI
- Promotion to walkers from ROI was paused but has now resumed as travel restrictions eased.

COMMUNITY TRAIL AWARENESS

- Preparation meeting took place to plan how WalkNI would Communicate information on community trails walkers can explore. This message is a legacy message from COVID lockdown restrictions.

TRANSFER OF WALK DATA TO ARC GIS

- Extensive work has taken place behind the scenes to transfer all walk data to ARC GIS this project has also included a review of all walks on the website.



WALK NI
WALKING IN
NORTHERN IRELAND

Report on	Mountain Bike NI Consortium Proposal 2022-23
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Anne Reid Parks/Countryside Development Officer

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To seek Council approval to commit to Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2022 - 23
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Mountain Bike NI Consortium was established to raise the profile of Northern Ireland's new mountain bike trail centres within the UK and Republic of Ireland markets.
2.2	Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) have developed marketing expertise and knowledge of the mountain bike market to deliver the Mountain Bike NI Consortium (a partnership between four local authorities) with the collective aims to: • Promote Northern Ireland as a World Class Mountain Bike Destination • Oversee activation of MountainBikeNI.com brand across each trail centre to increase 'cross-sell' opportunities • Secure a major sponsor for Northern Ireland's new National mountain bike trail centres • To combine budgets to deliver specialist targeted marketing campaigns in partnership with Tourism Ireland
2.3	In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of MountainbikeNI.com, previously funded by government departments, by continuing to contribute to the Mountain Bike NI Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:
2.4	A consortium approach provides the following benefits: • Economies of scale in campaign costs, project costs such as MTB Research • The ability to cross sell between trail centres i.e. consumers interested in or visiting the Mournes based trails will learn about the Davagh Trails and vice versa • A greater potential to attract (via tender) a sponsor • Improved brand, destination and product recognition
2.5	Within Mid Ulster District Council – mountainbikeni.com and Outmoreni.com incorporates detailed information on the two Mountain Bike Trail centres, Blessingbourne and Davagh.
2.6	Further details on the Mountain Bike NI Consortium Proposal is contained within Appendix A.

2.7	Previously in June 2021, Members at the Development committee resolved to approve Mid Ulster Districts Council's participation as a consortium partner for the 2021/22 year with financial support totalling £14,000 (minute reference: D106/21). Annual Consortium Report 2021/22 included in Appendix B.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Outdoor Recreation NI will continue to assign staff resources to the MountainBikeNI Consortium in order to continue to promote Northern Ireland as a 'must visit mountain bike destination'. Whilst promotion will take place under the MountainBikeNI umbrella brand each destination will be clearly differentiated within marketing activity.
3.2	The focus of marketing activity will be within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in order to deliver on key objectives: • Increase number of visits within each trail centre • Increase the engagement of mountain bikers with the local economy i.e. increase economic impact
3.3	Leading on from previous Council commitment towards this partnership for the 21/22 year, it is recommended to continue the partnership with a Council contribution of £10,500 for the 22/23 year.
3.4	The MountainbikeNI.com consortium will be managed by ORNI's Marketing Manager who will: • Agree an annual work programme including KPIs • Provide Quarterly progress reports • Hold two meetings per year to report on progress, discuss campaigns etc.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Proposal to contribute £10,500 as a participating Consortium Partner (decrease of £3,500 compared to the 21/22 year). Can be derived from existing revenue budgets.
	Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated at this juncture.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To note the contents of the reports and give approval for Mid Ulster District Council to participate as a Consortium Partner with the Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium and contribute £10,500 to 2022-23 campaign.

6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix A: Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2022 – 2023 Appendix B: Annual Consortium Report 2021/22

Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2022 – 2023

April 2022

Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) has prepared this proposal in order to request support from trail managing Councils for the financial year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023.

This proposal outlines:

1. Overview of Outputs
2. Added value gained from adopting a consortium approach
3. Proposal for 2022 / 2023

1. Overview of Outputs:

Outdoor Recreation NI will continue to assign staff resources to the MountainBikeNI Consortium in order to continue to promote Northern Ireland as a 'must visit mountain bike destination'.

Whilst promotion will take place under the MountainBikeNI umbrella brand each destination will be clearly differentiated within marketing activity.

The focus of marketing activity will be within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in order to deliver on key objectives:

- Increase number of visits within each trail centre
- Increase the engagement of mountain bikers with the local economy i.e. increase economic impact

Partner	NMDDC	MUDC	BCC	FODC
Partner Support	£16,974	£9,450	£5,250	£5,250
Sponsorship Contribution	£10,000	£5,000	0	0
Partner Total	£26,974	£14,450	£5,250	£5,250
% of Delivery Capacity	52%	28%	10%	10%
Fundamental Outputs				
Mountain Bike NI Consortium	✓	✓	✓	✓
MountainBikeNI.com Website	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customer Interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trail Centre Specific Outputs				
Trail Cards E-commerce	✓	✓	×	×
Mountain Bike NI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sponsorship Liaison	✓	✓	×	×
Marketing Outputs				
NI Marketing via MTBNI Channels	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROI Marketing Campaigns	✓ (£2100)	✓ (£1050)	×	✓ (£1050)
Business Upskilling	✓	✓	×	✓
Destination Support	✓	✓	✓	✓

Fundamental Outputs	NMDDC	MUDC	BCC	FODC
MountainBikeNI Consortium • Act as the Secretariat for the MountainBikeNI Consortium - minimum of 2 meetings per annum • Agree meeting dates, venue, agenda and circulate minutes • Prepare and agree annual work programme and provide a progress report on a quarterly basis	✓	✓	✓	✓
MountainBikeNI.com Website • Manage and maintain the MountainBikeNI.com website including: o All Trail Centres: ▪ Manage Trail Centre Profile including event calendar in liaison with trail managers ▪ Update of Trail Conditions (diversions, closures etc) as required in liaison with trail managers o National Trail Centres Only: ▪ Proactive liaison with local tourism service providers (accommodation and eatery) to ensure their web profiles are targeted to the mountain bike market and offers are available in line with campaigns • Provide accurate information and content (as required) for councils' tourism websites • Proactive Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to ensure competitive Google Ranking for key terms in both Great Britain (GB) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) markets	✓	✓	✓	✓
MountainBikeNI Social Platforms • Manage and maintain the MountainBikeNI social media platforms on: o Facebook o Instagram o Twitter o YouTube	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customer Interaction • Deal with customer enquiries via telephone, email and social media in a timely manner	✓	✓	✓	✓

Trail Centre Specific Outputs	NMDDC	MUDC	BCC	FODC
Trail Cards • Manage and maintain the e-commerce platform within MountainBikeNI.com • Proactively engage with tourism service providers and relevant retail outlets to encourage stocking and sale of trail cards	✓	✓	×	×

• Facilitate any reprint / redesign of trail cards[1] • Provide quarterly report of trail card sales within overall work programme report				
MountainBikeNI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme)[2] • Lead the recruitment of MTB volunteers and manage database • Communicate dates of maintenance days and allocate volunteers • Manage MountainBikeNI Trails Team Facebook Group • Proactively publicise the work of the MountainBikeNI Trails Team • Organise a training and reward programme in conjunction with the trail sponsor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sponsorship Liaison • In partnership with National Trail Centre managing councils recruit a title sponsor for MountainBikeNI.com and the National Trail Centres • Agree annual sponsorship plan with sponsors and act as key liaison to maximise benefits of both parties • Manage the ongoing relationship with the sponsor	✓	✓	×	×

Marketing Outputs	NMDDC	MUDC	BCC	FODC
NI Marketing via MTBNI Channels • Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from NI based Mountain bikers via: o Creation of blog content o Implementation of E-marketing plan o Implementation of social media plan o Creation and distribution of press releases to local and NI media	✓	✓	✓	✓
RoI Marketing via MTBNI Channels • Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from RoI based Mountain bikers via: o Creation of blog content o Implementation of E-marketing plan o Implementation of social media plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
RoI Marketing Campaign • Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from RoI based Mountain bikers via: o Delivery of a targeted marketing campaign to include offline and online advertising, social media advertising, social influencer marketing, PR, FAM trips etc.	✓	✓	×	✓

[1] Additional budget will be required for trail card design and print costs
[2] Council partners to deliver maintenance days including provision of lunch

Business Upskilling
• Support Council workshops for local tourism service providers
• Proactive engagement with local tourism service providers (accommodation, eateries and activity providers) to ensure:
  o their offering is targeted to the mountain bike market i.e. 'MTB Friendly'
  o innovative offers are available in line with campaigns
  o increased awareness of MTB product offering within their destination
  o Update of on-line toolkit for local tourism service providers including visitor profiles and requirements, product and service advice, marketing recommendations / opportunities and best practice benchmarking
• Ongoing support and promotion of the trail head providers
• Distribution of two e-newsletters to relevant stakeholders re marketing campaign updates, promotional opportunities and support
	✓	✓	×	✓

Destination Support • Provide support to Council Tourism teams to accurately incorporate the promotion of mountain biking within a wider tourism offering	✓	✓	✓	✓

2. Added value gained from adopting a consortium approach

Outdoor Recreation NI is able to provide the following added value to those councils supporting the MountainBikeNI Consortium:

Consortium Approach

A consortium approach provides the following benefits:

- **Economies of scale** in campaign costs
- The ability to **cross sell** between trail centres i.e. consumers interested in or visiting the Mournes based trails will learn about the Davagh Trails and vice versa
- A greater potential to attract (via tender) a **sponsor**
- **Improved brand, destination and product recognition**

Marketing Foundation

The following marketing foundation is already in place – reducing the need for supporting councils to further invest elsewhere:

- MountainBikeNI.com website attracting 49,346 visits in 2021/22 (6% increase from 2020/2021)
- E-marketing Database of 10,653
- Social media following of 30,000+ (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

Expertise & Knowledge
Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland is a not–for–profit organisation whose role is to develop, manage and promote outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland therefore those councils supporting the consortium benefit from its significant expertise and knowledge.

- Product knowledge gained from:
    - proactive campaigning for 10+ years for the development of mountain biking in Northern Ireland
    - driving the development of Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Blessingbourne, Castle Ward, Gosford and Barnett Demesne Mountain Bike Trails

- Visitor Safety knowledge gained from:
    - membership of Visitor Safety Group (VSG)
    - staff training investment including VSG and other relevant workshops

- Mountain bike market knowledge gained from proactive:
    - benchmarking from competitor destinations
    - engagement with UK and ROI wide industry experts
    - staff training investment including learning journeys and industry conferences

- Marketing expertise gained from:
    - 10+ years of proactively promoting outdoor recreation / activity tourism in Northern Ireland via Outdoor Recreation NI platforms such as WalkNI.com
    - 10+ years delivering activity tourism marketing outputs for Tourism Northern Ireland

3. Proposal 2022 / 2023

Delivery of Outputs

Partner	NMDDC / £	MUDC / £	BCC / £	FODC / £
Partner Support	£16,974	£9,450	£5,250	£5,250
Sponsorship Contribution	£10,000	£5,000	0	0
Partner Total	£26,974	£14,450	£5,250	£5,250
% of Delivery Capacity	52%	28%	10%	10%

RoI Campaign

Source	Amount / £	% of campaign delivery
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	2,100	50%
Mid Ulster District Council	1,050	25%
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,050	25%
TOTAL	**£4,200**	**100%**

MOUNTAINBIKENI HIGHLIGHTS

(APRIL 2021–MARCH 2022)

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland

WEBSITE

Received 49.3k unique visits.

Rostrevor MTB Trails received 14.9k page visits

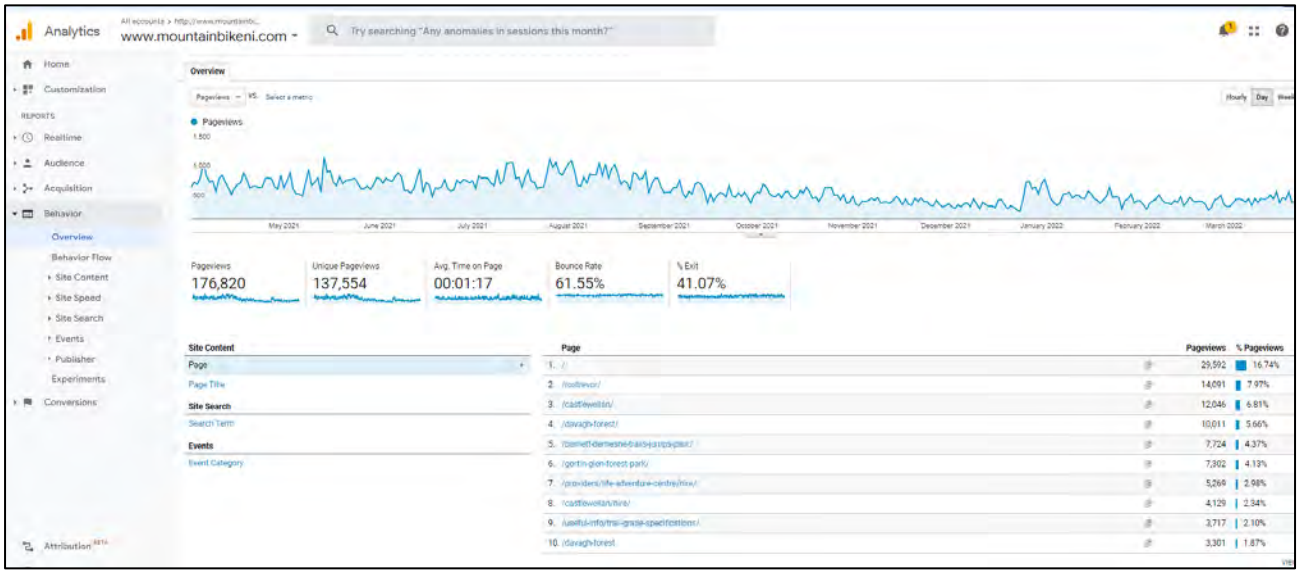
Castlewellan MTB Trails Profile received 12k page visits

Davagh Forest MTB Trails Profile received 10k page visits

Barnett Demesne Trails Profile received 7.7k page visits

Gortin Glen Forest Park Profile received 7.3k page visits

Blessingbourne Estate Profile received 2.9k page visits



ONLINE MARKETING – BARNETT DEMESNE

Barnett Demesne Jumps Park Renovations

Jumps 1 to 3 at Barnett Demesne Jumps Park have received a makeover from Belfast City Council following the recent surge in visitors to the site. For anyone who has visited the park recently, they'll know the atmosphere has been electric - get down and enjoy it if you haven't already!

While lines 4 to 6 remain closed, the works on lines 1-3 have improved the structure and security of the jumps and will ensure they're in good condition for years to come.

Barnett Demesne Trails and Jumps Park

ONLINE MARKETING – BLESSINGBOURNE ESTATE

Spend autumn at Blessingbourne Estate

Without wanting to sound dramatic, it can be a tad horrifying to contemplate the end of summer. Fear not though, there is something you can do to make the transition that much more pleasant! Book a MTB trip for yourself and your friends to Blessingbourne Estate's award winning accommodation, and experience some amazing trails right on your door step!

Book a Trip to Blessingbourne Estate

Treat the Family to a Trip at Blessingbourne Estate

With Covid-19 restrictions continuing to linger into the year, many people continue to opt for the staycation model of holidaying. Blessingbourne Estate's award winning accommodation provides all the benefits of a luxurious trip, with the added bonus of a mountain bike trail centre on your doorstep. What's not to love?

Book a Trip to Blessingbourne Estate

Storm Barra Closes Trail Centres Across NI

High winds from Storm Barra meant a number of trail centres had to be closed around Northern Ireland. Blessingbourne Estate and Davagh Forest remain closed, while all of the others have reopened. Please exercise caution in case of any further fallen branches on the trails. To keep up to date with closures, visit MountainBikeNI.com.

Check Trail Closures

Superb MTB Trails, Superb Experiences at Blessingbourne Estate

With restrictions easing around the country, it's the perfect time to book a trip for you and the family. Blessingbourne Estate provides you with stunning grounds and award winning accommodation for all the family to enjoy, whilst - importantly - also giving you 13km or red and blue MTB trails to enjoy! There's even a pump track for the beginners in the house to get stuck into.

Book to Stay At Blessingbourne Estate

4 Reasons to be Optimistic About the Future of Mountain Biking in NI

The news is pretty heavy wherever you look these days. We'd like to try and brighten your day with a little positivity in the form of an analysis of the different reasons we should be optimistic about the future of mountain biking here.

Click below to read about them!

ONLINE MARKETING – CASTLEWELLAN

Winners of the MountainBikeNI Awards

It's taken some time to announce due to Covid-19 restrictions, but we can now at last reveal the winners of the MountainBikeNI Awards 2020-2021, sponsored by Chain Reaction Cycles! You can read a full breakdown of the results in our latest MountainBikeNI blog here, but the TL;DR version is below:

Have your acceptance speeches ready;
Trail Centre of the Year - Castlewellan AND Gortin Glen Forest Park (our first EVER tie)
Best MTB Friendly Cafe - Urban Cafe, Castlewellan
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Best MTB Friendly Accommodation - Sperrinview Glamping
Most Active MTB Club of the Year - Gortin Glen MTB Club
Crash of the Year - There He Goes
Chain Reaction Cycles Competition Winner - Warren Campbell

Read the blog now

Castlewellan Volunteer Trail Day on BBC 1

The production team from BBC 1's Home Ground programme recently followed along with the MountainBikeNI Volunteers. Presenter Gavin Andrews then took to the trails with local MTB professional, Glyn O'Brien.

Watch the episode now by clicking the button below - the mountain biking segment begins at 07:45.

Watch the Home Ground Episode Now

Trail Cards On Sale Again

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Please be aware trail cards are currently only available for the national trail centres.

Visit MountainBikeNI.com Now

Record Breaking Visitors on the Trails at Castlewellan

The mountain bike trails at Castlewellan Forest Park have had their busiest year ever according to recently released figures.

Almost 35,000 riders were clocked on the over 20km of free to ride trails between April 2020 and March 2021 – an increase of 32% on the previous year, which was itself one of the highest on record. This is more impressive still considering the trails were closed for a number of months during the beginning of the pandemic.

Early indications show that this trend only seems to be continuing throughout the 2021 summer, which we're delighted to see.

Read More About Visitor Figures

Last Chance to Win an Epic MTB Staycation

MountainBikeNI has teamed up with the lovely people at The Yew Tree Barn, Life Adventure Centre and Urban Cafe to give you the chance to win an amazing mountain biking trip with a friend.

To enter, all you have to do is click the button below! The winners will be announced on Tuesday 31st August.

The 5 Advantages of Trailhead Providers

Trailhead providers are something which mountain bikers can sometimes take for granted, but having them at trail centres can open a whole new world of benefits. We take a look at what Northern Ireland's trailhead providers offer to your MTB experience.

Read the Blog

Chain Reaction Cycles Staff Assist with Maintenance Day at Castlewellan

A big thank you to the staff members from Chain Reaction Cycles HQ and their Belfast store who helped out the Mourne Heritage Trust team during a recent maintenance day. Days like these are always a great opportunity for mountain bikers to meet the people who look after the trails on a day to day basis and see the extent of the work they do.

Visit ChainReactionCycles.com

BikeMourne Welcomes a New Fleet of E-Bikes

The team at BikeMourne and Life Adventure Centre have just taken delivery of their new Electric Full Suspension MTB fleet! And what a fleet 😍

They are currently available in Castlewellan and soon to be available in Rostrevor. In addition, they've also got their new HardTail, Full Suspension and Electric HardTails in stock, so if you like playing with new toys... now's the time to book! Do so via the link below.

Oh and one more thing - new bikes, means the ex-hire fleet is now up for clearance, with HardTails, Full Suspension and Electric Full Suspension remaining. These won't last long so if genuinely interested, call the team direct on 02843770714. First come first served.

Book to Try a Brand New E-Bike Now

ONLINE MARKETING – DAVAGH FOREST

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Visit MountainBikeNI.com Now

SPERRIN BIKE HIRE

New Trailhead Provider at Davagh Forest

There have been several exciting developments around Davagh Forest recently (not least of which has been the opening of the OM Dark Sky Observatory). To add to this, there is now a new trailhead provider based a short distance from the trails.

Sperrin Bike Hire currently have a fleet of Carrera Vengeance bikes, for all sizes. You can find them online by pressing the button below.

Find Bike Hire at Davagh Forest

OM Dark Sky Observatory Now Open

The much anticipated OM Dark Sky Observatory is now open at Davagh Forest. While not directly related to the trails, it's great news as this truly unique experience inevitably draws more people to the area and in turn, introduces more people to the world of mountain biking.

Visit the OM Dark Sky Observatory

Grab and Go From OM Dark Sky Observatory While Visiting Davagh Forest

A coffee to heat you up after a day out on the trails is hard to beat. The OM Dark Sky Observatory has a Grab and Go facility inside it which mountain bikers can avail of, as well as a food facility and toilets.

Better still, you can check out one of Northern Ireland's newest and most unique tourism experiences while you're there!

Learn More about the OM Dark Sky and Observatory

Trail Closures Around Northern Ireland

High winds from Storm Dudley and Eunice have meant a number of trail centres are closed around Northern Ireland. Blessingbourne Estate and Davagh Forest are closed, while all of the others have issued warnings to exercise caution in case of fallen trees. To keep up to date with closures, visit MountainBikeNI.com.

If you come across any fallen trees on the trails, please report them by emailing info@mountainbikeni.com.

Check Trail Closures

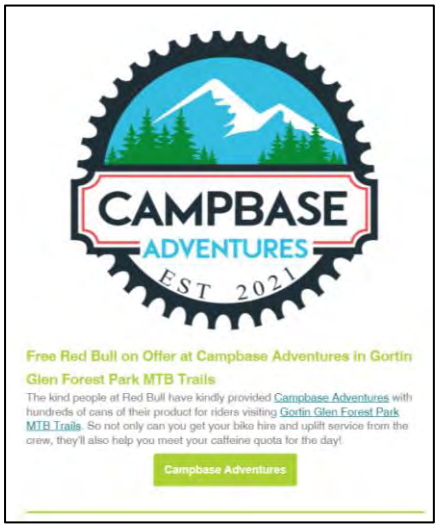
Send Us Your Best Pictures and Videos

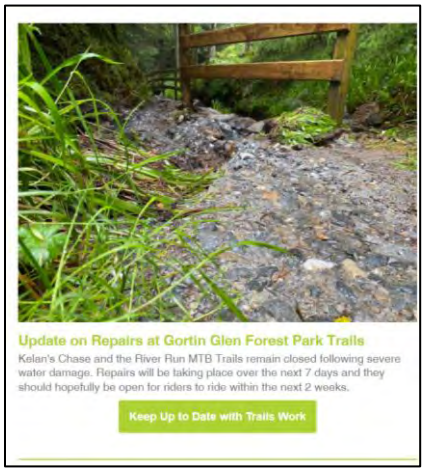
Love showcasing pictures from your recent rides? Have an epic video of you shredding through some horrendous weather on the trails?

We want to see it! We'll be compiling all of the content sent to us over the next few weeks and publishing it in a blog for everyone to see. You can email us your content via the link below or just use the #MTBNI when posting to social media.

Send MountainBikeNI Your Content

ONLINE MARKETING – GORTIN GLEN FOREST PARK





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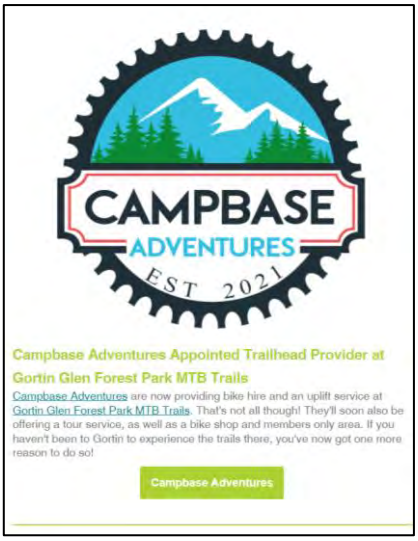
Read the blog now



Campbase Adventures Appointed Trailhead Provider at Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails

Campbase Adventures are now providing bike hire and an uplift service at Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails. That's not all though! They'll soon also be offering a tour service, as well as a bike shop and members only area. If you haven't been to Gortin to experience the trails there, you've now got one more reason to do so!

Campbase Adventures

ONLINE MARKETING – ROSTREVOR

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Please be aware trail cards are currently only available for the national trail centres.

Visit MountainBikeNI.com Now

Share your pictures with MountainBikeNI

We always love to see your pictures from the trails. These shots from Colin, Robert and Ian in particular are great as all three showcase the next generation of riders at one of the most scenic mountain bike locations in Northern Ireland, #KodakCorner. To share, just include #MountainBikeNI when posting your pictures online!

Search #MountainBikeNI

6 Most Commonly Asked Questions from New MTBers

We spoke to some of the people who contact MountainBikeNI interested in starting mountain biking and asked them what their biggest questions were about the sport. Check them out, and our answers, by clicking the link below.

Answering the Most Common Questions from Beginner Riders

Barnett Demesne: Mentioned in 2 News Stories and 2 Blogs

News

SEE ALL NEWS

BARNETT DEMESNE JUMPS PARK RENOVATIONS

MAY 5

Jumps 1 to 3 at Barnett Demesne Jumps Park have received a makeover from Belfast City Council following the recent surge in visitors to the site.

While lines 4 to 6 remain closed, works have been completed in recent weeks to improve the structure and security of the jumps. The updates have been warmly welcomed by local mountain bikers, who have seen a significant rise in visitors to the jumps park since the beginning of lockdown.

As with many places, the influx of people can pose problems for maintenance and upkeep however the recent works will ensure the jumps park remains in top condition for a long time to come.

News

SEE ALL NEWS

TRAIL CLOSURES AS STORM BARRA HITS

DEC 7

Trail centres across Northern Ireland are closed today with the arrival of Storm Barra. The trails are currently closed at Barnett Demesne, Blessingbourne Estate, Castlewellan, Davagh Forest and Rostrevor MTB Trails.

Riders are also strongly advised against visiting Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails.

All trails will be reopened following a safety check.

4) Bonuses

Trailhead providers can offer a host of other experiences and benefits. Blessingbourne Estate for example, has award winning accommodation which you and the family can stay at.

Life Adventure Centre at Castlewellan has a delightful café with a fire and plenty of space to sprawl out. Spectrn Bike Hire can give you the run down on all the information about the new and nearby Dark Sky Observatory. Campbase Adventures is currently offering free cans of Red Bull and the team at Belfast Activity Centre run expert coaching sessions around Barnett Demesne MTB Trails.

These bonuses are often particularly useful if you're not familiar with the area; your trailhead provider will keep you right in terms of places to visit and spots to eat and drink, if that's what you're looking for.

So, not this one then.

Stick to green trails until you get used to your bike, then to blue trails until you get used to trying obstacles on the bike. Don't be in any rush to progress - mountain bikers are incredibly supportive of new riders and everyone started out on these trails at some stage. Another tip to ensure you minimise injury if you do happen to come off, is to ensure you have the right gear. Helmets are a non negotiable and ideally a good, well reviewed helmet at that. Gloves, knee and elbow pads also help to minimise the sting.

2. How can I find the nearest mountain bike trails?

Time for a little self promotion! MountainBikeNI.com lists all of the official trail centres in Northern Ireland. Each trail centre has it's own profile page with information about the trail and the difficulty levels you can expect, as well as other information like trailhead providers and outlines of the route.

3. Are there any local clubs to join?

Starting out can be a little intimdiating, so joining a MTB club (or a road cycling club with a MTB contingent within it) can be a good way to get out with a few experienced heads. You can find a map outlining the list of official clubs in Northern Ireland here*. Clubs often will be able to direct you to an appropriate trail and specific section of trail, will pair you up with other riders and encourage you to have a laugh while you pick up the basics. Although one of the smaller trail centres, Barnett Demesne is a good example of a trail centre with lots of local clubs to pick from.

Blessingbourne Estate: Mentioned in 2 News Stories and 3 Blogs

News

+ SEE ALL NEWS

TRAIL CLOSURES AS STORM BARRA HITS

DEC 7

Trail centres across Northern Ireland are closed today with the arrival of Storm Barra. The trails are currently closed at Barnett Demesne, Blessingbourne Estate, Castlewellan, Davagh Forest and Rostrevor MTB Trails.

Riders are also strongly advised against visiting Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails.

All trails will be reopened following a safety check.

News

+ SEE ALL NEWS

TRAIL CLOSURES IN PLACE AS STORMS

FEB 16

Please be aware that trail closures are in place at Blessingbourne Estate and Davagh Forest MTB Trails with Storms Dudley and Eunice. There are also advisories in place at all other trail centres - please exercise extreme caution. There are currently reports of fallen trees at Gortin Glen Forest Park, and there are likely to be more down elsewhere.

4) Bonuses

Trailhead providers can offer a host of other experiences and benefits. Blessingbourne Estate for example, has award winning accommodation which you and the family can stay at.

Life Adventure Centre at Castlewellan has a delightful café with a fire and plenty of space to sprawl out. Sperrin Bike Hire can give you the run down on all the information about the new and nearby Dark Sky Observatory. Campbase Adventures is currently offering free cans of Red Bull and the team at Belfast Activity Centre run expert coaching sessions around Barnett Demesne MTB Trails.

These bonuses are often particularly useful if you're not familiar with the area; your trailhead provider will keep you right in terms of places to visit and spots to eat and drink, if that's what you're looking for.

What helps even more with this wave of compound interest is the bike industry in Northern Ireland is fortunate to be home to the likes of Chain Reaction Cycles, one of the biggest brands in the world for mountain bikes.

Riders enjoying a breather at Blessingbourne Estate Mountain Bike Trails

This swell of interest is what the people who are deciding where to spend public money look at; if constituents love mountain biking and those numbers keep going up, that's where political interest will lie and where ultimately, it becomes easier to secure funding for new trails. Speaking of which...

There are a lot of factors that go into deciding where your next mountain bike destination will be. Today MountainBikeNI explores the myriad of reasons why RoI riders should get #OnYerBike and head north

1. It's so close

If you're thinking about exploring the mountain biking world, you don't have far to travel. Luckily on this island, we have plenty of incredibly exciting trails on our doorstep. Northern Ireland is home to six mountain bike trails that encompass black, red, blue and green trails, as well as a number of downhill trails and orange features.

Dublin's fair city is a short distance to two of NI's biggest trails, only an hour and a half from Rostrevor and just under two hours to Castlewellan. You're also much closer to the mountain bike trails in Northern Ireland if you live in the west of Ireland with Blessingbourne Estate only a half an hour journey from Monaghan and Cavan. The MTB trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park in County Tyrone are only a half an hour journey from the border of Donegal. With these wonderful trails situated only a few hours up the road, it's a must try for MTB riders across Ireland.

Castlewellan: Mentioned in 3 News Stories and 4 Blogs

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

GLOBAL BRAND PROVIDES HELPING HANDS

NOV 3

Volunteers from Chain Reaction joined Mourne Heritage Trust staff this week to assist in a maintenance day at Castlewellan Mountain Bike Trails. It was reported during the summer that the trails have had their busiest year on record, and they continue to hold the mantle of Northern Ireland's most popular trail centre, with over 35,000 people visiting between 2020 and 2021.

This growth in visitors to the trails has led to increased pressure on Mourne Heritage Trust, who maintain all the mountain bike trail centres and the majority of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Newry, Mourne and Down region.

During the maintenance day, volunteers collected litter, repaired damage, and dug drainage along a large section of the more than 20km trails within the Forest Park. Seamus Murphy from Mourne Heritage Trust outlined the significant benefit that volunteer days like this have:

"There is a lot of work required to maintain all of the sites we manage, so to get nearly 15 extra pairs of hands is a massive help to us. We always try to make the work enjoyable, and joke that it's part work and part 'walk and talk'. As the weather begins to turn this is a great time to ensure the trails are in the best possible condition for going into winter."

Volunteers from Chain Reaction, who are the sponsors for Northern Ireland's National Trails, included staff from their Belfast store, as well as a multitude of employees from different departments from their Mallusk Head office.

Stephen Laird from Chain Reaction's Boucher Road retail store said the amount of work required to keep the trail in good shape was surprising: "It's something I think we all take for granted, and you don't realise how much work goes into keeping the trails looking great until you're actually out and seeing the sheer number of things that you need to do. So it's been great to be here and help out."

Dale McMullan, another volunteer from the bike design team, said, "It's been great to be out with a bunch of guys from customer services, house brands, merchandising and other departments, to all come together and tidy up the trails. It's interesting to see, there's a lot more maintenance that goes on that anyone imagines. Personally, I ride here quite often so it's really good to give something back."

The winter is typically a period during which multiple storms can cause serious damage to the trails and require diversions and closures for longer period of times. The volunteer scheme to assist Mourne Heritage Trust is open on an ongoing basis, as Ethan Loughrey from MountainBikeNI outlined:

"Our maintenance days in conjunction with Mourne Heritage Trust are a real asset, both for mountain bikers and the team who are looking after the trails year-round. It gives both groups an opportunity to provide feedback and as some of the guys mentioned here today, is a reminder of just how much work the trails require to keep at a high standard."

If anyone would like to assist with volunteer maintenance days, you can find more information at http://www.mountainbikeni.com/events-news/maintenance-days-ahead/.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

CASTLEWELLAN VOLUNTEER TRAIL DAY ON BBC ONE

MAY 15

The production team from BBC One's Home Ground programme recently followed along with the MountainBikeNI Volunteers. Presenter Gavin Andrews then took to the trails with local MTB professional Glyn O'Brien.

Watch the episode now by clicking the button below- the mountain biking segment begins at 07:45.

For more information, click here.

JUN 4

The popular mountain bike trails at Castlewellan Forest Park have had their busiest year ever according to newly released figures.

Almost 35,000 riders were clocked on the over 20km of free to ride trails between April 2020 and March 2021 – an increase of 32% on the previous year, which was itself one of the highest on record. This is more impressive still considering the trails were closed for a number of months during the beginning of the pandemic.

At Castlewellan, riders are treated to trails for a variety of abilities, ranging from child friendly green trails, novice blues, challenging red trails, and even includes two epic black trail challenges for the adrenaline junkies. The offering of different abilities has been a key component to the trails success, as more and more people turned to the outdoors for something to do during the pandemic.

Kath Maguire from local Castlewellan mountain bike club, 'Feel Good Factor' – a women's only group for those interested in the outdoors – said:

"We love the Castlewellan trails, and the club make great use of them – they are our 'go to' trail centre... Feel Good Factor club ladies enjoy riding here, particularly with the longer stretch coming in the evenings. The forest is beautiful and the trail allows you to enjoy the hilly terrain as well as take in the beauty of the forest, lake and aspect of the Mournes."

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Laura Devlin was delighted with the news. *"The mountain bike trails at Castlewellan have clearly proven to be invaluable to the local community during the pandemic. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful and well maintained natural resources on our doorstep. I am very proud that of the work that Council and our local private sector have put in which has resulted in such a strong outdoor recreation package."*

One key player in the private sector at Castlewellan Forest Park over the years has been the outdoor adventure provider, Life Adventure Centre. One of Life's Directors, Martin McMullan, has witnessed firsthand the surge in numbers to the park in the last year:

"The past year has been exceptionally challenging for all aspects of society, not least the business community, particularly what would be deemed as 'non-essential'. That said, the newfound appreciation of the outdoors and the various pursuits it offers, particularly in times of crisis, has proven that what we offer may be much more essential that first realised. When permitted, we've been privileged to play a part in supporting what for many is a new start in not just the activity itself but the outdoors in general. We're very much looking forward to achieving some normality in the not-too-distant future and shall endeavour to continue supporting access to the outdoors, the many activities and resulting benefits it offers."

The growth in users hasn't been without its challenges however, as addressed in a recent public awareness campaign #TheRightSideOfOutside. Martin Carey, the Chief Executive of Mourne Heritage Trust recognised the issues this posed to his team, who manage and maintain the trails, but considers it a good problem to have:

"It is very pleasing to see the value so many people have derived from the Castlewellan trails over the last year or so. They have clearly been a vital outlet for people in these difficult times and that makes the work of looking after them all the more satisfying. Of course, with that popularity come increased management pressures but, with the support of funders, our team has risen to the challenge and we are reassured by positive feedback on the condition of the trail network."

Even with the easing of restrictions, visitor numbers to Castlewellan's trails have continued to grow, with March alone seeing an increase of more than 100% on the previous year. This has in turn driven up the demand for mountain bikes with which to ride the trails – something trail sponsors, Chain Reaction Cycles are familiar with.

The Managing Editor at Chain Reaction Cycles, Matt Cole said,

"To see growth like this is a great boost of confidence for all involved in the mountain bike industry in Northern Ireland. Chain Reaction Cycles has been a proud sponsor of the national trails since they opened in 2013 and we are proud of our local roots, with the company having started out in Ballyclare over 30 years ago.

In particular the rise in new mountain bikers shows that more people are discovering the fantastic resources that are on their own doorstep and getting out to look after their physical and mental health."

Ethan Loughrey from MountainBikeNI, the brand which promotes all of Northern Ireland's official trail centres, was hopeful the figures would reshape people's concepts of mountain biking and encourage others to give it a try:

"It has been amazing to see the figures just go up and up in the last year. People sometimes assume that mountain biking is an all flying, ultra-adrenaline sport but the truth is that we have trails that suit every ability, and I would really encourage everyone to give them a try. They are also a shining example of how capital investment and private sector endeavor can successfully combine to bring a sustainable economic injection to rural economies."

The popularity of Castlewellan Mountain Bike Trails reflects the wider growth in the sport, with several new trail centres opening within the last few years in Northern Ireland, most recently at Gortin Glen Forest Park in Co. Tyrone.

The mountain bike trails are owned by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and maintained by Mourne Heritage Trust. Please adhere to the latest current government advice on exercising outdoors.

For more information on the Castlewellan Mountain Bike Trails please visit MountainBikeNI.com

Life Adventure Centre at Castlewellan has a delightful café with a fire and plenty of space to sprawl out. Sperrin Bike Hire can give you the run down on all the information about the new and nearby Dark Sky Observatory. Campbase Adventures is currently offering free cans of Red Bull and the team at Belfast Activity Centre run expert coaching sessions around Barnett Demesne MTB Trails.

These bonuses are often particularly useful if you're not familiar with the area; your trailhead provider will keep you right in terms of places to visit and spots to eat and drink, if that's what you're looking for.

5) Broaden your MTB connections

The world of MTB is growing rapidly but it's still a familial one, with a strong culture of community once you embrace it. In that sense, making the connections with your trailhead providers is the natural thing to do, opening new relationships that can benefit you for years to come.

Bike broken down 1km into a ride? If you know your trailhead provider, pop back and see if they can lend a hand. Most of them will do everything they can to ensure your experience on the trails is a positive one; that's why they're there!

A big thank you to Life Adventure Centre, Sperrin Bike Hire, Campbase Adventures, Blessingbourne Estate and Belfast Activity Centre for all their support over the years. Follow them by clicking the links above!

3. Are there any local clubs to join?

Starting out can be a little intimdiating, so joining a MTB club (or a road cycling club with a MTB contingent within it) can be a good way to get out with a few experienced heads. You can find a map outlining the list of official clubs in Northern Ireland here*. Clubs often will be able to direct you to an appropriate trail and specific section of trail, will pair you up with other riders and encourage you to have a laugh while you pick up the basics. Although one of the smaller trail centres, Barnett Demesne is a good example of a trail centre with lots of local clubs to pick from.

Learning the ropes at Castlewellan MTB Trails

4. How good are the trails?

Don't just take our word for it, hear it from the people who know what they're talking about. Check out our YouTube channel to hear what the likes of Greg Callaghan, Dan Wolfe and Colin Ross have to say about Northern Ireland's trails.

Arguably just as importantly are the ordinary cyclists; and trails in Northern Ireland have seen a year on year rise in the numbers visiting trail centres for almost 4 years now. Castlewellan MTB Trails actually enjoyed their busiest ever year last year!

Thinking about hiring?

If you don't have a bike or don't fancy dragging it up the road, there is always the option of hiring when you're there. There are mountain bikes to hire for all abilities and preferences across all our centres. Check out our 'Trails Map' section to find out where to hire.

For more information about mountain biking in Northern Ireland, visit MountainBikeNI.com

Favourite MTB Trail Centre in NI

Making history in the MountainBikeNI Awards, we have a tie! Both Castlewellan and the fresh faced newcomer Gortin Forest Park MTB Trails, were tied with the most votes in this category!

As things get back to normal it means you've even more reason to get the bike out and visit these two trail centres (as local Covid 19 restrictions allow; see current regulations for mountain biking here.)

Davagh Forest: Mentioned in 8 News Stories and 3 Blogs

FURTHER UPDATE ON COVID RESTRICTIONS

DEC 13

Updated on 13th December 2021

Although many coronavirus restrictions have eased, regulations and guidance remain in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Continue to protect yourself and others by following public health advice.

The following information has been taken from NI Direct and applies specifically to undertaking outdoor recreation:

- **Travel:** You should avoid visiting places where there is a chance that large numbers of people will gather and crowds will form. If you go somewhere and there are crowds which will make social distancing difficult, consider going somewhere else instead.
- **Outdoor Gatherings:** Outdoor gatherings of 30 people or fewer do not need a risk assessment. You should maintain social distancing as well as good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.
- **Outdoor Sport:** All outdoor sport, whether organised formally by your local sports club or informally by a group of friends, is permitted. To determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend or participate in an outdoor sporting activity/event, the organiser or operator must carry out a risk assessment. Outdoor sporting activities/events of 30 people or fewer do not need a risk assessment. Any behaviour which may encourage the risk of transmission around sports activities, such as car sharing, congregation of people on the side-lines and sporting celebrations, should be avoided.

Spending time outdoors can significantly improve physical and mental wellbeing. To stay safe outdoors, you should always follow the **'Be Outdoor Smart – Leave No Trace – Love The Place'** guidance alongside government protocols and public health guidelines by:

1. Being prepared – check the site and facilities you need will be open before you leave home
2. Planning ahead – wear appropriate clothing and footwear, bring the right kit, choose activities that are within your skills and capabilities and check the weather forecast
3. Parking with care – go early to get a car parking space as careless parking can create a road hazard or block access for Emergency Services, local farmers and residents
4. Choosing quiet locations - avoid peak times and popular sites to help maintain social distancing and have a plan B if the site is full when you arrive
5. Bringing and using hand sanitiser, especially after touching surfaces and wash your hands as soon as you are back indoors
6. Sharing the space with all - respect staff, volunteers and signage and other users of the site and avoid gathering around key areas such as car parks, information points etc.
7. Taking your litter and dog waste home with you
8. Keeping your dog under control – stop it from approaching other people and their dogs, cyclists and wildlife and avoid bringing dogs to areas where livestock are present
9. Enjoying nature but don't disturb it – watch wildlife from a distance, stay invisible, quiet and don't stay long
10. Avoiding starting open fires and only light a barbecue in a designated barbecue area
11. Only camping in designated camping areas

For more information on engaging healthy and inspiring visits to our outdoors please visit NI Direct.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

TRAIL CLOSURES IN PLACE AS STORMS

FEB 16

Please be aware that trail closures are in place at Castlewellan Forest Park and Davagh Forest MTB Trails with Storms Dudley and Eunice. There are also advisories in place at all other trail centres - please exercise extreme caution. There are currently reports of fallen trees at Portglenone Forest Park, and there are likely to be more down elsewhere.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

SHARE YOUR MOUNTAIN BIKE ADVENTURES!

FEB 7

Calling all mountain bikers! During the month of February, MTBNI are collating your mountain bike adventures across all our trails. We are calling for you to share with us your mountain bike adventures by sending your pictures, videos, blogs, or written thoughts from any of the official trail centres across NI. If you are interested, please email info@mountainbikeni.com. (using WeTransfer if the files are above 15MB).

We look forward to hearing from you!

#MountainBikeNI.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

MID ULSTER £1.8M INVESTMENT PLANS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION TO BENEFIT DAVAGH FOREST

JAN 17

A capital programme in Mid Ulster valued at in excess of £1.8M will contribute to civic space revitalisation, upgrades to outdoor play opportunities and improved access to outdoor recreation across the district in the coming year.

The multi million pound investment plans from Mid Ulster District Council will see a total of 10 projects delivered by late spring 2022, with a further 9 projects in the pipeline for later in the year.

In addition to new mountain bike trails at Davagh Forest, there will be extensive works alongside Coalisland Canal and its town centre; a range of improvements at Inniscorn Forest, Pomeroy Forest and Ballyronan Wood; upgrades to children's play areas in Moygashel, Cookstown and Magherafelt; and the installation of connecting walkways and footpaths in Coalisland. Clonoe and Eglish are among the projects about to begin.

Chair of the Council, Councillor Paul McLean said, "More and more people are relying on outdoor recreation as a way of taking care of their physical and mental health, especially during the pandemic and 2021 saw increased amounts of visitors to Mid Ulster outdoor recreation sites.

"It became apparent therefore that many of these sites needed improvements to access and facilities, and our focus for the early part of 2022 is to make more outdoor recreation opportunities open to residents and visitors alike.

"Almost two years on from the start of the pandemic, we are acutely aware that our tourism and hospitality industry continues to suffer the effects of multiple lockdowns and a reduction in footfall and visitor numbers, and so it is important that we continue our drive to develop innovative tourism product which will help attract domestic, and eventually, out of state visitors.

"These works would not be possible without the support of a range of funding bodies and programmes, so thanks should go to them for supporting the revitalisation of the district".

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

ON 'YER BIKE FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY WEEKEND

MAR 16

Northern Ireland MTB Trails Ready for St. Patrick's Day Weekend!

Mountain bikers across the island of Ireland are expected to visit the mountain bike trails in Northern Ireland over the bank holiday weekend as part of the #OnYerBike campaign.

Northern Ireland boasts 6 incredible trail centres dotted across the region that means you'll just be a short trip away whether you're coming from Sligo or Donegal; or from Dublin or Monaghan.

With the recent addition of Gortin Glen Forest Park Mountain Bike Trails, riders coming from the Republic of Ireland can experience the rugged beauty of the Sperrin Mountains while riding in Gortin or, NI's hidden jewel in the collection, Davagh Forest, home to some of the most epic rock drops you'll find.

Better known are the trails located in the Mourne Mountains, as varied as they are popular. Castlewellan MTB Trails enjoyed their busiest ever year in 2021 with mountain biking exploding in popularity over lockdowns. With a fantastic range of black, red, blue and green trails as well as a top class trailhead provider in Life Adventure Centre, Castlewellan has everything you could want in a national trail centre.

Rostrevor has also seen popularity increase over the last year with rider figures growing by around 12%, illustrative of the epic views, incredible riding and well earned reputation which Rostrevor has developed over the past 9 years.

Wherever you're going, make sure and share your adventure with us. Get #OnYerBike and use that hashtag!

UPDATED GUIDANCE ON COVID-19

APR 21

The government have updated their restrictions to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and to help manage the pressures on the health and social care system. During this time, the single most important action we can all take is to follow the public health advice.

The current regulations will be reviewed on 13th May 2021.

