

<b>Report on</b>	Seamus Heaney HomePlace Progress Report
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Tony McCance
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<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with a review of Seamus Heaney HomePlace following the first year of operations and to highlight some of the events, activities and key achievements that have taken place over the first 12 months of the facility.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council recognises the important role that Culture and Arts plays in today's society and that the availability of accessible, high quality culture and arts provision can enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of the local community of Mid Ulster. The Culture and Arts facilities and programmes provided in Mid Ulster are designed to maximise participation from all sections of the community and provide pathways that enable every resident within the Mid Ulster area and visitors to the region to maximise their enjoyment, aspirations and quality of life.
2.2	Seamus Heaney HomePlace is one of three key Culture and Arts venues under the control of Mid Ulster District Council. This report reviews the first twelve months of operation of the council's most recent flagship Culture & Arts facility which opened on 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2016 in Bellaghy.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Seamus Heaney HomePlace was officially opened by Marie Heaney with Michael, Christopher and Catherine Heaney in the presence of Councillor Trevor Wilson, Chair of Mid Ulster District Council and invited guests including the then First Minister and the late Deputy First Minister on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017. As noted below, since opening, Seamus Heaney HomePlace has achieved all targets set for visitor number performance in Year One of operations. The positive feedback from visitors has been overwhelming and the comments received from visitors have been exceptionally positive towards the facility and the staff team. (See appendix 1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of paying visitors- 42,532</li> <li>• Exhibition - 21,611</li> <li>• Arts programme – 11,612</li> <li>• Room bookings – 6,225</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School pupils- 3,084</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>HomePlace has established itself as a venue for some of the biggest names in the arts scene with actors Adrian Dunbar, Stephen Rea and Fiona Shaw all making appearances on The Helicon stage. Internationally renowned poets and authors have included Michael Longley, Sinead Morrissey and Paul Muldoon, while Phil Coulter, Glen Hansard, Bronagh Gallagher, and Lisa Hannigan are among the internationally recognised performers to play to sell out audiences at the new facility. A full Education Programme has been developed across all key stages of the curriculum and HomePlace has welcomed students from across NI, ROI and further afield.</p> <p>People from almost 20 countries, including America, New Zealand and Japan, China and all over Europe have visited Bellaghy and provided a real boost to the village. Bellaghy and Seamus Heaney HomePlace have been accredited with World Host status and business are starting to see an upturn in the local economy due to the presence of the facility. The Seamus Heaney Cluster Group has been established through the Tourism department where local key tourism providers are working jointly on providing the best service to those who visit the district.</p> <p>See appendix 2.</p>
3.3	<p><b>Awards</b></p> <p>Just to highlight some of the significant awards received by the facility over the last 12 month period:</p> <p>Excellence in Planning for Built Heritage award by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)</p> <p>Best Local Authority Tourism Initiative- Northern Ireland Local Government Awards (NILGA)</p> <p>Best Visitor and Interpretation Centre by the Association of Heritage Interpretation (AHI)</p>
3.4	<p><b>Notable visitors</b></p> <p>Highly successful event on the 9th May when Prince Charles and Duchess of Cornwall visited HomePlace. Invited guest including councillors, community reps, local schools and the Heaney family where treated to specially commissioned musical piece performed by local artists, a performance of Burial at Thebes by Rainey Endowed students and a reading of 'Clearances' by Laura Porter. The 3 local schools also performed on arrival. Extensive positive press coverage on the back of the visit.</p>



In addition to the royal visit, other dignitaries have included Lord Nicholas Bourne of Aberystwyth, Pura Lopez-Colome- Heaney Spanish translator, Mitsuko Ohno, Heaney Japanese translator and Richard Pietrab- Heaney German translator. Also, Tim Wheeler from rock band Ash and Olympic gold medal winner Mary Peters were among others who have dropped into the exhibition.



HomePlace had a visit from Minister for Communities, Mr Paul Givan on Tues 8<sup>th</sup> November. Pictured here welcomed by Mid Ulster Council, Vice Chair Mrs Sharon McAleer.



