

# **Scoping Study for the Development of Drumcairne Forest, Stewartstown**

August 2021

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI  
*on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council*



**OUTDOOR  
RECREATION**  
NORTHERN IRELAND

## Executive Summary

### The Site

Drumcairne Forest was originally part of a landscaped demesne associated with the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Drumcairne House. Garden landscape features such as the remains of a steep terraced Italian garden and ponds, with Irish yews, sequoia trees, and ornamental shrubs, and a degraded network of compacted gravel trails throughout the Forest, are owned by Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) across a 70Ha area.

Drumcairne is a unique and diverse woodland with a range of specimen tree species and woodland floor cover, with much to contribute towards preservation and protection of habitats and engaging people with nature. Its landscaped Georgian gardens have been ‘left to nature’ and are overgrown such that terraces and ponds within it are barely distinguishable as built landscape features.

Drumcairne has been open to the public since it came into public ownership around the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with car parking, trails, gardens, and ponds providing recreational value to surrounding communities, and visitors from further afield, across many years. However, in recent decades site maintenance of visitor servicing and recreational facility has been minimal, leading to anti-social behaviour, car park closure, and limited use of the space for outdoor recreation due to its unwelcoming and often inaccessible environment.

### The Scoping Study

*This Scoping Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Drumcairne Forest as a local multi-activity hub.*

### The Need for Development

There is a renewed community interest in seeing Drumcairne’s visitor assets restored and enhanced, no doubt amplified by recent demand for *local* access to outdoor spaces as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drumcairne has recently benefitted somewhat from the re-opening of the car parking area, and some limited trail works carried out by FSNI in response to increased use. The local Stewartstown Community Group has been pro-active in keeping historic trail corridors in use, cleared back, and informally waymarked.

With Stewartstown village falling within the top 20-30% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, Drumcairne Forest is a valuable community asset. 84% of survey respondents indicated that

the development of recreation facilities at Drumcairne Forest is ‘very important’ to the local community.

Five key development priorities for Drumcairne forest have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and summarised as follows:



### Development Proposals

Development proposals resulting from the scoping study are focused around three key themes:

- Restoration
- Preservation
- Enhancement

These themes reflect community sentiment and the assessment of need, with planning proposed to start in 2021 and visitor infrastructure delivered across two phases between 2023 and 2026, as follows:



By the end of proposed delivery Phase 1 in 2024, Drumcairne will be a welcoming space providing community trails and visitor servicing to a standard and scale such that a good level of its potential as a multi-use activity hub has been met. Community momentum after Phase 1 is likely to accelerate demand for Phase 2 delivery that would see the site's potential fully realised.

### Development Costs

An investment of **£96,500** for the 'planning' element of works reflects external professional fees required to work up all phases of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that much of this could be delivered 'in-house' by Mid Ulster District Council staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single-year budgets. Notably, the cost includes professional fees for conducting a Heritage Feasibility Study to assess the social value of a full restoration the Italian terraced Gardens.