The following information has been taken from NI Direct and applies specifically to undertaking outdoor recreation:

- Travel: To help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading you should stay in your local area. If you go somewhere and there are crowds which will make social distancing difficult, consider going somewhere else instead.
- Outdoor Gatherings: Up to 10 people (including children of all ages) from a maximum of two households can meet outdoors. You should maintain social distancing by being at least two metres apart, as well as good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.
- Outdoor Areas, Visitor Attractions & Activity Centres. Outdoor parks, play areas, outdoor areas of properties operated by the National Trust and the outdoor areas of stately homes, historic homes and castles are permitted to remain open. From 23rd April outdoor visitor attractions and activity centres may reopen.
- Outdoor Exercise & Sports:
  - Up to 10 people (including children of all ages) from a maximum of two households can take part in outdoor exercise or sports activities.
  - Up to 15 people (including coaches) can take part in structured outdoor sports training, through clubs or individuals affiliated to recognised sport's governing bodies or representative organisations for sport and physical activity.
  - Outdoor sports facilities can re-open but only to permit their use for those allowed in the regulations. Club houses and indoor sports facilities (changing rooms, showers, kitchens, meeting rooms), apart from essential toilet facilities must stay closed.
  - From 23rd April squad training can resume, as well as competitive outdoor sports. No spectators are permitted and numbers (including officials, participants, management and support personnel) should be restricted to the minimum number required for the delivery of the event and should not exceed 100
  - The return to sport protocols put in place by sport's governing bodies should be strictly adhered to including hygiene measures, social distancing and other mitigations. Sport NI has provided further guidance for governing bodies / representative organisations on the Pathway out of Restrictions for Outdoor Sport.

Spending time outdoors can significantly improve physical and mental wellbeing. To stay safe outdoors, you should follow the 'Be Outdoor Smart – Leave No Trace – Love The Place' guidance by:

1. Planning ahead – check if your destination will be open and what facilities are available
2. Respecting the emergency services – now is not the time to end up in hospital
3. Scaling back your ambitions – choose activities that are within your skills and capabilities
4. Parking with care – careless parking can create a road hazard or block access for Emergency Services, local farmers and residents
5. Avoiding peak times and popular sites to help maintain social distancing
6. Bringing and using hand sanitiser, especially after touching surfaces and wash your hands as soon as you are back indoors
7. Respecting the wishes of landowners, local communities and other users of the site
8. Keeping at least 2 metres apart from anyone outside your household or bubble where possible
9. Not leaving your house if you have any COVID-19 symptoms or if you are self-isolating
10. Taking your litter home with you
11. Keeping your dog under control
12. Enjoying nature but do not disturb it
13. Only starting fires in designated BBQ areas

For the most up to date status of key outdoor recreation guidelines please visit NI Direct.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

SHARE YOUR CONTENT AND WIN A CHAIN REACTION CYCLES VOUCHER

MAR 1

Throughout February and March 2022 we are asking mountain bikers to share their pictures and videos from Northern Ireland's trail centres!

Email to info@mountainbikeni.com or simply use the #MountainBikeNI and you'll be in with a chance of winning one of three £50 vouchers for Chain Reaction Cycles.

It can be a standard bike pic, a video of a particularly gnarly drop, GoPro of you gunning it - whatever you want!

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

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Wherever you're going, make sure and share your adventure with us. Get #OnYerBike and use that hashtag!

While we're not in the loop of all the plans ahead, there is no doubt there is a trend at the minute for adding to trail centres. Davagh Forest will be having new trails added to it, there was the recent opening of trails at the GAP and as mentioned above - success for mountain bike trails tends to beget more success for mountain bike trails.

4) New found interest in our health

It's hard to argue with the fact that Covid-19 made us all acutely aware of our overall health. The statistics continue to show that being overweight increases your chances of being seriously ill with the disease, and so society as a whole has never had a greater reason to set aside time to ensure we are exercising enough and eating healthily.

In addition to the physical element, there are copious number of studies that reflect the health benefit of being outdoors in green spaces

The benefits of mountain biking are that it offers people a non traditional way to get fit. Better still, advances in e-bike technology mean that even with injuries or despite what people might consider 'age restrictions' anyone can get into the sport and give themselves a moderate workout climbing to the top of a mountain.

4. Is mountain biking expensive?

This answer unfortunately is 'it depends'. Bikes aren't exactly cheap but a basic one can be purchased relatively cheaply. We're biased obviously but Chain Reaction Cycles, who sponsor the national mountain bike trails, have some great entry level bikes at good prices.

Once you get into mountain biking you'll not believe the number of variations you can source for your bikes

After that, the sport is as cheap or as expensive as you want to make it. In fact, most of the trail centres are free to ride which often surprises people. The risk comes if you get *into* into it, then you won't be satisfied with just the one bike. Some people aren't even satisfied with two bikes. You may laugh, but you too may become that person.

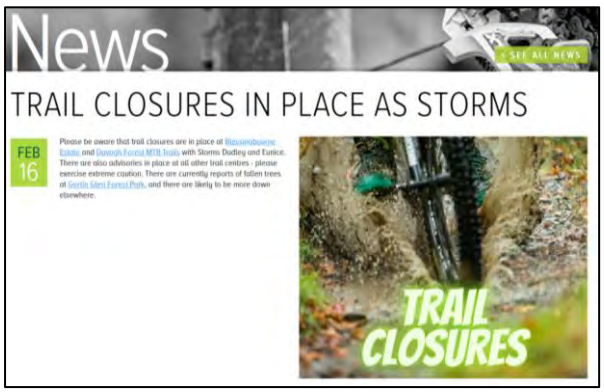
Of course if purchasing a bike isn't an option, you can also hire bikes from local trailhead providers such as Belfast Activity Centre for Barnett Demesne MTB Trails; Sperrin Bike Hire for Davagh Forest; Campbase

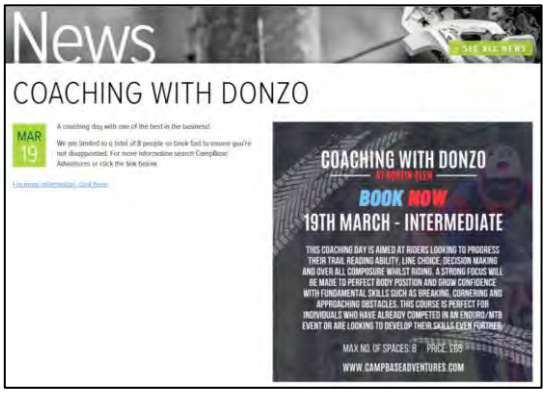
Favourite MTB Trail Section in NI

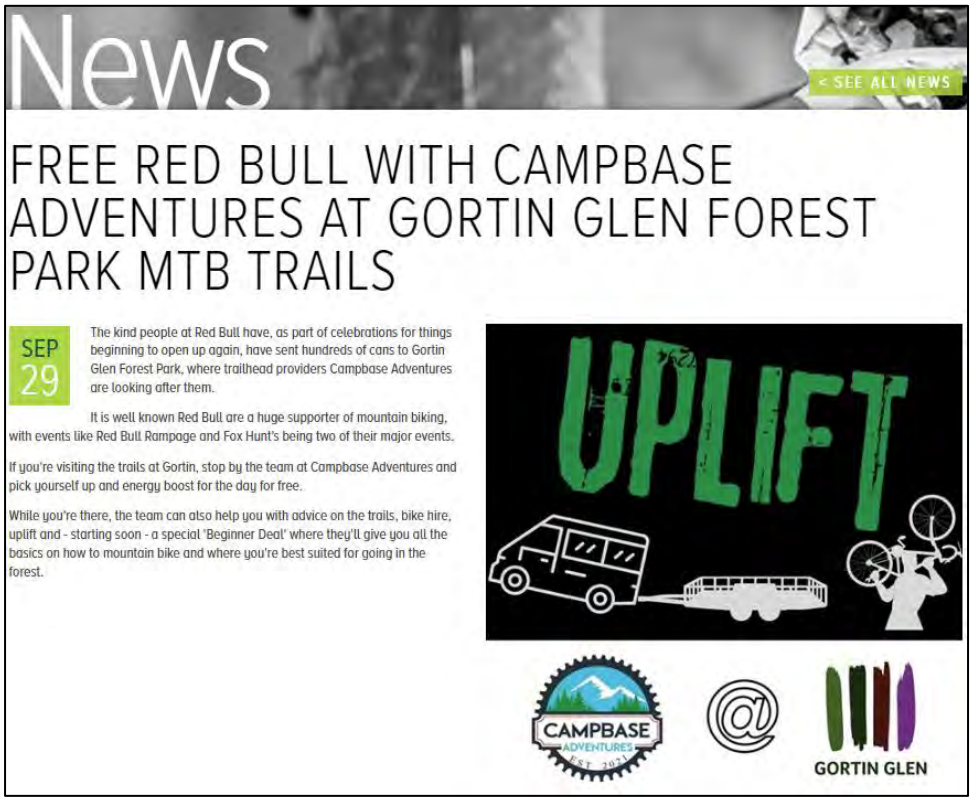
It's a triple whammy for the Stream Trail section at Davagh Forest, fighting off stiff competition from both the black trails in Castlewellan and some of the newer trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park.

Speed and fun are the order of the day if you haven't ridden the Stream Trail before. Also, what the heck are you doing?! Go try it right now!

Gortin: Mentioned in 3 News Stories and 4 Blogs







bikeni.com/blog/

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Of course if purchasing a bike isn't an option, you can also hire bikes from local trailhead providers such as Belfast Activity Centre for Barnett Demesne MTB Trails; Sperrin Bike Hire for Davagh Forest; Campbase Adventures for Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails and Life Adventure Centre for Castlewellan and Rostrevor MTB Trails. This can be helpful in deciding which bike you like the feel of before actually making a purchase.

2) Uplifts

Although not available from all trailhead providers, an uplift service is a God send if you're planning a long day on the trails and you're not looking to pedal all day. "Up hills" are a part of mountain biking as much as downhills are, but that doesn't mean you have to ignore the helping hand of the trailhead providers.

Uplifts are currently only available at Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails from Campbase Adventures.

Favourite MTB Trail Centre in NI

Making history in the MountainBikeNI Awards, we have a tie! Both Castlewellan and the fresh faced newcomer Gortin Forest Park MTB Trails, were tied with the most votes in this category!

As things get back to normal it means you've even more reason to get the bike out and visit these two trail centres (as local Covid 19 restrictions allow; see current regulations for mountain biking here.)

Most Active MTB Club

The new category to the MTBNI Awards had a LOT of interest. The winner however ended up with a strong margin – congratulations Gortin MTB Club! If you don't already, make sure to give them a follow as they showcase what Gortin has to offer.

3) Plans Afoot

Everyone is likely now familiar with Northern Ireland's newest mountain bike trails, Gortin Glen Forest Park Mountain Bike Trails. If not, treat yourself to a visit and we can promise you'll be blown away by what's on offer there, especially after it's addition of trailhead provider Campbase Adventures.

Campbase Adventure offer bike hire and an uplift service for Gortin Glen Forest Park

While we're not in the loop of all the plans ahead, there is no doubt there is a trend at the minute for adding to trail centres. Davagh Forest will be having new trails added to it, there was the recent opening of trails at the GAP and as mentioned above - success for mountain bike trails tends to beget more success for mountain bike trails.

Rostrevor: Mentioned in 2 News Stories and 3 Blogs

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

BOOK ROSTREVOR UPLIFT WITH BIKE MOURNE

JAN 25

Uplifts for mountain bikers remain available with Bike Mourne for Rostrevor Mountain Bike Trails. Bike Mourne are currently offering bike hire and uplifts throughout the winter, every weekend until the end of March.

There are options for both groups and individuals and booking for each date must be done at least 24 hours in advance.

For more information, click the link below.

For more information, click here.

News

< SEE ALL NEWS

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MAR 16

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Wherever you're going, make sure and share your adventure with us. Get #OnYerBike and use that hashtag!

BIKE DESTINATION FOR PEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Posted on April 11, 2022 @ 2:11 PM

There are a lot of factors that go into deciding where your next mountain bike destination will be. Today MountainBikeNI explores the myriad of reasons why RoI riders should get #OnYerBike and head north

1. It's so close

If you're thinking about exploring the mountain biking world, you don't have far to travel. Luckily on this island, we have plenty of incredibly exciting trails on our doorstep. Northern Ireland is home to six mountain bike trails that encompass black, red, blue and green trails, as well as a number of downhill trails and orange features.

Dublin's fair city is a short distance to two of NI's biggest trails, only an hour and a half from Rostrevor and just under two hours to Castlewellan. You're also much closer to the mountain bike trails in Northern Ireland if you

Q1. How likely am I to get injured?

This is a big one and not something to immediately brush over with assurances that mountain biking is a completely safe sport. It isn't, which is also part of the reason so many of us love it. Not only will telling a new rider that they won't get hurt be disinegenous - they'll probably just not believe you.

The best thing you can do here is to manage expectations and advise on the best way to minimise injury. Yes, it is possible you'll come off your mountain bike in the early days, but you can reduce the odds of this happening substantially by doing a few things. Firstly, only riding on trails of appropriate ability.

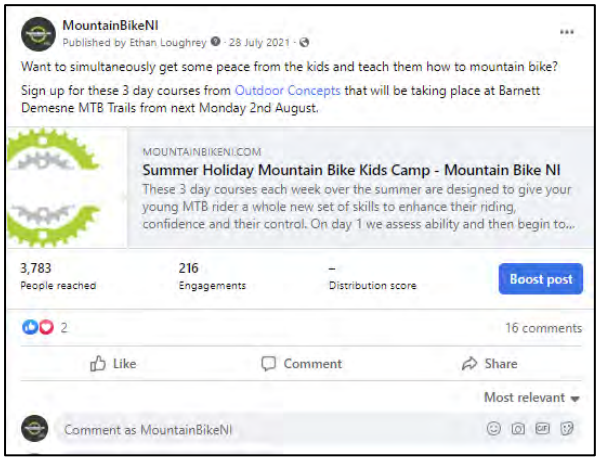
So, not this one then.

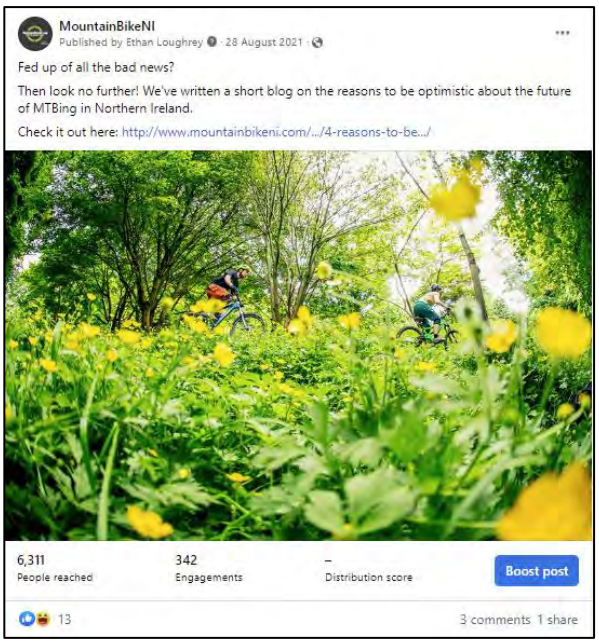
SOCIAL MEDIA

25,347 2,755 2,918 1,167

Continued branding on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. 2% growth in social media

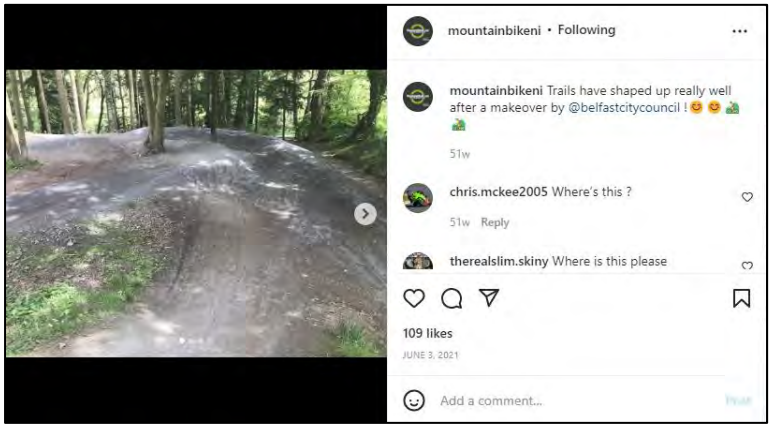
Barnett Demesne - 7 Posts


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 28 July 2021 ·
Want to simultaneously get some peace from the kids and teach them how to mountain bike?
Sign up for these 3 day courses from Outdoor Concepts that will be taking place at Barnett Demesne MTB Trails from next Monday 2nd August.
MOUNTAINBIKENI.COM
Summer Holiday Mountain Bike Kids Camp - Mountain Bike NI
These 3 day courses each week over the summer are designed to give your young MTB rider a whole new set of skills to enhance their riding, confidence and their control. On day 1 we assess ability and then begin to...
3,783
People reached
216
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
2
16 comments
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant
Comment as MountainBikeNI

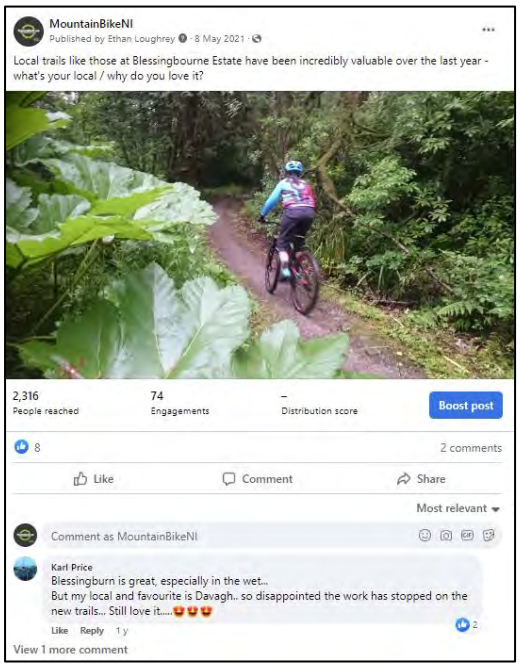

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 28 August 2021 ·
Fed up of all the bad news?
Then look no further! We've written a short blog on the reasons to be optimistic about the future of MTBing in Northern Ireland.
Check it out here: http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../4-reasons-to-be.../
6,311
People reached
342
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
13
3 comments 1 share

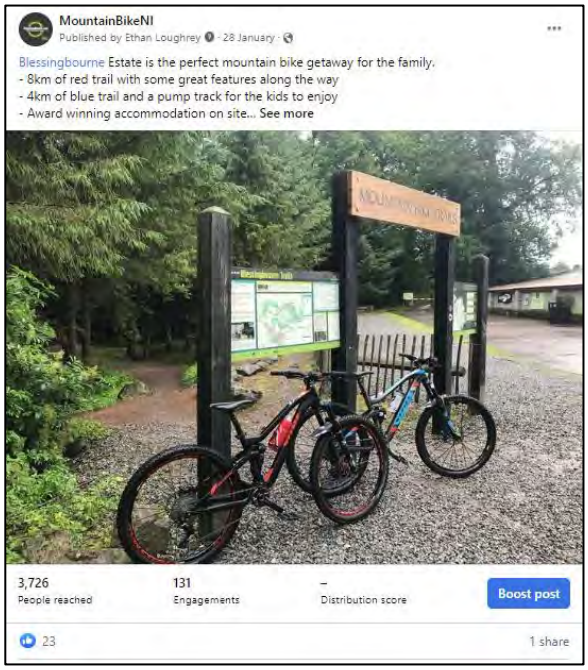
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jun 3, 2021
Trails have shaped up really well after a makeover by @belfastcc !
1

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jul 28, 2021
How would you like to get some peace from the kids, whilst also getting them into mountain biking?
Check out @outdoorconcepts 3 day courses for kids that start on Monday 2nd August at Barnett Demesne MTB Trails:
mountainbikeni.com/events/57624/s...


mountainbikeni • Following
mountainbikeni Trails have shaped up really well after a makeover by @belfastcitycouncil !
51w
chris.mckee2005 Where's this ?
51w Reply
therealslim.skiny Where is this please
109 likes
JUNE 3, 2021
Add a comment...

Blessingbourne Estate - 13 Posts





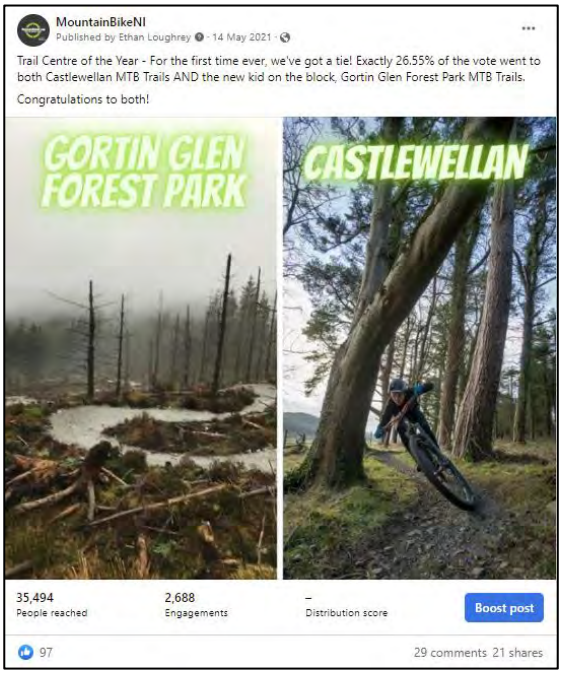
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jan 29

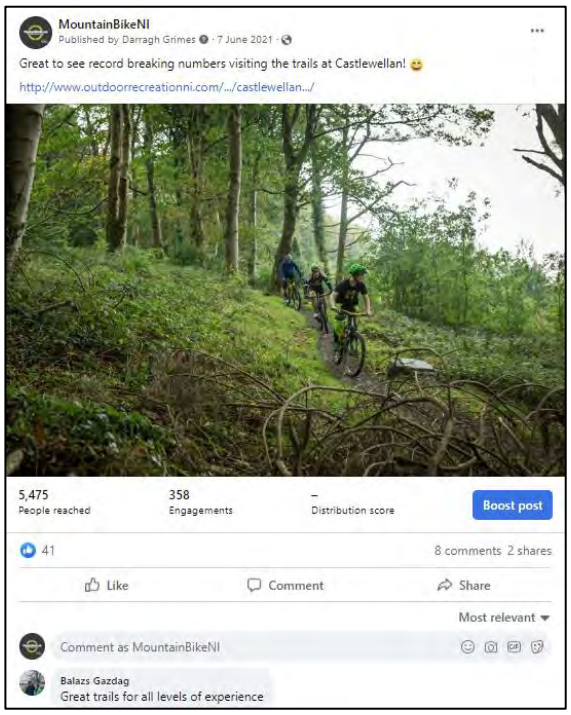
Blessingbourne Estate @Blessingbourne is perfect for a getaway with the family.

- 8km of red trail with some great features along the way
- 4km of blue trail and a pump track for the kids to enjoy
- Award winning accommodation on site

2 1 5

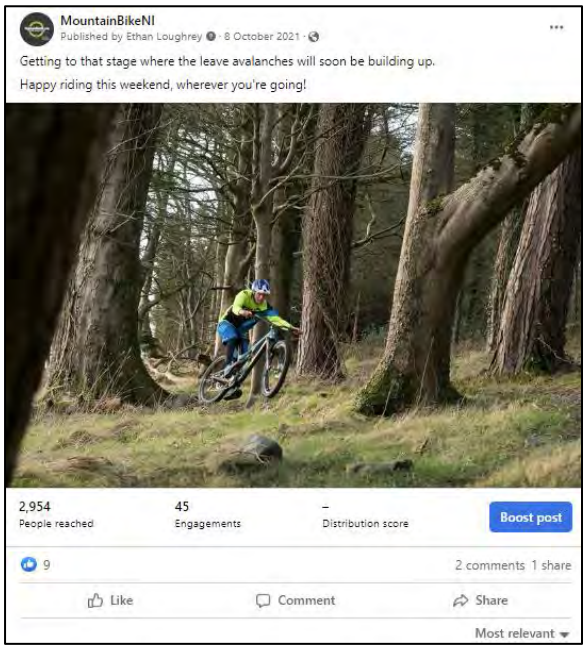
Castlewellan - 16 Facebook Posts





MountainBikeNI
Published by Darragh Grimes · 14 June 2021 ·
NEW COMPETITION!
Win the Ultimate MTB Staycation!
To enter please visit our website www.mountainbikeni.com/
Best of luck!
@yewtreebarn
Life Adventure Ctr
URBAN CAFE Castlewellan
Chain Reaction Cycles
WIN THE ULTIMATE MTB STAYCATION
Overnight Stay at The Yew Tree Barn
e MTB Hire from Life
Brunch from Award Winning Urban Cafe
FOR YOU AND A FRIEND
URBAN
YEW TREE
MountainBikeNI.com
BIKE
2,591
People reached
91
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 26 August 2021 ·
This is your last chance to enter our fantastic competition to win an epic MTB Staycation trip for you and a friend. Thanks to our friends at Yew Tree Barn - with Jacuzzi Brand Hot Tub, Life Adventure Ctr and URBAN CAFE Castlewellan for the brilliant prizes.
To enter just click this link: https://bit.ly/3mFfIml
The winners will be announced on Tuesday 31st August. Good luck!
WIN THE ULTIMATE MTB STAYCATION
Overnight Stay at The Yew Tree Barn
e MTB Hire from Life
Brunch from Award Winning Urban Cafe
FOR YOU AND A FRIEND
URBAN
YEW TREE
MountainBikeNI.com
BIKE
5,390
People reached
169
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
8
2 shares


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 8 October 2021 ·
Getting to that stage where the leave avalanches will soon be building up.
Happy riding this weekend, wherever you're going!
2,954
People reached
45
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
9
2 comments 1 share
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 15 November 2021 ·
Some pictures from the recent Volunteer Maintenance Day with Chain Reaction Cycles and Chain Reaction Cycles Belfast. The day was organised by the team at Mournelive.
Thanks to all the guys who kindly gave up their time to help with resurfacing, litter picking and all the other small jobs that ensure the trails stay in top condition.
Interested in volunteering? Find more information at:
http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../mountainbikeni-trails.../
+7
8,223
People reached
729
Engagements
Boost post
37
1 share

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · May 6, 2021

😎👌

callum scoTT @clscottweet · Apr 29, 2021

Replying to @MountainBikeNI

4

You Retweeted

Outdoor Recreation NI @OutdoorRecNI · Jun 4, 2021

Great to see record breaking numbers at #Castlewellan MTB trails. Well done @MountainBikeNI, @nmdcouncil , @Chain_Reaction @LifeAdventureCt 👏🚵

outdoorrecreationni.com

Record Breaking Visitor Numbers for Castlewellan ...

The popular mountain bike trails at Castlewellan Forest Park have had their busiest year ever ...

2 3

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jun 7, 2021

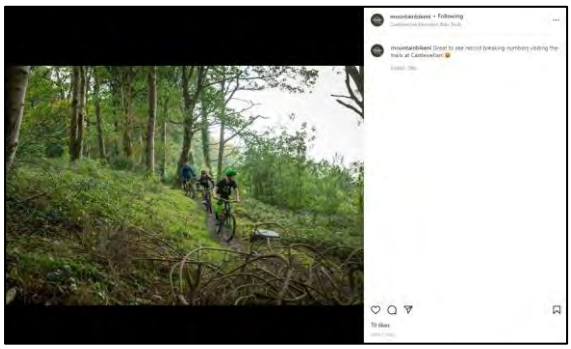
Great to see record breaking numbers visiting the trails at Castlewellan!😆

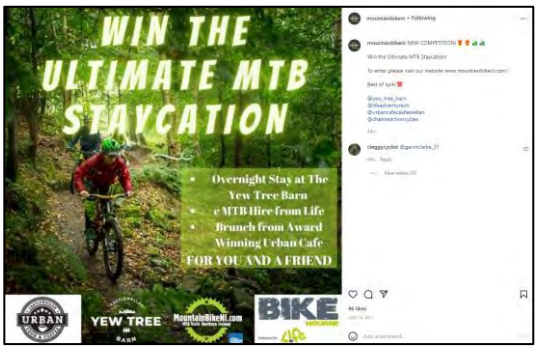
outdoorrecreationni.com/news/castlewel...

1 4

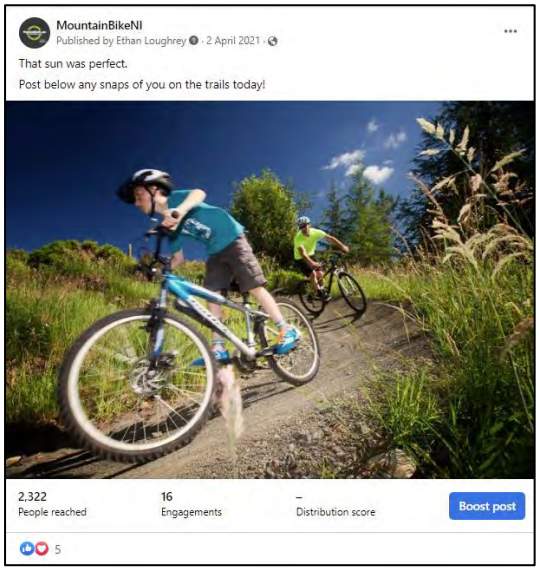
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jun 14, 2021
NEW COMPETITION!
Win the Ultimate MTB Staycation!
To enter please visit our website mountainbikeni.com
Best of luck!
@theyewtreebarn
@LifeAdventureCt
@urbancafecastlewellan
@Chain_Reaction
WIN THE ULTIMATE MTB STAYCATION
Overnight Stay at The Yew Tree Barn
e MTB Hire from Life
Brunch from Award Winning Urban Cafe
FOR YOU AND A FRIEND
URBAN
YEW TREE
MountainBikeNI.com
BIKE

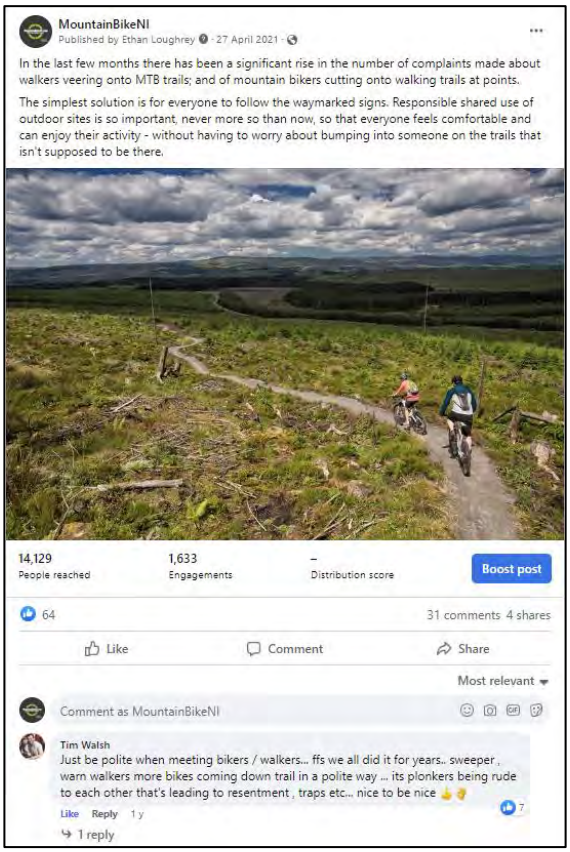
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jan 30
Kicking it at #Castlewellan
7

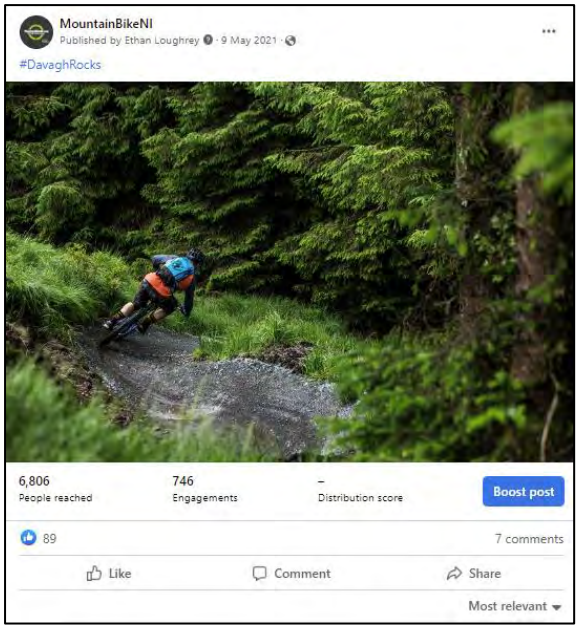


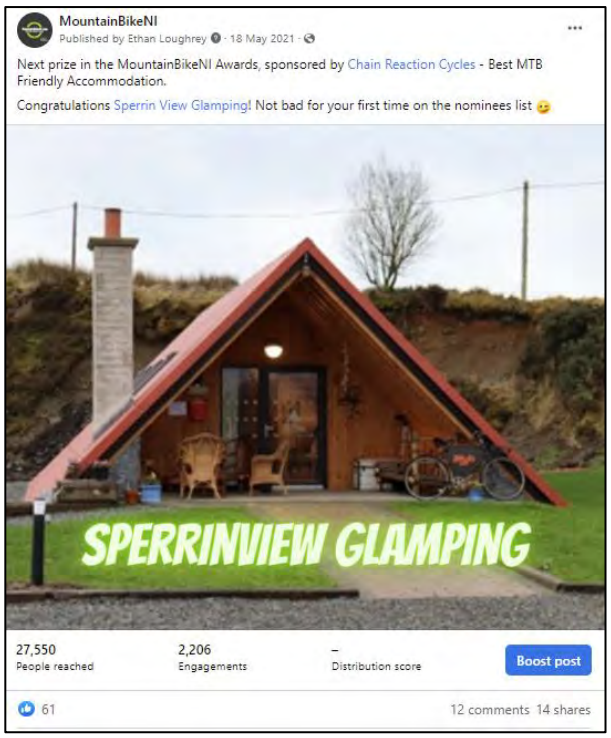

WIN THE ULTIMATE MTB STAYCATION
Overnight Stay at The Yew Tree Barn
e MTB Hire from Life
Brunch from Award Winning Urban Cafe
FOR YOU AND A FRIEND
URBAN
YEW TREE
MountainBikeNI.com
BIKE

Davagh Forest - 22 Facebook Posts

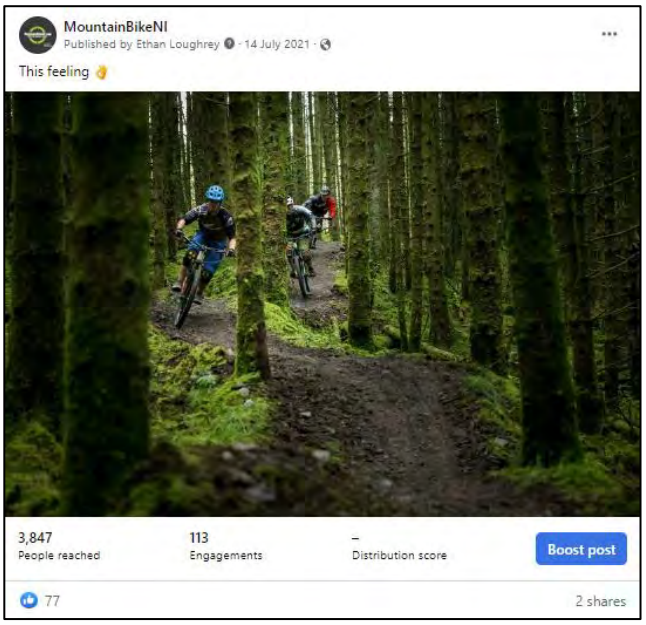


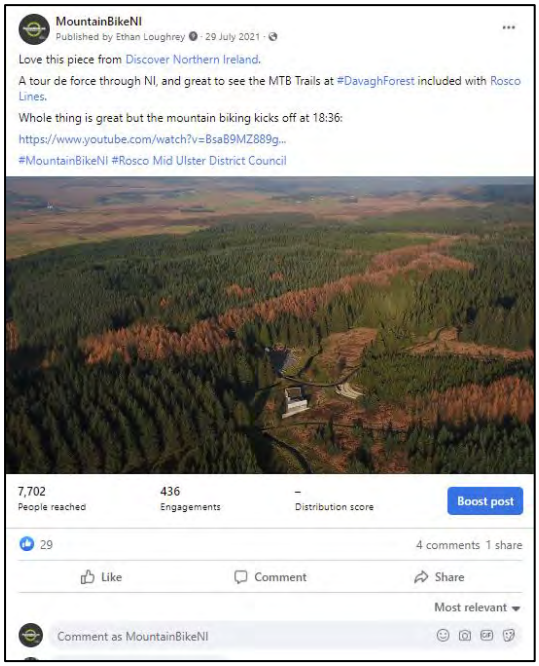


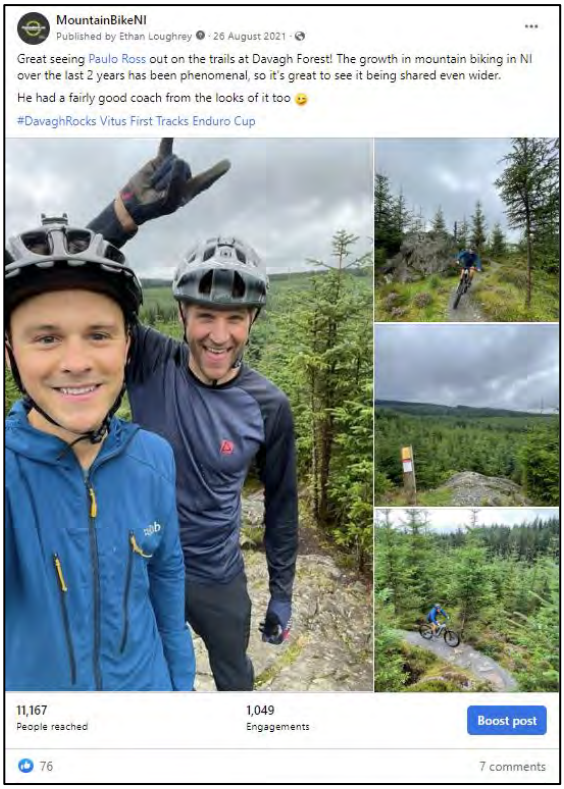

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 9 May 2021 ·
#DavaghRocks
6,806
People reached
746
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
89
7 comments
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 18 May 2021 ·
Next prize in the MountainBikeNI Awards, sponsored by Chain Reaction Cycles - Best MTB Friendly Accommodation.
Congratulations Sperrin View Glamping! Not bad for your first time on the nominees list
SPERRINVIEW GLAMPING
27,550
People reached
2,206
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
61
12 comments 14 shares

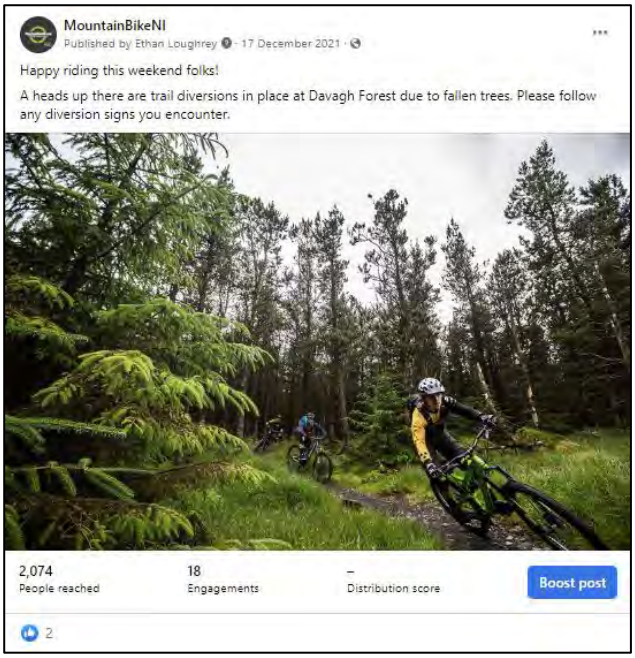
MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 19 May 2021 ·
And our final award - trail section of the year for 2020-21 is...
The Stream Trail!
Fighting off competition from the new trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park, as well as previous year winners, this is the Stream Trail's third year to take the gold. Thanks to everyone who voted, to our sponsors at @ChainReactionCycles and congratulations to all the winners!
STREAM TRAIL
6,499
People reached
793
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
56
18 comments 1 share


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 14 July 2021 ·
This feeling
3,847
People reached
113
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
77
2 shares


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 29 July 2021 ·
Love this piece from Discover Northern Ireland.
A tour de force through NI, and great to see the MTB Trails at #DavaghForest included with Rosco Lines.
Whole thing is great but the mountain biking kicks off at 18:36:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsaB9MZ889g...
#MountainBikeNI #Rosco Mid Ulster District Council
7,702
People reached
436
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
29
4 comments 1 share
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant
Comment as MountainBikeNI


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 26 August 2021 ·
Great seeing Paulo Ross out on the trails at Davagh Forest! The growth in mountain biking in NI over the last 2 years has been phenomenal, so it's great to see it being shared even wider.
He had a fairly good coach from the looks of it too
#DavaghRocks Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup
11,167
People reached
1,049
Engagements
Boost post
76
7 comments

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 3 December 2021 ·
Big shout out to Niall Convery for the litter lift he did around Davagh Forest last week.
Folks if you bring it with, please bring it home again.
6,819
People reached
345
Engagements
Boost post
73
2 comments


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 17 December 2021 ·
Happy riding this weekend folks!
A heads up there are trail diversions in place at Davagh Forest due to fallen trees. Please follow any diversion signs you encounter.
2,074
People reached
18
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
2

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 17 January ·

Climbing on the bike.

The climb at Davagh Forest (endearingly called "The Widow Maker") is an example of a climb with great views. Are you happy to climb if the views are good?

Or would you prefer downhills, uplifts and e-bikes all day long?

13,668	1,161	–	
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	Boost post

57 — 27 comments 4 shares

Like · Comment · Share

Most relevant

Comment as MountainBikeNI

Simon Stockton
Climbs are all part of mountain biking, love them, I'm maybe not great at them but there's a good sense of achievement making it to the top of a hard one!!
Like Reply 18 w — 3
1 reply

View 15 more comments

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 21 January ·

Fantastic article from National Geographic UK about everything there is to do in the Sperrins, including mountain biking at Davagh Forest and Gortin Glen Forest Park

NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK
Going off-grid amid the drama of Northern Ireland's Sperrin Mountains
The Sperrin Mountains are an ancient, storied landscape of stone circles, dark skies and literary...

4,112	176	–	
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	Boost post

14 — 1 share

MountainBikeNI
Published by Darragh Grimes · 8 February ·

Share Your Mountain Bike Adventures!

Mountain Bike NI want to see your mountain bike adventures.

Send us your pictures / videos (stunts or crashes; chilled rides or races) to info@mountainbikeni.com (using WeTransfer if it's over 15mb) and we'll share our favourites at the end of the month

1,679	27	–	
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	Boost post

2 — 1 share

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 9 February ·

A reminder about works ongoing at Rostrevor MTB Trails:

As part of the ongoing construction works of Phase 2 of the New Fallows Trail within Rostrevor Forest it is necessary to utilise Helicopter aerial lifting to transport materials to parts of the new route.

These works are scheduled to commence on Monday 7th February 2022 for approximately 10 days (weather dependent) between the hours of 8am & 5.30pm including Saturday and Sunday.

The exclusion zone highlighted red on the attached map is the helicopter operating area and for health & safety reasons this exclusion zone will be strictly out of bounds for public access during this period.

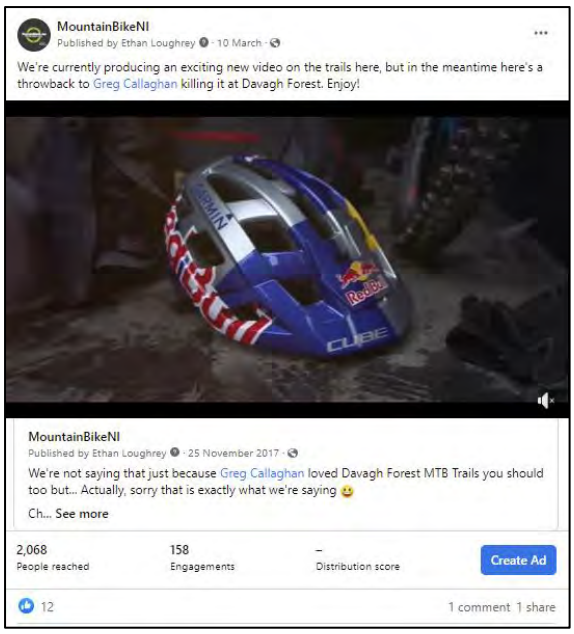
Some forest access roads will not be accessible through this exclusion zone. Signage and diversions will be in place advising walkers & bikers of closures.

Both the Red & Black Mountain Bike Trails will be closed throughout this time.

Both Downhill trails - On the pulse & Mega mission will remain open.

We would ask for the public's co-operation during this time.

NB- this work will also fall under normal CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) guidelines.
#MountainBikeNI
WalkNI


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 10 March ·
We're currently producing an exciting new video on the trails here, but in the meantime here's a throwback to Greg Callaghan killing it at Davagh Forest. Enjoy!
MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 25 November 2017 ·
We're not saying that just because Greg Callaghan loved Davagh Forest MTB Trails you should too but... Actually, sorry that is exactly what we're saying
Ch... See more
2,068
People reached
158
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Create Ad
12
1 comment 1 share

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Dec 17, 2021
Happy riding this weekend folks!
A heads up there are trail diversions in place at Davagh Forest due to fallen trees. Please follow any diversion signs you encounter.
1
3

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 18 March ·
Get ready and get #OnYerBike this bank holiday weekend!
http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../on-yer-bike-for-st.../
#ONYERBIKE
2,325
People reached
21
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
6

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Apr 27, 2021

There has been a large rise in complaints about walkers veering onto MTB trails & of mountain bikers cutting onto walking trails.

Responsible shared use of the outdoors is critical so that people feel comfortable enjoying their activity without concerns. Please follow the signs.

1 4

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Apr 30, 2021

All trails riding well this weekend.

Bonus points because it's a bank holiday weekend.

Get out there and enjoy it!

3 8

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jul 27, 2021

Love this piece from @NITouristBoard. A tour de force through NI, and great to see the MTB Trails at #DavaghForest included with Colin Ross.

Whole thing is great but the mountain biking kicks off at 18:36

#MountainBikeNI #Rosco @MidUlster_DC

youtube.com
A Giants Welcome to Northern Ireland (Part 5)
Travel around Northern Ireland and Embrace A Giant Spirit with Ed Finn in the new TV programme, A ...

1 2

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Mar 18

Mountain bikers of Ireland!

mountainbikeni.com/news/42686/on-...

#OnYerBike #MTBNI @Chain_Reaction

1

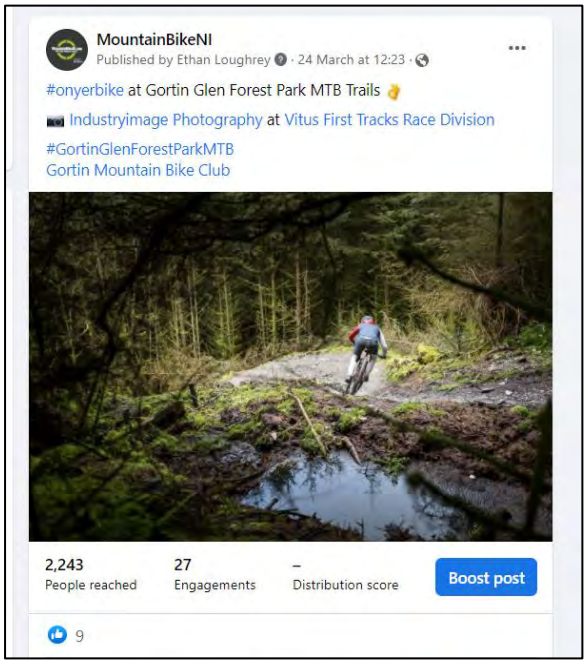
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Mar 10

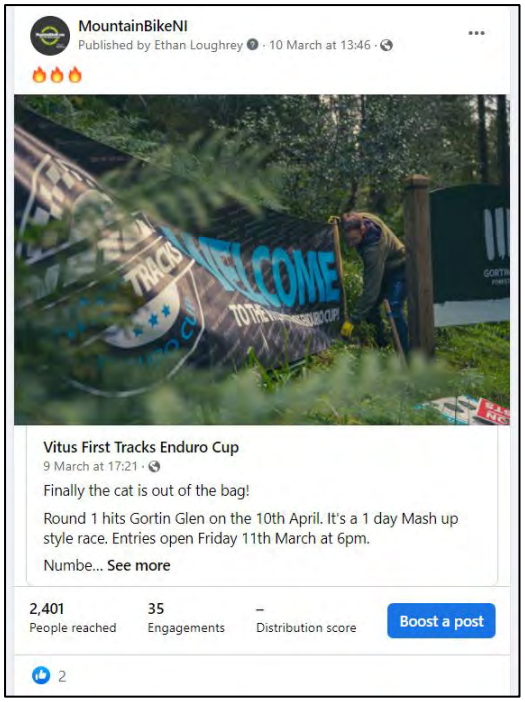
Throwback to this great video from @MtbGC at #DavaghForest MTB Trails: youtube.com/watch?v=PmUUyr...