### Room Bookings

Seamus Heaney HomePlace has hosted conferences ranging from Arts Council, RSPB the Northern Health Trust, BBC Children in Need, NILGA and local company Premier Electrics. Other bookings have been made by:

- The British Heart Foundation
- Victims Support NI
- Sure Start NI
- Department of Communities
- Autism NI
- National Trust
- Belfast City Council/ Derry & Strabane Council

### Community Use

- Bellaghy Women's Group are now established in the Annex
- 'HomePlace Book Club' based and established
- 'Off the Cuff' Theatre Group meet regularly in HomePlace
- Bellaghy Historical Society have jointly programmed events through the Arts Programme
- St. Mary's, Bellaghy had a week long Lent event

3.6	<p>Both Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland had their Board meetings in HomePlace during the year and were very complimentary of the facility.</p> <p><i>BBC Screening</i></p> <p>In November, HomePlace played host to a preview screening of ‘My Mother and Other Strangers’ a network drama written by Barry Devlin, brother of Marie Heaney:</p> <p>“We’ve had lots of positive feedback about the venue (it was a first visit for many) and about the ambience and feel of the screening. Unusually for us, someone even got in touch with BBC Audience Services to say lots of nice things about the HomePlace and Barry’s series.” Mark Adair, BBC.</p> <p><b>Public Relations/ Media</b></p> <p>Seamus Heaney HomePlace has received very positive press coverage throughout the year, from opening weekend, for the Royal Visit, and articles carried in newspapers enthusing about the offering at HomePlace. This has included newspaper articles in The Irish Times, The New York Times, The Belfast Newsletter, The Irish News, The Guardian, Irish Independent. Television pieces has been carried by BBC NI, BBC National news, RTE, UTV. Radio has included BBC Radio Ulster, RTE, BBC Radio Four, Q Radio and Highland Radio in addition to extensive web and social media traction. (See Appendix 3).</p> <p><b>Tour Operators</b></p> <p>In conjunction with the Tourism department in MUDC, HomePlace has welcomed a number of tour operators throughout the year. These connections will be built upon across the coming years and will allow the facility to become established within this key market segment.</p>
3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Murphy’s Travel</li> <li>• Celtic Tours</li> <li>• Diverse School Travel</li> <li>• Brendan Vacations</li> <li>• Erne Heritage Tour Guides</li> <li>• Blue badge Guides</li> <li>• Tourism NI</li> <li>• Abbey Group</li> <li>• Celtic Culture - Harvard Alumni</li> <li>• Marathon Travel</li> <li>• Event Partners</li> <li>• Brack Tours</li> <li>• Matthews Coach Hire</li> </ul>



*Irish Tour Operators visiting HomePlace*

### **EDUCATION PROGRAMME:** (sample detailed under Appendix 4)

Seamus Heaney HomePlace has developed an extensive Education Programme rolling out across all key stages and directly linked to the NI curriculum. The programmes have proven to be a real success and strong platform for the 2017/18 school year. Support materials and teaching aids have been produced and examples are provided in the appendices.

3.8

#### *Foundation/ Key Stage 1*

A special programme around Blackberry Picking has been devised for this age group. Pupils are read the story book 'Seamus Goes Blackberry Picking' in the Creative Learning Zone and then are given an opportunity to have a teddy Bear's picnic and taste scones and blackberry jam in the Glanmore to ensure a full sensory experience at HomePlace.





### *Key Stage 2*

Seamus Heaney's grandchildren planted trees in the grounds of HomePlace on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to mark the launch of this scheme, and this was supplemented by local children planting snowdrops and various other flowers to emphasise the importance of local children in the symbolic ceremony.



Programmes have been developed around two Seamus Heaney poems for this age group- 'Churning Day' and 'A Kite for Aibhin'. See below for a photograph of the children flying their kites made during this programme.



### Key Stage 3

#### 'My Place within the Landscape'

Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership, RSPB NI and Seamus Heaney HomePlace are collaborating on a programme, called *My Place Within the Landscape*. This is currently being rolled out in pilot form with 5 post primary schools in the immediate catchment area of Bellaghy taking part. The intention is to examine the possibility of extending delivery of this scheme throughout the Mid-Ulster District and beyond in 2018/19.