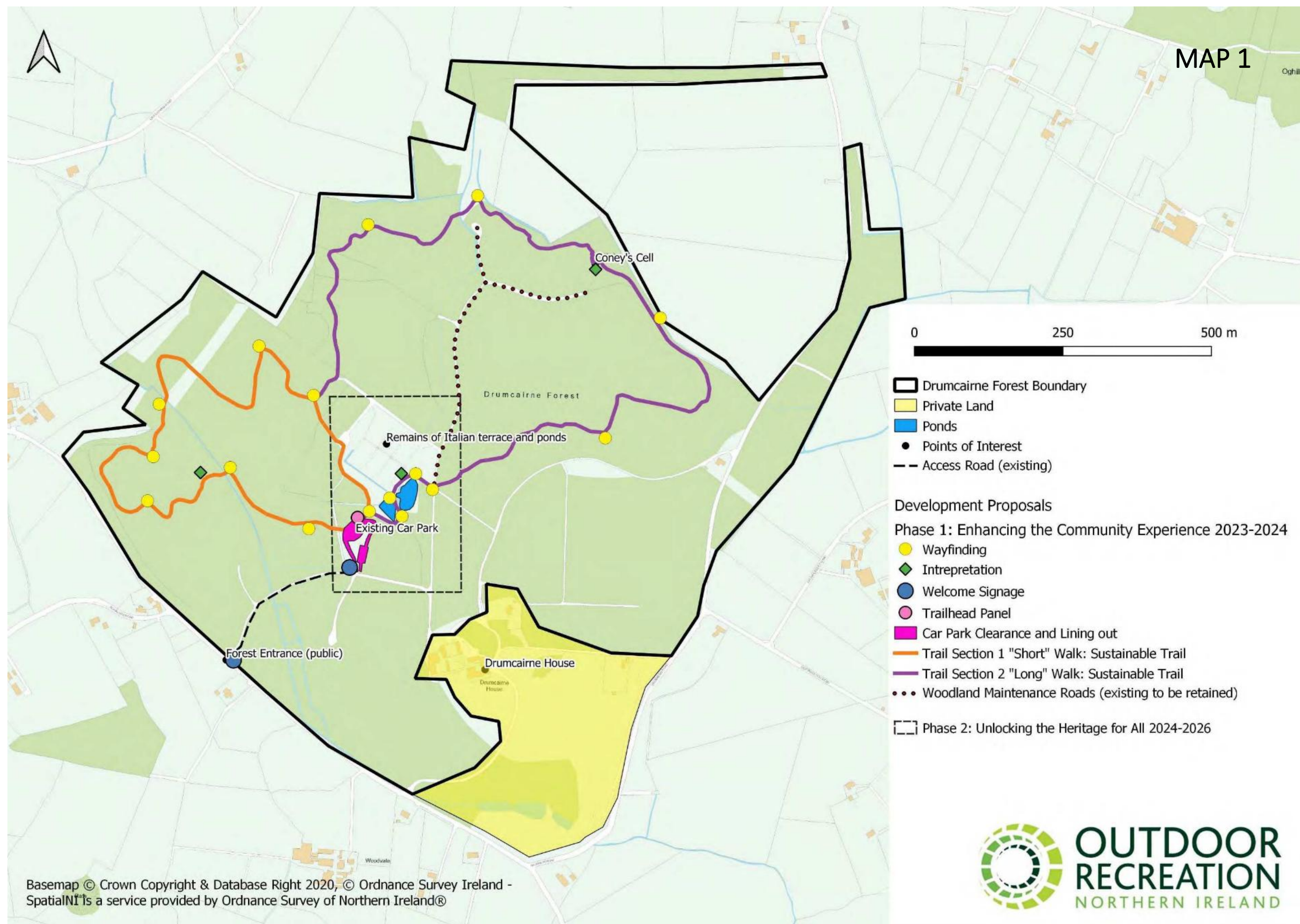
Phase 1 2023-2024 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at **£126,650**.

Phase 2 2024-2026 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at **£190,700**, increasing to £340,700 if full heritage restoration of the former gardens is implemented.

### Social Return on Investment

Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, the Estimated Social Return on Investment for Drumcairne development is estimated at **£10.4M over 25 yrs.**







# MAP 2



## Development Proposals - Phase 2 larger scale

### Phase 1: Enhancing the Community Experience 2023-2024

- Wayfinding
- ◆ Intrepretation
- Welcome Signage
- Trailhead Panel
- Car Park Clearance and Lining out
- Trail Section 1 "Short" Walk: Sustainable Trail
- Trail Section 2 "Long" Walk: Sustainable Trail
- ... Woodland Maintenance Roads (existing to be retained)

### Phase 2: Unlocking the Heritage for All 2024-2026

- Phase 2: Unlocking the Heritage for All 2024-2026
- Trail Section 3 Meadow and Pond walk: Accessible Sensory Play/Picnic Trail
- ▲ Toilet Block with Changing Place
- Terrace and Pond Heritage Restoration

- Ponds
- Points of Interest
- Access Road (existing)



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## 1 Introduction

In February 2021, Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) appointed Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) to undertake a scoping study for the proposed development of Drumcairne Forest, near Stewartstown, in County Tyrone (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

This study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Drumcairne Forest as a local multi-activity hub.

Mid Ulster District Council defines a local multi-activity hub as a site developed primarily for the local community, to include a range of outdoor recreation and environmental products, accompanied by appropriate visitor servicing.



Figure 1 - Drumcairne Forest Location

## 1.1 Scope of Study

The Scoping Study has been approached in two stages:

### Stage 1

- Desktop review of existing strategies applicable to the region.
- Consultation with agencies/stakeholders, local community, Council staff and Councillors to ensure incorporation of ideas and feedback.
- SWOT Analysis
- Identification of land ownership and land management status and opportunities.
- Exploration of a sustainable balance between the economic, environmental, and social functions of the forest.
- Current infrastructure and condition audit.
- Exploration of the opportunity for linkages and routes within and external to the forest.  
Explore how the forest offers access to the village, local landscapes, and other neighbouring visitor attractions.
- Identification of any potential barriers to development.
- Determination of what is currently available within the site for outdoor recreation, to include any visitor data, and explore what capacity there is within the site to accommodate further outdoor recreation and educational activities.