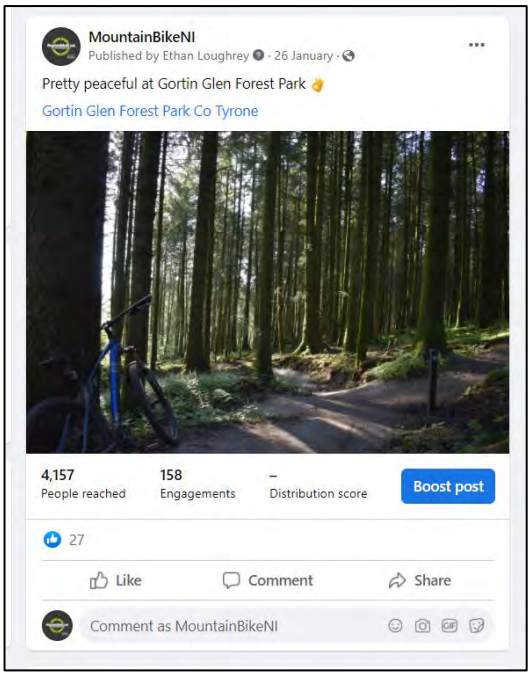
@MidUlster_DC #MountainBikeNI #OnYerBike

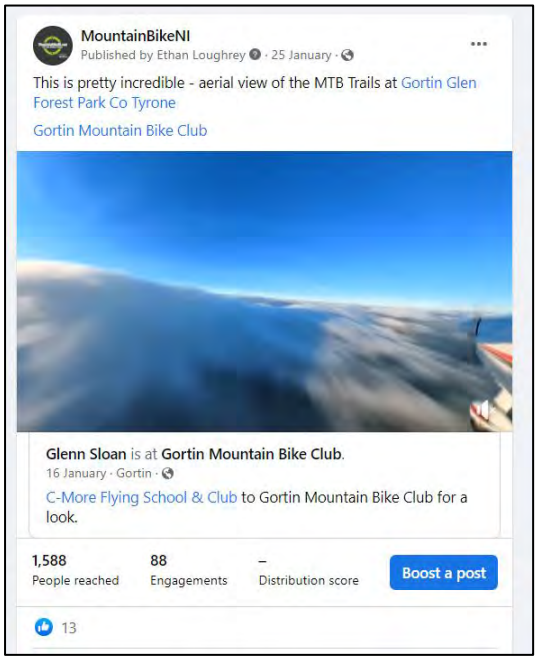
youtube.com
Greg Callaghan Rides Davagh Forest, Northern Irel...
MountainBikeNI were thrilled when legendary Irish mountain biker Greg Callaghan agreed to come an...

Gortin - 18 Facebook Posts

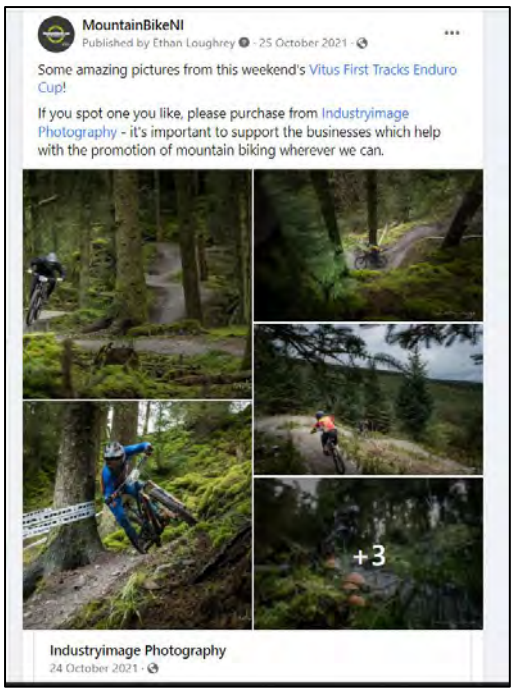


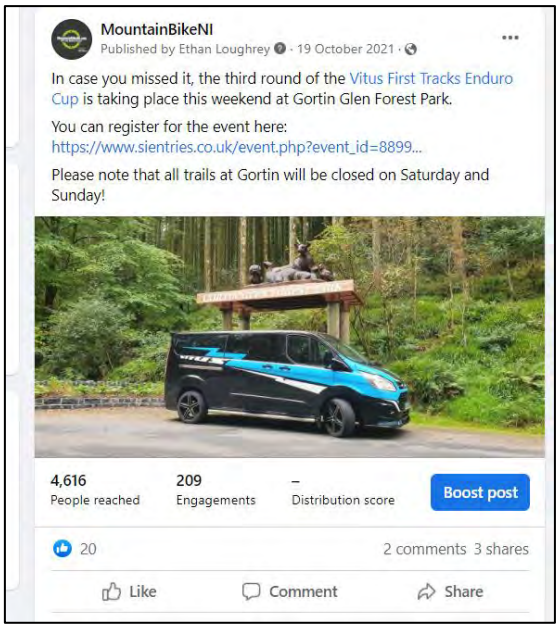

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 10 March at 13:46 ·
Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup
9 March at 17:21 ·
Finally the cat is out of the bag!
Round 1 hits Gortin Glen on the 10th April. It's a 1 day Mash up style race. Entries open Friday 11th March at 6pm.
Numbe... See more
2,401
People reached
35
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost a post
2

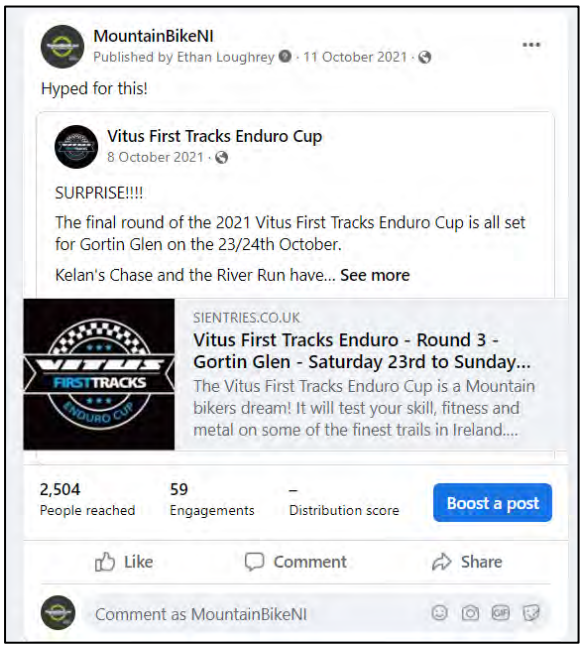

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 26 January ·
Pretty peaceful at Gortin Glen Forest Park
Gortin Glen Forest Park Co Tyrone
4,157
People reached
158
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
27
Like
Comment
Share
Comment as MountainBikeNI

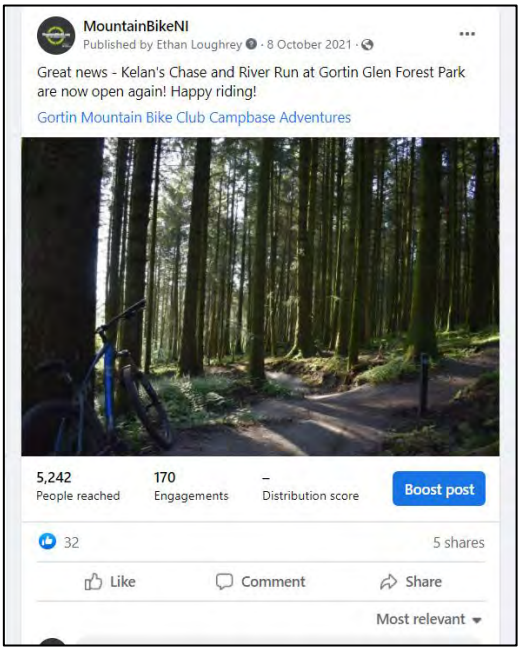

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 25 January ·
This is pretty incredible - aerial view of the MTB Trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park Co Tyrone
Gortin Mountain Bike Club
Glenn Sloan is at Gortin Mountain Bike Club.
16 January · Gortin ·
C-More Flying School & Club to Gortin Mountain Bike Club for a look.
1,588
People reached
88
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost a post
13

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 20 December 2021 ·
The MTBNI volunteer ranger scheme, sponsored by Chain Reaction Cycles, is being extended to Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails.
If you'd like to join the crew there (usually helping our 3 or 4 times a year in normal times) drop us a PM and we'll send you more details.
JOIN THE VOLUNTEER RANGERS TODAY!
1,985
People reached
47
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
7
2 comments

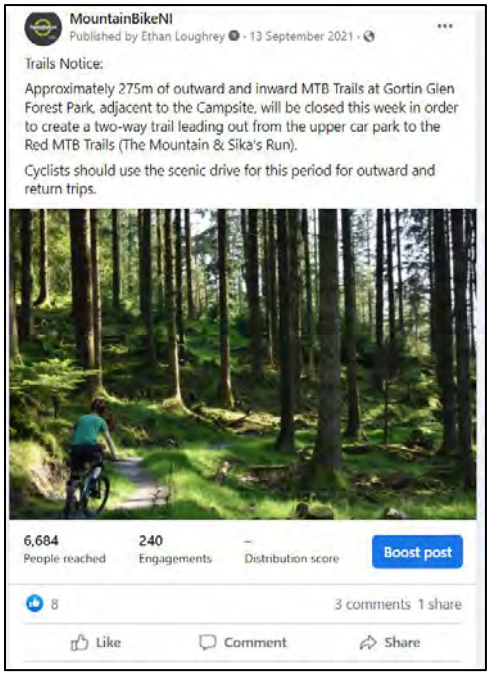

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 25 October 2021 ·
Some amazing pictures from this weekend's Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup!
If you spot one you like, please purchase from Industryimage Photography - it's important to support the businesses which help with the promotion of mountain biking wherever we can.
+3
Industryimage Photography
24 October 2021 ·


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 19 October 2021 ·
In case you missed it, the third round of the Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is taking place this weekend at Gortin Glen Forest Park.
You can register for the event here:
https://www.sientries.co.uk/event.php?event_id=8899...
Please note that all trails at Gortin will be closed on Saturday and Sunday!
4,616
People reached
209
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
20
2 comments 3 shares
Like
Comment
Share

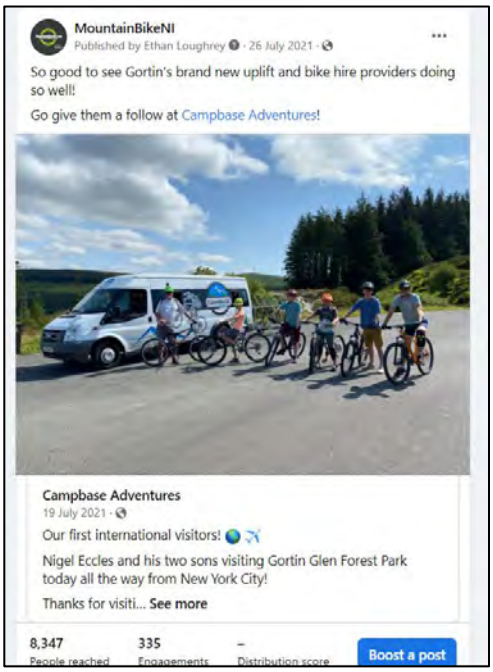

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 11 October 2021 ·
Hyped for this!
Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup
8 October 2021 ·
SURPRISE!!!!
The final round of the 2021 Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is all set for Gortin Glen on the 23/24th October.
Kelan's Chase and the River Run have... See more
SIENTRIES.CO.UK
Vitus First Tracks Enduro - Round 3 - Gortin Glen - Saturday 23rd to Sunday...
The Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is a Mountain bikers dream! It will test your skill, fitness and metal on some of the finest trails in Ireland....
2,504
People reached
59
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost a post
Like
Comment
Share
Comment as MountainBikeNI

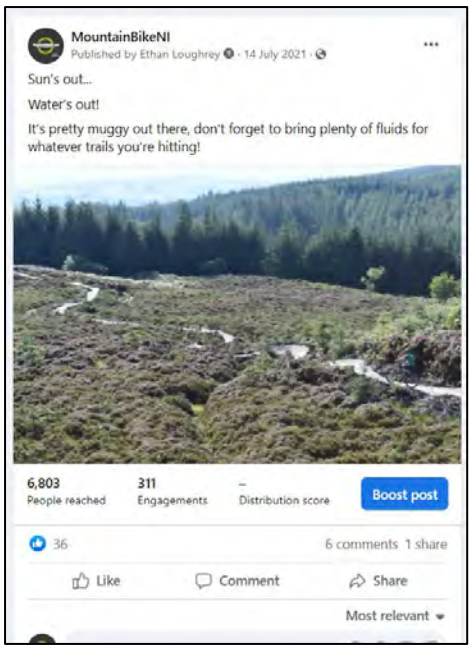

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 8 October 2021 ·
Great news - Kelan's Chase and River Run at Gortin Glen Forest Park are now open again! Happy riding!
Gortin Mountain Bike Club Campbase Adventures
5,242
People reached
170
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
32
5 shares
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 1 October 2021 ·
Half price on uplifts at Gortin's trails this weekend!
Campbase Adventures
Campbase Adventures is at Gortin Glen Forest Park Co Tyrone.
30 September 2021 · Gortin ·
HALF PRICE OFFER! THIS WEEKEND ONLY!
To celebrate the launch of our new bespoke MTB uplift trailers we are offering half price on al... See more

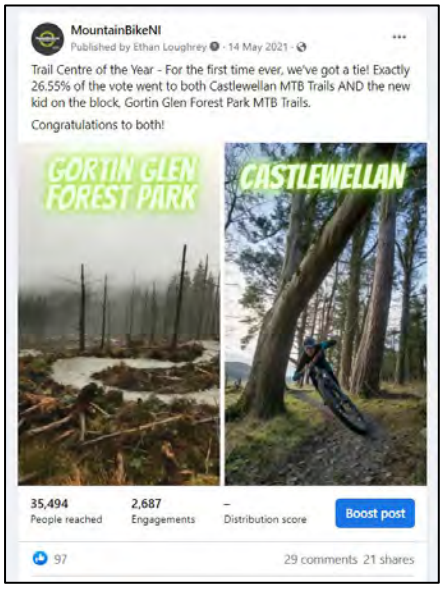

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 13 September 2021 ·
Trails Notice:
Approximately 275m of outward and inward MTB Trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park, adjacent to the Campsite, will be closed this week in order to create a two-way trail leading out from the upper car park to the Red MTB Trails (The Mountain & Sika's Run).
Cyclists should use the scenic drive for this period for outward and return trips.
6,684
People reached
240
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
8
3 comments 1 share
Like
Comment
Share

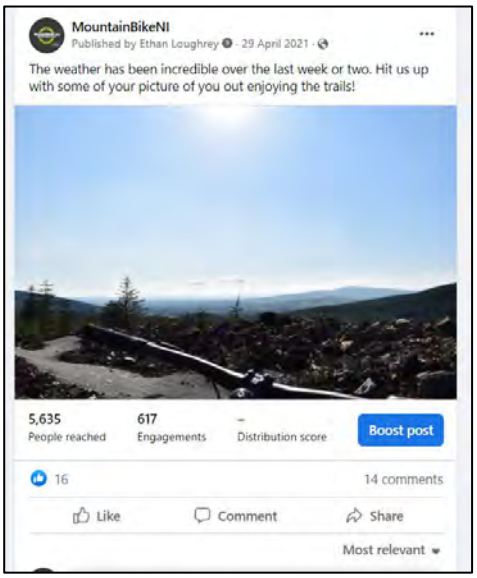
MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 8 August 2021 ·
Update
Kelan's Chase and the River Run trails at Gortin Glen Forest Park Co Tyrone have been closed due to excessive water damage following the bad weather.
Gortin Mountain Bike Club Campbase Adventures
Gortin Mountain Bike Club

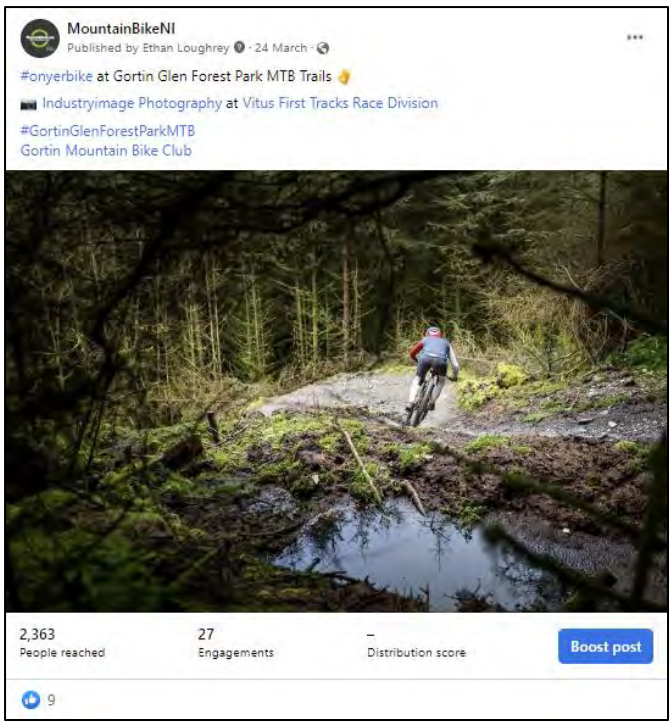

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 26 July 2021 ·
So good to see Gortin's brand new uplift and bike hire providers doing so well!
Go give them a follow at Campbase Adventures!
Campbase Adventures
19 July 2021 ·
Our first international visitors!
Nigel Eccles and his two sons visiting Gortin Glen Forest Park today all the way from New York City!
Thanks for visiti... See more
8,347
People reached
335
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost a post

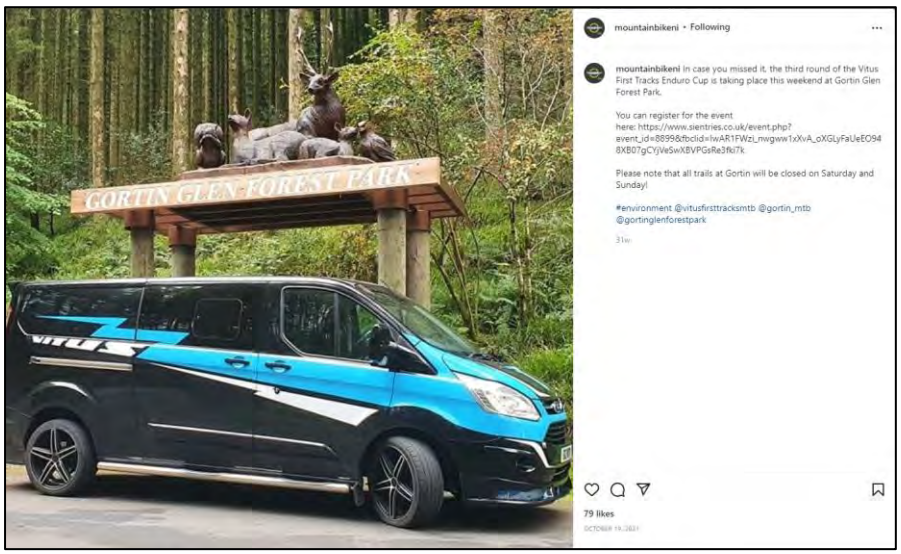

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 14 July 2021 ·
Sun's out...
Water's out!
It's pretty muggy out there, don't forget to bring plenty of fluids for whatever trails you're hitting!
6,803
People reached
311
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
36
6 comments 1 share
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 15 May 2021 ·
Our next prize received the most votes of any category. The most active MTB club of the year, as voted by you, was...
Gortin Mountain Bike Club - congratulations! Many people will know the hard work these guys and girls have put in over the last few years, and as our last result shows, it has paid off.
GORTIN MTB CLUB
6,275
People reached
371
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
38
1 comment 7 shares


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 14 May 2021 ·
Trail Centre of the Year - For the first time ever, we've got a tie! Exactly 26.55% of the vote went to both Castlewellan MTB Trails AND the new kid on the block, Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails.
Congratulations to both!
GORTIN GLEN FOREST PARK
CASTLEWELLAN
35,494
People reached
2,687
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
97
29 comments 21 shares


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 29 April 2021 ·
The weather has been incredible over the last week or two. Hit us up with some of your picture of you out enjoying the trails!
5,635
People reached
617
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
16
14 comments
Like
Comment
Share
Most relevant


MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 24 March ·
#onyerbike at Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails
Industryimage Photography at Vitus First Tracks Race Division
#GortinGlenForestParkMTB
Gortin Mountain Bike Club
2,363
People reached
27
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
9


GORTIN GLEN FOREST PARK
mountainbikeni • Following
mountainbikeni In case you missed it, the third round of the Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is taking place this weekend at Gortin Glen Forest Park.
You can register for the event here: https://www.sientries.co.uk/event.php?event_id=88998&fbclid=IwAR1FWzi_nwgww1xXvA_oXGLyFaUeEO948XB07gCYjVe5wXBVPGsRe3fkI7k
Please note that all trails at Gortin will be closed on Saturday and Sunday!
#environment @vitusfirsttracksmtb @gortin_mtb @gortinglenforestpark
79 likes

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Apr 29, 2021
The weather has been incredible over the last week or two.
Hit us up with some of your picture of you out enjoying the trails!
2
6

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · May 6, 2021
callum scott @clscottweet · Apr 29, 2021
Replying to @MountainBikeNI
4

You Retweeted

tomorrowsvisitors @tomorrowsvisit · May 26, 2021

Tomorrows Visitors Podcast 4 with Ethan Loughrey Outdoor Recrea...
youtu.be/eDNCUNLW-CI via @YouTube @Tour_GuidesNI @BusinessSRC @NITouristBoard @MidUlster_DC @Blessingbourne @OutdoorRecNI @MountainBikeNI @visitmourne

You can listen to the podcast here

anchor.fm

Tomorrows Visitors Podcast Episode 4 with Ethan Loughrey, Marketin...

In this episode, I talk to Ethan Loughrey, Marketing Officer with Outdoor Recreation NI on the growth of Mountain biking in Northern ...

1 · 0

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Sep 13, 2021

Approx 275m of outward & inward trails adjacent to the Campsite will be closed this week at Gortin to create a two-way trail leading out from the upper car park to the Red MTB Trails.

Cyclists should use the scenic drive for this period for outward and return trips.

2 · 5

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Oct 12, 2021

Have you heard the news?

Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup are having their 3rd round at Gortin Glen Forest Park MTB Trails!

Visit mountainbikeni.com/events/57626/v... for more info

#Enduro @fermanaghomagh #MountainBikeNI

2

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Oct 8, 2021

Great news - Kelan's Chase and River Run at Gortin Glen Forest Park are now open again! Happy riding!

2 · 5

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Oct 19, 2021

In case you missed it, the third round of the Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is taking place this weekend at Gortin Glen Forest Park.

You can register for the event here: slentries.co.uk/event.php?even...

Please note that all trails at Gortin will be closed on Saturday and Sunday!

3

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Oct 25, 2021
facebook.com/MountainBikeNo...

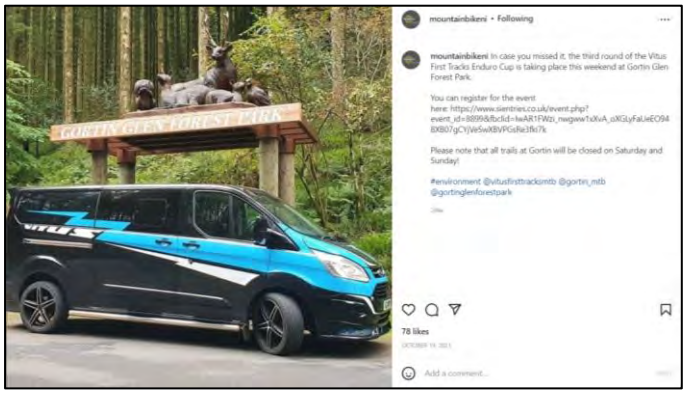
Some amazing pictures from the third round of the @VitusBikes First Tracks Enduro Cup at Gortin Glen Forest Park @fermanaghomagh. Pictures taken by @industryimage - please support by purchasing!

7

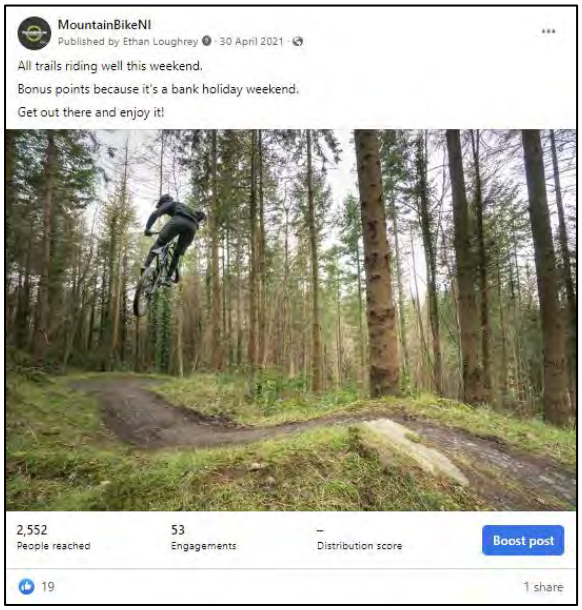
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jan 26
Pretty peaceful at Gortin Glen Forest Park 👌
@fermanaghomagh
1

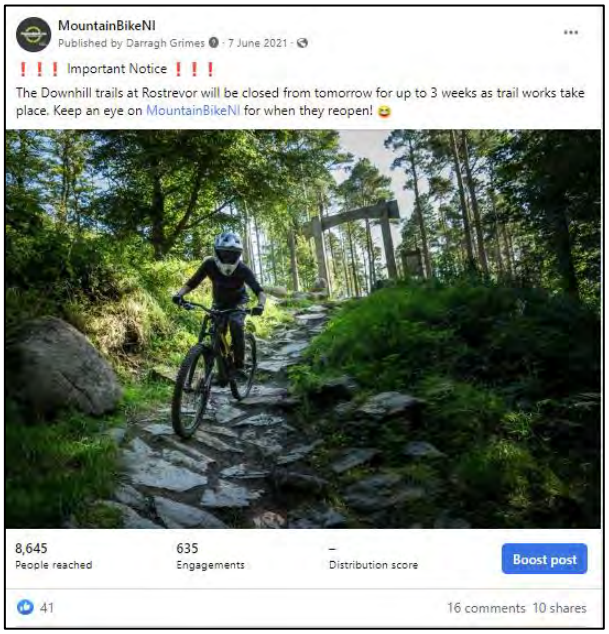
You Retweeted
Lakelander Gravel Grinder @LakelanderG · Jan 27
CAUTION Have you saved the date!!! 👉 8TH OCT 2022 😎 Entries opening very soon for the #lakelandergravelgrinder 👌 #BigDog 100k Or #LittleDog 50k 😎 #gravelgrinder #Fermanaghlakelands @Irish_Cycling @VictoryChimp @MountainBikeNI @notinthepeloton @DiscoverNI @fermanaghomagh
CAUTION
2
4
8

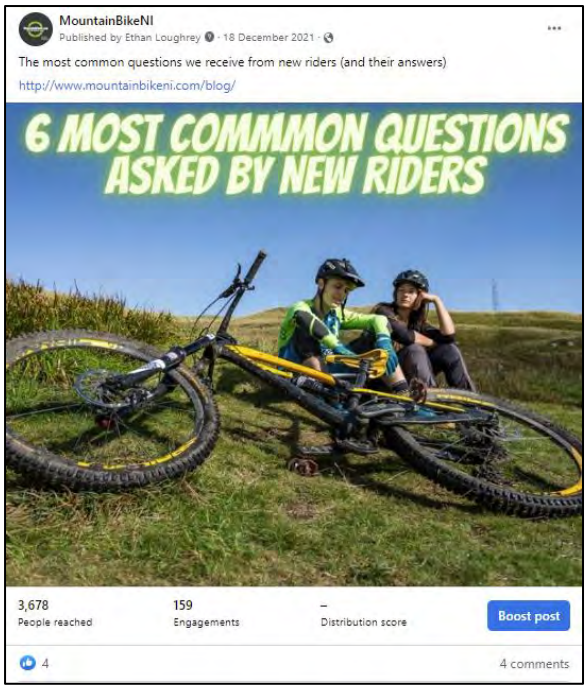
MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Feb 15
Eyes on the prize tonight!
Lakelander Gravel Grinder @LakelanderG · Feb 15
Entries open tonight 8pm for Irelands premier gravel event. Sat 8th Oct 2022 🚴
#gravelbike #cycling #lakeladergravelgrinder #discoverni #Fermanagh @Irish_Cycling @MountainBikeNI @sticky_bottle @VictoryChimp @pelotonmagazine @CyclingIreland @CyclingUlster fb.watch/bbkABXTiGD/
3

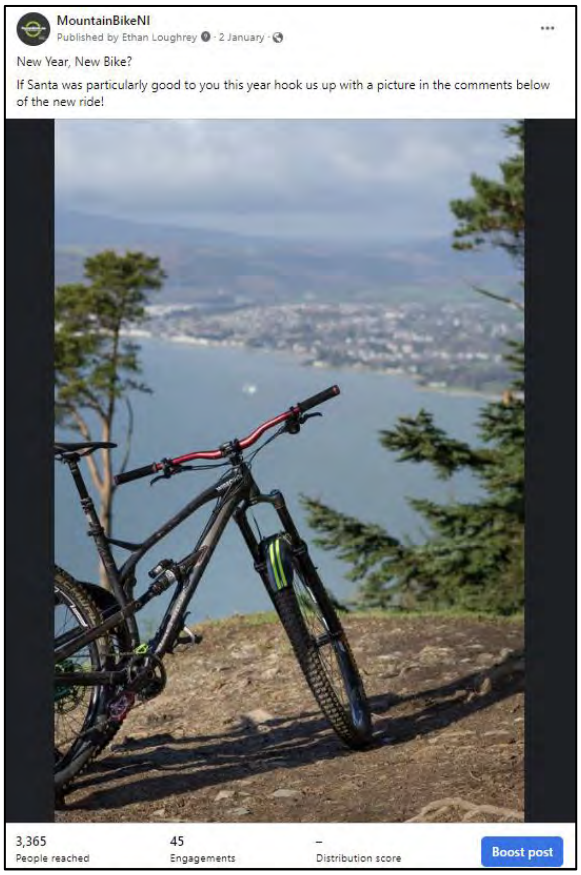

GORTIN GLEN FOREST PARK
mountainbikeni • Following
mountainbikeni In case you missed it, the third round of the Vitus First Tracks Enduro Cup is taking place this weekend at Gortin Glen Forest Park.
You can register for the event here: https://www.sientries.co.uk/event.php?event_id=8899&fbclid=IwAR1FWzi_nwgaw1xXvA_oXGLyFaUeEO94BXB07gCYjWeSwX8VPGsRe3fkI7k
Please note that all trails at Gortin will be closed on Saturday and Sunday!
#environment @vitusfirsttracksmtb @gortin_mtb @gortinglenforestpark
78 likes
Add a comment...

Rostrevor - 18 Facebook Posts

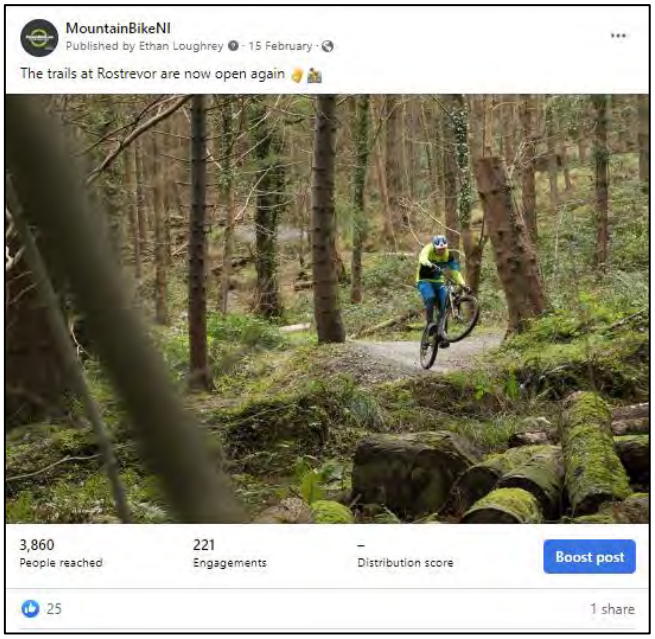




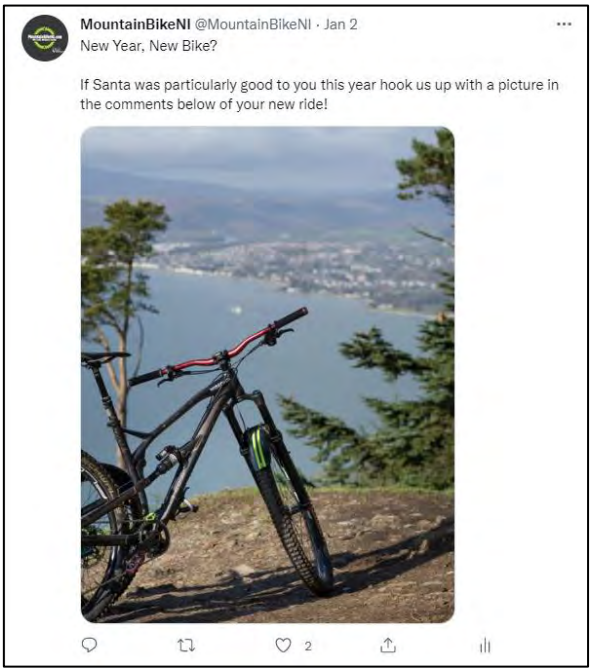




MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 9 February ·
The guys in Rostrevor MTB are recruiting marshalls for the first round of IDMS, April 2nd & 3rd.
If you're a parent of a son or daughter starting in Irish Downhill, this is a fantastic way to get involved and help out the Downhill community. Also get a few bob for your troubles too!
More information over on Irish Downhill Mountainbike Series IDMS
IDMS
ROUND 1 | 2/3 APRIL | ROSTREVOR, CO DOWN | ROSTREVOR MTB
ROUND 2 | 20/21 AUGUST | SHRONABOY FARM, KILLARNEY | KILLARNEY CC
ROUND 3 | 24/25 SEPTEMBER | THE GAP, DUBLIN | GAP MTB
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP | 23/24 JULY | BREE, CO WEXFORD | BREE RACING
HIGH5
BBB
CYCLON
Irish Downhill Mountainbike Series IDMS
7 February ·
Mark the dates in your calendar - 2022 IDMS venues and dates officially announced!! 2022 Irish Downhill National Championships confirmed for July!
The IDMS 20... See more
3,054
People reached
44
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost a Post

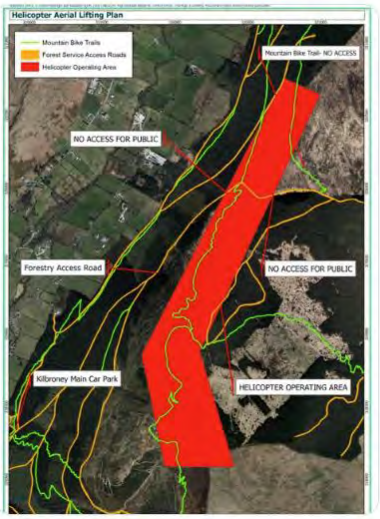

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 15 February ·
The trails at Rostrevor are now open again
3,860
People reached
221
Engagements
–
Distribution score
Boost post
25
1 share

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jun 7, 2021
! ! ! Important Notice ! ! !
The Downhill trails at Rostrevor will be closed from tomorrow for up to 3 weeks as trail works take place. Keep an eye on @MountainBikeNI for when they reopen!
2
5


MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Jan 2
New Year, New Bike?
If Santa was particularly good to you this year hook us up with a picture in the comments below of your new ride!
2

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Feb 6

Trails closure at the red and black trails at Rostrevor MTB Trails for up to 10 days. More information here: facebook.com/MountainBikeNo...



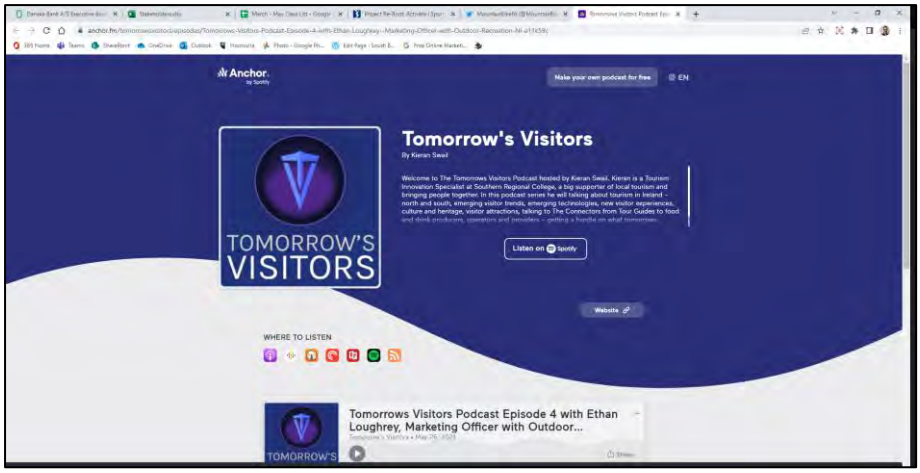
1

Miscalleanous Assistance

Ongoing recruitment for a Gortin Glen Forest Park Volunteer Ranger Team

Advice on purchasing signage panels

Promotion of Gortin Glen Forest Park in tourism podcast



MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 26 April 2021 ·

If you're wondering what the current guidelines are for outdoor recreation, we have them right here:

http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../updated-guidance-on.../

MOUNTAINBIKENI.COM
Updated Guidance on Covid-19 - Mountain Bike NI
The government have updated their restrictions to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and to help manage the pressures on the health and social care system. During this time, the single most important action we can all take i...

1,330	45	–	Boost post
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	

Like Comment Share

Comment as MountainBikeNI

MountainBikeNI
Published by Ethan Loughrey · 20 May 2021 ·

http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../covid-19-restrictions.../

The guidelines will be reviewed again on Thursday 10th June.

1,808	104	–	Boost post
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	

MountainBikeNI
Published by Darragh Grimes · 19 July 2021 ·

Check out the link below regarding the updated Covid-19 guidance for MTB!

http://www.mountainbikeni.com/.../updated-covid-19.../

MOUNTAINBIKENI.COM
Updated Covid-19 guidance for Mountain Biking - Mountain Bike NI
Although many coronavirus restrictions have eased, regulations and guidance remain in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

1,537	55	–	Boost post
People reached	Engagements	Distribution score	

Like Comment Share

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · May 20, 2021

We've the latest Covid-19 guidance on outdoor recreation: mountainbikeni.com/news/42665/cov...

This will be updated on Thursday 10th June.

1

MountainBikeNI @MountainBikeNI · Oct 29, 2021

Partial DH Closure: The top section of Mega Mission is closed until further notice due to water damage.

2 4

Report on	Social Inclusion – Community Wealth Building
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officer	Martina Totten

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 provide an update on progress in respect to the development of a Community Wealth Building framework for Mid Ulster District Council.
1.2	To commence the development of a Community Wealth Building Plan.
1.3	To consider and agree the proposed governance approach.
1.4	To approve Council officer attendance at the fifth annual Community Wealth Building Summit on Friday 18 November in Birmingham.
2.0	Background
2.1	A motion considered and agreed by Council on 23rd June 2022 in regards to the development of a Community Wealth Building Framework; which stated that, "Council commits to developing a fully funded Community Wealth Building framework with the purpose of democratising the economy by empowering community organisations, non-profits, social enterprise and co-operatives to be established or expanded with the ambition to create employment and grow local economies."
2.2	To progress the motion, Officers were asked to develop governance to take this forward, including the establishment of a Members working group. At a meeting of the Council in July 2022, it was further suggested that the working group could be consumed within an existing structure and it was agreed that this would be considered as part of a wider review of Council working groups.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Officers have carried out some initial research into the development of a Community Wealth Building Framework and conducted desk based research into best practice and principals of Community Wealth Building across the UK, referring to Preston City Council and North Ayrshire Council as examples of best practice (Synopsis of each at Appendix 1)

3.2	Community Wealth Building was initially developed by the Democracy Collaborative in the United States, and championed in the UK by the progressive economics think tank Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). It is a model of local economic development that tackles inequality and poverty by redirecting wealth and public spending into communities. It works through changes to public sector investment and spending practices and greater collaboration with the community.
3.3	There are five practical pillars for implementing Community Wealth Building. 1. **Fair employment and just labour markets** Anchor institutions have a defining effect on the prospects of local people. Recruitment from lower income areas, paying the Living Wage and building progression routes all improve local economies. 2. **Progressive procurement of goods and services** Develop dense local supply chains of businesses likely to support local employment and retain wealth locally. These include SMEs, employee owned businesses, social enterprises, co-operatives and community businesses. 3. **Plural ownership of the economy** Developing and growing small enterprises, community organisations, co-operatives and municipal ownership is important because they are more financially generative for the local economy – locking wealth in place. A key mechanism for developing these enterprises is through a more progressive approach to business support. 4. **Socially just use of land and property** Deepen the function and ownership of local assets held by anchor institutions, so that financial and social gain is harnessed by citizens. Develop and extend community use – public sector land and facilities as part of “the commons”. 5. **Making financial power work for local places** Access to credit is the life blood of many small businesses. Without it they struggle to operate and compete. Yet the UK banking sector is orientated to global markets rather than local investment and economic development and, in recent years, we’ve seen a stagnation of lending to small business and a loss of connection between lenders and communities. We need to increase flows of investment within local economies by harnessing and recirculating the wealth that exists, as opposed to attracting capital. This includes supporting mutually owned banks/credit Unions. It may also include the consideration of community no interest of low interest loans to support the sector development.
3.4	In considering how this work should be taken forward in a Mid Ulster Context, awareness needs to be given to Community Wealth Building at a Regional Level. In autumn of 2020 the Communities Minister committed to embedding CWB into Departmental spending priorities and development. The Minister for Finance announced that the NI executive has agreed to mandate that from June 2022, tenders must include a minimum of 10% of total award criteria to social value, with contracts stipulating that bidders must pay the Real Living Wage.

3.5	In March 2022, Communities Minister appointed an advisory panel to undertake a focused piece of work that would advise on the most effective and sustainable approach to embedding the principles of Community Wealth Building into all relevant departmental investment, policy and practice. The Panel was also asked to identify potential actions which could be taken forward as part of the next Executive Programme for Government. The Ministerial statement on the report, terms of reference and makeup of the panel are now published (see Appendix 2). The report includes 26 recommendations which include a mix of specific actions and needs, while others suggest larger-order changes in government policy and direction.
3.6	Engagement has taken place with senior officials from the Department of Communities (DfC) to explore the opportunities for Mid Ulster to develop a localised Community Wealth Building Framework, in parallel with any regional initiatives and 'dove tail', were relevant. The Officer team is also engaging with representatives from DTNI and CLES to explore options to get guidance on the development of a plan for Mid Ulster District Council, based on good practice guidance from other areas.
3.7	To enable this work to be taken forward in a way which is inclusive, appropriate governance needs to be developed, involving the correct stakeholders and avoiding any unnecessary duplication of structures.
3.8	It is proposed to embed this work under the area of Social Inclusion; and link it to the work already being undertaken including: addressing poverty, social housing, deprivation etc. It will also be important to correlate to Mid Ulster Community Planning.
3.9	At this initial stage it is recommended to follow a 3 tiered approach to the governance, which takes account and complements other structures within the area of Social Inclusion, involving; Members, Stakeholders, and Cross Departmental Officers. It is proposed to establish the following governance groups to support the development of a Community Wealth Building Framework in Mid Ulster: **1. Working Group** This will be established with a number of sectors; Elected Members (D'hondt), social enterprise groups (selected through an EOI process), Community Planning Partnership nominee, DFC representatives (advisory – to create the links with any regional work) and Officers from Communities & Place, Economic Development & Procurement. Expert support from agencies such as CLES, DTNI will be engaged as required. **2. Cross Departmental Officer Group** To ensure CWB is implemented across all council services. It is proposed to use the existing Leadership Team of Strategic Directors and Assistant Directors. **3. Community Planning** Aligned to the Vibrant and Safe Communities, which also engages with Council in the delivery of addressing poverty, social housing and deprivation. This will allow for strategic engagement with key departments on community wealth building, as delivery and impact will be cross sectoral.

3.10	An all Member Group is organized on a regular basis to update on a range of issues being delivered under Social Inclusion: addressing poverty, social housing.
3.11	On agreement of the governance structures, Officers will develop an initial high level action plan to enable work to be progress, which will include; 1. Training & Awareness Raising; 2. Best practice & information sharing 3. Wider stakeholder & community engagement. 4. Development of a Plan
3.12	The fifth annual Community Wealth Building Summit is scheduled to take place on Friday 18 November in Birmingham. The only UK-wide event dedicated to examining and expanding community wealth building, this year the Summit will focus on examining the function and future of local economic development and the role that community wealth building can play in unlocking solutions to the most pressing challenges being experienced in our places. DFNI is arranging for a number of NI regional and local government officers to attend and DfC has confirmed that they will cover the cost of the Mid Ulster representative.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial & Human Resources Implications** Financial resources may need to be made available, if required, but this will be considered as the structure develops. **Professional Support** DTNI/CLES for Community Wealth Building Advisory Support, as required.
4.2	**Equality and Good Relations Implications** None
4.3	**Risk Management Implications** None
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To note the update on progress in respect to the development of a Community Wealth Building framework
5.2	To agree to commence the development of a Community Wealth Building Plan, with support as required.
5.3	To consider and agree the proposed governance approach.

5.4	To consider and approve Council officer attendance at the fifth annual Community Wealth Building Summit on Friday 18 November in Birmingham, with no financial cost to Council.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix 1 – Synopsis of Community Wealth Building on Preston and North Ayrshire
6.2	Appendix 2 – DfC's Community Wealth Building Report and Recommendations

Community Wealth Building (Appendix 1)

Preston City Council

A leading Council in the development and implementation of CWB, in 2012, Preston Council became an accredited Real Living Wage Employer and began to collaborate with other five other anchor organistions to ensure their procurement spend supported local businesses. By 2017, they had achieved the following outcomes,

- 4000 new real living wage jobs created
- Reduction in unemployment from 6.5% in 2014 to 3.1% in 2017
- 10% rise in 16-24 year olds in Preston receiving an NVQ Level 3 qualification between 2013 and 2014.
- Preston moved out of top 20% most deprived local authority areas in England.

In 2018, out of 42 UK cities, Preston was named the most rapidly improving city in the *Good Growth for Cities Index* by Demos and PWC.