The programme has been tailored specifically for Key Stage 3 English students to celebrate the work of Seamus Heaney, whilst exploring his deep connection with the wonderful Lough Neagh landscape.

Engagement with students will take place through:

- A visit to Seamus Heaney HomePlace, which includes viewing of the exhibition and a presentation in The Helicon.
- A visit to view and explore an outdoor location close to the inspirational sites mentioned in Seamus Heaney's poems: 'Digging' and 'The Strand the Lough Beg'.
- Outreach workshops at your school venue, delivered by expert staff from the '*My Place Within the Landscape*' team.





### 'Alphabets'

Seamus Heaney's poem Alphabets is the inspiration behind this programme, where pupils use their imagination and all the senses. HomePlace is used as a theme for a creative writing piece, and whilst students explore the exhibition and take part in the creative writing workshops, they will keep in mind HomePlace means. The students in turn compose a piece about experiences at HomePlace or their own home, family, connections. The programme feeds imagination and inspires writing as you will learn about Seamus Heaney, the boy, the man, his family and what inspired his poetry, and what fed his imagination. The workshops entail a carousel of sensory experiences.

### *Key Stage 4*

### 'Burial at Thebes'

Stephen Beggs devised and delivered a workshop for A2 English Literature students on The Burial at Thebes (legacy specification CCEA) and 11 schools (235 pupils) and their teachers will participated in this programme. In addition, pupils from this programme performed a section for the Royal visit in May 2017. Unfortunately Burial at Thebes is not on the curriculum for 17/18, however this programme can be adapted for future use if required.

### 'Heaney/ Hardy'

The KS4 Programme launched in January, 2017. The programme will ran across 6 weeks and was facilitated by Mrs. Shelagh O'Brien through a series of lectures which focused on Heaney & Hardy anthology (CCEA) and Death of a Naturalist & The Badger (Nature & War anthology CCEA) – both are part of the curriculum specification.

### *Key Stage 5*

November, 2016 marked the launch of the Education Programme at HomePlace, with a special event for teachers, which focused on the Key Stage 5 and the new Heaney and Frost module on the CCEA AS Specification. Over 45 teachers from schools in – Newry, Omagh, Kilkeel, Belfast, Portadown, Derry, Ballymena, Antrim, Maghera, Magherafelt, Randalstown, Armagh, Dungannon, and Lurgan attended the event.

Dr. Tim Hancock, Subject Director of English at the University of Ulster, delivered a specially devised lecture, which, focused on key Heaney poems from the AS Specification. The title of his talk was: ***'Known and strange things': Heaney, Frost, and the momentary stay of poetry.***



3.9

In this programme, HomePlace collaborates with QUB and UU to deliver a series of bespoke lectures/seminars over a six week period for A level students, which, will also focus on the AS specification requirements for the Heaney and Frost module. Lectures from both universities provide students with a lecture and the students then proceed to a workshop seminar to examine the work in more detail- providing pupils with their first experience of university style teaching and providing superb preparation for exam time.

### **Arts Programme**

#### ***'12 months/12 books'***

For the first year of the HomePlace arts programme the framework devised for delivery was called '12 months/ 12 books'. This reflected the 12 published volumes of poetry by Seamus Heaney, and beginning with *Death of a Naturalist* in October 2016, through to *Human Chain* in September 2017, a wide range of world class artists, poets and performers were invited to offer their interpretation and response to the work.

The year opened with a highly successful opening weekend, setting the standard for the year and closed with a moving performance of the 'Brought to Bach' piece which bookended the year.

Highlights are many but special note goes to singer songwriters Paul Brady, Phil Coulter, Glen Hansard, Bronagh Gallagher, Lisa Hannigan; actors Fiona Shaw, Ian McElhinney, Stephen Rea, Adrian Dunbar, Stanley Townsend, Laura Porter; poets Michael Longley, Simon Armitage, Sinéad Morrissey, Paul Durcan; authors Michael Murpurgo, Louis de Bernières, Alan Hollinghurst; and theatre companies including Kabosh, Big Telly, The Lyric and Rough Magic.