### Stage 2

- Identification of phased, viable and sustainable recreational, educational, and social activities which could be delivered within the scope of the Development Plan. Proposals aim to enhance user/visitor experience, whilst supporting biodiversity and local heritage.
- Exploration of potential local business/social economy options to use the site.
- Recommendation and Actions.
- Detailed Development Plan costs and profiled timetable of expenditure.
- Identification of suitable funding streams and timetables.

### 1.2.1 Approach

Table 1 summarises ORNI's approach to undertaking the Scoping Study, with key dates provided where relevant.

*Table 1 – Scoping Study Approach and Key Dates*

	Activity	Status
<b>Stage 1</b>	Desk-based assessments of population demographics, strategic context at Council and Regional scale, geography and geology, environmental and heritage opportunities and constraints, land use opportunities and constraints, forest planning and zoning.	Throughout
	Initial site walkovers.	18 <sup>th</sup> March, 9 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
	Bespoke engagement with select individuals representing themselves, a community group, or club within the surrounding community.	Complete (Ongoing as required)
	Promotion and marketing of scoping study, public survey, and virtual public meeting (Zoom).	Public meeting 14 <sup>th</sup> April. Formal public engagement for 6 weeks concluded 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2021.
	Meetings with key stakeholders including Forest Service NI to facilitate clear decision-making around future planning.	Complete (ongoing as required)
	Interim presentation to Council Officers and feedback period	Virtual Presentation 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Stage 2</b>	Detailed site walkover survey	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021
	SWOT analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and final reporting	July 2021
	Presentation to Elected Members	Pending

## 2 The Site

Drumcairne Forest is a well-defined 70 Hectare woodland on the outskirts of Stewartstown Village, in County Tyrone, approximately 2km from the western shores of Lough Neagh. The woodland consists of a mix of coniferous and broad-leaf species, and the remains of formal landscaped gardens. It sits within a rural drumlin landscape and has been accessed to varying degrees of formality by the public for many years for walking, educational activity, licensed shooting, and mountain biking.

Drumcairne Forest is accessed from the B160 Stewartstown to Coagh Road leading onto the Castlefarm and Ballygrittle Road. A well-maintained shared access lane leads to a car park, and beyond to an occupied forester's residence and the rear gate to Drumcairne House.

### 2.1 Landownership and Land Management Status

Drumcairne Forest was originally part of a wider landscaped demesne associated with the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Drumcairne House. The Forest is now owned, managed, and maintained by Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI). Drumcairne House and some surrounding ground is now under private ownership. See Figure 3 for land ownership boundaries.

Garden landscape features associated with Drumcairne House and demesne, such as the remains of a steep terraced Italian garden and ponds, with Irish yews, sequoia trees, and ornamental shrubs, sit within the FSNI ownership boundary.



*Figure 2 - Pre-WW1 postcard image of Drumcairne House. The house is now privately owned but some of its former gardens are in FSNI Ownership.*