North Ayrshire

North Ayshire Council became the first CWB Council in Scotland and launched the first CWB Strategy in Scotland in May 2022.

They established a CWB Commission to “drive forward the progress on Community Wealth Building across the Council and with wider regional Anchor Institutions.” The Commission includes representation from senior Elected Members, Council services, Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board and Community Planning Partners (CPP) including major Anchor Institutions like NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Police Scotland, Ayrshire College, Scottish Enterprise and The Ayrshire Community Trust (Third Sector Interface).

Their 5 year CWB Strategy details actions they will deliver on the 5 CWB principles:

1. PROCUREMENT - We will use our spend to actively encourage and support a growing, diverse and resilient local business base, and to support our net zero carbon ambitions.
2. FAIR EMPLOYMENT - We will encourage the creation of fair and meaningful jobs with progression opportunities to unlock the potential of our residents.
3. LAND AND ASSETS - We will support the wider regeneration of our communities by maximising all of our land and assets including through alternative uses for community and business benefit.
4. FINANCIAL POWER - We will invest locally and encourage regional and national institutions to invest in our communities. We will support our communities in their development.
5. PLURAL OWNERSHIP OF THE ECONOMY - We will support the creation and sustainability of a range of business models including SMEs, social enterprise, employee ownership, cooperatives, municipal activity and community enterprises.

The £251m Ayrshire Growth Deal work will be taken forward through a community wealth building lens to maximise the impact of the Deal

Sources

http://qpol.qub.ac.uk/community-wealth-building-belfasts-missed-opportunity/

https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/Documents/nac-cwb-strategy-brochure.pdf

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Recommendations to advance Community wealth building in Northern Ireland

From The Independent Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building to The Minister for Communities

October 2022

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Executive Summary

We are in a moment of profound and growing political, economic, and ecological difficulties. War and inflation have destabilised long-standing policy approaches and responses. An unprecedented cost-of-living crisis threatens to ravage real wages and living standards. Austerity and the Covid-19 pandemic have diminished community economic resilience, while decades of underinvestment and productivity challenges have led to a low-wage, low-skills economy in Northern Ireland that remains highly vulnerable to external shocks. Deep economic and regional inequalities persist and are worsening and the looming civilisational threat of climate change calls into question many of the fundamental assumptions of a four-decades-old economic model predicated on growth.

In such a forbidding context, in which available resources are scarce but the need is growing exponentially, every public pound is going to have to do double or triple duty. The calculus must change from one of overly narrow cost-benefit analysis on a lowest unit cost basis to one in which the objective is to understand the role of the public sector in Northern Ireland as a stabiliser and anchor and catalyst for economic change, ensuring that public money stays and recirculates in local economies rather than being immediately extracted away to distant shareholders offshore.

The good news is that Community Wealth Building (CWB) can be one of the major tools of government in Northern Ireland in responding to multiple and related challenges, making public money and interventions go further in underpinning the essentials of a more stable and equitable economy. It can help lessen the pressure on social security and health budgets, tackling problems in a more cost-effective manner by intervening way upstream, enlisting the social determinants of health and poverty as intervention points and drivers of change.

CWB supports collective community ownership of, and democratic control over, the local economy. It does this through a range of institutions and policies, including worker cooperatives, community land trusts, community development financial institutions, “anchor institution” procurement strategies, municipal and local public enterprise, and public and community banking. CWB offers the local building blocks by which we can set about a transformation of our economy. Awareness of, and support for, CWB strategies is growing, and powerful examples of CWB already exist in communities across Northern Ireland. There is a well-developed community infrastructure, a thriving social enterprise sector, the credit union sector is one of the largest in Europe, and social finance has grown in response to demand. Furthermore, the size and strength of the public sector in Northern Ireland is a key building block for a CWB approach and offers a baseline of economic stability and means of resilience in a period of crisis.

Yet to truly displace the extractive economy and all its ills, CWB must be properly supported and scaled—redirecting resources that have been funnelled towards failing and insufficient economic development and regeneration efforts. This will require a whole-of-government approach and a political commitment to driving real change. Positive outcomes will not be produced by tinkering around the edges of an extractive system, akin to trying to run up a faster and faster moving down escalator. What is needed is a transformative approach that tackles problems at their roots, changing institutions and relationships and building new ones that produce resilience, sustainability, equity, and stability by their ordinary everyday functioning. This change in the institutional basis and functioning of the economy at its base is what CWB has to offer.

Building on the existing expertise, experience, and impact of CWB efforts in Northern Ireland, this report, produced by the independent Minister's Advisory Panel (MAP) on Community Wealth Building (CWB) convened by Deirdre Hargey, Minister for Communities within the Northern Ireland Executive, offers key recommendations for how the Executive can truly step up to the task of creating this new economy for all of Northern Ireland's communities.

Given its size, the strength of its public sector, the robustness of its community infrastructure and social enterprise sector, and the scale of its need, Northern Ireland is well positioned to become not only a regional leader in CWB but even a global beacon. Getting there will require strong political leadership and the mobilisation of the whole-of-government in Northern Ireland to support CWB.

1. Preface

This report was produced by the independent Minister's Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building (CWB) convened by Deirdre Hargey, Minister for Communities within the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Minister's Advisory Panel (MAP) is made up of five members selected based on their knowledge of, and expertise in, CWB and related fields, locally and internationally. The MAP consists of Harry Connolly with Fáilte Feirste Thiar; Joe Guinan with The Democracy Collaborative; David Hunter former CEO of Access Employment Limited (AEL); Sarah McKinley with The Democracy Collaborative (Chair); and Brendan Murtagh with Queen's University Belfast. The goal of this report and its recommendations is "to advise the Minister on the most effective and sustainable approach to embedding the principles of CWB into all relevant departmental investment, policy and practice." The full Terms of Reference for the MAP can be found in the appendices to the report.

In developing the report's recommendations, the panel has brought to bear its own knowledge and experience; built upon the extensive research, analysis, and ongoing engagement activities and parallel consultation processes of the panel secretariat made up of Trademark Belfast (Seán Byers) and Development Trusts Northern Ireland (DTNI) (Paul Roberts and Charlie Fisher); engaged directly in additional information gathering with key stakeholders, including members of the Department for Communities' CWB Action Learning Group; and consulted with leaders in the CWB field, most notably the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), and with counterparts in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. A list of direct MAP consultations and parallel engagement processes that fed into this report can be found in the appendices.

The major focus of the panel's work has been on the appropriate role of government in Northern Ireland—specifically within the remit of the Department for Communities, but also importantly considering a whole-of-government approach—in supporting CWB work in communities by partners on the ground. The report's recommendations are therefore oriented towards necessary policy and legislative changes as well as modelling, leadership, influence, and enabling actions that government can take to help deliver transformative impact through CWB in Northern Ireland. Some of the recommendations are more detailed and specific, building on a substantial body of existing work, while others are broader and more aspirational, offering frameworks and bold directions necessitating the development of new strategies and lines of work.

A word about purview: This report is strategic but selective—its scope is by no means exhaustive, nor is it representative of the full range of CWB activities and actions already taking place in communities across Northern Ireland at different levels and scales. Rather, it seeks to provide a framework for additional government support and actions to advance the CWB agenda at scale moving forward.

The success of a truly transformational CWB approach in Northern Ireland (and, indeed, the successful delivery of the recommendations presented in this report) will require deep partnership, consultation, and empowerment of community stakeholders and bottom-up activity in, and by, communities themselves. While government has a necessary and powerful role to play in delivering a CWB agenda, for true long-term viability and impact, CWB must be community-owned and-driven. The actions the MAP is proposing should be viewed in that light.

The panel has convened on a weekly basis over a period of six months between March and September 2022, reviewed the CWB learning and capacity building work previously conducted by the Department for Communities in partnership with Trademark Belfast and DTNI, and conducted a series of information gathering conversations with key stakeholders inside and outside government.

We have drawn upon best practices elsewhere in localities where governments are engaged in CWB efforts. While we have done our best to cover the landscape and waterfront of CWB activity in Northern Ireland, time and resources have by necessity meant a focus on the role of the Northern Ireland Executive in delivering an enabling framework and support for further advancement.

Some of our recommendations address specific actions and needs while others suggest larger-order changes in government policy and direction the details of which lie beyond our scope of inquiry. This accounts for an unavoidable unevenness of specificity and focus in the contents of the report as we move from the general to the particular and back again.

Finally, we wish to emphasise that the real work of CWB must occur on the ground in and by communities for their own development. Our recommendations to government should be understood as seeking to support the advancement and further growth of such activities in order to bring about the overarching objective of CWB: a transformation of the Northern Ireland economy on the basis of democratic ownership and control to deliver real and lasting change for all its people.

2. What is Community Wealth Building?

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is a fast-emerging new approach to economic development that seeks to transform local economies based on direct community ownership and control of assets and wealth by the people of those communities themselves. As such, it extends democracy beyond the political to the economic realm, giving people real ownership and control over their own economic lives and destinies.

CWB seeks to transcend the limitations and failings of existing economic development approaches by tackling social, economic, and ecological challenges head on. For example, CWB addresses long-standing problems of income and wealth inequality not by seeking to correct such lopsided outcomes "after the fact" through regulation or redistribution (though both will remain necessary) but instead by reorganising and rewiring the core functioning of the economy itself. Through reconfiguring the everyday institutions and relationships of the economy, different and better outcomes are generated as a matter of course through its ordinary operations, and the worst excesses of an unequal and extractive system are not merely ameliorated but abolished. In this way, wealth is not extracted but instead becomes broadly held, such that income and investment recirculate automatically to the benefit of the community, and all people can be given the opportunity to realise their full human potential.

Viewed in this light, CWB is economic system change, starting at the local level, enacted from the ground up. It represents in microcosm a new approach to a more democratic and inclusive economy.

First articulated in the United States in 2005, CWB provides a frame for thinking about local economic change and a practical and pragmatic means of getting there. It coheres existing building blocks, such as community land trusts, worker cooperatives, municipal enterprises, public banking, and more—the elements of a democratic economy—and seeks to scale and enhance their impact through policy and institutional and financial support strategies.

In recent years, CWB has been spreading far and wide, with many governments across the UK, including the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, taking up CWB or elements of CWB strategy. It is also spreading internationally, including in Ireland, North and South, and has recently been included in the strategic plan of the U.S. federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). There is growing interest in CWB in parts of Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The UK National Health Service (NHS) has recently taken up aspects of CWB—in particular, the "anchor mission"—as part of its long-range strategy.

The Five Pillars of Community Wealth Building

CWB focuses on developing targeted strategies and approaches across five interrelated pillars of the local economy to harness existing resources and enable local economies to grow and develop from within. The pillars relate to sectors in all local economies, but can (and should) be adapted to the context of specific places.[1] The panel has thus adapted the five pillars of CWB to Northern Ireland for the purposes of this report. They are:

I. **Plural Ownership.** A thriving local economy should have multiple forms of business enterprise, including worker and consumer cooperatives, social enterprises, municipal enterprise, and more, based on the recognition that the ownership of productive capital is at the heart of where power lies in any political-economic system.

II. **Locally-Rooted Finance.** Government and local institutions should redirect money in service of the real economy of production and consumption—rather than financial speculation and extraction—through public and community banks, credit unions, targeted public pension investments, and kindred strategies.

III. **Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets.** Every worker must receive a living wage and real power in and control of their workplace for decent work and conditions, and advancing employment rights.

IV. **Socially Productive Use of Land and Property**. Land and property assets should be deployed to build real wealth in communities, bring local land and real estate development back under community control, and combat speculation and displacement.

V. **Progressive Commissioning, Sourcing, and Procurement of Goods and Services.** Local governments and place-based "anchor institutions" should lead with commissioning and procurement practices that re-localise economic activity, build local multipliers, and end leakage and financial extraction.

As a still-emerging paradigm and body of practice, CWB becomes truly transformative when it moves beyond a focus on just one of these pillars or any single approach but instead seeks to pull together all of the actions within these pillars in an interconnected way, disrupting and displacing the extractive features of the present economy, and creates a new place-based and re-circulatory economic model that delivers improved economic, social, and ecological outcomes as a matter of course by building a more democratic economy from the ground up.

[1] The five pillars of CWB were first articulated by Neil McInroy of The Democracy Collaborative while he was Chief Executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, and have since been re-articulated in a Scottish and U.S. context.

3. Community Wealth Building as a Response to Growing Crisis

Contours of the Present Crisis

It is important to acknowledge that this report has been delivered at a moment of profound and growing political, economic, and ecological difficulties. War and inflation have destabilised long-standing policy approaches and responses. An unprecedented cost-of-living crisis threatens to ravage real wages and living standards. Austerity and the Covid-19 pandemic have diminished community economic resilience, while decades of underinvestment and productivity challenges have led to a low-wage, low-skills economy in Northern Ireland that remains highly vulnerable to external shocks. Deep economic and regional inequalities persist and are worsening. And the looming civilisational threat of climate change calls into question many of the fundamental assumptions of a four-decades-old economic model predicated on growth.

Taken together, these factors amount to a complex and multifaceted crisis that is going to strain the capacity of government, businesses, and local communities to deliver an adequate response. Moreover, worsening framework conditions are likely only going to get worse before they get better. In Northern Ireland, newspaper reports are predicting that more than 70 per cent of households will be living in fuel poverty by January of 2023, compounding hardship for people and families across the region. While some of these crises have been nearly half a century or more in the making, it is important to recognise that they are not born just of temporary political or policy difficulties. At their heart, they stem from a steadily-building crisis of our underlying economic model. To address these crises at their roots, rather than attempting to merely ameliorate their symptoms, means addressing the dysfunctional aspects of our economic model itself.

Most ordinary people experience an economy that is no longer working for them, their families, or their communities. Instead of producing broadly-distributed prosperity and happiness, today's economy delivers only for a small number at the very top, who are increasingly receiving the lion's share of wealth and income. This is in a context in which the United Kingdom already boasts the greatest regional economic disparities in Europe. Returns to capital have been increasing at the expense of labour's share of the economic pie: recent years have been locust years for workers, who have experienced the longest squeeze on their incomes since the Napoleonic Wars, with inflation-adjusted real wages still lower than they were before the financial crisis of 2007-2008—and set to be eroded still further by the onset of an era of double-digit inflation. We are back to the economic distributions of the 1920s and 1930s, before the collective global descent into Depression and World War.

An Overly Extractive Economic Model

While external shocks have fed into this crisis, it is also a crisis of the functioning of the economy. The economic data reveal an economic model that is essentially extractive—that is designed to enable the extraction of financial gain for asset holders at the top, regardless of the collateral damage that creates for workers, communities, and the environment. The result is a new era of monopoly in which the energy firms, property developers, big banks, and large corporations control our natural resources, land, money supply, and capital assets, and are steadily extracting growing profits from customers and suppliers with impunity.

In such a model, gains to the economy do not flow downwards but upwards to economic elites, and a rising tide does not lift all boats, as "trickle-down" economic doctrine had claimed. Rather, concentrated ownership, corporate dominance, and the ascendance of finance are driving the negative outcomes we see all around us: crumbling public infrastructure, social atomisation, environmental degradation, widening economic and regional inequalities, stalled social mobility, and a widespread sense of popular disempowerment and political alienation.

Such outcomes will not be sustainable for very long, and will otherwise lead to social backlash and further instability. At the same time, without a dramatic change in direction, we will be left largely underprepared for the era of climate and economic disruption that stretches ahead.

This grim reading is not intended as doom-mongering but as an unblinking assessment of the conditions in which the Northern Ireland Executive will likely be operating in the near future. In such a forbidding context, in which available resources are scarce but the need is growing exponentially, every public pound is going to have to do double or triple duty. The calculus must change from one of overly narrow cost-benefit analysis on a lowest unit cost basis to one in which the objective is to understand the role of the public sector in Northern Ireland—encompassing Executive departments, public bodies (including various different Executive and non-departmental public bodies and arm's length bodies), local government, and public companies—in acting as a stabiliser and anchor and catalyst for economic change, ensuring that public money stays and recirculates in local economies rather than being immediately extracted away to distant shareholders offshore.

CWB can be one of the major tools of government in Northern Ireland in responding to this crisis, making public money and interventions go further in underpinning the essentials of a more stable and equitable economy. It can help lessen the pressure on social security and health budgets, tackling problems in a more cost-effective manner by intervening way upstream, enlisting the social determinants of health and poverty as intervention points and drivers of change.

This will require a whole-of-government approach and a political commitment to driving real change. Positive outcomes will not be produced by tinkering around the edges of an extractive system, akin to trying to run up a faster and faster moving down escalator. What is needed is a transformative approach

that tackles problems at their roots, changing institutions and relationships and building new ones that produce resilience, sustainability, equity, and stability by their ordinary everyday functioning. This change in the institutional basis and functioning of the economy at its base is what CWB has to offer.

The Community Wealth Building Alternative

Traditional economic development models are often based on the presumption that local communities need to attract inward investment to meet their needs and grow their local economies. This places them in competition with each other—a zero-sum game in which they can only succeed at the expense of other jurisdictions by scrambling to attract and keep golden-egg laying geese—and can push them in the direction of offering favourable treatment to corporations and developers, even when it might be against the wider community interest. CWB is different.

Instead of traditional economic development through tax breaks, outsourcing, and public-private partnerships, which uses billions to subsidise the extraction of profit by footloose multinational companies who may have no real long-term loyalty to communities, CWB supports collective community ownership of and democratic control over the local economy. It does this through a range of institutions and policies, including worker cooperatives, community land trusts, community development financial institutions, "anchor institution" procurement strategies, municipal and local public enterprise, and public and community banking. CWB offers the local building blocks by which we can set about a transformation of our economy.

Instead of the ongoing concentration of wealth in fewer hands, CWB pursues a broad dispersal of the ownership of assets. Instead of distant global markets, it develops the rooted participatory democratic local economy. Instead of extractive corporations, it is recirculatory, mobilising "anchors"—large place-based economic institutions such as local government, hospitals, and educational institutions—in support of socially-oriented firms that are often democratically-owned and-controlled by their workers or the community as a whole. Instead of private credit creation by private commercial banks, CWB looks to the huge potential power of community and state banks, cooperative credit unions, and public money creation.

The starting place for CWB approaches is that, in most communities, the resources, levers and tools already exist to begin creating a more equal, just, and sustainable economy—you just have to know where and how to look for them. Whether it is local government, educational and school systems, the health service, cultural institutions and the non-profit sector, or public pension funds and other collective capital, the resources to build a more inclusive and democratic economy are all around.

Estimates are that in most places in the UK the potential "CWB sector" amounts to as much as a third of any given local economy, if only it can be repurposed to serve community needs. Repurposing this activity into a coherent and interconnected CWB model of economic development is happening all over—from Cleveland, Ohio, in the United States to Preston, Lancashire, in England, and now, most notably, Scotland, where they recently appointed the world's

first Minister for Community Wealth Building. To truly displace the extractive economy and all its ills, CWB must be properly supported and scaled—redirecting resources that have been funnelled towards failing and insufficient economic development and "neighbourhood regeneration" efforts—to build a new economic model from the ground up.

Given its size, the strength of its public sector, the robustness of its community infrastructure and social enterprise sector, and the scale of its need, Northern Ireland is well positioned to become not only a regional leader in CWB but even a global beacon. The know-how and expertise and models are increasingly available; the question will mainly be one of leadership and political will.

4. Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland

Few places in the advanced industrial world have a more urgent need, or make a stronger case for, CWB than does Northern Ireland. Here communities have been ravaged by deindustrialisation, austerity, and sectarian divides. For decades, Northern Ireland has had an economic model based on low wages, precarious employment, financialised property speculation, and heavy reliance on foreign direct investment and tourism, coupled with a generous system of state subsidies and tax breaks for big transnational companies.

The result of this is an "agglomeration economy" that has concentrated power and capital accumulation in the urban centre of Belfast at the expense of state-led investment, indigenous enterprises, balanced regional development, and community needs. This further exacerbates community and regional inequalities, economic insecurity, and precarity at a time of crisis, all of which undermine the fragile balance of peace building and the ability for all people living in the region to thrive and improve the quality of their lives.

The good news is that awareness of and support for CWB strategies is growing, and myriad CWB activities already exist in communities across Northern Ireland. There is a well-developed community infrastructure that has long supported working-class and marginalised communities, and considerable progress has been made on the five pillars of CWB across areas, sectors and organisations. There is a thriving social enterprise sector with a turnover of nearly £1bn per annum, a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £625m, and around 25,000 employees, whilst a range of labour market intermediaries have placed thousands into valuable work. The credit union sector is one of the largest in Europe and social finance has grown in response to demand. We have also seen new social value clauses in procurement and communities taking more control over land and property to use them more effectively and sustainably. All of this has helped to create a vibrant and diverse social economy across the region.

Furthermore, the size and strength of the public sector in Northern Ireland—defined above as consisting of Executive departments, public bodies (including various different Executive and non-departmental public bodies and arm's length bodies), local government, and public companies—is a key building block for a CWB approach and offers a baseline or economic stability and means of resilience in a period of crisis.

Stabilising and sustaining public services is key to CWB by insourcing jobs and contracts that had previously been outsourced to the private sector, and by municipalising or nationalising important goods, services, and assets that have either been privatised or otherwise should be in public hands. Public services are (or can be) "anchor institutions"—large economic institutions that are rooted in place—with an important role to play in incentivising and supporting re-localisation

and democratisation of the local commercial economy through local sourcing, hiring, and investment.

CWB approaches can be adapted to, and implemented in, the range of geographical and economic contexts that exist across Northern Ireland, from growth areas of Belfast and Derry to parts blighted by deindustrialisation, from small market towns to the struggling agricultural and rural communities of the border regions who face the need to make an imminent double transition away from farm subsidies and carbon emissions. Indeed, CWB can be a powerful tool to address regional and community imbalances driven by historic conflict and therefore help advance peace in areas most affected by conflict.

It is also a feature of Northern Ireland that the places most damaged by conflict are among those that have benefited least from peace. Desegregation in housing and mixing in work, education and public spaces have been highest in areas where economic progress and investment have increased. There needs to be stronger recognition that local economic development in places and among people left out of such processes is an important pathway to peace building, meaningful contact, and social progress. In addition, CWB can help in the democratisation and creation of cross-community ownership of a state in Northern Ireland that has itself been viewed as problematic by many communities.

The ground is fertile and steps have already been taken to support and advance CWB efforts in Northern Ireland. However, there is also cause for sober consideration and assessment here. Several past efforts to launch full-scale CWB strategies in Belfast and elsewhere have failed to take root. That said, significant groundwork has been laid, many key elements exist in the current landscape, and the timing is right and critical. Organisations such as the DTNI and Trademark Belfast (who have supported the work of this Panel) have worked to promote, popularise, and drive a CWB approach and agenda. Burgeoning cooperative efforts and community finance movements have popped up in support of proliferating democratic ownership forms. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies has supported CWB action plans for local authorities such as Belfast Council and developed network strategies for local anchor institutions.

Executive government in Northern Ireland has a necessary and integral role to play to advance CWB. Already, the Department for Communities is leading the way, having committed in its five year strategy to “grow and scale community wealth building” to support sustainability and inclusive growth. But there is so much more that government can and must do, not just in one department, but across all that it does. It can calibrate and harness the grassroots energy on the ground, and empower and fund community-based organisations, acting as a convenor to bring together different groups across the community and ensure alignment. It can choose to invest its significant purchasing power locally, particularly in under-served communities. It can better channel resources, and incentivise other large institutions to do the same, and also create job training programs and grow community enterprises to service their demand locally.

It can mandate that all investments be green-proofed and advance industrial planning for a just transition. It can deliver even more much needed public services, from broadband to transport, in a fair, affordable, democratic and accessible way.

Getting there will require strong political leadership and the mobilisation of the whole of government in Northern Ireland to support CWB from the top down and implement it from the bottom-up. This report seeks to build on the existing expertise, experience, and impact of CWB efforts in the North and offer key recommendations for how the Executive can truly step up to the task of creating this new economy for all of Northern Ireland's communities.

5. Recommendations for Advancing a Whole-of-Government Approach to Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland

In this section we present our top recommendations for how government can help to grow, scale, and connect CWB activity in Northern Ireland. The recommendations offer actions across all five of the pillars of CWB, as well as our best thinking on how to structure appropriate governance that will embed and sustain a CWB approach to economic development across the Northern Ireland Executive. These recommendations are both evidence-based, rooted in practice, as well as bold and aspirational. The goal is to present a mix of both "easy wins" to inspire and show the art of the possible and bold forward thinking to position Northern Ireland, with all of its assets and potential, as a leader in CWB and an international model for delivering an equitable and resilient economy that works for people, place, and planet.

As indicated above, these recommendations are based on direct consultation, our own expertise, existing research, and ongoing engagements and learning. We do not intend to represent or present the full gamut of CWB activity occurring across Northern Ireland, but rather to focus in on key actions that the Northern Ireland Executive can take to scale and move this work to the next phase of action and transformation. Deep partnership and consultation with community is necessary for successful delivery of all of these actions. We have done our best to provide illustrative examples where possible to make these actions concrete and pragmatic. Yet, again, as noted above, some of the recommendations grow out of a large body of existing work and will therefore be more detailed and have ready examples to which we can point, while others are broader and more aspirational, requiring new work to be done and new models to be created. While we appreciate the difficulty and complexities involved in implementing this work on the ground, we believe that bold actions and pathbreaking directions are necessary for a truly transformative agenda commensurate with the scale of the social, economic, and ecological challenges.

We have done our best to synthesise a vast body of information and expertise, and to incorporate many ideas and best thinking in line with CWB principles. We fully acknowledge our limitations, both in general and within the confines of this process. We hope these recommendations are received as suggestive but actionable milestones and guideposts to achievable policy and institutional change.

5.1. Plural Ownership

Context:

CWB is underpinned by a vision of a more democratic, regenerative, and sustainable economy in which wealth is broadly shared by those who create it. The successful creation of this kind of economy will require a strategic focus on growing a plurality of inclusive business models, including SMEs, social enterprises, community-owned businesses, cooperatives, public enterprise, and employee ownership.

We noted earlier that the social enterprise sector is strong and diverse and works effectively in deprived areas, integrating those furthest from the labour market into good quality work and delivering a complex mix of services in neighbourhoods, including to some of the most excluded people in the region. Indeed, the communities with a strong social enterprise base have adapted and coped most effectively in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations—"the third sector"—stepping up to coordinate mutual aid efforts and support the work of statutory services.

Despite this, there is a widespread feeling within the social economy sector that its contribution is undervalued by state agencies and policy-makers, with social enterprises too often treated as something that exist outside the "real"—i.e. commercial private sector—economy. There is no dedicated strategy for the sector, and the Department for the Economy's 10X Strategy sees social enterprises primarily as a vehicle for delivering labour market integration. This marginalisation stands in sharp contrast to the experience of regions with a thriving social economy, which are characterised by an enabling financial and fiscal environment, regulatory support, coordinating mechanisms, research and development, capacity building, and a commitment to invest in sectoral growth.

Just as there are multiple challenges facing the social economy, so too is there the potential for scaling up, diversifying and integrating the sector into the wider economy in order that it can play a more central role in area-based regeneration and CWB. The following recommendations are cross-cutting in nature and designed to encourage a new departure in how the social economy is understood and supported.

Recommendations:

1) Adopt, deliver, and resource a social economy strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Panel notes that in 2004 Northern Ireland's Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) introduced a strategic plan for the social economy sector, but that this lacked the enabling legislative framework and investment needed to make it a success. Since then, the region has fallen further behind its nearest neighbours, both in policy terms and the extent to which the sector has received government support to grow and develop.

To address this weakness, we recommend that the Department for the Economy introduces, delivers, and properly resources a new social economy strategy. This should be far-reaching and encompass all aspects of a sectoral approach, including cooperative

models, community associations, foundations, and development trusts. The strategy should focus on increasing awareness of the social economy, the policies that need to be put in place, and what is needed to upskill and upscale the sector. It should also come with a fully developed social investment plan that will underpin delivery.

Timeframe and delivery

The delivery of this recommendation is a priority for the social economy sector, and critical to the success of CWB in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that Social Enterprise Northern Ireland (SENI) has drafted a fresh social economy strategy, which provides a basis for expediting this recommendation. The Department for the Economy should engage with SENI and other key stakeholders with a view to introducing a new strategy and investment plan in Year 1, drawing on the experiences of Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.[2] Given its cross-cutting nature and cross-departmental focus, the Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit (see Governance section below) and Social Economy Policy Group will be key players in driving this strategy forward. The strategy would be informed by a strong collaborative approach, but would:

- Put in place staged support for new-start, emerging, growth, high-capacity, merger and scaling businesses across sectors and places;
- Stimulate growth in cooperatives and worker buyouts/ownership;
- Strengthen support for intermediaries in networking, advocacy, and business support;
- Set out and resource a comprehensive programme of skills and technical support; and
- Build social finance supply and access to competitive grant/loan products.

These dovetail with and are supported by a range of recommendations under the related pillars described below.

2) Establish a CWB/social enterprise fund.

The Panel strongly believes that one outcome of any social investment plan should be the establishment of a CWB/social enterprise fund that caters to the capital, technical, and revenue needs of the sector. This fund should be flexible in so far as to provide bespoke solutions that enable the social economy to grow and ultimately realise its full potential. It will be used to address the legacy of underinvestment in the sector, and to help restructure areas of high social deprivation by building a workable, sustainable, and locally embedded economy with social enterprises playing an anchor role.

Timeframe and delivery

The Department for Communities and Department for the Economy should begin an engagement with the Department of Finance around the question of how such a fund could be capitalised, both directly and under the aegis of the Social Economy Policy Group. The fund should be in place by Year 2

[2] Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-2026: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-social-enterprise-strategy-2016-2026/**; Scotland's Social Enterprise Action Plan (2020): **https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-enterprise-action-plan/**; The National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022 : **https://assets.gov.ie/19332/2fae274a44904593abba864427718a46.pdf**.

and be administered by the Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit. (see Governance section below).

3) Review and realign existing financial levers to support the social economy.

As noted above, access to finance and skills are critical to the future prospects of the social economy. There are a range of already existing financial instruments and capital resources that could be better used to support the development of the sector, be that through ringfencing, repurposing, or the insertion of CWB criteria into guidelines. These include the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities, the Dormant Accounts Fund, Financial Transactions Capital, the local government pension fund, and mainstream regeneration and grant-making programmes administered by the Department for Communities. In addition, the Levelling Up, PEACE PLUS, and City & Region Growth Deals present significant opportunities to prioritise investment in local economies and CWB. The Panel recommends that these various levers are explored for their CWB potential and that steps are taken to deploy them in support of this agenda.

Timeframe and delivery

The Department for Communities has influence over a number of the levers identified, and will have a pivotal role in delivering this recommendation. For those where there exists a short window of opportunity, it will require swift action in collaboration with key partners such as Local Government. For others, there will be scope for a more strategic long-term shift that by necessity draws in other departments and public anchor institutions.

4) Explore the potential for cooperatives, employee ownership, and worker buyouts.

Cooperative and worker ownership is commonplace across Europe, forming a key part of the social economy in regions such as the Basque Country and Emilia Romagna. Closer to home, there is growing recognition of the role that employee-ownership successions and worker buyouts can play in saving jobs and retaining wealth within the community, thereby helping to build more resilient and democratic local economies. England and Scotland have both seen exponential growth in employee ownership in the past few years, driven by a favourable policy environment and the work of agencies such as Cooperative Development Scotland, while the Welsh Government has recently taken tentative steps in the same direction.[3]

In recognition of this progressive trend, and noting that Northern Ireland lacks the requisite levers and infrastructure to underpin similar progress on the domestic front, the Panel recommends that a scoping study be commissioned to explore the untapped potential of cooperatives, employee ownership, and worker buyouts in Northern Ireland. This is of particular concern given the impact of the pandemic and cost-of-living shocks on the family-owned business sector and the ongoing and growing "silver tsunami" wave of retiring baby boomer business owners.

[3] See CLES, Owning the workplace, securing the future (2022), which was commissioned by the Welsh Government: **https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG-Owning-the-workplace-FINAL.pdf.**

Timeframe and delivery

It is proposed that the Department for the Economy commissions a scoping study in Year 1, with a view to working with the Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit to action its recommendations in Year 2.

5) Expand democratic ownership, control, and participation in the public sector through democratisation of public services and innovative public enterprise models.

The Panel sees Northern Ireland's public sector as a major reservoir of community wealth, but acknowledges that more could be done to facilitate community engagement and citizen participation in the delivery of policy outcomes. To this end, we recommend a process of exploration and experimentation with participatory approaches to the design, management, and delivery of public services, drawing on best practice exemplars from across Europe. As part of this exercise, consideration could be given where appropriate to new multi-stakeholder models of asset ownership and management, for example Public-Common Partnerships (PCPs).[4] This should not be confused with outsourcing and privatisation, which are not part of, and in fact, antithetical to, a CWB approach! We also recommend that efforts are taken to determine the potential for state-owned and municipal enterprise, in line with the experience of successful regional economies and progressive CWB efforts in areas such as North Ayrshire.

Timeframe and delivery

This is conceived as an ongoing process that has already begun in local authority areas including Newry, Mourne & Down. In the near term, we recommend that all local authorities follow this lead as part of their own CWB agenda, and that the broader piece (including guidance to Councils and government agencies) is taken up by the Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit once established.

6) Experiment with spatial interventions within an area-based framework.

Building integrated, regenerative, and sustainable local economies that build community wealth will require an area-based framework for delivery, and there are both well-developed and emerging models of how this might work. In the first place, there is considerable evidence that anchor social enterprises and social economy clusters have turned places around, providing a basis for wider regeneration in combination with other public and private investments. Secondly, the Panel notes that a number of VCSE organisations have come together to establish 'CWB Hubs' in the north-east and the north-west of the region. The Panel therefore recommends that the Department for Communities works with others to explore and experiment with spatial interventions such as Social Enterprise Zones, Social Enterprise Places and CWB Hubs, using these to connect social innovation and skills development with upscaling and diversification of the social economy.

[4] For more on Public-Commons Partnerships (PSPs), see: **https://www.common-wealth.co.uk/interactive-digital-projects/a-new-model**

Timeframe and delivery

The Department for Communities has leverage with local authorities through the community planning process to better connect communities, planning, and local economic development. This can be used to identify and road test the most effective spatial intervention, suited to the unique context of Northern Ireland. This may be supported in the short-to-medium term using financial levers such as PEACE PLUS, which have a focus on social innovation.

5.2. Locally-Rooted Finance

Context:

The manner in which money flows and recirculates in a local economy is determinative of a range of important economic outcomes. Instead of financial speculation and extraction, the money and banking system locally should be a source of real economy investing to build a community-serving local economy. One necessary element in the institutional landscape of all successful CWB efforts is a network of plural local banking forms, including public and community banks, and the creation and use of local investment funds. Locally rooted financial flows are integral to ensuring that an economy is developed in a way in which local people and communities benefit, positive social outcomes are secured, and wealth grows and recirculates for local benefit. Financial institutions and investors, particularly in the UK, are now increasingly consolidated and globally focused, with little or no attachment, connection, or affinity to local places. This means that the return on investments is extracted for the profit of distant shareholders rather than recirculated through local economies via community -based and-oriented finance.

The long-term solution is to substantially redirect investment locally and to communities. This includes mechanisms that recirculate and increase local multipliers by public (both direct investment and to influence private investment) as well as private finance, and requires a plural local financial ecosystem. To support this, it is important to build a thriving community-focused banking ecosystem that includes lending and investment vehicles that root money flows locally and ensure that investments are deployed in a way that helps build community wealth. Patient (long term and risk-tolerant) capital needs to be made available to CWB organisations and institutions, offering not just debt but also equity investments, and making significant-scale resources available with fewer strings attached.

A key means to do this is through the establishment of a regional public bank that should be mandated to support local community banks, which serve the everyday financial needs of citizens, local community groups, and pluralistic local businesses. This is particularly relevant in Northern Ireland, where public resources dominate and public spending is among the highest proportion of any regional economy in Western Europe. A public bank would be a way to funnel that investment directly into activity in the real economy of households and businesses, production and consumption, and away from financial speculation. Precedents for public banking exist in such diverse places as the State of North Dakota in the United States and across Germany in the form of the Sparkassen Banks. Such institutions can connect to and

support the scaling of the growing community banking movement. Additional powerful financial tools are municipal bonds issued by local authorities to support CWB or direct investment from local public pension funds. A diverse banking landscape is integral to a healthy local economy and should be the backbone for capitalising community businesses and investing in local initiatives, and should be supported at all levels.

Northern Ireland already has the groundwork to build a strong locally-rooted and community-focused financial ecosystem. Credit Unions in particular, as well as Community Finance Ireland, play a significant role in communities and there are new efforts to develop a mutual bank for the region. Much more can be done to support this growing landscape, while new tools and instruments can be created through the redirection of existing and new capital flows and investment opportunities. For example, in North Ayrshire in Scotland, they will be leveraging their annual revenue budget, their capital programme and house building programme, in addition to the £251 million Ayrshire Growth Deal—which includes a £3 million fund to pioneer Scotland's first CWB project—to grow community wealth.

Beyond their provision of welfare and social programmes, the Department for Communities alone is responsible for roughly £1.1 billion, with more than £800million in resource/revenue spending and £200million in capital spending; and tens of millions allocated from Financial Transactions Capital. This money should be streamlined, screened, and directed in a way that considers the development of CWB capacity and mechanisms. Furthermore, when looking across the whole of government in Northern Ireland there are multiple forthcoming sources of finance and investment that have the potential to be directed in such a way that supports and scales CWB activities in place. These sources of finance come from various different bodies, and are made up of both public and private resources. The levers may vary significantly, but they represent significant emerging opportunities and there is potential to influence their direction and focus to some degree. These include the following, though by no means comprehensive, list:

- Belfast City & Region Deals (£1bn)
- PEACE Plus (£1bn)
- Dormant accounts and assets (£30-100m)
- Financial Transactions Capital (approximately £60m)
- Casement Park and sub-regional stadia programme (£140m)
- Neighbourhood Renewal (£18m)
- UK Levelling Up Funds
- National Lottery Funds (Community, Heritage, Sport, etc.)

While the challenges are pressing, from budgetary pressures within government, made worse by the challenge of replacing post-Brexit funds, to the piecemeal and short-term nature of funding, and the needs myriad—from the need to change capital rules to allow for credit union investment in CWB and the social economy to diversifying grant and social investments to meet the needs of social enterprise—there is still much that can be done both in the immediate term to address current needs and fill gaps, and over the long term to build a stable and sustaining local financial ecosystem. The following recommendations are intended to help accomplish both.

Recommendations:

There are a number of ways to ensure that finance is rooted locally and investments recirculate for the benefit of residents and community in Northern Ireland. Here we offer our top line recommendations for both developing new tools and resources that lay the groundwork for a robust local financial landscape moving forward, as well as changing or adjusting existing programmes or efforts and lifting up and scaling ongoing work. The below recommendations connect to and complement. Recommendations in other target opportunity areas, and are meant to be additive to, support, and augment the financing recommendations proposed in those sections.

As a basis for all the below actions, we recommend that a full audit of available funds (a brief illustrative listing of which is offered above) be conducted as a baseline to ensure a full picture and allow for informed decision-making about how best to redirect finance without unnecessary market disruptions.

1) Explore the potential for a public investment bank as an intermediary for social and green lending.

A public regional investment bank is a state-owned and publicly capitalised institution which provides financing to public and private bodies in service to the social good. This should be a mission-oriented public bank which would seek to catalyse transformational change in key areas. Drawing from the example of the recently established Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB), a regional investment bank would be 'mission orientated' in its approach, generating a return across its portfolio as a whole but shifting the traditional investment focus of profit maximisation toward tackling challenges such as securing a just transition or improving quality of life and place through its investments.

A key mission of the investment bank should be to support CWB activities, and it should have an explicit objective to provide patient risk capital to safeguard long-term funding for the cooperative, mutual, and social enterprise sector. The governance of this bank is critical to its functioning. The Board of Governors should include at least one Minister, one trade union representative, two representatives from civil society, one representative from local authorities, and one representative from a social enterprise or CWB background—and the number of Board Members from the conventional private sector should be capped at one-third. This is to ensure that the public investment bank does not simply replicate the behaviour of private commercial banks.

Timeframe and delivery:

The feasibility and scoping for this work can begin immediately, though the implementation would begin in the medium to long term. The Department of Finance should lead on the establishment of this entity.

2) Establish a Community Wealth Building pilot programme fund.

In order to support the development of robust CWB models in Northern Ireland that demonstrate the "art of the possible," funds should be made available, in a competitive bidding process, to projects on the ground that focus on resident ownership and control, and demonstrate connectivity across all the five pillars of CWB in a specific community. For example, how could a community-owned

asset, financed through community-controlled funds, house democratically run enterprises that create stable jobs employing local residents? The goal of this fund would be to strengthen local ecosystems while building pipelines to develop and deliver CWB model projects on the ground.

This pilot fund could be seeded with Lottery funds, or even potentially UK Levelling Up funds, and could be further capitalised by contributing foundations and charitable investors. An example can be found in the City of Chicago in the United States, which has recently launched a $15 million CWB pilot project fund on this model, using the Biden Administration's federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money to initiate the fund.

Timeframe and delivery:

This fund could be set up relatively quickly and could be housed in the Department for Communities with support from the Departments of Finance and Economy.

3) Conduct an audit of underutilised financial instruments and repurpose them for Community Wealth Building ends.

Pension funds, community shares, green bonds, and municipal bonds can drive direct investment into CWB related activities, and particularly to activities that advance a just transition. The Place-based Climate Action Network in partnership with the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change have already presented a proposal to the Northern Ireland Executive on how to capitalise a green bond to finance a just transition by revitalising the Housing Executive's power. This is just one example of how to use underutilised assets to capitalise investment tools. Municipal bonds can enhance the borrowing and investment power of local governments in advancing CWB. In Preston in the North of England, for example, they also used public pension investment to develop affordable student housing. Some of these assets could be used to support the creation of new fund as noted above.

Timeframe and delivery:

This audit should be conducted immediately and should be the responsibility of the Departments of Finance and Economy, with oversight from and accountability to the Northern Ireland CWB Unit, and should involve the Department for Communities as well as local government.

4) Strengthen the role of community finance as a key partner to distribute and diversify funding and financing away from government.

We recommend that regulations are changed so as to allow credit unions to become more involved in business lending in the real economy. This will involve loosening capital requirements, but should not be seen a move towards deregulation or to permitting speculative activity outside of bread-and-butter real economy lending—as has been a notable risk elsewhere when capital requirements on community-based lenders are relaxed. Additionally, Community Finance Ireland (CFI) should be supported in its efforts to develop and grow as a social lender and a rigorous feasibility study should be conducted to evaluate the possibility of establishing a local mutual bank in Northern Ireland, as is being proposed.

Timeframe and delivery:

This should be acted on immediately and is the responsibility of the Departments of Finance and Economy.

5) Embed participatory budgeting practices across local authorities in Northern Ireland.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which citizens decide directly how best to spend some portion of a public budget, and is a means of supporting both community empowerment and the development of participatory democracy. Deployed most famously in Porto Alegre in Brazil, PB has been practiced in many communities globally, and was most recently included in Scotland's Community Empowerment Act as a means of delivering on the goals of their National Performance Framework. We believe that the Northern Ireland Executive should consider a mandate for local authorities across Northern Ireland to agree that at least 1% of local budgets be subject to PB within the coming years.

Timeframe and delivery:

This would be a medium-term consideration, to be implemented in the next 2-4 years. It would be the responsibility of the Department for Communities, falling under their remit with local government.

5.3. Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets

Context:

CWB takes a holistic approach to tackling poverty and advancing community and individual development by creating just and inclusive local economies in which decent work and pay are central.

In contrast to conventional economic development approaches, which too often view labour as a mere input into production (or, worse, a cost to be relentlessly minimised in service of profit), CWB seeks to ensure that workers receive their share of economic gains and elevate the importance of fair employment practices and just labour markets as part of ensuring that the economy serves the needs of people, place and planet. Viewed through a CWB lens, good work is a core social aim and an important source of individual human development.

In CWB practice elsewhere there have been significant recent efforts to advance these objectives through social value policy, skills development, targeted employment support programmes, intermediary labour markets, and interventions to drive up employment standards across the public, private, and VCSE sectors. Some of these are already present in embryonic form in Northern Ireland, or have been shown to be effective in the past. That said, a number of challenges and opportunities remain.

The recommendations in this section range from immediate CWB conditionalities that can be applied to government-controlled activity to tilt the playing field back in the direction of workers' rights and labour's share of economic returns to more economy-wide interventions that would advance the green and community-based economy of the future that has been envisioned and called for in a number of previous government reports—but not, as yet, delivered in practice.

Northern Ireland is currently marked by a high prevalence of low-paid employment, with almost a quarter of all employees receiving

less than the Real Living Wage. Overall earnings have stagnated for decades, and the effects of this will be compounded by the recent, unprecedented cost-of-living increases. Meanwhile, productivity has lagged the UK average for decades along with employment rates, and there is a persistent skills imbalance in particular areas of the economy. This is not simply a question of raising productivity—the so-called "productivity puzzle"—as elsewhere where productivity is higher there has been a persistent decoupling of wages from productivity increases, with the latter simply producing higher returns to capital.

Part of the picture is the lack of bargaining power on the part of workers in Northern Ireland, who like their counterparts across the UK have laboured for decades under some of the most restrictive trade union legislation in the advanced industrial world. Just over half of workers in Northern Ireland have union bargaining in their workplace, with coverage of only 32 per cent in the private sector. This includes the VCSE sector, which has poor levels of union representation and no coherence around how best to advance the rights of a disparate workforce. Moreover, the UK as a whole—and by extension, Northern Ireland—is set to fall further behind its European peers in this regard, with the Council of Europe approving a directive to move EU Member States to 80 per cent collective bargaining coverage. Simply increasing trade union strength in the workplace is a proven method of increasing wages via increased worker bargaining power on wages and conditions.

Another piece of the puzzle is the protracted issue of unemployment. The drivers of worklessness in Northern Ireland are cross-cutting, and impact more on groups such as women and lone parents. There are also regional and geographical disparities, with unemployment and in-work poverty being more concentrated in inner-city areas as well as rural communities and small towns across the region. On the upside, social enterprises and community-based organisations are significant employers and providers of employment support in areas of high social deprivation, offering a base that could be more strategically utilised to create progressive employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market.

Finally, we believe it is necessary to look at some important interventions at the level of the economy as a whole that go far beyond the usual domain of CWB practice. Without such interventions—for example, the development of a powerful industrial strategy for the Northern Ireland economy of the future—there is a risk that CWB interventions, however beneficial, will become lost in the overall deteriorating macroeconomic environment we described at the outset. CWB is most effective when embedded in a compatible macroeconomic context that does not leave its practitioners attempting to run up a faster and faster moving downward escalator. These wide-ranging recommendations are by their nature more suggestive and overarching, and may require resources and a new political mandate beyond the scope of our Panel's investigations, but will nevertheless be essential in ensuring that CWB is operating in a conducive and supportive context rather than working against the grain of the overall economy in Northern Ireland.

Recommendations:

For many places in which there is a need to tackle decades of worklessness and poverty, fair employment and skills must be at the core of any CWB agenda. Concerted efforts by the public sector to turn the dial on employment and skills have the potential to reshape local labour markets so that they provide progressive training opportunities, supporting people to develop and reach their full potential—and to ensure that there is decent employment available at the point of entry (or re-entry) into the jobs market. This vision is largely reflected in the Executive's renewed focus on better jobs with better wages, including for those with non-academic skills and qualifications. Work has also begun on three longer-term 'missions' addressing some of Northern Ireland's biggest challenges (employability and productivity; green sustainable future; and improving life outcomes), which could help deliver on the ambition for a generational transformation in economic and employment patterns.

