

Report on	Review of Mid Ulster District Council's Tourism Strategy
Date of Meeting	Thursday 12 March 2020
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
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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 and inform Council on actions as part of the review of the Tourism Strategy "Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster 2016-2021"
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster Council is working on delivering "Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster 2016-2021" and have recently undertaken a mid-term review of the Tourism Strategy to assess progress made to date, identify if there are any areas where a contingency is required and update targets on those actions which have progressed.
2.2	<p>The review comprised of series of consultations of the current strategy with Elected Members, Council staff and the private sector who are members of the Council's Tourism Development Group and Cluster members.</p> <p>The review considered 3 key areas / themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Activities; • Heritage; and • The Seamus Heaney Homeplace. <p>Within each of the areas / themes the groups considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress to date; • Challenges still to addressed; • Emerging opportunities; and • Actions to be taken. <p>The session also considered evaluation tools that could be used to monitor outputs for the remaining 24-months delivery of the strategy and how these could be further developed.</p>

3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Council has made progress in developing its product offering within the District over the last 24 months, which will now enable it to progress with marketing the offering in the latter half of delivering its tourism strategy. There are a number of key areas to be progressed to build on the recent product developments.
3.2	<p>Focus of the Audience</p> <p>The Council should carefully consider its target markets, both existing and potential, for its product offering and develop a clear focus for its marketing activities.</p>
3.3	<p>Development of Packages & Experiences</p> <p>The District offers a range of innovative and attractive products and experiences for incoming visitors based on clearly defined target audiences. Council now needs to work with private sector to encourage further development of a range of packages that can be marketed. This could not only assist with attracting more visitors to the area but could increase dwell time and spend in the local area.</p> <p>Examples of packages that could be developed are the Three Sisters product.</p> <p>Packages could also include linkages with other areas in Northern Ireland and across the island of Ireland, for example, literary tours linking Heaney with Yeats and Wilde or the American Presidents tour with Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.</p>
3.4	<p>Development of a Regional Brand</p> <p>The product offering in the District has been developed under the 3 key themes identified in the strategy which can compete, not only in the local market, but also in the international marketplace. These themes now need brought together in a regional brand that will assist with the marketing of the area. The brand also needs to link to and be reflective of Tourism Northern Ireland's Embrace a Giant Spirit brand.</p>
3.5	<p>Marketing Plan</p> <p>Following on from the development of a regional brand, Council needs to develop a destination marketing plan to highlight the world-class product offering in its portfolio. Key to this will be the development at Davagh but will also include the continued marketing and promotion of Seamus Heaney HomePlace, its History and Heritage, Outdoor Activities and its expanded private sector product offering.</p>
3.6	<p>Attending Trade Shows</p> <p>The Council has made good progress in raising the profile of the destination to date on the national and international platform, but this could be further expanded now the product offering has expanded. Council should continue with the work it has achieved to date as a long-term activity this will offer a targeted approach to developing key target markets. Trade and Consumer platforms plan attached including targeting in the main B2B events, across, Ireland, Europe and the USA. Total cost projected for 2020-2021 is £23,600.</p>

3.7	<p>Digital App</p> <p>The Council should consider developing a digital application that can be used across the three key themes. This could for example, map key sites and would be of real benefit as this would facilitate with the development of experiences and itineraries. The solution could also link supporting product that is emerging around the Seamus Heaney HomePlace to again assist with increasing dwell time in the area and offering visitors a full day itinerary.</p>
3.8	<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Given the increasing importance of managing and protection of our natural resources the issue of sustainability is rising to the fore. The issue of sustainability within the Mid Ulster tourism sector needs to be considered and brought to the fore strategically within the sector and disseminated throughout the sector after this. It is recommended that Council Officers receive training in this area to ensure they are reliably equipped and fully versed in areas where this is applicable and can embed this within the strategy wherever possible and relay the message to the industry.</p>
3.9	<p>Future Industry Training</p> <p>Sustainability & Green Tourism for the industry needs to be developed as this is becoming increasingly important in the industry.</p>
3.10	<p>Measuring Overall Performance</p> <p>One of the re-occurring themes in the review process was the limitations of the existing evaluation process and measuring of performance. During the review sessions it was agreed that there needs to be a range of bespoke measures developed and implemented to ensure that Council can effectively capture the real impact and benefits of tourism on the local economy in the District.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Request approval for £23,600 to deliver the Trade and Consumer Platforms 20-21</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Mid Ulster Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Approve actions and budgets outlined in the Mid Ulster Tourism Review and associated trade and consumer platforms 20-21 plan.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Review of Mid Ulster District Council's Tourism Strategy 2021 & list of Trade & Consumer Platforms