HomePlace continued throughout the year to play host to a series of varied and highly received discussions on Seamus Heaney's life a work by writers Bernard O'Donoghue, Tom Paulin, Peter Fallon, Rosie Lavan, Horatio Clare & Mark Cocker, and an unforgettable lecture by Fintan O'Toole (see below) on the subject of Brexit and what is to be learnt from Seamus Heaney's writing on that subject.

So well received that Fintan O'Toole has been booked for a follow up in December 2017.



### 'On Location'

As well as events in The Helicon theatre HomePlace took a number of performances into the locale. Firstly the 'Mycenne Lookout' reading was delivered at Church Island, then two local Bellaghy churches hosting the Meccore String Quartet playing Beethoven's Opus 132 and readings of TS Eliot's 'Four Quartets'.

A very special reading of 'The Great Hunger' by Patrick Kavanagh was held at 'The Wood', the Heaney family farm. This reading was delivered by well-known actor Frankie McCafferty.



The programme continued to appear in unusual places, with a very special event held at 'The Forge', at the Hillhead. With the support of the Devlin family, actors Julia Dearden and Dan Gordon performed specially commissioned pieces of work by leading authors including Colum McCann, Deborah Levy and Paula Meehan. Called 'Sparks Flying at the Forge' the event was also featured in the Belfast Telegraph and was subject of the Mark Patterson programme on BBC Radio Foyle produced by Stephen McCauley.



3.11



### **Seamus Heaney Estate**

Anthony Tohill, Anne-Marie Campbell, Adrian McCreesh and Brian McCormick have attended a series of meetings with the Heaney Family Estate, and these will continue on a quarterly basis, with a MOU currently being finalised to formalise the relationship. The family have been absolutely delighted with the progress made in the first year and have been fully supportive, both in their attendance at events and overall encouragement and enthusiasm towards the project.

### **Workshops and some special events**

The HomePlace workshop programme continued to be popular throughout the year, with sell out classes in Basket Making, Christmas Card Making and Wreath Making, Poetry Masterclass, Journal your Journey, and Notebook-Making all receiving excellent feedback.

HomePlace hosted the first show particularly for children on Saturday 18 March. The Amadan Ensemble presented two shows of Mr Mess, a family clowning show, which drew audiences of almost 200 catering for a family audience.



A Christmas Family Fun Day on 18 December featured choirs from the local primary schools performing in the Helicon, alongside storytelling with Liz Weir and pop in Christmas Crafts with Red Apple Arts.





### **World Poetry Day, 21 March, 2017**

Students from Bellaghy P.S. Knocknagin P.S. and Desertmartin P.S. attended the Creative Writing Poetry workshops at HomePlace to mark World Poetry Day.

### **Creative Learning Summer Programme**

Very successful programme targeted at young people and families:

- Thumbprint Family Tree: 10 – 16 July
- Bespoke Bookmarks: 17 – 23 July
- Stone Art: 24 – 30 July
- Paint A Portrait: 31 July – 6 August
- Thumbprint Family Tree: 7 – 13 August
- Bespoke Bookmarks: 14 – 20 August
- Stone Art: 21 – 27 August



#### 4.0 **Other Considerations**

##### 4.1 **Financial & Human Resources Implications**

Financial: Within identified and agreed budgets approved by Council

Human: Within identified staffing resources agreed and approved by Council

##### 4.2 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

The activity delivered, including facility programming is designed to maximise engagement and participation from all sections of the community in the Culture & Arts Service provided by Mid Ulster District Council.

<b>4.3</b>	<b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b>  N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are asked to note activities undertaken within Seamus Heaney HomePlace during the course of its first year of operation.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 – Customer feedback
6.2	Appendix 2 – 12 month storyboard
6.3	Appendix 3 – Media reviews
6.4	Appendix 4 – Sample Education programme
6.5	Appendix 5 – Sample Programme