Situating these efforts in the context of an overall CWB approach not only provides a framework for connecting fair employment to related and interdependent public policy agendas, but also helps to identify the various ways and means by which better jobs can be directed to where they are most needed. At both a local and regional level, linkages to procurement can encourage fair employment practices to build real jobs with decent terms and conditions, and advance living wages and trade union rights. Critically, the CWB focus on building resilient and ethical local supply chains can also support the growth of progressive training and employment opportunities within marginalised communities and excluded populations.

The Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets pillar of CWB is too often underdeveloped. The Northern Ireland context in particular calls for a robust set of interventions to spread and enhance existing good practice, while also building towards longer-term structural change, including:

- deploy the available levers of government and public anchor institutions in support of fair pay and working conditions;
- raise the bargaining power and wage levels of employees; and
- ensure that supply side measures on skills and workforce development link to actual jobs and to the development of sectors of the economy that better meet the needs of the future.

1) Deploy the available levers of Government and public anchor institutions in support of fair pay and working conditions.

The utilisation of levers such as procurement, investment, and public finance in support of CWB can play an important role in transforming Northern Ireland into a high skills, high wage, and high productivity economy through a carrot and stick approach deploying incentives, on the one hand, and conditionalities on the other. In this area, given the region's size, it may be appropriate to pursue a centralising rather than decentralising approach that can truly "level up" while simplifying standards and procedures across tiers of government and areas of public policy. One example of this centralising approach is Scotland's Fair Work Convention, an independent advisory body

established in 2015 to support the Government to realise its vision of fair work by 2025. [5]

It is important that any such approach is rooted in the conditions of Northern Ireland, and builds on progress that has been made to date. Recognising this, we recommend two key provisions that would augment existing practice and help the region on its way to achieving a fuller vision of fair work:

a) Spread the Northern Ireland Executive's Real Living Wage commitment to other public bodies through conditionalities in their public contracts. The public sector has a responsibility to set the bar on pay, job quality, and employment standards, and through this promote a "race to the top" across other sectors. With this in mind, the Panel welcomes the Executive's accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer, alongside the clause in the Scoring Social Value Policy that payment of the Real Living Wage must be included as a condition of contract for all tenders. It should also be emphasised that the Department for Communities has introduced full cost recovery on its own grant programmes. Such leadership, demonstrating what is possible, should be replicated across government, public anchor institutions, public companies, donors and grant-makers, and extended into the wider economy through the promotion of Real Living Wage accreditation.

Timeframe and delivery

This is a proposal that could be actionable in the short term, consolidating recent gains and building on work that is ongoing. We understand that Executive Departments have been engaging with the Living Wage Foundation around a programme to promote Real Living Wage Accreditation across all sectors, and recommend that the Department for Communities assumes responsibility for taking this forward.

b) Add trade union recognition to the Social Value Policy. As outlined in the Scoring Social Value Policy, adherence to collective agreements and the adoption of fair work practices are among the mandatory requirements to be incorporated into all government contracts. The Panel welcomes these efforts to improve public procurement practice, guided by the Carnegie Trust definition of fair work. We recommend that this is further strengthened with the insertion of trade union recognition and access as an additional clause in the Social Value Policy. Furthermore, the adoption of fair work or good employment charters should be encouraged across all local authority areas, and fair work audits should become part of the system for recording, monitoring and policing of social value outcomes.[6]

Timeframe and delivery

The adoption of fair work or good employment charters is an exercise that could begin with immediate effect (Year 1), led by the Department for Communities working in

[5] For more on Scotland's Fair Work Convention, see: **https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/**

[6] For examples of best practice, see Greater Manchester Authority's Good Employment Charter: **https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/greater-manchester-s-good-employment-charter-model-revealed/**; and Scotland's Fair Work Framework: **https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework/**.

collaboration with local government in Northern Ireland. It is envisaged that the new Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit would have a role in ensuring that these charters and their real-life outcomes are effectively monitored. New trade union insertions into the Scoring Social Value Policy and the incorporation of fair work audits should proceed over the medium-term as part of the Department of Finance's continuing efforts to review and strengthen social value policy and practice.

2) Harness the power of collective bargaining for social and economic benefit.

The benefits of inclusive collective bargaining systems include reduced wage inequality, better terms and conditions, improved workplace safety, and lower staff turnover, with positive implications for overall societal wellbeing. Collective bargaining is also good for innovation and productivity, forming one part of the economic performance equation. Recent legislative efforts to address this, and to catapult Northern Ireland to the forefront of workers' rights in the advanced world, have fallen short.[7] But the legacy of the pandemic and challenges of the future mean that the case for reform is stronger and more urgent than ever.

Recognising this, we recommend a renewed effort to institute a labour relations model in Northern Ireland that is fit for the twenty first century-one that accounts for the unique structure of the regional economy as it currently exists but also ensures that the benefits of long-term economic change are equally distributed. This process should begin with the necessary steps to keep pace with progress in EU neighbours:[8] specifically, the Panel recommends that the Department for the Economy produce an action plan for progressively increasing collective bargaining coverage to 80 per cent, in keeping with the recent Council of Europe directive, setting out a clear timeline and concrete measures for doing so. This action plan should outline statutory measures for re-establishing sectoral bargaining, combating union busting, and strengthening the right to trade union access. Within the scope of this exercise, the Department for the Economy should also explore the case for extending collective bargaining to all matters relating to pay, terms and conditions, productivity, and the transition to net-zero.

Timeframe and delivery

Work to producing an action plan should be commenced by the Department for the Economy within Year 1, informed and guided by developments in EU neighbours, engagement with key stakeholders through existing fora, and emerging research on best practice internationally.

3) Put the Real Living Wage on a statutory basis.

Fair pay is not only a critical means of putting money in people's pockets and lifting them out of poverty. It also makes economic sense, as those most in need of a wage uplift are most likely to spend their income in local businesses. This is what is meant by CWB's

[7] **http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/non-executive-bill-proposals/trade-union-and-labour-relations-amendment-bill/**

[8] For more on the new EU Directive, see: **https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/07/minimum-wages-council-and-european-parliament-reach-provisional-agreement-on-new-eu-law/**

commitment to fair work and just labour markets and to a high road economy based on building local spending power and multipliers.

Indeed, there is growing evidence that paying living wages generates a wealth of benefits for workers, businesses, and communities alike.[9] Employers ranging from SMEs to FTSE 100 companies have attested to the multiple benefits accrued from voluntarily paying the Real Living Wage,[10] while recent research estimates that the economic dividend of moving a quarter of low-paid workers up to this wage level would be worth £910 per worker annually in a UK region outside London.[11] Although the universal adoption of the Real Living Wage would naturally result in increased costs for some employers, this has to be balanced against its likely benefits, both at the level of individual firms and more broadly in terms of increased consumption, higher tax revenues, and possible reductions in social welfare spending.[12] This is of particular relevance to Northern Ireland, where low pay is prevalent and a high proportion of working-age families are in receipt of income supports.

The Panel therefore endorses the commitment within the "New Decade, New Approach" agreement to devolve the Minimum Wage and recommends that steps are taken to explore the potential for making the Real Living Wage the statutory floor. Following the example of the Irish Government,[13] the Department of Finance should commission independent research to look at the issue of low pay in general, and to examine the design and implications of a statutory Real Living Wage for Northern Ireland. Proposals for policy or legislative change should account for the high concentration of micro-businesses in the region, as well as the obvious need for the Real Living Wage to be linked to the cost of living. This would represent a bold step to tackle the persistence of working age poverty, putting Northern Ireland at the cutting edge of best practice globally.

Timeframe and delivery

The Department of Finance can begin the process by exploring the possibility of devolving the Minimum Wage and commissioning the body of work proposed in Year 1, while continuing to support the roll-out of Real Living Wage accreditation (see above). It is likely that a significant legislative programme would be required to enable policy change of the kind we envisage, but this would become clearer once the initial groundwork has been undertaken. Action on the bulk of the Real Living Wage implementation would occur in the medium term.

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9 Anna Barford, Richard Gilbert, Annabel Beales, Marina Zorila and Jane Nelson, The Case for Living Wages (2022): **https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/files/the_case_for_living_wages_report_2022.pdf**.

10 Edmund Heery, David Nash and Deborah Hann, The Living Wage Employer Experience (2017): **https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/Cardiff%20Business%20School%202017%20Report.pdf**

11 Paul Hunter, The Living Wage Dividend: Maximising the local economic benefits of paying a living wage (2021): **https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/The%20local%20Living%20Wage%20dividend%20REPORT%201_0.pdf#:~:text=The%20report%E2%80%99s%20findings%20suggest%20that%20if%20Living%20Wage,wages%20boosting%20productivity%20and%20providing%20additional%20local%20spending**

12 See for example, KPMG, The Living Wage: An economic impact assessment (2015): h**ttp://www.kpmg.com/UK/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Pages/the-living-wage-an-economic-impact-assessment.aspx**

13 For the Irish Government's journey to bring in a living wage, see: **https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8556d-tanaiste-outlines-proposal-to-bring-in-living-wage-for-all/#:~:text=the%20living%20wage%20will%20be,currently%20%E2%82%AC10.5-0%20per%20hour.**

4) Integrate CWB into Labour Market Partnerships and efforts to broaden access to employment.

As emphasised throughout this report, the social economy sector plays an important role in promoting fair work at a local level. Social enterprises working at scale not only provide direct employment from the delivery of their own services, but those with well-integrated intermediary labour markets and youth (and family) intervention offer a more holistic approach to tackling the barriers faced by those furthest from the labour market. As the experience of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme[14] and other recent employment support programmes demonstrate,[15] there is considerable value in building integrated pathways that link personal development, social inclusion, skills, and technical assistance to decent and secure employment opportunities.

Evidence presented to the Panel suggests that social enterprises have the potential to play an even bigger role in the delivery of these integrated models in areas of high social deprivation. Recognising this, the Panel recommends the development of Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) across all local authority areas in collaboration with community partners, using social economy infrastructure as a delivery vehicle. This should include the integration of area-based training, including lifelong learning, work-readiness, and technical apprenticeships within the social economy sector, as well as across the public and private sectors. Investment in skills and retraining should be connected to the development of growth sectors such as the green, circular, and creative economy that offer better employment rewards.

It should be noted that the social economy sector's current and future involvement in local labour markets needs to be underpinned by sustainable investment. Brexit and the end of ESF funding leaves many social enterprises facing a financial cliff-edge and a significant loss of investment, damaging their capacity for sustaining or expanding the provision of progressive employment and training opportunities for those most in need of them.[16] The Department for Communities has a critical role to play in the shift to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, however it looks increasingly uncertain that this will operate in a way that provides a like-for-like replacement of ESF funding in Northern Ireland. Clearly, this calls for a succession plan that directs adequate resources into employment programmes that are proven to be most effective.

[14] Grant Thornton, An Impact Evaluation of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme, 2014-20 (December 2020): **https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/ESF-2014-20-Evaluation-Report.pdf**

[15] See for example report on "Disability within the Northern Ireland Labour Market" from DfC Professional Services Unit: **https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/disability-within-northern-ireland-labour-market**

[16] Pat O'Neill (SIB), Colin Stutt (SIB), Stephanie Morrow (SIB), Therese Hogg (SIB) and Mark Graham (SIB), European Social Fund Succession Landscape Paper: A report jointly commissioned by the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities (February 2021): **https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/european-social-fund-succession-landscape-report.pdf**.

Timeframe and delivery

There is an immediate need and opportunity to create an integrated employment pathway for those furthest from the labour market, using social economy infrastructure to deliver through mechanisms such as the LMPs. The Departments for Communities and the Economy should pursue this opportunity with Local Government in Year 1. This should go hand-in-hand with ongoing efforts to put in place an adequate succession plan that provides a smooth transition away from ESF funding.

5) Labour market planning to meet the needs of the future through a comprehensive industrial strategy.

It is time to seriously prepare the overall economy of Northern Ireland for the future, including through an industrial strategy in pursuit of a green transition and a refocusing on services such as care-giving that meet real and growing social needs.[17] An industrial strategy framework could help Northern Ireland overcome multiple economic challenges. It could provide high-wage jobs, generate revenue, expand exports, and reduce trade deficits—all while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality and public health outcomes. Real-world examples in which industrial strategy has been married to democratic economy approaches (including the deployment of public finance) include the cooperative economy of Emilia Romagna in Italy, the social solidarity economy of Quebec in Canada, and—albeit in a more particularised fashion that is less portable and replicable—the networked cooperatives of the Basque region of Spain, with its flagship Mondragon Cooperative Corporation.

The Panel recommends that the Northern Ireland Executive build upon the content of recent government reports and strategies to initiate a comprehensive industrial strategy framework that would complement, enhance, and align new and existing strategies. This policy framework should be based on existing and future audits of skills and enterprises on the supply side and an assessment of future needs (commercial and social) on the demand side.[18] In addition to government capacities, the resources and capabilities of the higher education sector should also be tapped and deployed to both create and address gaps in this vision and landscape.

A community-sustaining industrial strategy framework would consist of the direction of capital to sectors, localities, and regions so as to balance out market trends and prevent communities from falling into decay, while also ensuring the investment in research and development necessary to maintain a highly productive economy. In some cases this might mean assistance in allowing workers to buy up facilities and keep them running (see Pillar 1 above).

In other cases, it might involve retraining workers for new skills and refitting facilities for work in a different industry. As the 10X Economy Strategy suggests, a greater emphasis on reskilling and lifelong learning will be needed to facilitate this kind of

[17] For example, see North Lanarkshire's Workforce for the Future Strategy: **https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Workforce%20for%20the%20Future%20Strategy%20v3.pdf**

[18] See Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC), Northern Ireland Skills Barometer 2021 (2021): **https://www.ulster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1112986/Skills-Barometer-Summary-Report-2021_FINAL_SENT.pdf**

transition. Going wider and deeper, affected localities and populations would be able to participate in planning and draw upon public resources whose aim is to help secure the long-term stability of communities and, overall, to sustain production in key sectors and industries. This top-down strategy would connect to bottom-up CWB approaches that would offer key avenues for delivery through gap analyses and local capacity building in response to identified needs and opportunities and strategic priorities. This would require greater economic planning capacity than currently exists at any level of government.

Community-sustaining policy to preserve particular places can be married to sector-based approaches. A more strategic emphasis on green manufacturing strategies and services can support the building and sustaining of demand and production capacities for ecologically sustainable forms of energy and technology.

Although the recent experience of deindustrialisation in Northern Ireland has already hollowed out a great deal of productive capacity, manufacturing remains a key sector in the Northern Ireland economy, accounting for an estimated 11 percent of employment and 15 percent of GVA. The low carbon sector is an important part of this, but has the potential for significant growth, with the race to net zero presenting opportunities for new entrants to the workforce as well as offering a just transition pathway for skilled workers in carbon-intensive industries. As Northern Ireland moves towards a mission-oriented focus on employability and productivity, green sustainability, and improving life outcomes, a community-supporting industrial strategy can help to preserve productive capacities in communities on a long-term basis through their repurposing in pursuit of new priorities and objectives.

Tired approaches that place the emphasis on foreign direct investment (FDI) and its supposed trickle-down benefits will not achieve this, and do not merit the policy support or level of public subsidy devoted to them in the past. By contrast, a properly resourced industrial strategy would help ensure that productive capacities stay in use in such circumstances and provide guidance on how to organise conversion when a shift to a different product or industry is required. In the long-term, it may also entail the conversion of legacy industries to more socially beneficial purposes.

The details of how to develop such a strategy and provide the resources and political mandate are beyond the scope of this Panel. However, we urge the development of such a strategy as essential to providing a supportive framework for CWB in Northern Ireland, and note that rhetorical commitments to industrial strategy have been commonplace in both UK government and Northern Ireland Executive documents.

From the much-heralded “march of the makers” and “levelling up” to the inclusion of industrial strategy in the mandate of a purposely-created Whitehall Department—Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)—there have been lots of warm words from Westminster, but precious little concrete action. The Panel acknowledges the ambition within documents such as 10X that Northern Ireland will obtain a significant share of the jobs growth and economic opportunities arising from the UK Government’s ‘10 Point

Plan for an Industrial Revolution', for example. But if Northern Ireland is to realise the jobs growth promised from above, this will require strategic interventions to develop the region's indigenous industrial base. In short, if Northern Ireland is to have an actual industrial strategy for the twenty-first century it will have to develop one of its own.

In a Northern Ireland context, industrial strategy commitments can already be found across many recent reports and initiatives, including but not limited to:

- Economy 2030, a draft industrial strategy issued for consultation in 2017 by the then Minister for the Economy (who now heads up the Belfast Chamber of Commerce); [19]
- The 10X Economy strategy, which focuses on innovation, priority clusters, high value-added sectors, and the idea of emulating other small, advanced economies; [20]
- The Skills Strategy that accompanies the 10X Economy strategy, containing 34 individual commitments including the development of bespoke skills action plans to support the priority clusters and a heavy emphasis on developing local/sub-regional approaches to skills development in collaboration with DfC and local government; [21]
- The Green Growth Strategy that was published in 2020, following the declaration of a climate emergency, which may offer ways of linking CWB, industrial strategy, and climate action; [22]
- The 2022 Climate Change Act, which includes net zero targets by 2050, a requirement for sectoral plans and carbon budgets, and just transition principles, and which should be followed up with ambitious cross-governmental climate action plans. (Some local councils have already adopted their own plans tailored to their own context).
- The Department for the Economy Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland; [23]
- Work currently progressing to develop a circular economy strategy, which should be published in draft form this Autumn.[24]

We also understand that work has also begun on three longer-term 'missions' addressing some of Northern Ireland's biggest challenges: employability and productivity; green sustainable future; and improving life outcomes.

[19] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/economy/industrial-strategy-ni-consultation-document.pdf
[20] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/10x-economy-ni-decade-innovation.pdf
[21] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/economy/skills-strategy-10x-economy-consultation.pdf
[22] https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/Green%20Growth_Brochure%20V8.pdf
[23] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/energy-strategy-path-to-net-zero-action-plan.pdf
[24] https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/circular-economy

Timeframe and delivery

Developing a comprehensive industrial strategy framework will require a long-term commitment from the Department for Economy, but could begin with an audit or diagnosis or the existing industrial base and future needs. Much of the work required for developing a comprehensive industrial strategy for Northern Ireland may already be underway, but the danger is that it will happen piecemeal and without the necessary coordination and integration. It is also unlikely as of yet to be informed by CWB principles, nor will it view CWB approaches as a substantive input into the goals and purposes of such a strategy, nor as potential mechanisms by which such a strategy can be delivered on the ground. We believe that this is a huge missed opportunity and that political leadership will be required to bring such a joined-up strategy into being and that it should form part of a future Programme for Government for the Northern Ireland Executive.

5.4. Socially Productive Use of Land and Property

Context:

The widespread public ownership of land and real estate property in Northern Ireland is an enormous baseline advantage in crafting a CWB strategy for the region, and it will be important to find ways in which to democratically determine the better deployment of these assets in service of the community. Certainly, we are against any fire-sale of public holdings, whether land or buildings. The absence of a legal basis for community land trusts (CLTs) in Northern Ireland also raises the question as to whether the region has all of the institutions it requires in order to manage the socially productive use of land and property to the best effect from a CWB perspective.

However, in certain well-defined instances there may be opportunities in which it may be beneficial to pursue the transfer of ownership of real property from the state to the community. The community-led development of land and property has been one of the successes in urban regeneration and rural development in Northern Ireland and demonstrates the impact of partnership working between the public sector (who own the asset), social enterprises (who have developed them successfully) and local people (who benefit from their use). Asset holding social enterprises allow new facilities in areas where services have often been poor or non-existent; they remove blight and dereliction; create jobs and generate local spending; save important buildings for productive use; and enable organisations to sustain and diversify their work.

In 2019, the Department for Communities commissioned the Community Asset Transfer Strategic Insight Lab that identified the barriers to policy implementation, including the lack of capital investment, the absence of enabling legislation (similar to Britain), a risk-adverse culture, and weak skills across the public and community sector. The current policy, launched in 2014, has enhanced awareness on community ownership but has failed to deliver a meaningful programme of asset transfer. The evidence presented to the Panel emphasises the importance of legislation to enable efficient low-cost projects, better support (especially in the start-up phase), and a stronger funding regime to enable transferred projects to develop as viable schemes.

Why do we need legislation? There are instruments and regulations that allow for the sale of assets by government departments at less than market price for social purposes and this has been, in part, clarified by Department of Finance Guidance on the Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property.[25] This states (section 6.9) that 'land can be sold, leased or otherwise transferred to a local authority or to a body or persons not trading for profit' where Department of Finance 'is satisfied that such a sale, lease or transfer will result in the development, improvement or general benefit of any land held by the Ministry'. Local authorities can also acquire and dispose of land to carry out their statutory functions at less than best consideration and the general power of competence enables local authorities to do anything an individual can do (subject to restrictions) rather than only what they are directly empowered to do.

However, Guidance on its own has not and is not likely to create a proactive and ambitious approach to a programme of asset transfer, as is the case in England, Scotland and Wales. Asset transfer and community ownership of land and property is an important and integral way of building sustainable local economies and should not be confined to the use of residual stocks of land and buildings. The Panel heard from policymakers across the UK and Ireland that legislation is critical to placing asset-based regeneration at the heart of sustainable economic, social, and environmental development. Laws are not an end in and of themselves but make the system work effectively and efficiently, supported by clear guidance, a proactive culture within the public sector, and competent sponsors starting, operating, and scaling projects.

The Panel heard that there have been very few successful community asset transfers under the current policy and the lack of legislation, especially on right to challenge and build as well as General Disposal Consent, have made the system slow, bureaucratic, costly, and inefficient. It should be emphasised that this is important for asset holders because it provides certainty about what and how they can dispose of assets without attaining best value, sets out processes to make the system efficient, and provides legal certainty, especially around the use of public money. It also encourages the policy system across levels and agencies of government to be more facilitative and enabling, rather than seeing asset transfer as an exception. Only assets that qualify under the legislation in terms of value, current use, governance, and accountability would be considered for transfer. An asset-lock can be inserted to ensure that schemes are protected for community use; that profits need to be retained by the social enterprise; that assets cannot be disposed of outside the company; and that appropriate and reasonable clawback provisions would be placed on any investment including grant-aid. It should be emphasised that legislation is simply a mechanism to achieve something else—better regeneration outcomes—and needs to be seen in the context of investment, skills development, and support across communities and the public sector.

[25] https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/disposal-surplus-public-sector-property

Recommendations:

1) The Department for Communities should prepare a new Community Asset Transfer Delivery Framework based on comprehensive legislation to ensure effective and efficient community asset transfer across public bodies in Northern Ireland.

A working group, led by Department for Communities, should report within year 1. Within this policy, a phased approach to legislation is proposed, starting with General Disposal Consent and then progressing to a comprehensive provision on community right to bid, buy, and build. A strategic review of the legislative options for Northern Ireland[26] concluded that a General Disposal Consent provision could be introduced in a timely and efficient way, with a longer timeframe to introduce asset transfer provisions to deliver an ambitious policy.

Phase 1 legislation

* General Disposal Consent in Britain provides general consent and guidance which allows councils to sell land at less than best consideration without the need to seek the consent of the Secretary of State, provided that the undervalue is less than £2m. This should be applied to public bodies in Northern Ireland along with further changes to Department of Finance Guidance (see above) on the disposal of land and property at less than best value.

Phase 2 legislation

* Community Right to Buy enables community organisations to make requests to public bodies for any land or buildings they feel they could make better use of. Public bodies would be required to assess requests against a specified list of criteria, including the contribution to economic development, regeneration, public health, social wellbeing, and environmental sustainability. The public body has a right of refusal, but there should be clear grounds for such a decision as well as a right to appeal by the community organisation.

- Community Right to Challenge gives community organisations and public employees the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service. The policy scope and exclusions (such as services and facilities for children, vulnerable people and mainstream health and social care) for such a challenge, would be developed by Department for Communities and reflect the configuration of public administration in Northern Ireland. If the public body accepts the challenge, it should run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid.
- Disposal of Land by public bodies would provide further discretionary powers to local authorities to dispose of land and assets to community organisations at less than best consideration, without reference to the appropriate Minister.

[26] https://www.dtni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/1-Technical-Advisory-Asset-Based-Development-Final.pdf

It was noted that the Department of Finance Guidance on the transfer of surplus land and property is welcome but this needs to be supported by changes in practices around clawback provisions. Current charges made on social enterprises and community groups are overly restrictive. No evidence was presented to the Panel suggesting that clawback clauses should not be built into transfer agreements, but we did hear that the public sector insist on charges against whole organisations rather than individual grant-funded buildings. In many cases organisations are required to seek Departmental approval to borrow money, which acts as a disincentive to social enterprises and reduces their capacity to borrow. CWB needs responsible entrepreneurship and more commercially viable social enterprises and it is therefore important that charges are set against the appropriate liability in grants and transferred assets. Guidance should be revised to clarify that such charges in grant making to social enterprises and asset transfer schemes should only apply to the project under consideration.

Timeframe and delivery

Short-term. The Department should establish a cross-agency working group on the introduction of community asset transfer legislation with relevant Departments, public agencies, and local government along with the Departmental Solicitors Office and representatives from the community and voluntary sector. Department for Communities should aim to introduce General Disposal Consent within year 1 (Bill stage). Running parallel with this work should be the consideration of phase 2 provisions on community asset transfer legislation with an aim of introducing such legislation within year 3. Legislation in England, Wales, and Scotland already provide the basis on which such laws can be drafted, of course reflecting the administrative, political and legal context in Northern Ireland. Changes to Guidance on charges and clawback should be negotiated with Department of Finance in year 1.

2) Develop a capital and revenue-based funding programme to support asset transfer.

There is limited value in transferring an asset without the necessary funding to realise its potential. A capital investment fund would help support construction works, renovations, and repairs; while revenue grants would pay for staff and running costs until the project can sustain its services. There is also a need to access UK-wide social finance products and to strengthen the supply of more appropriate (debt/grant) finance (see above). As part of the new strategy, the Department should set a capital and revenue budget to support specific asset transfer projects, which would be part of an overall investment in a CWB strategy. Community Plans would play a key role in identifying asset schemes across agencies at the local level and provide a framework for a more planned and integrated approach to local investment (see above).

Timeframe and delivery

It will take time to build and/or realign budgets to deliver CWB interventions at the local level and how this relates to extant programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal and Areas at Risk. Clearly, what is implied here is a transition in how urban regeneration and community development is structured at the local level. There is a review of neighbourhood renewal, which offers an important opportunity to create a progressive approach to rebuilding local economies, strengthening the social enterprise asset base, and to connect deprived communities to the wider labour market.

3) Develop a dedicated programme on Community-led Housing.

The Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy highlighted the importance of Community-Led Housing and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is taking forward a programme of research and policy development with a particular emphasis on rural areas. The Department should work with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to develop and implement a CLH framework for Northern Ireland that would set out: policy priorities; sectoral and area market potential; finance and investment models; and legal reform. Land law in Northern Ireland appears to make Community Land Trusts unviable and legislative changes (to lease conditions and types) would be required (including for example, via an amendment to the Property (NI) Order (1997)) to maximise their potential for housing as well as asset transfer projects more broadly.

Timeframe and delivery

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive strategy could be integrated more firmly into the roll-out of the CWB framework and seen as an integral part of the first year of implementation by Department for Communities. Proposed changes to the Property (NI) Order could be delivered in parallel with community rights legislation in Recommendation 1, phase 2 provisions.

4) Evaluate the public sector asset register for the potential for community asset transfer.

The Strategic Investment Board (NI) has developed an Asset Management Strategy (AMS) accompanied by Departmental Asset Management Plans (AMPs) and similar strategies for agencies and non-departmental public bodies. A systematic evaluation of the register to assess and prioritise land and property for community asset transfer would establish a proactive approach to local development rather than seeing it as an exception. Assets where community organisations have an established interest could be explored first for their viability, including, for example, size, condition and quality, planning constraints, and legal status with covenants or other restrictions. This would help prioritise schemes that can most contribute to local social, economic, and physical regeneration.

Timeframe and delivery

The audit of the DfC asset register, especially around urban regeneration sites and Housing Executive landbanks could be commenced in year one. Prioritisation in terms of short (1–3 year release); and medium (4-6 year); or not viable would be the outcome of such a process published in year 2.

5) Strengthen skills across the public and community sector.

There is a need to strengthen investment readiness, project planning, and financial skills to underpin a sustainable programme of asset transfer. Technical assistance linked to each stage of the programme design, capital works, and implementation should connect a development budget to each one, including to access loan and grant investment. Linked to this, a separate capacity building pathway is needed for public sector asset holders to ensure an efficient management of the project in which government maximises social, economic, and environmental value from such schemes.

Timeframe and delivery

This could be finalised in Year 2 with a review of capacity, needs, current provisions, and gap analysis. A new Skills, Knowledge and Learning framework would be published in year 3 with voluntary sector funding aligned around the priorities set out in the strategy. This has wider implications for capacity building and how CWB is underpinned by investing in the voluntary sector that supports groups in forming, consolidating, and scaling asset-based social enterprises.

5.5. Progressive Commissioning, Sourcing, and Procurement of Goods and Services

Context

The commissioning and procurement of goods and services by government and place-based public anchor institutions is an important lever in CWB. The use of progressive and intelligent commissioning and procurement practices works to localise spend and build dense local supply chains, thereby reducing leakage and financial extraction from the local economy. A robust and diverse local supply chain should be made up of well-resourced third sector/VCSE organisations, new forms of plurally owned enterprises in the private sector, and democratically controlled local public enterprises. The goal is not to increase contracts or purchasing to the private sector, but rather to direct those that are already going to the private sector to more locally rooted and socially directed enterprises rather than to extractive multinational corporations. Developed in tandem with the pillars of CWB, this approach can help to create good employment opportunities and support the growth of the social economy in areas of high social deprivation. This promotes the recirculation of wealth and generates a multiplier effect which sustains jobs, businesses, and services in the community, all while reducing the environmental impact of public sector supply chains.

Executive and local government in Northern Ireland spends upwards of £3 billion annually on goods, services, and construction works, while the combined procurement spend of other public and semi-public anchors runs into the hundreds of millions. In addition, a further grant allocation of more than £1 billion is spent on external organisations that support the delivery of public sector policy objectives. There is growing recognition of the potential to harness this considerable purchasing power for local economic, social, and ecological benefit. Government departments, local authorities, health trusts, universities, and arms-length bodies (ALBs) such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive have each begun to place greater emphasis on social value and social impact, and to pursue opportunities for collaboration around a more progressive commissioning and procurement agenda.

Significantly, this shift within the public sector has gained added impetus with the Executive's adoption of a new Scoring Social Value Policy (PPN 01/21), which mandates that from 1 June 2022 public tenders must include a minimum of 10 per cent of the total award criteria to social value. This is the first time in Northern Ireland that awarding bodies will be obliged to take into account social value, alongside price and quality. Taken together with PPN 02/21 (concerning the use of reserved contracts) and the UK Government's Procurement Bill, this new policy has the potential to act as an important enabler of social value, providing departments, arms-length bodies, and public companies with an imperative to identify social value priorities and develop more resilient and ethical local supply chains for community benefit.

Recommendations

Building on progress in this area will naturally involve the consolidation and spread of existing good practices, from the establishment of anchor networks across all local authority areas to the use of 'end-to-end' social value plans in capital investment and regeneration schemes. It will also require a concerted effort to embed social value across all departments at the earliest stage of the commissioning process; to develop a robust system for recording, monitoring and policing social value outcomes; and to build models of delivery that support VCSE organisations and other forms of democratically owned enterprises to identify and access supply chain opportunities. The following recommendations are proposed with these objectives in mind.

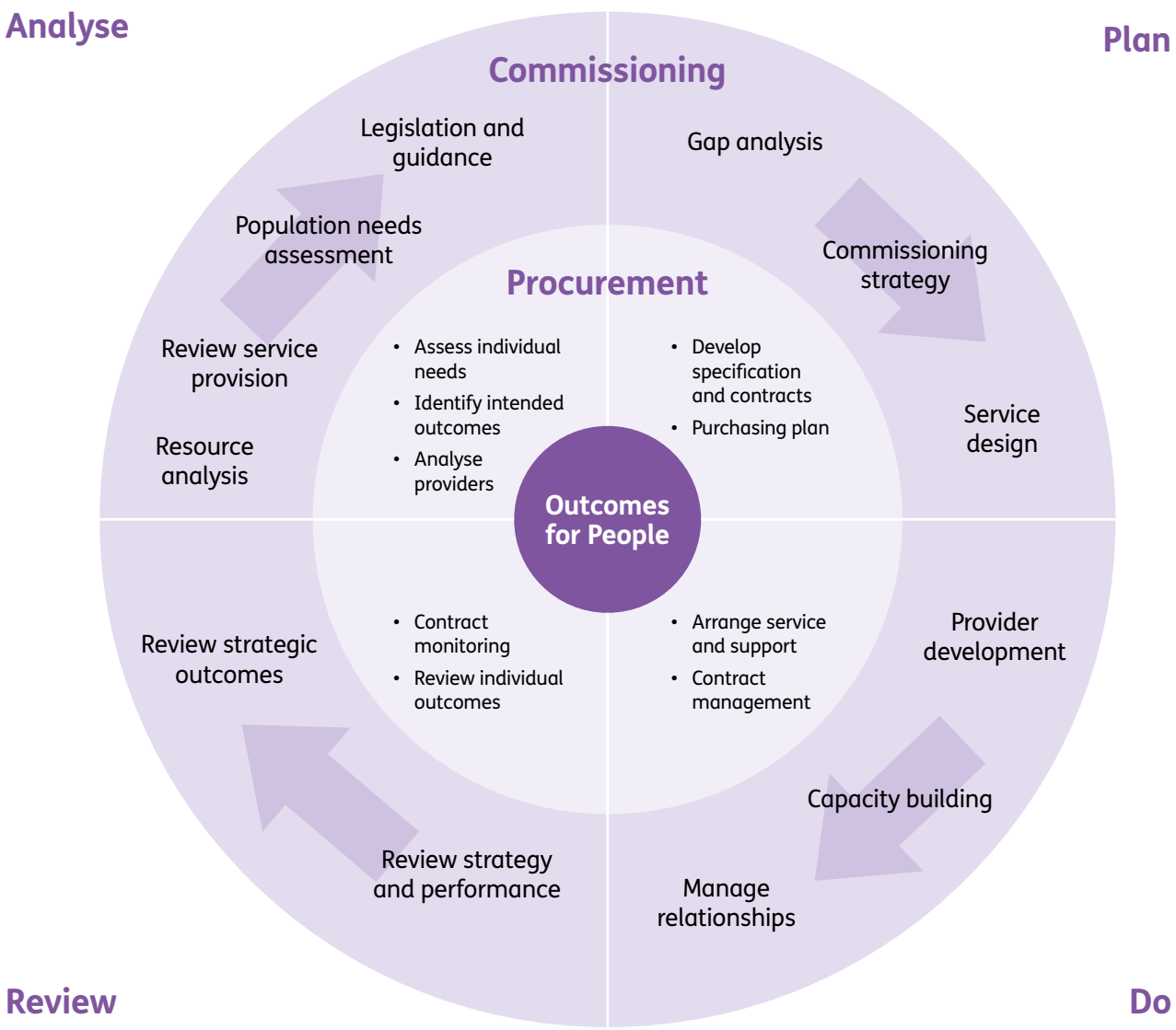
1) Develop a Public Sector Transformation Academy for Northern Ireland.

Despite recent progress, there remains a heavy emphasis on the procurement route as the favoured option for sourcing goods and services. But it is widely acknowledged that when goods or services are at the procurement stage, then the opportunity to consider delivery methods with the greatest social value potential may have already been lost. This is a significant barrier preventing locally rooted organisations from accessing supply chain opportunities.

Successfully embedding social value and realising greater community benefit from government spend will require a culture shift that overcomes risk-aversion and encourages key decision-makers (policymakers, budget holders, commissioners) to think innovatively about how goods and services are sourced. A critical element of this is providing those key

decision-makers with the tools and techniques to manage the commissioning life cycle and consider the wide range of sourcing options (including procurement) to deliver their desired outcomes. This applies not only to mainstream budgets but also to grant spend, which is not as strongly linked to outcomes as it could be.

Fig 1. The relationship between commissioning and procurement



The Panel welcomes the opening up of training opportunities through the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and the UK Commissioning Academy, which should go some way to support commissioning and procurement reforms. It is also to be welcomed that a number of Executive departments have commenced pilots to build in social value at the commissioning stage, with a view to making this a more mainstream approach.

It is felt, however, that Northern Ireland is still in need of a bespoke resource to help drive a step-change in thinking and practice. In view of this, the Panel notes that Social Enterprise Northern Ireland (SENI) and Ulster University Business School have partnered to develop the concept of a Public Sector Transformation Academy (PSTA) for Northern Ireland, and recommends that this concept be developed with the support of the Executive. In essence, a fully-fledged PSTA would become the regional hub for the development of essential knowledge and skillsets—a centre of excellence for sharing best practices among all key decision-makers who wish to transform service delivery and put social value at the heart of the commissioning process. There is also the potential to broaden the scope of the PSTA to include capacity and capability building with VCSE and other locally rooted organisations.

Furthermore, the Panel proposes the following parallel steps that should be taken to support the delivery of social value outcomes:

- Government departments and public anchor institutions should consider innovative ways of advertising tendering opportunities better suited for locally rooted organisations to compete, to include the advertising of future tendering opportunities and smaller bundles and contracts. In addition, there should be greater use of reserved contracts to increase social value. Overall targets should be set, underpinned by statistics and examples of best practice, and reported to the NI Procurement Board quarterly.

- Consideration should be given to a pan-public sector survey of key decision-makers to pinpoint the knowledge, skills, and cultural barriers that need to be overcome in order for supply chain opportunities to be made more accessible for locally rooted organisations.

Timeframe and delivery

Considering that research and early scoping for a PSTA has already been conducted by SENI with Ulster University Business School, we believe that with the support of the Executive, and particularly Department for Communities with support from Department of Finance, the next step development of the Academy could be advanced immediately.

2) Develop a robust system for the consistent recording, monitoring, and policing of social value outcomes.

The Panel notes that the Department of Finance has developed a new system for recording and monitoring social value outcomes, while the UK Government's Procurement Bill obliges public authorities to publish details of awarded contracts and includes a requirement that suppliers report annually against stated outcomes.

To strengthen these arrangements, we are recommending that a consistent approach to recording and monitoring outcomes is developed centrally and implemented across the public sector. This should begin with a baseline spend analysis across government and public anchor organisations and should include the introduction of an effective system of accountability to include verification of delivery against social value clauses. The tracking process must be embedded with the contract management process and social clauses must carry the same status as the other conditions within the contract. A single independent unit should be created to gather, analyse, and report on all social impact data linked to public spend.

In parallel with this, we recommend that Department of Finance and the CWB unit investigate the possibility of introducing a "social licence to operate" for suppliers, which could become the overarching mechanism for setting the parameters of market participation and enforcing the delivery of social value outcomes. We note that the social licence to operate model is currently being explored as part of Scottish Government's CWB agenda, and propose that the newly established Northern Ireland Executive CWB Unit liaises with Scottish counterparts regarding its potential application in a Northern Ireland context.

Timeframe and delivery

While recognising that it is important to ensure that the right system is put in place, it is essential that the process of doing so begins immediately in order that that the new Scoring Social Value Policy can be properly implemented and embedded. The social licence to operate model can be explored through new and existing fora for sharing knowledge and best practice with counterparts in the Scottish Government.

3) Deliver social value through working in partnership

At all levels of government and public policy in Northern Ireland, there is a strong emphasis on the role of collaboration in tackling societal problems and improving wellbeing for all. This has given rise to various institutional arrangements designed to facilitate co-design and partnership working across government and with social and community stakeholders.

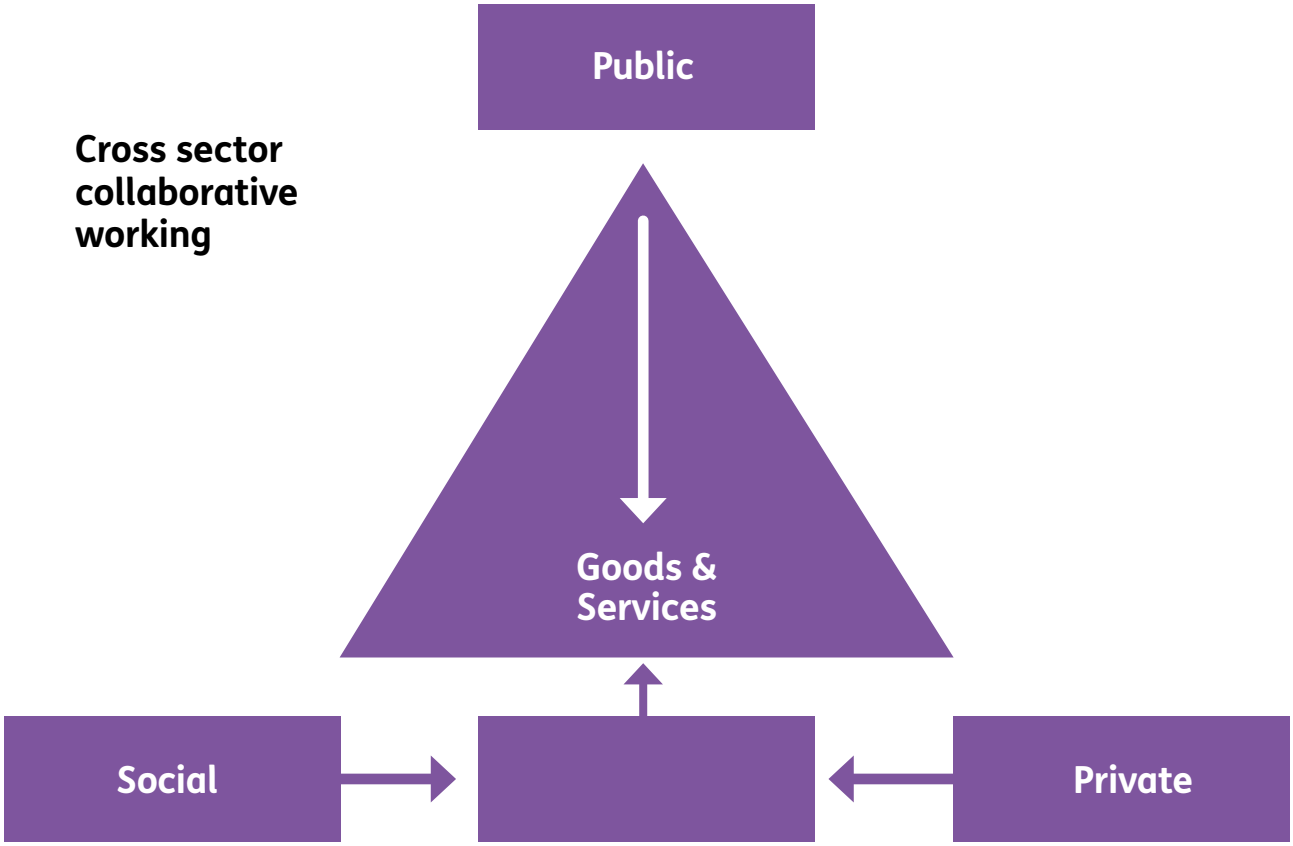
There is an obvious need and desire to improve how existing structures function in order to strengthen cross-sectoral linkages and provide for meaningful community engagement in policy design and implementation. Consideration also needs to be given to the practical means of supporting locally rooted organisations to identify and access supply chain opportunities. Ongoing capacity building and technical support is an important part of the equation (see above), as are the commissioning and procurement reforms discussed above. It is here that we focus on partnerships with the public and (where appropriate) private sector as a mechanism for: a) directing supply chain and employment opportunities towards areas of high social deprivation; and b) simultaneously building the capacity of the VCSE sector.

We note that the Scottish Government has sought to promote greater VCSE sector participation by investing in a number of

strategic Public Social Partnerships (PSPs),[27] and can see a strong case for adopting a similar approach tailored to the context of Northern Ireland. Variations of this model which could be considered by the Executive include:

- A Social Private Partnership model, which would ensure that there is at least one social partner involved in the delivery of large contracts.
- A Social Partnership Scheme (SPS), which would see Northern Ireland's public, private, and social (VCSE) sectors working together to achieve the desired outcomes (see below).

Fig 2. Social Partnership Scheme (SPS)



[27] For more on Public Social Partnerships, see: **https://www.gov.scot/policies/third-sector/public-social-partnerships/**

One advantage of these proposed models is that they would allow respective partners to bring their skills and expertise to support the delivery of particular goods and services, and provide a means of evolving best practice in the design and delivery of social value outcomes. In the case of the SPS, the key objectives and activities of participating members would be agreed collectively and underpinned by a common commitment to deliver positive social change. Outcomes would be recorded and monitored in accordance with new and existing models of best practice.

The benefits for social partners would be twofold. First, they would receive a portion of the financial surplus to be invested either in the enterprise or in a related activity aligned to their social purpose. Second, their capacity would be strengthened through participation in the delivery of contracts and through regular engagement with established public and private sector partners. In the SPS model, it is envisaged that private and social sector partners would be encouraged to use their experiences from the SPS process to bid for new and recurring government contracts.

The Panel recommends that pilot schemes be identified for testing this model as a mechanism for delivering social value outcomes and building community wealth. Alongside this, a review should be carried out into the different sourcing options (including procurement) that can be used to achieve policy outcomes in the acquisition of goods and services. This should include a logical decision process for inclusion of a preferred option as part of the development of business cases.

Timeframe and delivery

The Department for Communities should identify and support appropriate pilots for testing this model in Year 1. Work to embed the model and introduce any necessary policy change could begin in Year 2, working in collaboration with the Department of Finance and CWB unit.

4) Introduce a Social Value Act and/or make direct changes to procurement guidance.

As indicated above, the new social value policy is welcomed as an important step in the direction of transforming how commissioning and procurement is conducted in Northern Ireland, and the Panel recognises that it will take a period of time to bed in the changes to practice that accompany and flow from this policy development. At the same time, it should be noted that there is a strong body of evidence which favours the introduction of a specific piece of social value legislation for Northern Ireland. The Panel is of the view that changes in policy and practice should ultimately culminate in the introduction of a Social Value Act, bringing the region into line with the rest of the UK, or possibly changes in procurement guidance as has been done in Scotland.[28] We therefore recommend that the Department of Finance continues to promote and embed social value in a way that prepares for this eventuality.

[28] Find out more about Scotland's Procurement Reform Act 2014: **https://www.gov.scot/publications/procurement-reform-scotland-act-2014-statutory-guidance/pages/3/#:~:text=The%20sustainable%20procurement%20duty%20requires,particular%20focus%20on%20reducing%20inequality.**

Timeframe and delivery

Noting that a Social Value Bill has been drafted and received cross-party support, we propose that the Department of Finance engages with the All-Party Group on Social Enterprise to assess the draft legislation's general preparedness and alignment with the Scoring Social Value Policy. Based on this engagement, Department of Finance should set out a timetable for the introduction of legislation in this mandate.

6. Pulling it All Together: Governance and Enabling Infrastructure for Long-Term Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland

There is much to build upon in advancing CWB in Northern Ireland. At the same time, the approach requires a break with several decades of mainstream thinking and official culture on economic development, not least within government itself. To support the successful delivery of the strategic recommendations in this report, there must be a clearly articulated, empowered, and accessible "home for CWB" within the Northern Ireland Executive. This likely requires a purposely-created unit within government with access to the necessary financial, economic, and social levers across departments and agencies that would provide the enabling architecture and infrastructure to support, embed, and grow CWB action over the long-term. It is critical that this entity takes a cross-departmental and whole-of-government approach to link policy and public resources directly to CWB practice on the ground.

An important aspect of successfully embedding CWB is shaping and creating a coherent narrative and building momentum and credibility around this work. Government has a key role to play in that and CWB needs to be better understood and articulated across all of government policy. This includes presenting CWB as central to the economic strategy for Northern Ireland's future development and a core means of achieving a more inclusive, sustainable, equitable economy that re-circulates wealth and improves the wellbeing of all citizens. To do this, we must secure wider institutional recognition and buy-in and align different agendas across government departments to build credibility and catalyse action to deliver positive outcomes. Empowering a purposely-created entity within government to own and drive CWB across all departments—from Communities and Economy to Finance and Health—would go a long way towards accomplishing this.

Knowledge and awareness of CWB within government is growing, but clearly remains unevenly dispersed across departments and business areas (and the community and voluntary sector and social enterprises). Additionally, there is an absence of dedicated resources, expertise, and easy-to-access information within government to support CWB delivery and practice. Similarly, there is a need to build capacity and leadership around CWB within communities in order to

address social and spatial inequalities and the particular historic challenges regarding democratic accountabilities and participation in the local state. Therefore, any cross-departmental government entity must own and drive awareness-building within government while also working to better mobilise policy and resources in support of community-led and-based CWB activities on the ground. This applies especially with regard to local government as a key player in delivering and enhancing CWB not only through its own purchasing power, hiring practices, and asset allocation, but also its ability to convene and set standards across the community. Therefore, it is essential that local government understand the full scope of a CWB approach—from delivery and practice to its transformative potential in reorienting the local economy. CWB should be seen not to duplicate or be in conflict with any other local government regeneration and community plans, but, rather, as connecting efforts systemically to be greater than the sum of their parts.

There are already a number of opportunities for the Northern Ireland Executive to embed CWB. First, CWB should be seen, and can act, as a bridge for an Executive-led approach to economic system change. Furthermore, while a number of regeneration efforts, including Neighbourhood Renewal, are under review, and efforts to advance community planning are processing, it is a good time to position CWB as a connecting frame that offers a roadmap for how to create changes in place and providing one potential route for embedding CWB at a local government and Executive level.

In the end, a whole-of-government approach is needed to embed CWB and fundamentally rewire the economy. Accordingly, the recommendations in this report clearly link CWB policy and practice to Programme for Government priority areas and outcomes, which should encourage serious adoption and cross-departmental collaboration. But this needs to go even further, by making CWB an explicit goal of the next Programme for Government. CWB needs a home within government with dedicated resources and a body of expertise to support CWB practice, as well as political leaders and champions to drive the agenda forward. This entity also needs to interact with external community bodies to support effective local delivery. Below we offer several ideas for how best to accomplish this.

Recommendations:

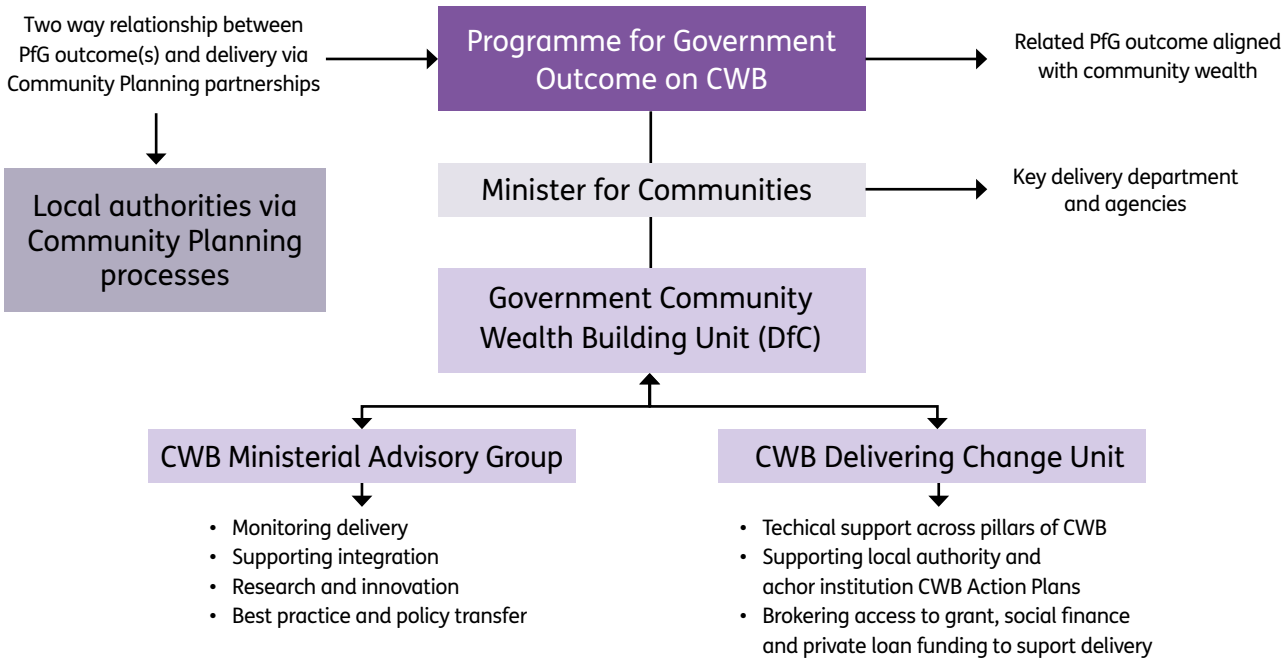
We believe the following recommendations to be essential to supporting CWB as a means of creating a just and resilient economy for Northern Ireland for the long-haul. They have been developed based on learning from the experience to date of the Scottish Government, which now boasts the world's first Minister of Community Wealth Building, but also through consideration of what can work within the context of the Northern Ireland Executive. Successful implementation will require both political leadership and political will and also detailed consideration as to the particular needs of government at the time these actions are taken. Without a strong lead on CWB within government, it will be difficult to deliver on any of the other recommendations within this report.

1) Create, staff, and resource a cross-departmental CWB Unit within the Northern Ireland Executive to promote, embed, and coordinate CWB across government.

It is essential that any dedicated CWB Unit has the remit to work across the Executive, as is the case in Scotland, and with all Departments across the Executive. This CWB unit should be included directly in and empowered by the Programme for Government.

The Panel recommends that this CWB Unit be housed within Department for Communities, as it is already leading on CWB and has responsibility for relevant policy areas, including local government and the third sector. However, it is important that the CWB Unit also has access to decision-making in both the Department of Finance and Department for Economy, so that they are not just connected to the work of the Unit but are directly engaged and committed to delivery through dedicated staff and a mandate for the unit that allows it to range across departments to hold them to account. In particular, Department of Finance holds the purse strings and has the power to mandate other departments to pursue a certain policy agenda (i.e. through enabling frameworks, guidance and directives), and Department for Economy holds many of the levers required to fundamentally rewire the economy. The CWB Unit housed in Department for Communities should be given power to call on these remits in fulfilment of the agenda of the Unit. In particular, linking CWB into Programme for Government will be key to securing buy-in of other departments whilst integration between the CWB outcome and related PfG targets will strengthen connections at the operational level.

The CWB Unit should be placed within Department for Communities to integrate policies, programmes, and resources and to build the necessary horizontal (across Departments) and vertical (with local government and agencies) integration to deliver the programme of work under the five pillars.



The remit of this CWB Unit should be to:

- Set the strategic direction for the five pillars of CWB, design and implement action plans under each one, and monitor progress to agreed outcomes, linked to achieving PfG outcomes.
- Raise awareness and deliver training (and related materials in conjunction with the external CWB Delivering Change Unit) on the CWB approach and implementation across government departments, agencies, and local government.
- Conduct an audit and examine relevant existing policy and legislative infrastructure across government to determine the need for change as well as possible overarching CWB legislation.
- Provide dedicated resource to advance CWB practice across the statutory, voluntary, and, where appropriate, private sectors (especially around procurement). This resource would be supplied via external bodies through contracts to deliver specific programmes of work.

The Minister would convene a permanent expert advisory body, as has been done in Scotland, that would be serviced by the CWB Unit that should:

- Consult with and support the work of the CWB Unit to advance CWB practice on the ground in NI with a social /community interface, through which government policy can be CWB-proofed. (An example of this is the existing Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment, with expanded membership to include key social/community/civic stakeholders).

The Minister would also convene an external "Delivering Change Unit" that would be an independent organisation and would:

- Design and guide the preparation of CWB Action Plans for key public anchor institutions and in each of Northern Ireland's eleven local council areas.
- Support a more planned approach to local investment and economic development, and over the long term ensure that the economic development remit of local councils is aligned with a CWB approach. These plans should be delivered in connection to existing Community Planning Partnerships and the agreed priorities in each local authority.
- Provide awareness-raising and capacity building across local government, arms-length bodies, public companies, and the third sector. Training and educational materials specific to local government will be of particular importance.
- Provide technical implementation expertise in all five pillars of CWB practice.
- Encourage promotion, replication, and scaling of best practice in CWB, both domestic and international, through communities of practice, stakeholder networks, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

7. Conclusion

In the preceding sections, we have laid out 26 key recommendations for how government can powerfully support the advancement of a coherent CWB approach to economic development in Northern Ireland across all five pillars of CWB, and considering broad governance structure. These recommendations grow from direct consultation, our own expertise, existing research, and ongoing engagements and learning, and are intended to align with existing work in communities across NI and support and grow these efforts moving forward. Taken as a whole, these recommendations represent a practical set of actions that the Executive, alongside partners in local government and the social and civic sectors, can take to help secure an equitable future for its residents, where the region's considerable wealth is broadly held and recirculated for the benefit of people, place, and planet for generations to come. These key recommendations are:

Plural Ownership:

1. Adopt, deliver, and resource a social economy strategy for Northern Ireland
2. Establish a CWB/social enterprise fund
3. Review and realign existing financial levers to support the social economy
4. Explore the potential for cooperatives, employee ownership, and worker buyouts
5. Expand democratic ownership, control, and participation in the public sector through democratisation of public services and innovative public enterprise models
6. Experiment with spatial interventions within an area-based framework

Locally Rooted Finance:

7. Explore the potential for a public investment bank as an intermediary for social and green lending
8. Establish a CWB Pilot Programme Fund
9. Conduct an audit of underutilised financial instruments and repurpose them for CWB ends
10. Strengthen the role of community finance as a key partner to distribute and diversify funding and financing away from government
11. Embed participatory budgeting practices across local authorities in Northern Ireland

Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets:

12. Deploy the available levers of Government and public anchor institutions in support of fair pay and working conditions
13. Harness the power of collective bargaining for social and economic benefit
14. Put the Real Living Wage on a statutory basis

15. Integrate CWB into Labour Market Partnerships and efforts to broaden access to employment
16. Labour market planning to meet the needs of the future through a comprehensive industrial strategy

Socially Productive Use of Land and Property:

17. Prepare a new Community Asset Transfer Delivery Framework based on comprehensive legislation to ensure effective and efficient community asset transfer across public bodies in Northern Ireland
18. Develop a capital and revenue-based funding programme to support asset transfer
19. Develop a dedicated programme on Community-led Housing
20. Evaluate the public sector asset register for the potential for community asset transfer
21. Strengthen skills across the public and community sector

Social Commissioning, Sourcing, and Procurement of Goods and Services:

22. Develop a Public Sector Transformation Academy for Northern Ireland
23. Develop a robust system for the consistent recording, monitoring, and policing of social value outcomes
24. Deliver social value through working in partnership
25. Introduce a Social Value Act and/or make direct changes to procurement guidance

Governance and Enabling Infrastructure for Long-Term CWB:

26. Create, staff, and resource a cross-departmental CWB Unit within the Northern Ireland Executive to promote, embed, and coordinate CWB across government

These recommendations present a mix of both "quick wins"—things that are actionable in the short term for immediate benefit, while inspiring and showing the art of the possible—as well as bold forward thinking to position Northern Ireland, with all of its assets and potential, as a leader in Community Wealth Building and an international model for delivering an equitable and resilient economy that works for people, place, and planet. At this moment of growing crisis, it is imperative that public investment and interventions work harder, go deeper, and recirculate further for the benefit of all residents while building the just and resilient economy necessary to prevent these kinds of shocks in the future. We believe that CWB is the best way to do that and this report offers our best thinking on the steps that the Executive can take to support CWB from the top down and empower implementation from the bottom-up.

Glossary of Terms

Anchor Institution: Large public or non-profit institutions that are physically rooted in a specific geographic area and play a prominent economic role in their local communities. Examples of anchor institutions include: hospitals, universities, municipal governments, electric and water utilities, and museums, libraries, and other cultural organisations.

Commissioning: The process by which goods and services are planned, purchased, and monitored by anchor institutions. Like procurement, commissioning should be conducted in a manner that makes community central to the process, prioritising local enterprises that deliver social value and social goods.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT): A process that allows a community organisation to take over publicly owned land or buildings in a way that recognises the public benefits that the transfer will bring. CAT can be achieved in a number of different ways at the request of the community. A CAT should only relate to viable assets not already in productive public use, and is concerned with how best to democratically determine the better deployment of these assets in service of the community

Community Land Trust: Community-based non-profit organisations designed to ensure long-term community control and stewardship of land. CLTs can be used for many types of development (including commercial and retail) but are primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability. Moreover, they are democratic institutions that are often governed by multi-stakeholder boards that can include residents, wider community representatives, and public officials.

Cooperatives: Cooperatives are businesses governed on the principle of one member, one vote. There are several common types of co-ops (as well as hybrids—which combine more than one type), including cooperatives owned and operated by: the people working there (worker or employee-owned cooperatives); the people buying the co-op's goods or services (consumer cooperatives); the people collaborating to process and market their products (producer cooperatives); and groups uniting to enhance their purchasing power (purchasing cooperatives).

Procurement: Contracts for goods and services that an anchor institution can shift to worker-owned companies, local businesses with high-road labour practices, and/or women and minority owned businesses in order to deliver significant direct and indirect local economic and social benefits. Most often, this involves goods and services that are not (or cannot be) produced in-house by the anchor institution. But in some cases, it may include goods and services that could, ultimately, be produced in-house but are currently being outsourced to large, extractive corporations.

Social Enterprise: Social enterprises are defined in many ways, but typically are non-profit organisations that operate businesses in order to generate revenues, meet a social need, and fulfil their missions to serve or employ.

Social Value: A term used to describe the difference an organisation or project can make to the community they are operating in to achieve positive and sustainable impact with regards to social, environmental, and economic outcomes. When considering social value, anchor institutions and enterprises must look beyond the financial cost of a contract to consider how the services they commission and procure can improve the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of a community.

For Further Reference

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Sarah McKinley, Miriam Brett and Mathew Lawrence, Democratic by Design: A New Community Wealth Building Vision for the British Economy After Covid-19 (2020) – **https://www.common-wealth.co.uk/reports/democratic-by-design.**

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Community Wealth Building in Ireland

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Paul Goldrick-Kelly, 'Community Wealth Building for the regions', NERI Blog, 12 February 2020 – **https://www.nerinstitute.net/blog/community-wealth-building-regions.**

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Mary McManus, 'Community Wealth Building: Belfast's Missed Opportunity', QPOL, 12 March 2021 – **http://qpol.qub.ac.uk/community-wealth-building-belfasts-missed-opportunity/.**

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Practice guides and toolkits

CLES, Community Wealth Building: Guide for New Council Members (2022) – **https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/New-Councillor-Briefing-FINAL.pdf.**

CLES, Growing Anchor Networks in Place: A How-to Guide (2020) - **https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Growing-anchor-networks-in-place_a-how-to-guide_December-2020_final.pdf.**

CLES, Making Spend Matter (spend analysis tool) – **https://cles.org.uk/making-spend-matter/.**

The Democracy Collaborative and Momentum, Community Wealth Building: A Toolkit for Councillors (2022) – h**ttps://peoplesmomentum.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CWB_MTM_11_April.pdf.**

Appendices

Appendix 1: MAP Terms of Reference

Department for Communities - Independent Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building

Terms of Reference

Background

1. The Department for Communities has committed in its five-year strategy, Building Inclusive Communities, to "grow and scale community wealth building" to support sustainability and inclusive growth.

2. The Minister for Communities has decided to appoint an Independent Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building (the Panel). The Panel will undertake a focused piece of work to advise the Minister on the most effective and sustainable approach to embedding the principles of CWB into all relevant departmental investment, policy and practice.

3. The Panel will build on the learning and capacity building work undertaken to date by the Department in partnership with Trademark and Development Trusts NI (DTNI).

4. The Panel will bring to bear the significant experience, skills, and knowledge of its members to identify how the Department can grow and scale CWB approaches to deliver outcomes against the 5 pillars of the CLES model for CWB.

Role of the Panel

5. The Panel is being established to:

- Consider relevant research and analysis relating to the application of CWB principles, informed by successful on the ground approaches;
- Make evidence informed recommendations to the Minister on the scope of a departmental CWB model and the key actions needed to support it, including proposals regulatory and legislative change;
- Advise on the elements of CWB that are within the Department's remit to implement;
- Identify areas where the Department can influence the actions of key partners, including Executive departments, local government, its Arm's Length Bodies and funded organisations who can deliver further impact in relation to CWB;
- Identify potential actions which can be taken forward as part of the next Executive Programme for Government, directly by the Department and in partnership with others;
- Advise on relevant resourcing requirements for the co-ordination of a mainstream Departmental approach to CWB, drawing on comparators in other jurisdictions, including Scotland and Wales;

- Advise on the development of policy implementation tools to support progress in effecting outcomes against our CWB goals (for example, appraisal and decision making templates/impact assessment, OBA indicators, outcomes/"Report Card")
- Recommend Cross-Sectoral (public, private, and social) solutions that encourage partnership or collaboration as a means to deliver CWB.

Membership and appointments

6. The Panel will have five core members. Each member is asked to agree to 15 full working days to the project, with a view to presenting the Group's recommendations to the Minister for Communities within 20 weeks of the date of appointment. Panel members may also be called upon during the subsequent implementation stage of our CWB journey on an ad hoc basis. Indeed, the Panel may recommend further support needs as part of its report.

7. Panel members will be selected based on their relevant knowledge and expertise. They will have a range of expertise, lived experience and knowledge of CWB.

8. The Panel will nominate a chairperson who will serve as the main point of contact and will be supported by a Secretariat.

Conduct and Confidentiality

9. Panel members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest and must adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life and GDPR obligations.

10. Panel members may be given access to information not yet in the public domain or which is policy under development. This information should not be shared outside the Group, including in the press or on social media, without prior written permission from the Department. This applies both during and after the Group's term of appointment.

Expenses and Remuneration

11. Panel members not already paid from the public purse may be paid a fee of £300 per day (to be confirmed). Members may also be able to recover any reasonable expenses incurred for travel and subsistence at the discretion of the Department, in accordance with relevant NICS rates and guidance.

Evidence Gathering / Administrative Support

12. The Panel will be supported by a Secretariat which will provide necessary administrative support. This will include co-ordination of evidence, liaising with colleagues across the Department to gather material, organising meetings, taking minutes, maintaining records in accordance with legislative requirements (including GDPR), and general administrative support. The Department will provide information we already hold on relevant policy, spending / budget, procurement and statistical information and analysis and other required information.

13. The Secretariat function will be supported by DTNI and Trademark who will also provide the Panel with updates and findings from their joint work strand and any ad hoc technical support required.

14. The Panel will have access to relevant senior Departmental officials, including members of the CWB "Action Learning Group". Departmental officials will support the work of the panel and will be available to discuss its recommendations prior to finalisation and presentation to the Minister.

Note from the Expert Panel

The Panel provided the following paragraph when agreeing the Terms of Reference;

15. The Expert Panel accepts the ToR as presented, viewing it as permissive of an ambitious and wide-ranging set of recommendations for CWB in Northern Ireland concerning both the direct remit of the Communities Ministry and its opportunity and ability to influence other vitally important actors across all sectors. We recognise the great work, past and present, that has been done and can be built upon. In particular, we believe it is important for the Panel to set forth and articulate a definition of CWB principles within the context of and as they pertain to Northern Ireland in particular. While there are common goals and unifying approaches to CWB globally, the framework for CWB in Northern Ireland must reflect local conditions and possibilities. We see significant potential in CWB as it relates to peacebuilding and the unmet needs of frontline communities in a society still emerging out of conflict. We will focus on the common purpose of a CWB strategy for Northern Ireland, lifting up what has worked in communities there and elsewhere, while pushing a "whole-of-government approach" to supporting and scaling these solutions for deeper impact and sustainable and transformative change. We will focus on action-oriented recommendations that address social, economic, and environmental needs in the short term, while building structures and institutions that imbed CWB for the long-haul. We look forward to beginning this much-needed and ambitious body of work.

Appendix 2: Consultation and evidence gathering and process

In responding to its brief, the MAP drew on an extensive programme of consultations, thematic and area-based discussions, and structured surveys of social enterprises and development trusts. This consultation and evidence gathering process, carried out by Development Trusts Northern Ireland (DTNI) and Trademark Belfast throughout 2021/22, consisted of a number of related elements:

1. Survey of social enterprises and development trusts

A survey of 54 locally-rooted social enterprises and development trusts focusing on capacity and priorities for delivery of the five CWB pillars.

2. Area-based consultation

A programme of area-based discussions that engaged local agencies and community organisations:

Area discussion 1: South/East Belfast

Area discussion 2: West Belfast

Area discussion 3: Causeway Coast and Glens

Area discussion 4: Derry

Area discussion 5: Fermanagh & Omagh

Area discussion 6: Lisburn

Area discussion 7: Mid Ulster

Area discussion 8: Newry, Mourne and Down

3. Public discussions

A series of public discussions on CWB related themes, featuring experts, practitioners, public anchor institutions, and stakeholders from across the social and civic sectors. This extended to sector-specific engagements that took place in response to requests from representatives of the sectors concerned.

Public seminar 1: Making Financial Power Work for Local Places

Public seminar 2: Public Anchor Networks and Community Wealth Building

Public seminar 3: Climate Action and Community Wealth Building

Public seminar 4: Participatory Budgeting and Community Wealth Building

Public seminar 5: Fair Employment & Just Labour Markets

Public seminar 6: The Role of Community Banks in Community Wealth Building

Public seminar 7: The Role of Housing in Community Wealth Building

Sectoral meeting 1: Women's sector

Sectoral meeting 2: Irish language sector

Sectoral meeting 3: Rural communities

4. Analysis of CWB practice and impact

Building on the survey conducted with social enterprises and development trusts, Queen's University Belfast was commissioned to produce five Technical Advisory Papers focusing on the practice and impact of CWB across each of the pillars. These papers can be found **here.**

Technical Advisory Paper 1: Asset-based Development and Community Wealth Building

Technical Advisory Paper 2: The Plural Economy, Social Economics, and Building Communities

Technical Advisory Paper 3: Technical Just Labour Markets and Inclusive Work

Technical Advisory Paper 4: Making Financial Power Work for Local Places

Technical Advisory Paper 5: Progressive Procurement

5. MAP consultation

Following its appointment in April 2022, the MAP commenced an extensive consultation process, which ran in parallel with—and drew upon—ongoing research and engagement led by DTNI and Trademark Belfast. The Panel met on a weekly basis over the course of 20 weeks, consulting with and gathering evidence from a range of key partners, experts, and practitioners. The bodies and work areas represented during these sessions are listed below:

Body	Work Area
Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)	CWB experts and practitioners (working with cross-departmental Action Learning Group of officials)
Community Finance Ireland	Locally rooted finance
Department for Communities	Permanent Secretary
	Deputy Permanent Secretary
	Community Planning and Local Government
	Engaged Communities
	Housing Division
	Neighbourhood Renewal
	Procurement
	Urban Regeneration
	Voluntary and Community Division
	Work and Wellbeing
Department for the Economy	Economic Strategy (Business Engagement)
	Sector Initiatives (10X Strategy and Social Enterprise)
Department of Finance	Policy and Performance Division, Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD)
	Strategic Policy and Reform
Department of Rural and Community Development, Irish Government	Rural Strategy and Social Enterprise
	Libraries Development and Community Policy Unit
Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU)	Credit Union sector, locally rooted finance
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Housing Services
Northern Mutual	Community banking, locally rooted finance
Scottish Government	CWB advisor
Social Enterprise Northern Ireland (SENI)	Social enterprise and procurement
SOLACE	13 members of SOLACE with CWB-related areas of responsibility, representing all eleven local authorities
The Democracy Collaborative	CWB experts and practitioners

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Report on	Social Inclusion – Hardship Support
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officer	Martina Totten

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 confirm the continued commitment of Council to the ongoing support with the cost of living challenges, as well as channeling any potential funding from Department for Communities, and any other sources through our already established support network.
2.0	Background
2.1	A proposal was brought to Development committee in June 22, in considering how best to deliver a Hardship Fund, in light of Derry City & Strabane District Council announcement the previous month. At this time Officers recommended that the best way forward for Mid Ulster, was to continue to support an already established and robust network of 11 strategic crisis support groups of foodbanks / SVP partners operating across 5 main towns and Clogher Valley, and to continue to work with partners including Mid Ulster Advice Service (STEP) and other partners on interventions to support people in poverty. A further proposal was brought to the Development Committee in September 22, asking Officers to explore the Hardship Fund that Derry City & Strabane District Council has agreed and is delivering and to consider a proposal for Mid Ulster District Council to address the cost of living crisis. The services of the current 11 strategic crisis support groups of foodbanks and SVP partners operating across 5 main towns and Clogher Valley include: support with provision of food (or food vouchers), fuel costs, support to purchase white goods and other necessary household requirements. There is no set value, this is dependent on need. People can access the support on more than one occasions, depending on need. Funding for the delivery is in partnership with DfC and TEO via the Good Relations Plan. Council also works closely with the Mid Ulster Advice Service (STEP) through additional uplifts to the current service to support people across the District maximize all benefits. In addition, via its Good Relations Plan, Council engages with the Family Support model (BELONG) delivered by STEP, which is mainly funded through the Big

	Lottery, and provides one to one support for those most vulnerable and in crisis, mainly BME communities. Between January and March 2022, Council delivered an emergency support programme, in partnership with Save the Children, the Northern and Southern Trusts, to provide support for families with young children in financial hardship. The referrals to the programme were made through the Mid Ulster Advice Service STEP. A support worker engaged with families in need to provide a wraparound service of support with provision for early learning educational toy packs for children, food and essential household vouchers (up to a maximum of £340 per family) and signposting to additional support services. The programme supported 104 families, reaching 267 children with an average of 2.5 children per household. A total of £37,714 was invested through Mid Ulster District Council (£20,000) the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (£7,714) and the Southern Health & Social Care Trust (£10,000) as well as in kind costs from Save the Children and Mid Ulster Advice Service STEP. Evaluation of the programme was very positive with Save the Children committing a further £40,000 to extend the programme to June 2022. Members will also be aware that the Council recently facilitated the development of a Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan, along with partners from across the Community Planning partnership Structure, to consider actions / lobbying to alleviate the impact of poverty on our residents.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The ongoing cost of living increases continue to place pressures on families and residents across the region, including within our own district. These additional pressures are pushing more people into poverty and negatively impacting upon people and their quality of life. Derry City & Strabane District Council has published their Hardship Fund which provides for a one off payment of £100 to people in cost of living crisis, who meet a set criteria and as agreed through their advice network. The total investment is £250,000, which provides for approx. 2500 people. Council has engaged with a number of local groups including the foodbanks and SVPs who are stating they are under severe pressure at the moment with the number of people accessing them. Officers have also been approached again by Safe the Children who due to need and demand is keen to continue its support programme for families in crisis who have young children, using the same delivery mechanisms as previous. Due to the pressures officers have been engaging their funders to identify additional funding sources. Additional funding has been secured from TEO under the Good Relations Programme who can commit to a further £7,050 with a Council match of £2,350 within existing budget. DfC has also provided an additional £12,000 as part of the mainstream community support to Council as part of the annual letter of offer.

3.2	After all claims have been submitted to DfC for the additional emergency funding support, there remains £12,000 unallocated (relating to the youth engagement programme). All allocations above creates a total funding package of £33,400. Members may also be aware of the recent announcement by the Communities Minister to unlock COVID monies, currently held by Council, to help mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis in the context of the ongoing COVID recovery. As a result of this announcement it is further proposed to allocate an additional £124,000, to create a total fund of **£157,400.** The recommendation allocation for this funding is as follows: 1. **£7,195** to Save the Children, with match funding from both Health Trusts and Save the Children with a total investment of £28,780 to allow the programme to run to end of March 2023. 2. **£90,000** to Councils current model of crisis intervention, via the 11 strategic crisis support groups of foodbanks and SVP partners operating across 5 main towns and Clogher Valley to provide support with provision of food (or food vouchers), fuel costs, white goods and other necessary household requirements. There is no set value per client, this is dependent on need. Funding will be allocated as per the 3 main towns (Magherafelt, Cookstown & Dungannon) £20,000 each and 2 small towns (Maghera & Coalisland) and Clogher Valley area of £10,000 each. 3. It is further proposed to commit an additional **£60,000** to provide up to a £500 uplift to the Community (and Sports) venues and facilities to help alleviate the unprecedented financial burdens placed on them as a result of the current energy and cost of living crisis. The additional contribution would be a one off payment for energy costs over and above their current grant and claims (based on identified need). This would be distributed to the groups in the venues grant and to the facilities from the sports capital grant over the last 2 year period. This would equate to approx. 120 groups. Through the local Anti-Poverty work, officers will continue to lobby government regarding intervention on some of the key issues affecting poverty in Mid Ulster District and poverty crisis.
3.0	**Other Considerations**
3.1	**Financial & Human Resources Implications**

	Costs associated with the extension of the funding support for the Strategic Foodbank Network **£33,400** from existing allocations. Allocation of the unlocked DFC funds to support Cost of Living support pressures in the context of the ongoing COVID recovery, of **£124,000.** **Professional Support** None
3.2	**Equality and Good Relations Implications** None known
3.3	**Risk Management Implications** None
4.0	**Recommendation(s)**
4.1	Members are recommended to confirm the following allocations for the additional **£157,195**, to support individuals & groups with the ongoing cost of living pressures; (i) **£7,195** to Save the Children, with match funding from both Health Trusts and Save the Children with a total investment of £28,780, to allow for continue delivery of the 'Families in Crisis' programme until end of March '23. (ii) **£90,000** to Councils current model of crisis intervention, via the 11 strategic crisis support groups of foodbanks and SVP partners operating across 5 main towns and Clogher Valley. Funding will be allocated as per the 3 main towns (Magherafelt, Cookstown & Dungannon) £20,000 each and 2 small towns (Maghera & Coalisland) and Clogher Valley area of £10,000 each. (iii) **£60,000** to provide up to a £500 uplift to the Community (and Sports) venues and facilities to help alleviate the unprecedented financial burdens placed on them as a result of the current energy and cost of living crisis
5.0	**Documents Attached & References**
5.1	None

Report on	Development Report
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officers	Philip Clarke - Community Services Manager, Oliver Morgan-Good Relations Manager, Michael McCrory - PCSP Manager, Caroline Sheehy – Burnavon Arts Manager, Brian McCormick Seamus Heaney Home Place Manager, Joanne Robinson – Hill of The O'Neill/Ranfurly House Manager

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

1	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members and seek approval for the following; • Rolling Community Grants • Community Grants Review and Policy 2023 - 2024 • Development Department Update
2	**Key Issues**
2.1	**Community Grants - Rolling Grants Programme 2022 – 2023** Members are advised that the grants assessment panel are making the following recommendations to award grants under the Community Festival & Good Relations funds.

Grant	No. of groups awarded	Value of Grant Awards
Community Festival Fund	8	£5280
Good Relations Grant	2	£1200

Please see attached in **Appendix 1** grant award recommendations

2.2 **Community Grants Review**

The online Community Grant Review Survey was open from the 13th until the 27th June 2022. Community and Voluntary Sector groups were encouraged to respond to the online survey through several avenues, including; an email to the community and voluntary database, notice in the newsletter, and Council's social media channels.

A total of 144 respondents engaged with the survey and the following 3 themes were examined:

What works well within community grants?
Are there areas you could suggest for improvement on our community grants?
If you did not apply for our community grants can you state why?

What works well within community grants
The majority of respondents left positive feedback with many remarking that the support and advice of the staff within community development was very good.

Many commended Council on their grant programme, with one group commenting that “these grants provide much needed support to local communities”.

The 3 year grant option was stated as a process which works well as it saves volunteer time and effort.

Are there areas you could suggest for improvement on our community grants

- Need for support for maintenance of buildings and facilities
- Consider funding for feasibility studies e.g. planning permission and other development costs that would allow groups to have their projects 'investment ready' for other funders
- Consider raising grant thresholds, to reflect rising costs, particularly facility overheads
- Reduce the need to upload documentation
- Be able to access application forms after submitting these online
- Set a clear timeline for the grants process; for example date of receipt of letter of offer from submission
- Support for projects on environmental/ climate change

If you did not apply for our community grants can you state why
The majority of the groups were aware of Council grants. Some barriers included:

- A small number of groups having no engagement with Council
- Possibility of rolling grants
- Simplification of grants to make it clearer that can be applied for.

At the end of the questionnaire there was space left for any other comments. Many respondents used this space to thank Council and officers for help and support through the grants process.

Grant Review Considerations

Considering the feedback from the Community Grant Review Survey 2022, the following is proposed for consideration, within existing budgets:

1. Open the Community Grants programme earlier and allow for a longer closing period with continuous marketing throughout.

2. Review the grant portal to allow access to all documentation post submission.

3. Simplify the monitoring forms and claims.

4. Small Grants – Have one small grant for all themes - amend the upper limit in line with the small sports grant to £1500. No change to budget. Grant open annually.

5. Community Festivals and Good Relations grants - extend the maximum funding awards to £1500 in line with all other small grants. No change to budget. Grant open annually and rolling.

6. Venues/Facilities/Development – amalgamate the community venues grant with the small sports capital/development grant. To provide for a medium level grant to support any group who manages a community (including sports) venue or facility. This grant is flexible for use for overheads, projects/activity, small venue/facility development. The budget will remain as £200,000 (both grant budgets brought together). The maximum available grant will be £3500.

7. All strategic and medium sized grants to set for a 2 year period. This allows groups to apply every 2 years, pending monitoring and evaluation and claims submission and confirmation, and budget availability. The 2 year period will allow for members of the next Council to continue to review and monitor the overall grants programme.

See attached Grants Policy 2023 – 2024 in **Appendix 2.**

2.3

Development Update

Community Support
Support is continuing to groups re community development activity.

A review of community grants was undertaken, as per above.

Good Relations
The Good Relations Plan continues to be delivered across the District.

The NI Office, TEO is providing an additional £7,050 available to program if Council match fund value of £2,350. This would be utilised to further support Foodbank resources across the District

PCSP
No Partnership minutes this month.

Burnavon Arts Centre, Seamus Heaney Homeplace, and Hill of O'Neill & Ranfurly House
A range of activities, events and performances are being delivered as per brochures and marketing.

Regional and Minority Language
The programme is continuing to roll out across the District.

4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Community Festivals Grants £5280, Good Relations Grants £1200 Community Grants Policy 2023 – 2024, subject to Council budget process. Good Relations Additional match fund of £2,350 (within existing budget)
	Human: NA
	Risk Management: NA
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: NA
	Rural Needs Implications: NA
5	**Recommendations**
5.1	Members are recommended to; (i) Approve the assessment panel recommendations under the Community Festival & Good Relations grants. (ii) Approve the Community Grants Review and policy 2023 - 2024. (iii) Note the update from the development department.
6	**List of Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 Community Rolling Grant Awards Appendix 2 Grants Policy 2023 – 2024

Appendix 1

Local Community Festival Grants - November 2022 (Maximum £1,200)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Request	Award
1.	Brocagh Afterschool	Community	Halloween Spooktacular	5	£1200	£720
2.	Caledon Social and Economic development Interest Company	Community	Community Involvement Event	6	£4500	£600
3.	Christ Church Castledawson	Community	Calling the Community Supper with Santa	7	£1200	£480
4.	Dungannon Choral Society	Community	Christmas Concert / Events	5	£3150	£720
5.	Friends of Rock	Community	Rock New Year's Day Run 2023	3	£1200	£960
6.	Montober LOL 661	Community	Autumn Festival	6	£1000	£600
7.	Stewartstown and District Environmental	Community	Christmas Market	7	£900	£480
8.	Valley Voices Community Carol Service	Community	Community Carol Service	5	£1495	£720
				Total		**£5,280**

Good Relations Grants - October 2022 (Maximum £1,200)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Requested	Awarded
1.	Orritor Cultural Development Group	Community	Winter Wonders	7	£1080	£480
2.	The Bridge NI	Community	Life Hacks	5	£1000	£720
				Total		**£1200**

Ineligible (for follow up)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Request	Comments
1.	Ausome Kids	Community	Me and My Community	£1580	Ineligible

Bands	Score	%
7	30-39	40%
6	40-49	50%

5	50-59	60%
4	60-69	70%
3	70-79	80%
2	80-89	90%
1	90+	100%

Appendix 2 Grants Policy 2023– 2024

Category 1 One Grant in Category Applications with * can submitted on a 2 year basis subject to outcomes review & Council annual budget	**Category 2** One Grant in Category Applications with an * submitted on a 2 year basis subject to outcomes review & Council annual budget	**Miscellaneous Grants** Contact relevant officers regarding each of the grants
Small Development Grant (Community, Arts, Culture, Heritage, Environment, Sport) Maximum £1,500 Budget proposed £160,000 ***Community Venue/Facilities Grant** Maximum £3,500 Budget £200,000 Greater than 10 hrs weekly activity ***Strategic Arts & Culture Grant** Maximum £20,000 Budget £85,000 (arts & culture dedicated performance space) ***Strategic Sports Development Grant** Maximum £15,000, Budget £75,000 (Governing Bodies only) ***Strategic Community Development Grant** Maximum £8,000 Budget £45,000	***Strategic Events Grant** Maximum £8,000 Minimum 1000 people attending Budget £75,000 (£10,000 GR TBC annually) **Good Relations Grant** Maximum £1500 Budget £35,000 Rolling Programme **Community Local Festival Grant** Maximum £1500 Rolling programme Budget £90,000 Rolling Programme	**Sports Representative Grant** Individual & Team Maximum £250-£500 Budget £15,000 Selected by their governing body to participate in a representative team or individual sport at provincial, national, all Ireland or international level (outside of NI) **Capital Discretionary Grant** Up to £50,000 as funder of last resort Budget £150,000 **Festive Lights** Allocation as per settlement Budget £105,000 **Schools Sports Access Grant** Maximum £4500 Schools providing sports facilities to minority sports with no facilities Budget £10,000

Groups can only apply to one grant per year to Categories 1 and 2. Miscellaneous Category grants are targeted at specific outcomes.

Grants Process

1. Application and criteria set through Committee and Council.
2. Public Advertisement for all grants.
3. Applications will be online or if required a hard copy can be requested.
4. There will be points of contact for queries on each grant area.
5. Applications will be submitted on line.
6. Eligibility will be confirmed upon receipt of applications, with 2 days' notice for ensuring all documentation is in place, telephone and email notification recorded.
7. Grants that meet eligibility will proceed to assessment to be carried out by officer teams, all declarations of interest are monitored.
8. Grants will be presented to Committee for consideration and approval, all declarations of interest are monitored.
9. Grants will be presented to Council for ratification.
10. Letters of Offer (standard template) will be issued to all groups.
11. Claims will be received as previous and verification undertaken.
12. Report to Council on investment of grant funding and groups supported.
13. Publicity of Council must be received for grant support in line with the LOO.
14. Advance payments will be provided, 50% up to £1500 and 25% up to £10,000.

Grant Eligibility Conditions

1. Groups applying for a grant must be a not for profit constituted community or voluntary organisation with an annual AGM, individuals can apply to the sports representative grant only.
2. Funding cannot be allocated for a project or venue where an existing SLA exists with Council for a project, building or facility.
3. Groups will only be able to apply for a grant as per the categories, this is to maximise the funding allocation to as many groups as possible.
4. The same project cannot be split across different grant categories.

5. Statutory and ‘for profit’ organisations, activities and recipients (incl. activities that receive statutory core provision are not eligible for grant, note exception schools facilities in the community grant).
6. Regional groups/organisations are not eligible to apply.
7. Applications that are not completed accurately and in full will not be considered.
8. Religious or political activity cannot be funded under any grant.
9. All applicants must present a project that will take place within the MUDC area (except Sports Representative Grant as detailed within this section).
10. Applicants must present a project that will be delivered between 1st April - 31st March
11. Evidence of good governance; including annual AGM, Group bank account, financial management practice, insurances, etc. will be required.
12. Successful applicants will draw down grants retrospectively based on vouched expenditure, with procurement adhered to. Advance payments will be 50% up to £1500 and 25% up to £10,000 with final verification of all expenditure.
13. Group recipients should not have a membership charge for its users accessing its community provision greater than £250.
14. Group recipients should have no element of profit gain to any member or individual of its Committee (community interest companies not included due to director contribution).

The following items are not eligible for funding:

Hospitality greater than 20% of the grant threshold	Bad debt, loans, bank charges, deficits or arrears in payments of any organisation, reclaimable VAT	Flags or bunting Alcohol	Groups or activities that discriminate against any section of the community
Celebrity appearances Or gifts and donations	Salaries are eligible only for a contribution to strategic grants (not more than 50%)	Retrospective or duplicate funding applications	Residential courses or training greater than 20% of funding sought

Grant Criteria: Category 1

Strategic Arts & Culture Grant

To support strategic arts and culture organisations that play a key role across the Mid Ulster District Council area in the development and delivery of arts & culture activity through the delivery of their own programmes utilising their own dedicated arts & culture performance spaces. The service must:

1. Provide the structured delivery of an annual arts and culture programme within the organisations own performance space/theatre.
2. Provide accessible arts and culture development opportunities of a strategic nature that is providing for a large number of people across Mid Ulster.
3. Provide 100% dedicated arts & culture activity & be delivered by a dedicated arts & culture group.
4. Provide at least bi weekly arts and culture activities.

Strategic Sports Development Grant

To support Governing Bodies that play a key strategic role across the MUDC area in developing their affiliated Clubs. It aims to provide Grant Aid to those Governing Bodies that provide direct support to Clubs across the area in increasing participation rates and improving playing standards through the employment of a Sports Coach. The service must:

1. Provide the structured delivery of an annual sports development programme of a main sport.
2. Be delivered through a recognised NI Sports organisation; through or in partnership with a sporting governing body; with no duplication of coverage within the same area or targeting of the same groups.
3. Provide accessible sports development opportunities of a strategic nature that is providing for a large number of people across Mid Ulster.
4. Provide the programme through a partnership approach with local clubs and groups.
5. Provide a minimum of 50% dedicated sports officer to the area of coverage in Mid Ulster. Funding for salary development only.
6. Provide match funding of a minimum 50% to the sports development programme targeted within the Mid Ulster District.

Liaison with Mid Ulster District Council Leisure Department will be required.

Strategic Community Development Grant

To support strategic community development organisations that provide for the Mid Ulster area. Groups delivering to the same area should submit a partner application to avoid duplication.

1. Level of Community Support Activity
2. Level of benefit – number of beneficiaries
3. Targeting of deprivation and social need
4. Quality and level of provision
5. Level of geographic coverage
6. Value for Money

Small Development Grant

(Arts, Culture, Heritage, Community, Sport, Environment)

To support local communities deliver a range of local community, arts, culture, heritage, environment, sports projects for their local area.

1. Community, Arts, Cultural, Heritage, Environment, Sports activity and participation
2. Contribution to community, arts, culture, heritage, environment, sports development in the area
3. Increase and widen participation, addressing social inclusion and diversity
4. Contribution to volunteering and volunteer development

Community Venue & Facilities Grant

To support local communities with community venues, sports community facilities etc. Venues & facilities must be located and provide for the community of Mid Ulster District Council. The facilities must be in community ownership and used for community development activity including community sports.

1. Beneficiaries (number of beneficiaries and groups)
2. Level of usage per week at venue/facility/ and programme activity
3. Level of provision – number of rooms and size etc.
4. Social Need/Social Inclusion – targeting those most vulnerable & targeting those not currently active in sports & to support lifelong participation in sport.
5. Sustainability – supporting the long term sustainability of facilities & groups.

The venue / facility must be open greater than 10 hours per week and the grant is flexible for use.

Grant Criteria: Category 2

Strategic Events Grant

To support a number of strategic events that are providing for the whole of Mid Ulster District and are of a significant nature to bring people to the area and to promote the area at a regional level.

1. Social, Regeneration and Economic Return
2. Event Development
3. Promotion of Mid Ulster & Council
4. Event Management Experience
5. Level of promotion of good relations and Inclusion
6. Value for Money

Note events with a target audience under 1000 people or events that are not receiving regional tourism attendance and coverage would be a local community festival.

Community Local Festival Grant

To support local communities deliver a local festival in their area bringing people from across the area together.

1. Level of Community Benefit and Participation (number of days, activities)
2. Number of beneficiaries (local and neighbouring areas)
3. Promotion of Good Relations and Social Inclusion
4. Festival Development

Good Relations Grant

To support local communities deliver on good relations in line with the Government Together Building United Communities Strategy.

1. Contribution to the Good Relations TBUC themes : Our Shared Community, Safe Community, Cultural Expression through increased use of shared spaces and services
2. Contribution to Core Good Relations, addressing sectarianism, racism and prejudice through provision of increased shared space

3. Level of Community Benefit and Participation in existing shared space through increased activity
4. Targeting of Social Inclusion and deprivation through access to shared space and improved access to activities/events.
5.

Grant Criteria: Miscellaneous Category

Sports Representative Individual and Team Competitive Grant

To support Individuals who have been selected by their governing body to participate in a representative team or individual sport at provincial, national, all Ireland or international level, with eligible costs (accommodation, travel, food), to a maximum of a £250 grant may be available. Applicants must be resident within the Mid Ulster District Council area for a period of 6 months prior to the period of the grant application.

To assist recognised Sports NI sports clubs (affiliated to their governing body of sport) who are travelling to compete in a recognised (by Governing body) representative (of District/County) sporting competition. A grant for eligible costs (travel, accommodation, food) to a maximum of £500 may be available. The team must have qualified in a recognised competition by the governing body of this sport, and must be representing the District / County. For both grants the event/competition must take place outside of NI.

Capital Discretionary Grant

To recognise that there are times when a modest amount of capital investment in our community can create the potential for a much larger project to happen. In such circumstances Council could potentially be a discretionary funder of last resort to allow projects to happen and maximise investment to our areas and communities. Any contribution would be a small percentage towards a much larger project.

Criteria:

Capital funding – Council will consider providing financial support for capital projects, which are defined as projects which will provide benefit to the community for a period in excess of five years, examples of which may include a new building

or refurbishment/renovation of an existing building. It will not provide support for acquisition of land, buildings or other assets such as equipment other than fixed plant for example permanently installed elevators/lifts.

a.The project funded must be in community ownership (satisfactory evidence of legal title or an appropriate long term lease will be required.
b.Not for Profit - Funding will only be considered for not for profit constituted community and voluntary groups which are involved in progressing a major community capital project which will provide significant benefit to the community within the Mid Ulster District Council area -Groups/organisations must able to demonstrate that the majority of project beneficiaries (>80%) live within the Mid Ulster District Council area.
c.Community Benefit – A Project Plan must be in place to show community need and benefit and to avoid any potential issues of duplication.
d.Funder of Last Resort - The majority of funding at least 70% should be in place and that all funding avenues have been exhausted. Evidence of this will be required.
e.Statutory Requirements - The project must be at a state of readiness 6 months after letter of offer; with planning permission, land acquisition or lease agreement (if required), and other statutory permissions in place along with accurate costings.
f.Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Aims – The project must clearly demonstrate how it is achieving on Council corporate aims and objectives.
g.The project is a minimum value of £300,000, with Council funding to a maximum contribution of £50,000.
h.The Project must complete within 18 months of letter of offer; phased delivery and invoicing of expenditure can be accommodated.

A Group can only submit one call per project for this Capital Discretionary funding Support and a submission will only be considered by a Group once every 3 years. Groups/Organisations would be required to formally present to a Special Development Committee of Council.

Festive Lights Fund (award as per village settlement population - Area Plan)

Direct provision of festive lighting will be provided in the main towns of Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Coalisland and Maghera.

A grant programme (revenue and capital funding) will be delivered across the remaining settlements under the following criteria -

I. The grant will be revenue (small items of capital applicable) and will support the supply, installations, maintenance, running cost of providing festive lights and any associated switch-on/launch event. The lights will be in a predominant village location visible to the wider community.

II. The village settlements and populations will be as per the Mid Ulster Development Plan 2020 - 2030. The grant allocation will be based on village settlement size and range from £1,250 - £3,000:
Up to £3,000 settlements greater than 1000
Up to £2,000 settlements greater than 500
Up to £1,500 all other listed village settlements
Up to £1,250 all other listed smaller settlements

III. Technical support will be available to groups and communities from Council Technical Unit.

IV. The grant can only be issued to one group per area and the main overall development/regeneration/Chamber group will be given priority.

V. All grant aid will be paid retrospectively to those successful applicants who submit appropriate paid invoices to Council as vouched expenditure.

VI. Provision, installation and insurance, liability of lighting and any activity will be the responsibility of the Group applying.

VII. Small settlements listed in the Area Plan that are not classified as villages will be considered for inclusion within the fund; if they have previously provided festive lights in their area.

VII. Letters will be issued to the main Development Group within the designated settlement with an offer of funding.

School Sports Access Grant (Threshold £4,500.00)

Mid Ulster District Council recognises the importance of participation in physical activity and sport and the need to maximise access to facilities which encourage and support this. Council recognises that a few underrepresented sports may be constrained due to lack of access to suitable facilities, yet these may exist in local schools.

Specifically targeted at clubs using / planning to use a schools synthetic pitch or schools wanting to offer access to their synthetic pitch outside curriculum times.

To increase access for sports clubs to an under-utilized school synthetic pitch.

To contribute to the cost to schools of opening up and maintaining schools synthetic pitch.

To enhance access to team sports activities which are under-resourced or underrepresented.

The maximum amount available to access a school synthetic pitch is £4,500.00 – 1 application per school / club and where 2 or more clubs apply to use the same school synthetic pitch the grant offered will be on a pro rata basis ie 2 clubs up to 50%, 3 clubs up to 33.3% and 4 clubs up to 25%, etc

Eligibility

Be a sports club using or planning to use a school owned synthetic pitch or be a school which plans to provide access to a school owned synthetic pitch by sports clubs.

Incur actual documented costs in accessing / providing a schools synthetic pitch or provide documentary evidence of voluntary work or maintenance costs involved in maintaining a school synthetic pitch.

Not have benefited from Council's: Sports Strategic Development Grant or Sports Capital Grant.

The programme is primarily aimed at team sports.

Council may consider applications by schools on behalf of, and supported by evidence of agreement with, a constituted sports club.

In addition for sports clubs:

Be a constituted and not for profit sports club participating in a sport recognised by Sport NI, located in the Mid Ulster District Council area or a minimum of 80% of members must be resident in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

Sports club should evidence a letter of support/commitment from School Principal that includes agreed hire charges.

In addition for schools: Be located in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

Appeals Process

An appeals process will be available for unsuccessful applicants. There will be no right of appeal in relation to the level of funding granted however appeals can be made on the basis of:

• That the stated process has not been followed.

• That the application has been rejected on the basis of eligibility criteria which had been applied incorrectly.

•That the scoring against the criteria for the programme has not been undertaken correctly.

Appeals can be undertaken in two stages if required:

Stage 1–an appeal must be lodged in writing within 10 working days of the date of receipt of a rejection letter. In the first instance the appeal should be submitted to the Grants Unit who will take responsibility for allocating this to the relevant senior officer. In all cases the appeal will be reviewed by the senior officer and a determination reached within one week of receipt of the appeal. If the appeal is upheld the project will be reassessed and an appropriate letter of offer issued. If the appeal is not successful the applicant will be informed and given the right to take the appeal to Stage 2 if required.

Stage 2 – if the applicant is still not satisfied he or she can request a review by the Chief Executive who will review the process and application and present their recommendation.

Grant Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation seek to ensure that funding delivers the required outcomes, that it is used as agreed and to provide a feedback mechanism to improve decision making.

Monitoring should seek to ensure that;

Value for money is achieved.

The predicted outcomes are delivered.

Council has received adequate communication/promotion
Procurement has been met
Where instances arise where outcomes are not being met, the officer will support the Group to address any issues.
Monitoring will include completion of an evaluation and monitoring form. A visit by an officer will be undertaken to 10% of projects that receive funding over £1,500 threshold. This will complement the verification visit and will include the same random selection of groups.
Grants applicable – Strategic grants: Culture, Arts and Sports, Strategic Community Development, Strategic Events, and Venues.
10% of small grants will have a project evaluation upon random sample. This will be undertaken by an officer of the Community Development Team, led by the Community Services Manager.
Capital projects; up to £5,000 will have to issue evidence (e.g. photographs) of the capital and equipment investment alongside their expenditure return. A 20% monitoring visit will be undertaken on site to view expenditure items.
Discretionary Capital Grants will all be vouched on site for delivery of the capital development.

Grant Verification

Reference DFP Guidance on Grants and Reducing Bureaucracy in funding the community and voluntary sector - The Code applies to revenue grant funding only.
Micro Grants will be paid when valid receipts are received & checked. A 50% advance will be issued to groups with final verification of all invoices before the balance of the grant is paid.
Small grants £1,500 - £10,000 financial verification will take place based on valid receipts being checked against agreed project expenditure. A 25% advance will be issued to groups with final verification of all invoices before the remainder of the grant is paid.
Verification will include completion of a claim form, signed by relevant people within the organisation, along with valid receipts and invoices.

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 13 October 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Black, Chair Councillors Ashton, Black, Burton*, Clarke*, Corry* (7.15 pm), Cuddy, Elattar*, Kerr, McNamee*, Milne*, Molloy*, Monteith, Quinn*, Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing Ms Linney**, Assistant Director of Development Ms McKeown**, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes Mr Brown**, ICT Support Mrs Grogan, Democratic Services Officer
Others in Attendance	Councillors S McAleer and S McGuigan **Deputation:** Knockmany Runners Club: Development of Lumford's Glen Ms Donna McKenna Ms Oonagh Armstrong Mr Conor McCarroll Mr Gerry McCaffrey

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance
** Denotes Officers present by remote means
*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Clarke who was attending virtually, the Deputy Chair, Councillor Black took the Chair.

The Chair, Councillor Black welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor Black in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

D150/22 Notice of Recording

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

D151/22 Apologies

Councillor Martin.

D152/22 Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Black reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest drawing attention in particular to agenda item on grants. He stated that if Members had already declared the interest it did not need reiterated.

Councillor S McAleer advised that although she was not a member of Development Committee declared an interest in the Deputation (Knockmany Runners Club) as was the Chairperson of the group.

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in agenda item 6 – Development Report – Community Grants, Good Relations Grant - Sollus School of Highland Dance as his granddaughter was part of the group.

D153/22 Chair's Business

The Chair advised that Councillor Wilson wished to raise an issue under Chair's Business.

Councillor Wilson sought clarification on how many members of a team which was being recognised could attend the Civic Awards event when they are being invited as one team.

The SD: C&P advised that he would investigate the matter and respond to the member directly with an update tomorrow.

Councillor Wilson said that this would be appreciated as there was an event taking place next week which included a number of teams.

D154/22 Deputation: Knockmany Runners Club: Development of Lumford's Glen

The Chair welcomed to the committee representatives of Lumford's Glen Rejuvenation Project and invited them to address the committee.

Ms McKenna thanked members for the opportunity to present to committee tonight. (appendix).

She advised that the group were not just a running club, but also a volunteer group with genuine interest in encouraging people to get outdoors in the beautiful Clogher Valley countryside. Lumford's Glen consists of a Waterfall and a Glen Route. The waterfall leads to a stunning natural 60 foot waterfall and the glen trail route ranging in distance to approximately 1.4 miles and if re-established would create a new 3.7 mile (6km) loop to incorporate Knockmany Cairn and the Waterfall.

Ms McKenna updated members on the heritage associated with Lumford's Glen and why they felt it should be restored and who would most benefit from it.

She said that the local Clogher Valley Community and the recently increased footfall in Knockmany would extend to Lumford's Glen:

- Local Schools (including preschools, primary and secondary)
- Sure Start
- Local Sports Teams
- Clogher Valley Walking Group and associated local walking groups (including Knockatallan, Dungannon, Cooneen)
- Knockmany Running Club
- Knockmany Forest Ramblers

The Chair thanked Ms McKenna for her impressive presentation which had included a lot of interesting history and what it could become going forward. He hoped that the Council could work in partnership which could benefit a lot of people in that area.

Councillor Burton said that she was delighted to have Donna, Conor, Gerry and Oonagh in attendance at this meeting tonight and was just sorry that she wasn't actually in the chamber, but had another meeting to go to. She advised that Lumford's Glen has been brought up and referenced very regularly and especially over the period of Covid, she was regularly contacted by people wanting to use and did use Lumford's Glen for walking and whilst some did deem that although it wasn't a safe place to walk, they had such fond memories from back in the day from when they visited as children. She said that she was in attendance at the night in Knockmany when the group received the Queen's Award and was absolutely delighted to see how many people that came out from the tiniest tots to the older generation. She commended the work which the group has put into Knockmany to develop the carpark and the change in facilities etc. which bodes very well and she felt that this was the next progression. At this point, Councillor Burton wished to pay tribute to MUDC staff as they receive a lot of requests from Councillors and in turn they have to go and seek out opportunities to carry out these studies. She was delighted to say that through Slieve Beagh Partnership which included (Fermanagh & Omagh Council, Monaghan County Council and Mid Ulster District Council), that confirmation had come through that the Shared Island Fund through that partnership, that there would be a feasibility and scoping study to see what we can do and was also delighted that the maps were widened out so it was assured that Lumford's Glen will go forward in that. She felt that this was a real positive meeting and the history that has been brought to light and as one of the local Councillors, she was thinking more about the tourism product and what it could bring, but it was also now evident with the historical side of it which was a wonderful thing that this Council should be getting more involved in. Over a period of time there will be workshops and consultations and would encourage people right across the Clogher Valley to get involved in so that when capital funding is opened that we are basically shovel ready to bring this project to a more live part. She said that there was a substantial amount of funding over the three councils but we will certainly have our part in that.

Councillor Burton concluded by thanking Donna and her team for coming to committee tonight and reassured them that the Council were totally on board with what the group was trying to achieve and to ensure that places that possibly can have the opportunity

to carry out equestrian, cycling and walking activities, that this should be all built into this feasibility study which will all come out in the consultation and really looked forward to working with the group.

The Chair invited the AD: Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes to provide an update to what Councillor Burton alluded to regarding funding which may have been secured.

The AD: EDT&SP said that Slieve Beagh Partnership is a grouping of three Councils; (Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Monaghan County Council and Mid Ulster District Council). Two elected representatives serve on the partnership from each of the three Councils. Mid Ulster's serving members are Councillors Burton and S McGuigan. Tourism staff from each Council area also represented on the Partnership.

The Partnership identified a funding opportunity through the Shared Island Fund (SIF) and worked together to make a bid for funding. Monaghan County Council acted as the lead partner in terms of making the funding submission. The Partnership have recently been advised they've been successful in obtaining €145,000 funding to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study of the wider Slieve Beagh area which includes Lumford's Glen, Knockmany Forest etc in the Mid Ulster District. She advised the feasibility study would allow for scoping work to be carried out across a range of work packages, including walking, cycling, equestrian, signage/public art, hero attractor, investor engagement and accommodation and ancillary services.

The AD: EDT&SP said that the work would be publicly tendered under the stewardship of the lead Council, Monaghan County Council. She reminded Members that Mid Ulster District Council has previously agreed to co-fund the feasiblity study with a financial contribution of £5,000, and the two partner Councils had agreed to do likewise. She said that there were exciting times ahead for the Sliabh Beagh area as they start to map out their requirements, however, she added there is much work to do once a successful organization is on board to undertake the Feasibility Study. This will involve widespread consultation at the appropriate time with the community, whilst also seeking Members views to shape the plans. When this Study is complete, it will prove to be a very valuable document and position the Partnership to make bids for capital funding as opportunities arise.

Councillor Molloy thanked Donna for her presentation and commended her on the content. He said that he had walked around Lumford's Glen, Knockmany and into St. Patrick's Chair and Well and up into Knockatallen and said that the whole area was a hidden gem for a lot of people when they discover it. He advised that the whole River Blackwater Catchment area and Blackwater Valley and all feeds into the same project of Slieve Beagh and all comes in together as a massive package if this was all developed in the right way and not talking about overuse but more about people coming to use it, to appreciate it for what it is and wished the group well for the future and hoped they get over the line on it.

Councillor Cuddy said that this was a great project and had spent a lot of time around the area when he was young and agreed that it was a beautiful area which had loads of potential and hoped that work could be carried out on it in the future. He said that it was very important to follow the policies.

The Chair said that he took on board the member's point but this was a good news story which was recent, where funding was secured and progressed as part of the scoping study which was touched upon within the presentation which was useful for the group to hear that when they were in attendance tonight.

Councillor S McAleer declared earlier in the meeting that she was Chairperson of Knockmany Runners and was delighted that the group were facilitated for the presentation. She said that in her opinion that no group works harder and probably why they received the Queen's Award this year, everything is voluntary and can assure that when they are involved in any project that it was backed 100% by the local community. She referred to the pride that this would take in the local community if this goes ahead with a scoping study and technical design officers coming in, it will meet the needs of the people and since the redevelopment of Knockmany has been carried out, Lumford's Glen is mentioned by everybody now and they are living in hope of a positive outcome. She thanked Donna and her team for all their hard work and attending the committee tonight to provide their impressive presentation.

Councillor Ashton said that although she wasn't a Clogher Valley Councillor, she was a local resident to Knockmany and commended the group on their recent award and very well deserved as they had done a lot of work around the trails which were currently opened. She referred to all the work Councillor Burton had done in the area with the group to try and open up those trails and said that it was great to hear the good news story that things were developing well and to give the group our support in whatever format that can take whether from Officers or Councillors, but felt that it was great that there was a local organisation which were willing to take such keen interest in driving this solely forward.

Councillor S McGuigan said that although he was not a member of the Development committee, he would like to say a few words of support as a Clogher Valley Councillor and a member of Slieve Beagh Partnership. He said that there was great delight in receiving the initial funding and hoped that it would allow for a number of projects to be supported right across that region.

Councillor S McGuigan declared an interest in Knockmany as he was part of Killeeshil Running Club which used Knockmany facilities for many years.

He said that the group had shown leadership in taking this initiative forward and even the project which they had taken up to now and one of the aspects of being shovel ready is having a good community group which stands the test of time and said that he was fully supportive of the group and they should be commended.

The Chair thanked Donna and her team for coming in to speak with members tonight and felt that it was useful for the committee to hear what the group had to say and hoped they were encouraged by the comments from the committee and welcome the positive news of the potential for a scoping study around all of this.

The group left the meeting at 7.30 pm.

Councillor S McGuigan and S McAleer left the meeting at 7.30 pm.

Matters for Decision

D155/22 Development Report

The AD: Development presented previously circulated report which provided update and sought approval on the following:

- **Rolling Community Grants 2022-23**
- **Chatty Places – Let's Get Together**
- **Community Grants Review - Festive Lights**
- **Development Department Update**

It was

Proposed by Kerr
Seconded by Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the following:

- **Rolling Community Grants 2022-23**

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the allocation of the Community Grants as recommended in appendix 1 of the Officers report.

- **Chatty Places – Let's Get Together**

Councillor Monteith felt that this was a good idea, but was aware of a number of other community initiatives which were talking about similar ideas and felt that it would be important that there was co-ordination so that people were sharing the same information. He said that this was not going to suit everyone, either in the rural or urban setting, but felt it was important that the Council acts as a contact point for other community groups and facilities which were proposing or if not the same or similar type of ideas. He felt that it would be important to help the community to publicise their groups as the Council were lucky in the fact they can access more avenues to the media and would be confident if the feelers were put out, most rural communities would have something up and running and was also aware of some urban settings that were thinking the same. He felt that it was a good idea but it would benefit from having a bit of work being done on sending word out to various community groups to see what else is out there.

Councillor Corry concurred with Councillor Monteith's comments and was aware of one café in Stewartstown called Café Connect which was a Chatty Space launched last week through Mid Ulster Loneliness Network along with the Northern Trust and felt that it could be something that our project could be tied in with as she was aware of a number of cafés looking to broaden this out. She felt that it would be beneficial that there was no duplication and for everyone to work together to try and get a good spread of urban and rural.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the Chatty Places – Let's Get Together in our towns of Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt and for officers to reach out our community partners and promote any similar types of initiatives operating across the District.

- **Community Grants Review - Festive Lights**

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the Community Grants Review Festive Lights Awards as recommended in appendix 2 of the Officers report. That it be further recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee that consideration be given to providing additional 'one off – in year' funding to support current recipients with costs to replace current lighting stock.

- **Development Department Update**

Councillor Monteith referred to the Cost of Living Crisis and said that a proposal was put forward by himself and Councillor Kerr a few months ago regarding a hardship fund and it was said at the time, similar to what Derry and Strabane Council were also saying that they hadn't anything worked out and nothing more could be done. Now, we see from the media two weeks ago, Derry and Strabane have now launched an initiative regarding a hardship fund.

Councillor Monteith proposed that officers engage with Derry and Strabane District Council to see the mechanism in which they are facilitating this and that as far as he was aware that it was being done through community initiatives. He said that it was his understanding that it was a one off payment of £100 to help people in need.

He proposed that Officers revisit this as it was previously agreed to do so and felt that as another Council has gone through the nitty-gritty of how to do it, there was now an opportunity to sit down and talk to them and bring a report back to the next Development Committee meeting on how to proceed. He said that this was a matter of urgency, because if this was not done now, it would run into December, January and would result in it being too late.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that our Officers liaise with Derry and Strabane District Council Officers regarding the hardship fund in which they have launched and that a report be brought back to next month's Development Committee meeting to see if this Council can facilitate something similar.

Councillor Kerr said that he was happy to support Councillor Monteith's recommendation and was also aware of the report in the media regarding the Cost of Living Grant being awarded by Derry and Strabane District Council. He felt that this was a great opportunity for a local authority to intervene on behalf of the residents as he

was aware of a lot of people facing hardships and although there was initiatives launched, he believes that this Council should be offering any extra support necessary and it was imperative that a report is brought back to the next committee to get it from theory to practicable as soon as possible.

The Chair agreed that it would be useful for the AD: Development to reach out to Derry and Strabane Council to see if there was a template which could be used by this Council to try and achieve something local.

The AD: Development advised that in relation to timeline, members should be aware that this would be double committee as it would have to be brought to Development and P&R as there were budgetary issues.

Councillor Monteith advised that there used to be a community element to the Development report and this was why he was raising this issue here. It has been brought to his attention issues relating to Loane House and enquired if it would be possible for our community planning department liaise with the Southern Trust. He said that concerns has arisen that staff working in Loane House on a number of occasions had to deal with patients with severe mental health problems which were placed there as there were no other beds or facilities for them to go. He felt that in fairness Loane House was a fantastic facility but staff were not trained to deal with mental health issues and asked that clarity be sought on what was the provision for in-house mental health within this area and what was being done to elevate pressure on staff. He said that staff were under severe pressure and asked if our community planning department would take the matter up with the Southern Trust.

Councillor Monteith stated that also in the past there was an item on the agenda for Leisure Services. He said that he had already liaised with the AD: HL&W regarding disabled access to swimming pools and it had been raised here before about trying to be a leading Council in relation to disabled access. He advised that he met with a parent whose disabled son was a wheelchair user and was unable to access facilities in Dungannon Leisure Centre due to the lack of staff resources to provide the support the young boy needs.

It was proposed by Councillor Monteith that a report be brought to Development Committee before the December meeting on what provision can be provided within our swimming pools and leisure centres and what were the gaps as it was unacceptable for disabled people not being able to access our services. He said that there were a lot more opportunities for able bodied people to avail of leisure including football clubs and community initiatives and there was onus on this Council to look out for the more marginalised group. He felt that it would be useful to talk to the various disability needs organisations to make sure we are doing our best and the fact we are putting a provision in place so as to provide for them. He said that by speaking to various staff members, there were specific needs but it may be beneficial to reach out to Special Olympics Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Swim Ulster and all those different organisations who were probably getting funding for full time coaches dealing with Paralympic and Special Olympic stuff and may be able to buy into their expertise.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that a report be brought to Development Committee if not next month, then December on what provision can be provided within our swimming pools and leisure centres for disabled persons.

Councillor Corry concurred with comments made by Councillor Monteith regarding access to swimming pools and said that she would be very happy to support that as it was something she was passionate about and everyone having access to our services and possibly tie in with Mid Ulster Disability Forum also.

D156/22 Economic Development Report – OBFD

The AD: Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes presented previously circulated report which provided an update on the following:

- **Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme**
- **Christmas Off Street Car Parking Charges Dungannon and Magherafelt**
- **Dungannon Traders Association Proposal**

It was

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the key activities as listed below in the Economic Development Report – OBFD.

- **Covid19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme**

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve authority for the Chief Executive to sign DfC's Covid-19 Recovery Programme Letter of Variance on Appendix 1, dated 9 September 2022, which grants an extension to the period of funding to 31 March 2023 and approve immediate return of Letter of Variance to DfC following the Development Committee Meeting in October 2022 to meet DfC's response timeframe.

- **Christmas Off Street Car Parking Charges Dungannon and Magherafelt**

Councillor Monteith said that he would be happy to support the recommendation but would also propose to look at free parking for all carparks in Dungannon and if elected representatives of Magherafelt feel it's of benefit to them they should also pursue it. This matter has been doing its rounds for years and felt that there should be free parking as we struggle to get footfall of people in and around the town centres for shopping and doing their bits and pieces and when speaking to people they advise that they go to out of town facilities due to free parking. A number of businesses have closed down due to not enough parking close to their business or if there is, parking has to be paid for and the reality is there is now a necessity for free car parking in a town centre environment. If there is a concern regarding all day parkers, he believed that a bit of imagination and a bit of thought could be used to deal with that situation and

should not be used at all stages to prevent a service that was no longer a luxury and long beyond a necessity.

He advised that he would be happy to agree to the proposed 10 pence tariff for the 6 weeks but also proposed that officers revisit the idea of free parking for various carparks in Dungannon on a permanent basis.

Councillor Kerr said that he would be happy to second Councillor Monteith's proposal as there were a lot of businesses closing down due to the cost of living crisis and free car-parking in the high street would go a long way of getting people back out in increasing the footfall within Mid Ulster.

Councillor Ashton said that although she appreciated where Councillor Monteith was coming from, Council had already been here before with certain issues arising and lobbying taking place. There was hinder within the town due to all day parkers and although she agreed with the issue of revisiting, felt there was also a need to be careful that we do not make a problem worse. She appreciated that this was revisited a number of years ago and we had witnessed the problems and issues which it created.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve –

(i) The temporary reduced tariff for the first 3 hours of 10 pence in all Off Street Pay & Display Car Parks in Dungannon and Magherafelt from Saturday 26 November 2022 to Saturday 7 January 2023 (6-week period) at a cost to Council of £24,000.

(ii) To revisit the idea of free parking for various carparks in Dungannon on a permanent basis.

- **Dungannon Traders Association Proposal**

Councillor Monteith felt that this was a good idea and initiative from traders and should be promoted as much as possible.

Councillor Ashton said that she had no issue with the proposal but sought clarity on the rationale for the nominated day to get footfall into the town. She enquired if the traders anticipated opening on the Sunday to benefit from that.

The AD: EDT&SP stated that she would like to think a number of the businesses would open in the town to benefit from the additional footfall from the event. She said that her team would liaise with the traders to encourage them to open but it cannot be guaranteed, as it will be a choice for each business to make. She said that the main reason why the traders selected Sunday to hold their event was due to the need for a partial road closure and if the road was closed on the Saturday this would impact businesses trading on a busy Saturday pre-Christmas. She also stated that it was her understanding that the Events Space at Feeney's Lane would like to open that day too which would generate a bit of activity in the town and to encourage people to go in.

Councillor Wilson said as a Councillor coming from a town without parking charges and hoped that it would remain that way, there were a couple of issues he wished to highlight on. When this Council took over the carparks as part of the reorganisation of local government, carparks became the remit of local councils, we still pay DfI Roads

for those carparks and a charge still levied against us and wondered if this Council could write to the Stormont Department responsible that in light of the current situation, would they look at reducing carparking charges to local authorities to help bring footfall into towns. He stated that the money that is given to DfI was supposed to be funding to maintain roads and unfortunately he was not at the meeting last Monday night although he had asked for a question to be asked which didn't appear in the answers issued today. He said that members around the chamber will be aware that housing estates were bereft of any tarring or repairs and money should go towards that and asked if it would be acceptable for a proposal as a committee write to the relevant Stormont department asking them to weaver the fees that they charge local authorities.

The Chair felt that this matter would be the remit of the Environment Committee and felt it would be more beneficial to raise the issue there.

Councillor Wilson said that he would raise the issue at the next Environment Committee.

Councillor Cuddy in referring to the Feeney's Lane project, congratulated the AD: EDT&SP and her team as this initiative had great potential going forward and was great to see the two organisations working together for the good of Dungannon.

Councillor Molloy said that this was a fantastic initiative which brought something different, new and possible footfall into Dungannon on the Sunday before Christmas when it was much needed and got the logic around Sunday rather than Saturday because of the road closure. He enquired if our own facilities would be open in the Market Square on that Sunday as well.

The AD: EDT&SP advised that she is liaising with the relevant officers to make the necessary arrangements so that Council facilities would be open when an event is taking place in the town centre.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve the request from Dungannon Traders Association to reassign Council's budget this financial year totalling £5,500 from the Heels on the Hill event to the new Dungannon Jingle Ball Run event which is proposed will take place on Sunday 18th December from 4pm – 7pm.

That it be recommended to the Council that the matter of town centre parking charges be referred to the Environment Committee to consider and in so doing request that the Environment Committee write to the Department of Infrastructure to request a reduction in car parking fees for local government.

Matters for Information

D157/22 Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 September 2022

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 September 2022.

Councillor Kerr referred to D135/22 and enquired if there was any further update on the Cappagh Regeneration Project.

The SD: Communities & Place advised the AD: HL&W had communicated with the Cappagh group and officers were due to discuss how to progress the NEA fund at a board of our outdoor recreation projects next week. Once there was a timeline, then re-engagement will take place with the Cappagh group to make sure they are involved as part of the consideration of going forward to appoint the consultant, and when this takes place, the group will obviously be engaged with the whole process. He said that the project was moving forward and although maybe not moving forward at a quick of a pace as first hoped, we were working towards a deadline of 31 March 2023. He advised that there were other departments involved across the organisations and there was a requirement to make sure there was co-ordination to line up the resources to bring it to completion before the deadline of 31 March.

Councillor Kerr also referred to D131/22 where reference was made to Dungannon and Coalisland Neighbourhood Renewal and wondered if there was any update on the Gortgonis Leisure Centre Project.

The SD: Communities & Place advised that there would be a report being brought back to P&R committee next month in relation to Gortgonis and members will be updated on the current situation at this meeting.

Councillor Monteith referred to page 34 wished to clarify as a matter of accuracy that he had declared an interest in Ballysaggart Area Community Association and not Ballysaggart Lough.

He referred to the anticipated two DEA meetings where were agreed last month, one which was proposed by Councillor Molloy and one by himself in relation to issues around Ballysaggart Lough, Railway Park and Ann Street and accepted there were issues around that some of those meetings were unable to happen, it was extremely disappointing that 4 weeks later we were no further on. He said that elected members were none the wiser on what or what not was happening and felt again this was symptomatic of the drift that occurs in the Council towards bigger capital projects and takes Councillors to almost ask questions on a continual basis in order to move things forward and could argue that this was a member's role but could also argue that when a decision was made it should be implemented. In order to move things forward we were at a stage now where it would be helpful, as obviously other Councillors in other DEA's can make recommendations themselves, but felt we were at a stage where we need to look at the corporate governance of the organisation and there was a need to fit into the corporate governance and corporate structure regular DEA meetings where issues specific particular DEAs can be dealt with on a monthly or bimonthly basis. The committees which are supposed to deal with policy and strategy matters and members are forced to bring up operational issues, which may relate to contracts which were specific to local DEAs and a lot not needs to be done if there was a regular contact point for Councillors on the particular issues that have already been agreed by Council and no need for them to come back and forward to be discussed at committee meetings, progress reports brought forward and Councillors be in a position to talk to the senior officers dealing with these issues. He felt that there should also be an opportunity to talk on smaller issues within their local DEAs, whether it relates to

environmental health or dog matters issues or whatever the case may be and felt that this would definitely be a benefit within the corporate structure. In his opinion, we were long past that point due to the concept of our committees about being about policy and strategy, was not working because everyone is forced to be bogged down on local issues which were DEA specific.

He urged that these DEA meetings which were alluded to in the previous minutes happen with the upmost urgency and felt there also needed to be an urgent discussion across the Council in relation to corporate structure to facilitate localised meetings, as we do it with roads, operational utilities and strategy agencies. We we were well past the point where this would be a benefit to this organisation and would allow the committee structure to work more strategically and would allow Councillors better access to their day to day or week to week information on what or what not was going on within the DEA.

The Chair was confident that Officers would follow up the DEA meetings Councillor Monteith referred to.

The SD: Communities & Place advised that there was a meeting in the diary for the Railway Park site visit which was on the back of a decision which was taken at Development committee last month.

He said that in relation to the wider issues, members will be aware that this Council has a very ambitious capital programme and the P&R committee agreed the revised programme in July. There is work ongoing with Senior Management Team being led by the SD: Environment in terms of reviewing our governance in relation to the capital framework and that will include how we as an organisation and Councillors input into structuring and prioritising our capital programmes, how we make sure we bring projects to a state of shovel readiness, that we can maximise any external opportunities. This may take time working through this process and as we move along this journey, officers will do their very best to make sure members were kept up to date, but there were a lot of projects which were currently live at the minute. He said that he heard members frustration, but assured them that there was work going on in the background to try and put a little structure in governance in moving forward and members will be engaged at the right time as part of that process.

Councillor Monteith referred to D144/22 and enquired if there was any update on the Dog Friendly Park facilities.

The AD: HL&W advised that there had been a meeting with Dogs Trust NI and officers were doing some scoping and benchmarking with other Councils where these facilities were currently in. Officers were currently investigating this issue and hoped to bring a report back to the December committee meeting.

Councillor Quinn referred to a matter which had been brought to his attention in relation to Roughan Lough regarding the lack of life saving equipment at the site. He asked if this was something that officers could investigate as this was an area which was very popular with fishers and swimmers and would be important to get this sorted.

The SD: Communities & Place advised the member that this would be looked at, but was not sure if this was Council's responsibility or remit, but would look at it and if something needed to be done then this would be addressed.

D158/22 Air Quality Report 2022

Members noted update on the current air quality in the Mid Ulster District Council area, and of the ongoing monitoring currently being undertaken in relation to this.

Councillor Molloy advised that he along with Councillor Monteith had mentioned this numerous times around the consistent reports that members get each year around the results relating to the monitoring. Consistently the two highest were the end of McKee's Terrace, Newell Road, Dungannon and Charlemont Street, Moy and whilst there has been a slight reduction we cannot continuously take a note, we need to liaise with the relevant authorities to address this as these people living in a residential area are being affected on a daily basis and work needs to be done to try and elevate the problem.

Councillor Monteith concurred with Councillor Molloy's comments 100% and said that we had received this report on an annual basis which was continually above the recommended limits. It's not good enough that we receive this report every year, this needs actioned immediately as there are people living in these areas susceptible to this high pollution. He said that he had raised this issue before with Environmental Health regarding the fitness of these homes and the air outside not fit for human beings to breathing, inadequate protection behind a single piece of glass where people are living and sleeping and asked how it could be safe for those people to be living there.

Councillor Monteith felt that an urgent meeting needs to be called with Councillors, Roads Service and Environmental Health to look at different legislation available, not just for air pollution but for those homes and people who live there. Air outside those people's homes this last 6 to 7 years has not been fit for people to breathe, never mind people who live there and not fit for human use.

He felt that there was a duty of care on this Council to inform the residents that they were living in an area which for the last 6 to 7 years the air was not fit for human use. We need to up the ante on this and treat this with the seriousness which it is.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith

That an urgent meeting be arranged with DEA Councillors and Environmental Health asking that a pro-active attitude be brought on using all the legislation available at our disposal in dealing with this now rather than sitting hoping that the figures decrease, this was not good enough for the people living there and a duty of care on this Council as a public body to inform the residents living in those areas of the very serious air pollution in their area.

He said that he had spoken to some residents and felt it was wrong that they haven't been informed and asked that they be contacted as a matter of upmost urgency.

Seconded by Councillor Kerr

Councillor Kerr said that he would be happy to second the proposal and totally agreed that residents should be informed ASAP as the air that they breathe was not fit for human consumption.

The SD: Communities and Place referred to comments received and advised that the process is that officers present this report to members for information and we are not suggesting that we just sit back and hope that something changes. He stated that it was officers' suggestion within the report to bring together all the relevant stakeholders including elected members to look at what actions which can be taken to see if we can reduce the NO_2 pollutant in those two areas. He said that through AD: HL&W and his team, this will be moved forward at pace and get this meeting pulled together, with all the relevant stakeholders around the table and hopefully out of that a number of actions will be agreed.

In response to query, the SD: Communities and Place said that it was his understanding that air quality reports as far as he was aware were published on the Council's website, which were public data.

Councillor Monteith suggested that a letter is formulated to go to all residents in both areas informing them of the seriousness of the situation of the air quality within their area and although he cannot speak for the affected residents in Moy, he was aware that quite a number of the residents in McKee's Terrace in Dungannon had an issue with English and felt it was not good enough just to say that it was on the website.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith

That a letter be formulated in a number of languages immediately or as soon as humanly possible after ratification at full Council meeting with all the relevant information and contact numbers in the event of anyone having concerns after they receive this letter, so they can get in contact with a designated officer from this Council to answer any queries they may have.

Seconded by Councillor Molloy

Councillor Molloy agreed that this would be a similar case in Charlemont Street, Moy as some of those residents which live in the multi-use flat properties, English was not their first language. He felt that it was telling that migrant workers were put into these properties and available to them, as you only have to sit outside these properties, look at the evidence of build-up on the windows and doors of the blackness and soot in which it accumulates and it's a telling sign of what people were breathing. He was happy to second the proposal of communicating with the residents as soon as possible.

The SD: Communities and Place suggested that this be based on legal advice and expert input.

Councillor Monteith said that he would have no issue as long as legal advice was sought before full Council and were in a position to do it, but would query legal advice being a necessity in this case. If there was a public health emergency issue being dealt with in the local area, then engagement would take place with local residents i.e. flooding and working together with Roads Service. He said that this was a public health

emergency and that Council were not treating it as such, for 6 to 7 years the air in these areas was not fit for human consumption and did not see why legal evidence or opinion should be sought as there was a duty of care for Council to protect our residents. If there was evidence of vermin within an area, this Council would have no difficulty in sending out letters to people without asking for permission.

The SD: Communities and Place stated that he wasn't indicating that this cannot be done but was suggesting that expert input be sought before moving forward with the recommendation.

The Chair said as this matter was being talked about in open business and on public record, in terms of letting people know, he couldn't imagine that there would be an issue with that. In terms of what the SD: Communities and Place suggested regarding legal opinion and as long as it was done before full Council ratification, could see no issue on this being moved forward.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that legal advice be sought before ratification at full Council in relation to a letter being sent to residents living at McKee's Terrace, Newell Road, Dungannon and Charlemont Street, Moy advising of concerns relating to air quality in their area. Letter to be formulated in a number of languages immediately or as soon as humanly possible after full Council with all the relevant information and contact numbers in the event of anyone having concerns after they receive this letter, so they can get in contact with a designated officer from this Council to answer any queries they may have.

Councillor Monteith said that as a point of clarity, the proper naming of Newell Road was actually New Well Road although he was aware that certain signage and local businesses indicated "Newell".

D159/22 Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme 2022

Members noted update which provided information on the successful applications that were awarded funding for the 2022 Mid Ulster District Council Live Here Love Here, Small Grants Scheme.

D160/22 Drinking Water Quality Report for Northern Ireland 2021

Members noted update which provided information on the recently published Drinking Water Quality Report for Northern Ireland 2021.

D161/22 Economic Development Report – OBFI

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on the following:

- Gearing for Growth Seminar – 20 October 2022
- TRPSI Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2022
- Tourism Development Group Minutes on 29 June 2022
- European Heritage Open Days
- The Shared Island Fund

- Blackwater River Update Report

The AD: Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes referred to Blackwater River Update Report and said she wished to update members. At the last Development Committee meeting members asked that a report be brought back to committee in relation to the survey work required for the Blackwater, to work with ABC and progress to procurement of that and to initiate the works. She said that Members will see within their papers this evening, that a Blackwater Report was taken to the Environment Committee in October 2022 with the recommendation outlined on page 244 seeking approval that *"officers progress undertaking required survey work subject to Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Council agreeing to work in partnership and funding 50% of the cost of fees for legal and technical survey work required at this stage".* However, the Environment Committee on the 11 October 2022 recommneded that a legal opinion is sought in relation to the Department's responsibility for undertaking the work on the River Blackwater before any money is spent by Council on carrying out further surveys. She said that this was the current position and wanted to update members accordingly.

Councillor Kerr said that by listening to the debate, there was some concern if this really belonged to ABC why Mid Ulster was taking such huge interest. He said that one of the key points when he had met with Lough Neagh Rescue in which he and Councillor Quinn had alluded to many times in the past, was the build-up of silt which denies and slows down the access of the volunteers of Lough Neagh Rescue is someone finds themselves in trouble. 5, 10, 15 minutes in water in this time of year could be life changing, the difference between saving a life or the worst consequences possible and there was requirement to move this project on. He said that this matter has been discussed for one year, seven months to be exact (19 months) and was very important that we get this project moving and reaffirmed the point that human life was at stake here if these decisions were not progressive and would be beneficial for the Lough Neagh area.

The Chair hoped that the legal advice which has been required will be forthcoming quickly to help move this forward.

Councillor Wilson advised that it was him that made the proposal at the Environment Committee meeting to take this legal route due to the fact of the issue relating to Lough Neagh Rescue. It is about the fact of this Council being a local authority spending money on something which is not our responsibility whatsoever and therefore the importance of this legal advice coming back on who actually owns it and whose responsibility it is which was vitally important. If it is the case that it is the responsibility of this Council, then we should move at full speed and if ABC's they should then move at full speed.

Councillor Quinn said that he had no issues with getting legal advice and felt it was important to establish who is responsible and a collective leadership needs to be shown, not just from our Council and ABC, but from the relevant government departments also as this has been talked about for a long time. He was aware of two options being put on the paper, one was to go up through the mouth of the Blackwater and the other one was to go through the Maghery Canal and if we can get one of them

sorted at this point, we would be happy. It is vitally important that this Council does not spend money just for the sake of it and felt that everyone needed to put their shoulder to the wheel to get this sorted.

The Chair advised that this was a very important issue and should be brought to a head and will show where responsibility sits and if this means working collectively to try and move this forward, then this would be very welcome and to get the clarification to move it in a positive direction.

Live broadcast ended at 8.17 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst members consider items D162/22 to D164/22.

Matters for Decision

D162/22 Economic Development Report – CBFD
D163/22 Report on Funding and Accommodation Arrangements for RDP & Community Services Staff at Gortlowry House

Matters for Information
D164/22 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 September 2022

D165/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 8.28 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/ Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening please raise your hand in the normal way and keep raised until advised to lower it
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda.

LUMFORD'S GLEN REJUVENATION PROJECT

13th Oct 2022 – MUDC Development Committee

KNOCKMANY RUNNING CLUB

WHO ARE WE ?

Not just a running club, we are a volunteer group with a genuine interest in encouraging people to get outdoors in our beautiful Clogher Valley countryside.

In 2019; in collaboration with MUDC, Sport NI and DEARA, we successfully completed a project to improve facilities at Knockmany Forest. Projected Year 3 figures was 27,000 annually/2250 monthly. The current usage of Knockmany is approx 5000 per month which equates to 60,000 annually. (2021/2022). These numbers far exceeded our expectations.

We would now like to build on this success and rejuvenate Lumford's Glen adjacent to the main forest block of Knockmany Forest which was closed to the public in 2012 due to damage caused by rain-storms.

IMPROVED CARPARKING

CLEARING OF PATHS AND IMPROVED ACCESS.

PROVISION OF TOILET FACILITIES, CHANGING PLACES FACILITY, KITCHEN AND MEETING ROOM

WHAT IS LUMFORD'S GLEN?

THE WATERFALL

Lumford's Glen includes trails and steps which lead to a stunning natural 60-foot waterfall.

THE ROUTE

From it's own small carpark, the route to the waterfall through Lumford's Glen is approx. 1.4 miles (Image 1).

Re-establishing this existing trail would create a new 3.7 miles (6km) loop to incorporate Knockmany Cairn and the Waterfall… starting and ending at Knockmany carpark (Image 2).

IMAGE 1: LUMFORD'S GLEN TRAIL

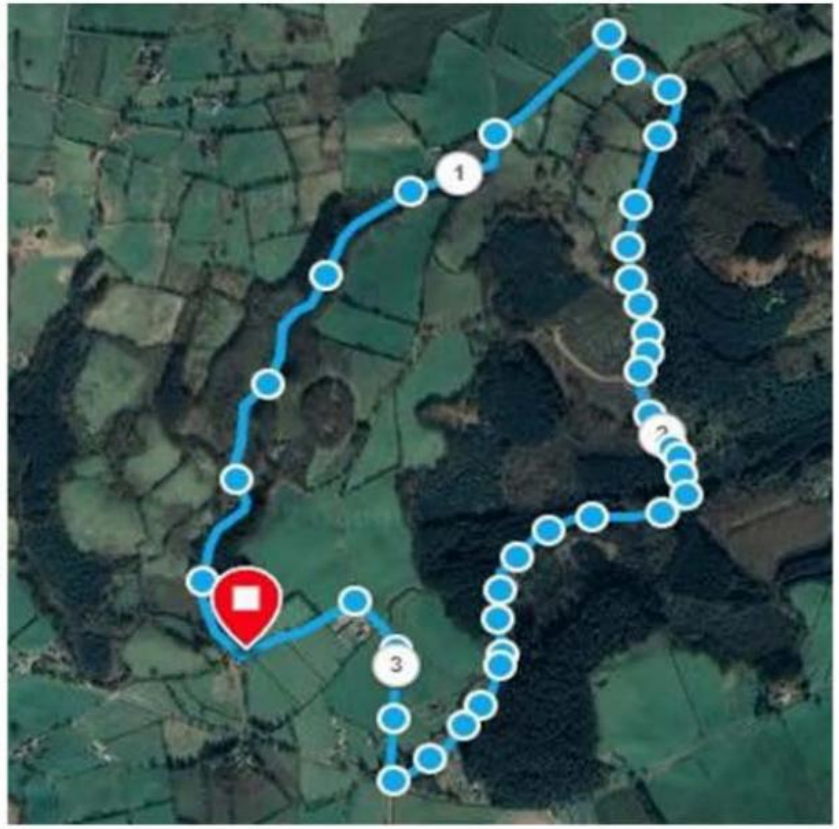


IMAGE 2: KNOCKMANY/LUMFORD'S GLEN TRAIL

WHAT IS LUMFORD'S GLEN?

THE HERITAGE OF LUMFORD'S GLEN

- **RECORDS INDICATE IT LIKELY PREDATES KNOCKMANY AS A BEAUTY AND TOURISM SPOT.**

  LETTERS FROM GEORGIAN IRELAND; THE CORRESPONDENCE OF MARY DELANY 1731-68 INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT

> *Clogher 2 August 1748 "we went to Longford's Glinn (Glen).. The water that runs through it is a little bubbling brook instead of a river… as if frequented by...'nymps and fawns.*

- **THE GRAND JURY MAP OF TYRONE 1813 NAMES LUMFORDS GLEN AND CATARACT (WATERFALL); THE MAP OF 1837 REFERENCES THE GLEN WITH PATHS OUTLINED.**

THE HERITAGE OF LUMFORD'S GLEN

- THE AREA ONCE FORMED PART OF THE CECIL MANOR ESTATE. THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BOUGHT THE LAND IN 1911, DEMOLISHED THE BIG HOUSE AND PLANTED THE CURRENT FOREST AREA.

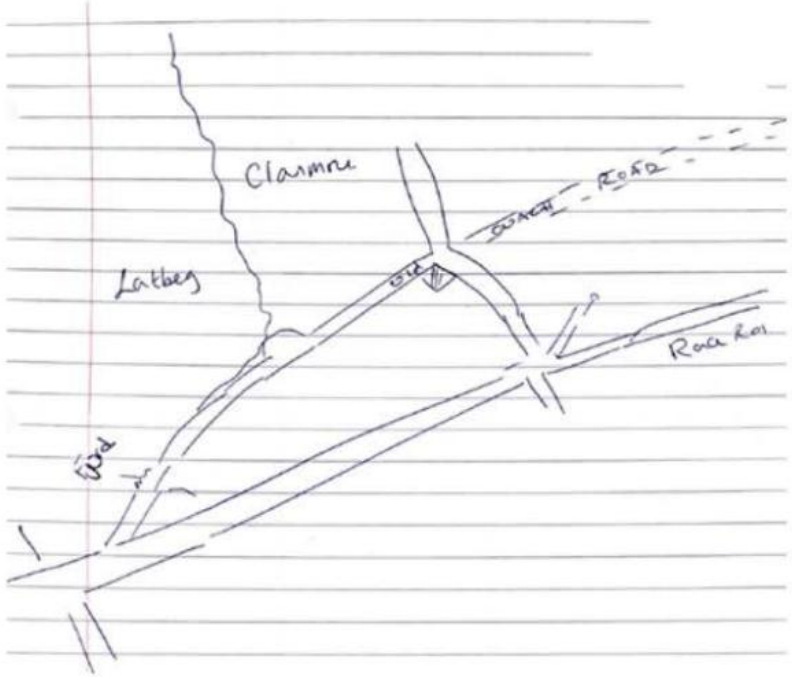
IN 1829 SIR GEORGE SAVILLE RESIDED IN THE AGENTS HOUSE OF THE MANOR ESTATE AND AT THAT STAGE THE TRAILS IN LUMFORD’S GLEN WERE VERY MUCH USED BY GENTRY OF THE AREA AS A WALKWAY AND NATURAL TOURIST ATTRACTION.

THE AREA ALSO FORMS PART OF THE CARLTON TRAIL FROM KNOCKMANY FOREST AND LUMFORD'S GLEN TO SAINT MACARTAN’S CHURCH AUGHER.

THE HERITAGE OF LUMFORD'S GLEN

THE OLD COACH ROAD

Previously known as the Old Coach Road, part of this trail was utilised by people getting the coach from Derry to Dublin which travelled from Newtonsaville along this route, crossing the existing fjord at the road and passing some of the current paths in Knockmany towards Augher, Clara and onwards to Monaghan.



THE WATER

The water flowing from the waterfall divides the Claremore and Latbeg townlands and feeds into the Blackwater catchment in Augher.

WHY SHOULD LUMFORD'S GLEN BE RESTORED ?

01 THE AREA IS A BEAUTIFUL TRAIL OF PATHS AND STEPS TO REACH THE WATERFALL. IT WOULD EXTEND THE CURRENT TRAILS ALREADY IN USE IN KNOCKMANY.

02 THE PATHS AND STEPS ARE ALREADY IN PLACE IT JUST NEEDS CLEARED AND MADE SAFE FOR THE PUBLIC TO ACCESS AND USE AGAIN.

03 THERE IS A HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH LUMFORD'S GLEN WHICH SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO DISAPPEAR.

04 THE GROWTH IN NUMBERS USING KNOCKMANY FOREST SHOWS DEMAND WAS REAL. THE PANDEMIC CREATED A SUSTAINED INTEREST IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITY AND LUMFORD'S GLEN WILL PROVIDE EVEN MORE TRAILS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

05 THE PROJECT ALIGNS WITH THE COMMUNITIES SECTION OF THE MID ULSTER CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES (2020-24) "TO OPEN AND SUSTAIN ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS TO PARTICIPATION IN LEISURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES ....IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES".

06 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY HAVE ALL RESPONDED VERY POSITIVELY AT THE PROSPECT OF BEING ABLE TO VISIT LUMFORD'S GLEN AGAIN.

That's Lumford's Glen and I think the waterfall was known as The Mad Woman's Leap (pronounced lep), probably the White Lady! My children walked in it very often, an adventure, then a picnic, cheap too 😉

Beautiful place hopefully it is restored for the local community to enjoy 🤞🙏

Lumfords Glen used to go here as a child and run past this entry every week it really would love to see it restored

The waterfall in lumfords glen is easy 60ft from when it tips over the edge at the top until it hits the bottom!!! If you heard of this from someone I bet I'd drive an hr to see it..... This is in heart of the clogher valley!!

Great memories with mum and dad in lumfords glen as a child, it was a real adventure! would love to see it restored as no doubt the local community and those from further afield would come to enjoy!

Lumfords Glen happy memories here from a child loved the steps up to the waterfall its a magical place would be lovely to see it opening again for our kids to explore.

Lumfords Glen ... and the mad womens leap 😌 stunning place .. be fabulous to get it restored and accessible again so future generations can experience the beautiful setting just as we all did in our childhood !

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

The local Clogher Valley community and the recently increased footfall in Knockmany would extend to Lumford's Glen

- **Local schools**
  - **Pre, primary and secondary**
- **Sure Start**
- **Local sports teams**
- **Clogher Valley Walking Group and associated local walking groups (inc. Knockatallen, Dungannon, Coneen)**
- **Knockmany Running Club**
- **Knockmany Forest Ramblers**

WHAT DO WE NEED FROM MUDC?

- TO PRIORITISE LUMFORD'S GLEN FOR A SCOPING STUDY
- TO FOLLOW UP WITH PROGRESSING TO A TECHNICAL DESIGN ASSESSMENT OF LUMFORD'S GLEN
- THERE IS ALREADY A LICENSED AGREEMENT IN PLACE BETWEEN MUDC AND FORESTRY FOR LUMFORD'S GLEN

Report on	The regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Melanie Patterson, Principal Environmental Health Officer

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 inform Members of the Health Minister's response to Council's request for better regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Members may recall that previously a paper was presented to September 2022 Development committee on this matter and it was resolved to support the Local Authority Health and Safety Liaison Group's request and agree to send a letter to the Health Minister to ask for better regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland, along with the introduction of a licensing scheme for non-surgical cosmetic procedures (minute reference: D137/22)
2.2	The popularity of aesthetic non-surgical cosmetic treatments has grown rapidly in recent years, with new non-surgical cosmetic procedures continually emerging on the market. Cosmetic treatments are those carried out for non-medical reasons, usually for aesthetic purposes.
2.3	The existing legislation available to Environmental Health Officers in Northern Ireland to regulate this sector is however considered no longer fit for purpose.
2.4	In October 2021 the *Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers (Children) Act 2021* came into force in England making it illegal to administer Botox or a filler by way of injection for a cosmetic purpose to a person under 18 years of age. No such law exists in Northern Ireland.
2.5	The introduction of a national licensing scheme to govern the oversight of advanced aesthetic non-surgical cosmetic treatments was one of seventeen recommendations made by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Beauty, Aesthetics and Wellbeing following their Inquiry into advanced aesthetic non-surgical cosmetic treatments.
2.6	The UK Government recently confirmed its intention to introduce a licensing regime for non-surgical cosmetic procedures to better regulate the cosmetic industry in England through an amendment to the Health and Care Bill.
2.7	The licensing scheme proposed for England will introduce consistent standards that individuals carrying out non-surgical cosmetic procedures such as lip fillers, Botox etc. must meet, as well as hygiene and safety standards for premises. The new licensing scheme will focus on those cosmetic procedures which, if improperly performed, have the potential to cause great harm.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Following a previous committee paper in September 2022, Members will already be aware that there has been a significant rise in the number and type of non-surgical aesthetic procedures available in recent years, with many practitioners performing treatments without being able to evidence appropriate training and the required standards of oversight and supervision.
3.2	The existing legislation available to Environmental Health Officers to regulate this sector in Northern Ireland is considered no longer fit for purpose, with the current legislative controls only covering a very limited range of treatments. As Northern Ireland does not currently have a licensing scheme (like that being introduced in England), many newer, riskier treatments will therefore be unregulated.
3.3	Following the Local Authority Health and Safety Liaison Group's (HSLG) letter seeking Council support in this matter, Members agreed the contents of a letter to be sent to the Health Minister seeking the better regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland. The letter agreed by and sent from Council is set out in Appendix A.
3.4	Following Council's correspondence to the Department of Health, a response was received from the Health Minister on 10th October 2022. The letter which is appended (Appendix B) outlines the role and limitations of the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) in regulating within the cosmetic treatments sector. It also outlines the role of the 'Medicines Regulatory Group' in regulating the provision of Botox treatments.
3.5	In his correspondence the Health Minister also gives a commitment to resume his review into regulatory policy, taking account of the issues which have emerged over recent years. It is hoped that this Review of Regulation will be taken forward during the current mandate of the Assembly.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Human: None anticipated at this juncture.
	Risk Management: None anticipated at this juncture.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	That Members note the contents of this report which sets out the Health Minister's response to Council's letter seeking the better regulation of cosmetic treatments within Northern Ireland.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1 6.2	Appendix A – Council's letter to the Northern Ireland Health Minister. Appendix B – Letter of response from the Northern Ireland Health Minister

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

29 September 2022

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Health Minister
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SQ

Dear Mr Swann

Re: The Regulation of Cosmetic Treatments in Northern Ireland

Due to the continuing popularity and rapid growth of new non-surgical cosmetic procedures that are emerging onto the market, Mid Ulster District Council wishes to highlight its concern regarding the increased risk to public health arising from these substantially unregulated procedures.

Elected Members are aware and concerned that the existing legislative framework available to environmental health departments across Northern Ireland is no longer fit for purpose and does not provide the necessary regulatory toolkit in which to address this area of public health concern.

It is notable that due to the significant rise in the number and type of non-surgical aesthetic procedures available, the UK Government have agreed to amend the Health and Care Bill in England to introduce a licensing scheme for non-surgical cosmetic procedures, to better regulate the cosmetic industry in England.

Whilst it is acknowledged that our environmental health officers currently engage with relevant businesses and utilise existing health and safety legislation and local bye-laws, Council would welcome better regulation of cosmetic treatments and the introduction of a licensing scheme as it is essential to adequately protecting the public's health.

Mid Ulster District Council therefore respectfully requests that your Department gives serious consideration to remedying this legislative shortfall within Northern Ireland.

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Black
Strategic Director for Communities and Place, on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council

Mid Ulster District Council, Circular Road, Dungannon, BT71 6DT

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Mr Ryan Black,
Strategic Director for Communities and Place,
Mid Ulster District Council
Emma.Bell-OBrien@midulstercouncil.org
Ryan.Black@midulstercouncil.org

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: CORR-1492-2022

Date: 10th October 2022

Dear Ryan,

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 September 2022 in relation to a request for better regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland and the introduction of a licensing scheme for non-cosmetic procedures.

Under the Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) regulate clinics providing certain laser or intense pulsed light cosmetic treatments and these providers are required to undergo the appropriate training etc. However, those carrying out non-surgical cosmetic procedures/treatments such as Botox or dermal fillers are not required to register with RQIA. There are no qualifications legally required to administer Botox or dermal fillers.

My Department's Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) carried out an enforcement and compliance programme into the provision of Botox over a 6 month period. Initial investigations and assessments have been conducted into over 200 individual providers of Botulinum Toxin Type A. Shortcomings in prescribing processes and breaches of advertising legislation have been identified. Those in breach of legislation have been issued formal advice and warning notices where appropriate and have moved into legal compliance in the vast majority of cases investigated. In addition, formal referrals have been made to professional bodies, e.g. GMC where appropriate. The MRG continues to monitor the situation.

My Department is aware of the changing health and social care environment, notably around cosmetic treatments, and has carried out a fundamental review of health and social care regulatory framework. My officials have developed a new draft regulatory policy that includes the principles of regulation, along with the broad scope of services to be regulated and the proposal that the regulator should have wider powers of enforcement etc.

This work has been the first phase of the process before moving on to phase 2. As part of my Department's response to the pandemic the launch of the consultation on phase 1 was delayed. Before a draft policy is consulted upon it will be subject to further review taking into account any additional lessons from the pandemic and any other regulatory and quality issues that have emerged over the past few years.

It is my intention that a Review of Regulation will be taken forward during the current mandate of the Assembly. This Review of Regulation will also include an assessment of current standards in order to consider whether any further assurances are required.

Yours sincerely

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health

Report on	Leisure Participation
Date of Meeting	10th November 2022
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Leigh Gilmore, Participation Manager

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 progress and the continuation of the Active Recreation Plan which encompasses the Active Leisure Programme and Summer Programmes. • Active Leisure Programme Sept 2022 – March 2023 • Summer Programme July – Aug 2022.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Previously in September 2021, Members considered the Council's Participation team ongoing activity and resolved to approve a new pilot programme as part of the annual Active Lifestyle Plan (minute reference: D161/21)
2.2	The over-arching aim is to ensure that targeted increases in active participation are achieved across the Mid Ulster District among traditionally underrepresented groups.
2.3	This Active Lifestyle Programme incorporates a range of activities targeted at Older People, those Living with a Disability and Pre and Post Natal.
2.4	The activities will take place across the District throughout 22/23 with opportunities to develop further programmes and initiatives that seek to provide greater opportunities to get physically active.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Participation unit within Health Leisure and Wellbeing service area wishes to increase opportunities for Mid Ulster District Council residents to participate in a range of scheduled structured and non-structured recreational activities and to meet objectives as set out with the Council's Community Plan 2017-2027 along with contributing towards the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan and continuing to encourage more residents to get active.
3.2	During Summer 2022, the £1 summer activity programme for under 18's was re-introduced during July and August with 6,040 participants availing of discounted swims, soft play, teen gym, athletics track, tennis, sports pitches, golf driving range and short par 3 course. Further details are enclosed within the appendix.

3.3	Due to the success of these initiatives that target poverty, community healthy and cost of living crisis, discussion regarding continuing these discounted activities throughout the rest of the year are to take place.
3.4	Summer camps and summer schemes were held during July and August 2022 with 1,300 spaces available over the summer.
3.5	Members are reminded that any customers that are currently enrolled in the Council's leisure household membership scheme can avail of 1 week's attendance at their chosen summer camp for their children as part of their membership. Also available where, golf lessons, water-based activities including swimming lessons and NPLQ qualifications. Further details are enclosed within the appendix.
3.6	Overall summer activities created 11,000 activity opportunities and generated income of approx. £30,000.00.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Planned activity from existing revenue budgets for 2022/2023.
	Human: Officers time to co-ordinate, implement and monitor the planned activities. Delivered within existing resources with support from specialised coaches via appointed activity providers (costs of which can be derived via existing revenue budgets for 2022/2023 and within Council procurement guidelines).
	Risk Management: Considered in line with Council Policies and Procedures.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Considered in line with Council Policies and Procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: Considered in line with Council Policies and Procedures.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To note the progress of the Active Recreation Plan Sept 2022 – March 2023 and Summer 2022 programmes and the planned continuation of these type of activities for 2023.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix 1 – Detailed Active Recreation Plan Sept 2022 – March 2023 and Summer 2022

Appendix 1

Active Lifestyle Programme Sept 22 – Mar 23

Cookstown Leisure Centre	**Age / Day / Time**
Post Natal Yoga A class for Mum to build strength and reconnect after baby. Exercises are tailored to the postnatal phase and designed to help you recover, release tension, and ease yourself back to exercise. (Baby is welcome along).	16+ Tuesday 9.30am - 10.30am
Ti Chi This low impact exercise focuses on a series of slow and gentle movements that strengthen your body and improve mobility.	18 - 64 / 65+ Thursday 12.00noon - 1.00pm
Strength & Balance An exercise programme designed to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and balance, and maintain bone health.	65+ Friday 3.30pm - 4.30pm
Dungannon Leisure Centre	**Age / Day / Time**
Neurodiversity Club A multi-activity club focusing on facilitating primary school aged children with Neurodiversity needs to do things at their own pace and to enjoy movement and fun games.	6 - 18 years Monday 5.30pm - 6.30pm
Post Natal Yoga A class for Mum to build strength and reconnect after baby. Exercises are tailored to the postnatal phase and designed to help you recover, release tension, and ease yourself back to exercise. (Baby is welcome along).	16+ Tuesday 11.15am - 12.15pm
Ti Chi This low impact exercise focuses on a series of slow and gentle movements that strengthen your body and improve mobility.	18 -64 / 65+ Thursday 10am -11am
Water Aerobics Offering a wide range of therapeutic and health benefits with low impact, high energy exercise.	16+ Thursday 12.15pm - 1.15pm
Strength & Balance An exercise programme designed to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and balance, and maintain bone health.	65+ Friday 1.30pm - 2.30pm
Greenvale Leisure Centre	**Age / Day / Time**
Neurodiversity Club A multi-activity club focusing on facilitating primary school aged children with Neurodiversity needs to do things at their own pace and to enjoy movement and fun games.	6 - 18 years Monday 5pm - 6pm
Ti Chi This low impact exercise focuses on a series of slow and gentle movements that strengthen your body and improve mobility.	18 - 64 / 65+ Wednesday

Greenvale Leisure Centre	Age / Day / Time
	11.30am - 12.30pm
Beginners Yoga Perfect for beginners or regular practitioners of yoga. Simple movements guided by your breath in order to prepare your mind for meditation.	16+ Thursday 10am - 11am
Strength & Balance An exercise programme designed to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and balance, and maintain bone health.	65+ Thursday 12noon - 1pm
Water Aerobics Offering a wide range of therapeutic and health benefits with low impact, high energy exercise.	16+ Thursday 2.30pm - 3.15pm
Active aging 65+ activities A multi-sport club focusing on activities for older people to include pickleball and walking football.	18 - 64 / 65+ Thursday 2:30 - 4:30pm

Maghera Leisure Centre	Age / Day / Time
Neurodiversity Club A multi-activity club focusing on facilitating primary school aged children with Neurodiversity needs to do things at their own pace and to enjoy movement and fun games.	6 - 18 years Monday 3.30pm - 4.30pm
Ti Chi This low impact exercise focuses on a series of slow and gentle movements that strengthen your body and improve mobility.	18 - 64 / 65+ Wed 9.30 - 10.30am
Strength & Balance An exercise programme designed to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and balance, and maintain bone health.	65+ Thursday 10.30am -11.30am
Post Natal Yoga A class for Mum to build strength and reconnect after baby. Exercises are tailored to the postnatal phase and designed to help you recover, release tension, and ease yourself back to exercise. (Baby is welcome along).	16+ Thursday 11.45am - 12.45pm

MUSA	Age / Day / Time
Neurodiversity Club A multi-activity club focusing on facilitating primary school aged children with Neurodiversity needs to do things at their own pace and to enjoy movement and fun games.	6 - 18 years Tuesday 5pm - 6pm
Disability Hub A multi activity club focusing on facilitating children and adults with disabilities to participate in various activities.	6 - 18 years Saturday 10.30am - 11.30am

Moneymore Recreation Centre	Age / Day / Time
Mums and Tums A post-pregnancy programme involving walking, jogging and	0-5 yrs / 16 + Wednesday

Moneymore Recreation Centre	Age / Day / Time
resistance based exercise using own body weight and equipment.	10.30am - 11.30am
Strength and Balance An exercise programme designed to help boost confidence, improve flexibility, mobility, strength and balance, and maintain bone health.	65+ Wednesday 11.30am -12.30pm

Summer 2022: Schemes / Camps and £1 Activities

Activity	Target Group	Location	Session
Summer Scheme			
Summer Scheme 1,040 spaces	8yrs-11yrs	CLC DLC GLC MSA MLC	18th July 2022 - 12th Aug 2022
	6yrs-11yrs		25th July – 12th Aug
		MRC	18th July 2022 - 29th July & 8th – 12th Aug (No scheme 1st – 5th Aug)
Summer Camps			
Gymnastics 160 spaces	5 -11	GLC	4th – 8th July
	5 -11	MLC	18th – 22nd July
	5 -11	MRC	1st – 5th
	5 -11	CLC	15th – 19th August
Tennis 60 spaces	7-14	MUSA	20th – 22nd July
	7-14	D Park	3rd – 5th August
	7-14	MRC	17th – 19th August
Canoeing 36 spaces	11-16	Ballyronan	4th -8th July 25th – 29th July 8th – 12th August
Golf 36 spaces	7+	TGC	6th – 8th July 14th – 15th August 26th – 28th July 9th – 11th August 17th – 18th August 23rd – 26th August
£1 Summer Activities			
£1 swims £1 soft play £1 teen gym £1 courts £1 golf par 3 & driving range £1 athletics £1 tennis courts £1 3G pitches	Under 18	Across all sites	1st July – 31st August

In addition to the activities detailed above during July and August, those Leisure Centres with swimming pools (Cookstown, Dungannon & Greenvale) hosted a wide range of water-based activities which were bookable via Leisure Hub and at facility receptions, including:

- Intensive swimming lessons
- National Pool Lifeguard Qualification
- Rookie Lifeguard

Industrial strike action did cause come disruption to these services in affected facilities.

Report on	1. Christmas 2022 Town Activities 2. ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022) 3. Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 Nov 2022) 4. Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022 5. Hidden Heritage 6. Sperrins Hillwalking Programme 7. Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services
Date of Meeting	10 November 2022
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes

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 provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	**Christmas 2022 Town Activities** In an effort to create greater festive ambience and lift people's spirits in our 5 largest shopping towns, officers have organised street entertainment, music, etc on Saturdays leading up to Christmas.
2.2	**ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)** Over the past number of years, a group of eight Councils from north and south (as listed below) have provided a financial contribution towards ICBAN to support their work; Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils. For the current year 2022/23 Mid Ulster District Council have in place a Service Level Agreement with ICBAN, outlining the projects to be undertaken.

2.3	**Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 Nov 2022)** Mid Ulster Enterprise Week is now in its fourth year. The activities this year includes mix of in person events and online webinars encompassing a range of issues pertinent to all types of businesses, set within the context of the current economic climate.
2.4	**Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022** Council continues to support the recovery of the tourism industry within Mid Ulster, and to extend the reach of the 'Embrace A Giant Spirit' campaign. While the autumn/winter period is traditionally seen as the shoulder season for the tourism industry, this time of year offers some unique opportunities for Mid Ulster to continue to position the region as a visitor destination. It also allows time to build on the campaign work, which has taken place in both the spring and summer periods 2022 and to continue to promote the new 'Visit Mid Ulster' website and to build engagement on the associated social media channels. In so doing, the campaign will further consolidate the Unwinding Time brand, while also being used as a key vehicle for promoting OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory as it enters what is its most significant period as a dark sky site.
2.5	**Hidden Heritage** Hidden heritage tours are organised annually across the District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites and destinations on their doorstep, which often go unnoticed. All tours departed from the Burnavon Theatre, Cookstown with pick up points in other locations. The cost to attend each tour was £20 pp, which included coach transport, tour guide, entry into the attraction (if applicable) and refreshments.
2.6	**Sperrins Hillwalking Programme** The Sperrins Partnership is a joint initiative involving the four Sperrins Councils with the purpose of delivering on a number of agreed action plans in a co-operative, co-ordinating manner under the themes of Tourism, Heritage, Infrastructure and Environment. The four Councils involved in the Partnership are Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council.
2.7	**Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services** In late 2021, the 11 Council SOLACE Economic Recovery Group (led and facilitated by Belfast City Council) established a Working Group to progress research into options for the future delivery of entrepreneurship, start up and growth support. Research had identified there is a case for change. There are shortfalls in NI's business start-up performance (relative to other UK regions/ the UK average position) that create the need to review/reposition the support infrastructure, with a view to a step change in performance. Furthermore, the enterprise ecosystem tends to be complex and difficult to navigate meaning that those seeking support often find it difficult to get the right help at the right time. In

	turn creating the need for a more effective ecosystem of support that offers greater connectivity and simplification for clients. SQW Consultants were appointed (again led by Belfast CC) to undertake an options analysis and subsequently, developed a Business Case detailing a potential future operating model, outlining the potential scale of the financial requirements for Councils to consider and also to inform positioning and engagement with DfE, DfC and other potential funders/contributors, including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**Christmas 2022 Town Activities** In the 5 main towns, there will be street entertainment on Saturdays from 12noon – 3pm from Saturday 26 November until Saturday 17 December 2022. This will include characters in costumes walking around the towns greeting children and handing out sweets, live musical entertainment and face painting. The purpose of this is create a little festive cheer for shoppers / families in the run up to Christmas. This will be in addition to the traditional Christmas switch-on events in the 5 towns to be held on; • Dungannon Switch on event 26 November from 1pm – 8pm • Cookstown Switch on event Friday 25 November from 6.30pm – 8pm • Magherafelt Christmas Market Saturday 26 November from 11am – 10pm & Sunday 27 November from 1.30pm – 6.00pm. • Magherafelt Switch on event Saturday 26 November 7.30pm – 8pm • Coalisland Switch on event Sunday 4 December from 1pm – 7pm • Maghera Switch on event Saturday 3 December 3pm - 6pm
3.2	**ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)** The report attached on **Appendix 1** provides an update on ICBAN's work across the areas outlined in ICBAN's SLA with Mid Ulster District Council. On review of the 6 month progress report, the work is on track across all areas.
3.3	**Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022)** Mid Ulster's fourth Enterprise Week will take place from Monday 14 to Friday 18 November 2022, with a series of online webinars and in-person events to support local businesses, from start-up through to growth. Eleven events are being staged across the week, to build digital capacity, sales, help businesses continue to adapt to and explore new ways of working, with the help of digital/social media and guidance on managing mental health and people. The full programme of events during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week is attached on **Appendix 2** If Members wish to attend any of the events, please register via the following link; www.midulstercouncil.org/EnterpriseWeek

3.4 **Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022**

The campaign will position Mid Ulster as an ideal staycation destination for NI domestic markets and a key gateway destination for ROI markets, centring on Mid Ulster's unique offering of as NI only Dark Sky Park which provides a chance to escape and get away from it all. The campaign will showcase our Autumn walks, dark sky, fabulous food and drink, places to stay and spa breaks.

The Council wishes to use a broad range of channels for the campaign to reach the above target segments, with an emphasis on those which are digital. The campaign will provide an opportunity to further grow the new Visit Mid Ulster social media channels with a clear and consistent call to action that will drive traffic to the Visit Mid Ulster website.

The campaign will use the following channels:

Channels	**NI Domestic Market**	**ROI Market**
Digital Advertising incorporating the new TV advert.	√	√
Local Radio Advertising / Cool FM with daily competitions	√	
Social Media Content using Visit Mid Ulster social media channels as primary source and other Council owned channels as secondary sources where appropriate.	√	√
Influencer Partnership	√	√

The campaign will run from 24th October to 7th November 2022 to maximise opportunities to tap into the school holiday planning, half term day tripping and staycation market readiness.

3.5 **Hidden Heritage**

The 2022 Hidden Heritage tours proved to be extremely successful allowing visitors the opportunity to sample unique visitor experiences whereby they could step back in time and discover what is on their doorstep. An additional tour, Poetry and Prayer was included within the series.

- Killymoon Castle All-American WW2 Tour - Saturday 18th June 2022, 9.30am -2.30pm

This tour was fully booked. The group were met by Lady Molesworth for morning refreshments before being led on tour of the Castle. They we then given a tour of the newly enhanced Cellars by Private Tony Vickery who was stationed at Killymoon Castle during WW2. This new experience helped raise awareness and resulted in Killymoon being able to deliver additional WW2 tours during the rest of the summer.

- A Village of Ages - Saturday 2nd July 2022,

	An historical walking tour of Donaghmore Village was scheduled however the date was changed to Saturday 17th September to secure living history actors. Unfortunately, this was cancelled at short notice as it coincided with the official mourning period of Queen Elizabeth II. This tour will now take place in the 2023 series. • Poetry and Prayers – Thursday 7th July, 1.30pm to 6.00pm This was a Spiritual Tour around Lough Neagh and tour was fully booked. The group were led on a spiritual journey, during which they discovered the rich monastic tradition found along the shores of Lough Neagh and visited Ardboe Cross, Washing Bay and Benburb Priory. The success has resulted in securing further bookings for the tour guides who devised this unique experience. Customer comment: "An excellent guide in Jim, who provided lots of interesting information at each venue, poetry and song! Three wonderful talking points in Ardboe, Washingbay and Benburb! The food was delicious and a perfect ending to our day. I thought the group gelled very well too and we had some opportunities to have private chats." • The Emigrant's Walk, Maghera Saturday 8th October, 9.30am – 3.15pm The last of the hidden heritage took place with Cathy O'Neill who led the group up Carntogher Mountain, following in the footsteps of our ancestors, where the views stretched across the hills. Customer comment: "I really enjoyed the Emigrants Walk. It was such a satisfying experience in so many ways for my mind and heart and senses. Historically and academically interesting, emotionally touching, the sight and smell of the beautiful landscape, the good fun and humour and ease of the walking company, the delightful and unique burn of a nip of Poitin on the mountain under a rock skelp. The comfort of tasty soup and bread at the end. I loved it all. I have been telling my family and friends about it. Thank you so much for putting the day on and your warm and friendly hosting of us all". Each tour catered for 20 people maximum at the cost of £20 per person. All tours sold out and the businesses ran these experiences separately to the public during the summer months, total attendees 60 people.
3.6	**Sperrins Hillwalking Programme** The four aforementioned Councils appointed Far & Wild to deliver a 2 day Walking Programme to promote the Sperrins region as a walking destination and to develop outdoor recreation for the local community and visitors, resulting in increased participation and ultimately improve physical and mental health. The Mid Ulster leg of the event took place on the weekend of 24th & 25th September 2022 with 85 walkers participating across the two days (see images on **Appendix 3**). The four walks showcased the local heritage and the walking/countryside experience taking in Slieve Gallion, Davagh Forest and Moydamlaght and local tour guides, Embrace Tours, B Adams and S Clarke. Each day ended with entertainment provided by the local community and light refreshments at Shepherds Rest, Draperstown and Rath Dubh Community Centre.

	A survey carried out to evaluate the programme and assist with planning for next year reported that: the Challenging Walk to Slieve Gallion sold out; camping and caravanning was most popular choice of accommodation; Facebook and Visit Mid Ulster website proved most effective promotional tool.
3.7	**Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services** Following the completion of the Outline Business Case, a preferred option was identified, which proposes support to be delivered in four key stages. These represent a continuum of support from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter, which may lead to transition to Invest NI supports and/or acceleration of high-growth potential at any point. These are working titles at present (there may be future decisions about positioning and branding that could shape these in advance of any proposed roll out): • **Engage** This will focus on engaging individuals in pre-start activities (outreach, awareness raising etc.) and lighter touch support for 'Volume Starts' (sub-VAT, self-employed etc.) • **Foundation** More intensive supports geared to establishment of 'employer enterprises' (Higher Value / VAT+ Potential starts) focused on start-ups that commit to be employer enterprises, ie, paid staff via PAYE (beyond the business owner and VAT registration), by an agreed timeframe. It excludes the self-employed and HMRC registered business with no employees. • **Enabling Growth** Level of supports aligned to growth aspirations and potential. This will be available to existing businesses, as well as those coming through this 'Start-Up Pipeline' It should be noted that a client journey may be linear e.g. from foundation, through growth to scaling. Equally it may not be linear – a business may want to move from start up straight to accelerating at scale – (if high growth potential is identified). Existing businesses could join at growth (if they meet eligibility criteria). Also, individuals may exit at engage/pre-start, if they have had sufficient support to achieve their entrepreneurial ambitions. An 11-Council Working Group is now working on the delivery of the preferred option, which involves the development of a number of workstreams for programme components, to support a future bid(s) for funding. These include a future procurement strategy and cost options analysis for procuring the different programme delivery strands, the development of a cross Council central management information system and the development of a new brand. The Outline Business Case was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) UK Shared Prosperity Fund team. They have responded to advise that they are considering the provision of funds in the current

	financial year towards assisting Councils' technical assistance requirements (to include the procurement strategy, brand development and MIS), as well as allocating resources towards a potential business grants programme in late 2022/23 (depending on funding being available). They have further advised they are considering the allocation of funding at significant levels in 2023/24 and 2025/25 towards the activities outlined in the Business Case, subject to the submission of a detailed proposal from the 11 Councils and a number of conditions, including: • Councils being required to continue to make a contribution in line with their Statutory obligations. It is anticipated this would be an average of what Council were contributing to NIBSUP + programmes match. As soon as this is clarified, members will be updated. • Inclusion of dedicated support activity for underrepresented groups, which differs from the Labour Market Partnership, which has no provision for entrepreneurial support. • Further development of outcomes and objectives. An 11-Council Working Group is continuing to liaise with other business support agencies who may also provide a contribution to elements of the new programme. Once a detailed Proposal has been developed this will be brought back to Development Committee to consider. It will include what funding opportunities exist and the level of match funding required and for the Council to decide if they will be part of this or not.
	Other Considerations
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: **Christmas 2022 Town Activities -** The additional Christmas activities in the 5 towns will cost in the region of £15,000 to be paid out of the existing economic budget. **ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)** Provision was made in 2022/23 Economic Development budget for ICBAN to receive funding of £15,000 per annum. **Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 November 2022)** Provision was made in 2022/23 Economic Development budget circ. £28,000 **Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022 -** £11,000 in respect of 2022/23 expenditure. **Hidden Heritage** Provision of £2,000 was made in existing 2022/23 Tourism Development budget.

	Sperrins Hillwalking Programme Provision was made in the 2022/23 Tourism Development budget of £3,500. **Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services** Level of Council match funding to be identified by Officers following development of more detailed proposals and response from DLUHC UK Shared Prosperity Fund Team
	Human: **Christmas 2022 Town Activities** Officers time **ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)** Officers time **Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 November 2022)** Officers time **Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022** Officers time. **Hidden Heritage** Officer time **Sperrins Hillwalking Programme** Officer time **Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services** Officer time
	Risk Management:
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:
	Rural Needs Implications:
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
	It is recommended that Members;
5.1	**Christmas 2022 Town Activities** **Note** update.
5.2	**ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)** **Note** update report from ICBAN.

5.3	**Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022)** **Note** details enclosed for Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2022.
5.4	**Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022** **Note** content of the Autumn Campaign.
5.5	**Hidden Heritage** **Note** content of report.
5.6	**Sperrins Hillwalking Programme** **Note** content of the report.
5.7	**Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services** i) **Note** Mid Ulster District Council is participating in an 11 Council collaborative Working Group which is developing a proposal to the DLUHC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to request resources towards technical assistance to support work to progress research into the future delivery of business start provision and, potentially, support for a business grant programme in early 2023; and, ii) **Note** that the 11 Councils are developing a Bid for funding (led by Belfast City Council), based on the Outline Business Case for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services, which seeks to provide a continuum of business support, from start-up to growth in 2023/24 and 2024/25. A detailed Proposal will be brought back to Council's Development Committee at the appropriate juncture to consider if Mid Ulster Council wishes to be part of this new Programme and if so, consider what match funding may be needed from Council.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix 1 – ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022) **Appendix 2** - Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022) Events Programme **Appendix 3 -** Sperrins Hillwalking Programme – Mid Ulster Event Photos

Appendix 1

ICBAN Progress on Mid Ulster SLA Projects

(01 April – 30 September 2022)

ACTION
Implementation of the 'Framework of Regional Priorities' strategy for the Irish Central Border Region

- Promote and advocate on same, targeting key stakeholders in government, political, community and business sectors etc.
- Engage in relevant public consultations in both jurisdictions, using the FRP strategy as the basis for submissions.
- Develop a pipeline of new projects, aligned across the 5 key Pillars / Themes, and targeting opportunities for cross-border and regional development funding including but not limited to Peace Plus, Shared Island Initiative, and Levelling-up / Shared Prosperity:
    - Initiate and review new project opportunities and initiatives, including those linked to the already identified Emergent Catalyst Projects.
    - Progress the development of these new project opportunities and initiatives (under the direction of the ICBAN Management Board).

ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

ICBAN continues to promote the FRP. Meetings have been held with a range of key stakeholders, including all member Councils' Senior Management and local political representatives, Shared Island Unit, SEUPB, Oireachtas Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, Institute of Technology Sligo, FE Colleges, Waterways Ireland, and InterTrade Ireland etc.

Delivery of the strategy is a key focus for the organisation. A Sub-Committee for the Implementation of the FRP has been established with the aim of supporting the overall work programme of the ICBAN Management Board, in overseeing the implementation of the Framework of Regional Priorities (FRP) strategy. It is intended that this Sub-Committee, along with the Council Senior Officers Forum, will help bring an energy and impetus to the delivery of the regional priorities.

These structures will assume an oversight role that will 1) support and direct the operational efforts of staff, and 2) advise the Management Board on decisions relating to delivery of the FRP.

The remit of the new FRP Sub-Committee for Implementation includes:

- helping identify and apply for financial supports for the implementation plans,
- directing promotional plans,
- reviewing research and reports,
- enhancing engagement and buy-in from member Councils,
- monitoring the operational programme,
- and putting in place structures for engaging other regional and national stakeholders.

It is anticipated that the Sub-committee would engage with stakeholders on key project developments, advocacy initiatives, and related issues for attention.

2 Joint Meetings of the FRP Sub-Committee and Council Senior Officers Forum have been held on (total number of participants serving on these groupings is 22):

6th January 2022 - presentation and discussion with Mr. Donal Sheehan of the BRIDE EIP
21st June 2022 - presentation of key findings of QUB Intern Research on the 'The Ulster Canal Regeneration Project :Re-imagining the Central Border Region's Tourism Infrastructure'

2 separate meetings of the CSO Forum :
- 24th November 2021
- 15th September 2022.

ICBAN is working to develop projects and identify potential funding sources, under the five pillars of the FRP:

- **Human Capital Pillar – Education, Skills & Training**

Priority Projects between educational institutions
This group was established in December 2021 to bring together senior staff of the Region's educational institutions, including the South West College, Southern Regional College, the Atlantic Technological University and the three local Education & Training Boards (ETBs).

Steering Group meetings have been held on 29th June 2022 and 30th September 2022. Reports were provided to ICBAN on the progress in developing projects within the four priority areas of: Sustainable Construction, Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, Apprenticeships - Professional & Technical Pathways, and Digital Inclusion.

- **Natural Capital – Greening the Region**

Climate Friendly Farming / Biodiversity
18 people attended the meeting held on 27th June in Palace Demesne, Armagh, including Mid Ulster District Council's Biodiversity Officer. A working group has been set up: the first meeting of this group was held on 26th July 2022 in Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Enniskillen. The working group is now developing two Expressions of Interest around hedgerows, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration for consideration under Investment Area 5.1 of PEACE Plus.

- **Liveable Communities**

Ringforts Projects Development
An outcome is awaited on this submitted application for Shared Island Development Funding. Leitrim County Council are keen to examine opportunities to redevelop the ancient ringwork at Killahurk near Carrigallen, through learning from the example of works to Tullahogue Fort, near Cookstown that were completed by Mid Ulster District Council and the Department for Communities (NI). Partners include Department for Communities (NI) and National Monuments Service (RoI).

- **Infrastructure & Connectivity**

Ulster Canal Feasibility Study
ICBAN also assisted MUDC and other Partner Councils in the development of a project proposal to the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding call for a Feasibility Study for the development of the Ulster Canal northwards.

Greenways Networks
A response was submitted to the AECOM consultation on new plans for an all-island National Cycle Network. ICBAN contacted all member Councils to share the response submitted to encourage that similar points be made by Councils in the Central Border Region's wider

interests. ICBAN also engaged with Sustrans NI on same relating to the Greenways study being completed for Department for Infrastructure (NI).

- **Economic Development**

Mountain biking

Potential ideas for a regional cross-border project have been discussed with Coillte when visiting the Coolanney Mountain Bike Trail on 19th June. ICBAN had responded to correspondence from Coillte on this and await the next initiative from Coillte.

- ***Consultation responses/engaging with stakeholders:***

During this period ICBAN has been active in engaging with SEUPB and agencies on plans for the delivery of PEACE Plus programme elements. These have included with, Urban Foresights on Smart Towns & Villages', RSM Consultancy on tourism theme, and Grant Thornton on Clusters. There has been regular contact with SEUPB on programme development updates and these have been shared with member Councils and other stakeholders to help prepare opportunities for the Region.

A response is currently being prepared for submission to Ireland's Fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) by the closing date of 9th November 2022.

ACTION
Regional Literary Tourism – Objectives:

- Close the BLITZ / Spot-Lit project and share learning through a 'Transformative Guide' with member Councils including Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC).
- Drawing on learning from both the BLITZ and Digi-2-Market projects, examine opportunities for the development of literary tourism using immersive technologies, through the 'N-Lite' preparatory project.

ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

The BLITZ / Spot-Lit project has helped to address the untapped potential of literary tourism across four regions of the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) territory – the West of Ireland, Northern Ireland and counties Cavan & Monaghan, Dumfries & Galloway in Scotland and Kainuu, Finland.

The project is now closed, and final reports have been submitted.

'N-LITE' Bridging Project

Work on the new INTERREG NPA funded Bridging Project 'N-Lite' has completed and the final report was submitted on 30th September 2022. ICBAN worked with the Western Development Commission, the Regional Council of Kainuu (Finland) and Trondheim (Norway) on this project.

The N-LITE proposal comprises an assessment of Immersive Technologies' potential to promote LT products and services and an evaluation of an EU Northern Literary Tourism Platform, developed in collaboration with national tourism agencies.

ICBAN's status as a UK registered company means that we cannot participate in any delivery project in this EU INTERREG funding call. We do though have access to the final application which could form the basis for a similar project to be developed to another fund.

ACTION
Broadband Infrastructure – Objectives:

- To utilise the previously completed reports for continued advocacy on broadband issues and inadvertent roaming charges.
- Close the Digi-2-Market project and share learning with member Councils including Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC).

ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report into 'Broadband Investment in Northern Ireland,' which was initiated by ICBAN, has been published. ICBAN has asked the Minister for Finance, the NIAO and the Stormont Public Accounts Committee to oversee the implementation of the report findings, including the clawback of c.£14 million of funding that was granted to BT**.**

ACTION

EU Exit – Objectives:

- Assist the Council in further exploring the opportunities and challenges of the EU Exit.
- Continue to deliver submissions and make representations drawing on the previously completed reports as evidence.

ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

ICBAN keeps abreast of Brexit developments, through monitoring of current affairs and governmental updates. The organisation has been submitting evidence to a number of committees and consultations and uses such opportunities to make representations on behalf of the Central Border Region.

Having identified an absence of community consultation on both sides of the border, ICBAN together with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) have to date published four reports on the impact of Brexit on local communities. There have been over 2,100 responses to these research initiatives to date. ICBAN has ensured those voices were heard by disseminating the reports to those involved in high-level negotiations, including the EU's negotiating team and the UK and Irish governments.

ICBAN and QUB have developed a proposal to partner on a fifth such research project that was submitted to the Department of Foreign Affair's Reconciliation Fund by the closing date of 20th September 2022. The project entitled '*Borders Beyond Brexit - Experiences of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Irish Central Border Region'* is a research study that proposes to collect evidence on how changes as a result of Brexit are experienced and perceived by those directly involved in cross-border cooperation, where problems and opportunities lie, and what the prospects of development or regression in such cooperation are. It will be addressed chiefly through eight organisational case studies, along with an online survey giving a voice to at least 250 citizens. The findings will be shared with key influencers and those with direct roles in implementing and monitoring Brexit.

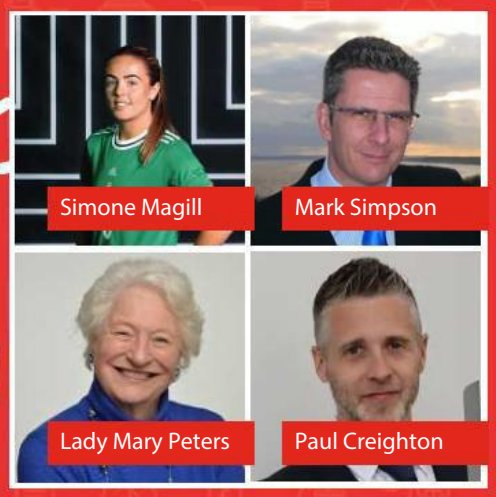
APPENDIX 2

Mid Ulster Enterprise Week

14-18 Nov 2022

Adapt, Evolve, Overcome

Register Online



MON 14th November

The 'Kick-off'! Resilience Means Business

10:00am - 11:00am (refreshments from 9.30am)

Venue: The Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown

The world of sports develops athletes' ability to recover from setbacks and withstand pressures that are rivalled by no other industry. Who better to hear from to inspire and inform your own resilience than four of Northern Ireland's brilliant sportspeople? Join Lady Mary Peters, Simone Magill, Darren Cave and Kieran McGeary for a panel discussion like no other, as they touch on the resilience they have had to learn from their experiences and how these skills can be applied to the business industry.

The Power of Video

2.00pm - 3.00pm

Hosted on: Zoom

Speaker: Aislínn Higgins, Dream Media Ireland

There is no business like showbusiness! Whether you are in front of or behind the camera, it's time to embrace the power of video for your business. Video can help you reach a new target market and acquire new customers, as well as engage and inform your current audience. Join Aislínn Higgins, Founder of Dream Media Ireland, to learn how to create engaging and informative short form video content for TikTok and Instagram.

Friday 18th November

PRIZE

If you attend any of our events, your name will automatically go forward into a prize draw with the opportunity to win some great prizes. The more events you attend, the more opportunity you have of winning a prize! Winners will be announced on Friday 18th November

Prizes from the Support Local - Mid Ulster Gift Card event will also be drawn on Friday.

All events are free to attend.
Register at:

midulstercouncil.org/enterpriseweek

*All information is correct at time of publication. Please confirm details online when registering.

TUE 15th November

Instagram & Facebook Reels – Social Media Workshop for Tourism Businesses

10am - 1pm (refreshments served)

Venue: The Tower Room, Hill of the O'Neill Dungannon

If you are unable to attend this event, it will also take place in Magherafelt on Thursday 17th.

This workshop explores the process in creating video content to upload to Instagram Reels and Facebook. We will show attendees how to plan, storyboard and record content using their mobile phones, and how to edit content, to publish online, using editing app InShot. We will also show examples of the benefits of Facebook/Instagram Ads to promote content online.
All attendees must bring their mobile phones for this workshop.

Economic Landscape: Preparing for Economic Volatility

12.30pm - 1.30pm (refreshments from 12.00pm)

Venue: The Gables, Dungannon

With the world heading into uncertain territory, the cost of living crisis is set to affect individuals and businesses alike. Join Mark Simpson as he discusses how businesses can best prepare for Economic Volatility with Feargal McCormack, PKF-FPM, Gavin Kennedy, G&J Kennedy Project Management and Mark Cunningham, Bank of Ireland, who will provide top tips on accessing finance to maintain your business.

Leading Ladies - Their Journey To Success

7.00pm - 8.00pm (refreshments from 6.30pm)

Venue: The Terrace Hotel, Magherafelt

Join our host, Denise Murtagh, in conversation with 3 local female entrepreneurs; Rachel Molloy, Café No. 47, Leona Morrow, LM Transport Consultant and Mona Houston, The Fashion House. Hear how it all started for this inspirational group of women. Learn what motivates and inspires them and how they have used this to overcome the many challenges that have presented themselves along their entrepreneurial journey.

WED 16th November

Net Zero: Challenge Accepted

10.00am - 11.00am

Hosted on: Zoom

We've all heard the term Net Zero. We all know we need to get there. Yet not enough of us know how to do so! Are you interested in hearing about how you can accelerate your business towards achieving Net Zero, or as close as possible? Jamie Delargy will host our panel of experts: Steven Agnew, RenewableNI, Bernadette Convery, Invest NI and Mareanne Bradley, Specialist Joinery Group, who will talk about the benefits of achieving Net Zero, how to get there, the practical supports, as well as how to overcome challenges along the way.

Develop an Entrepreneurial Mindset

12.00pm - 1.30pm

Venue: The Ecos Innovation Centre, Ballymena (Also Live Streamed)

In this hybrid workshop, Cate Conway will host an interview with Phil Graham, a hugely successful entrepreneur and business mentor, to give an insight into how Phil developed an entrepreneurial mindset critical to building his business as one of the UK and Ireland's leading fitness experts and business mentors.

Support Local - Mid Ulster Gift Card

1.00pm - 1.45pm

Hosted on: Zoom

Leah Brown will present to you the benefits of the Mid Ulster Gift Card! Join us to hear all about it, have your questions answered directly and hear from those who have already benefited from having the Gift Card as part of their business. By attending this webinar on the day you will be entered into a prize draw for one of four £50 Mid Ulster Gift Cards!

Keeping Hospitality At Home

2.30pm - 3.30pm

Hosted on: Zoom

Join James McGinn, MD of Hastings Hotels, as he brings us his practical advice how to excel in the current hospitality industry! He will discuss how to keep up with new trends, hit targets and bring people to your business in a time when travel is opening up again and people are keen to visit new places. James will be joined by Claire Murray, Deli on the Green and Dermot Friel, Friel's Bar & Restaurant.

THURS 17th November

Instagram & Facebook Reels – Social Media Workshop for Tourism Businesses

10.00am - 1.00pm (refreshments served)

Venue: The Terrace Hotel, Magherafelt

If you are unable to attend this event, it will also take place in Dungannon on Tuesday 15th.

Growth Through Innovation

10.00am - 11.00am

Hosted on: Zoom

Innovation has become so important to businesses as many adapt to a fast-changing world to ensure they remain sustainable and have a competitive edge. Join our host Clodagh Rice, BBC Journalist, and three business leaders from different sectors across the MSW Region of Northern Ireland, in conversation, discussing how innovating helped them grow and remain competitive in the current challenging economic conditions.
Panel - Colin Edgar, CET Cryospas, Stephen Smyth, TCTS Group Ltd and Terry Mullin, Global Automation

Mid Ulster Jobs & Careers Fair

11.00am - 4.00pm

Venue: Cookstown Leisure Centre

Are you looking for work? Fancy a change in career? Interested in upskilling? Then the Mid Ulster Jobs & Careers Fair is the place to be. With over 50 local employers and support organisations on site, this is a brilliant opportunity to make connections, get advice, apply, and interview on the day!

Build your Business Battleplan

2.00pm - 3.00pm

Hosted on: Zoom

Paul Creighton, CEO of AES Global and business mentor, is bringing you his five point battle plan for businesses heading into the impending recession. Join this webinar to hear how to prepare step by step, covering: finding your strategy, bringing your team into your strategic thinking, motivating your team, improving company culture and measuring simple KPIs to bring your business out on top.
This is a webinar not to be missed!

Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster District Council

APPENDIX 3

Sperrins Hillwalking Festival

Mid Ulster Event Photos – 24 / 25 September 2022