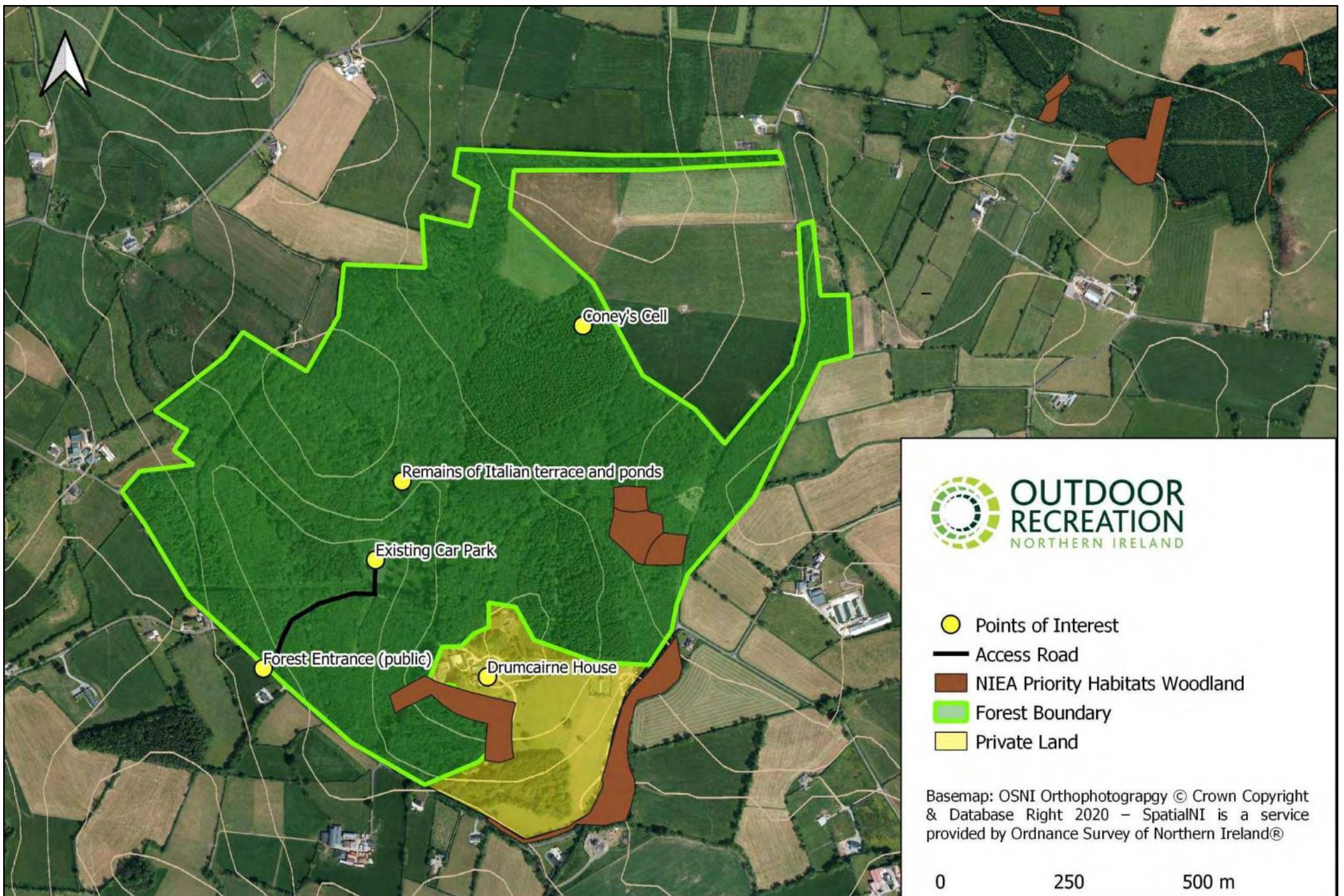


Figure 3 - Drumcairne Forest Layout



## 2.2 Heritage Designations and Potential

### 2.2.1 Environment

Drumcairne Forest does not sit within a designated Environmentally Protected Area and there is no registration of priority species at the site. Some small pockets of registered priority woodland habitat exist within and immediately surrounding the site (extents shown in Figure 3).

Despite the relatively limited 'registered' environmental significance within or surrounding Drumcairne Forest, this is a unique and diverse woodland with much to contribute towards preservation and protection of habitats and engaging people with nature. A range of tree species and woodland floor cover is shown in Figure 4.

There are some small areas of the former demesne with uncontrolled growth of rhododendron. No other high-risk invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed or giant hogweed have been observed during high-level site walkovers, though any future ecological surveys should specifically aim to rule this out.



*Figure 4 - Diverse woodland and habitat within Drumcairne Forest*

### 2.2.2 Built Heritage

There is one Scheduled Monument Record within Drumcairne Forest, recognising a '14<sup>th</sup> century hermit's cell' (though this appears registered with a Question Mark) known as Coney's Cell (SMR: TYR039:003). Information provided by the Heritage Environment Division (HED) describes the feature as follows:

*Situated in an area of low-lying, flat ground the site is now surrounded by a mature pine forest. Although now lying beneath a recently constructed ornamental summer house the foundations of a sub-rectangular structure are still visible... The summer house is built within the limits of the cell remains... An unlikely setting for a hermit having lived in the area has influenced the interpretation of what is more likely to be the slight remains of a small secular building<sup>1</sup>.*

Recent site visits have visually observed the summer house in a good structural state, but with evidence of vandalism through fire in its interior. It is understood that representatives from within the local Stewartstown community have maintained the structure over the past few decades.



Figure 5 - (left) Image from an old postcard pre-dating WW1 showing the summer house, and (right) The summer house in the present day (June 2021)

The whole estate extent, including the privately owned Drumcairne House and the FSNI owned forest, is registered with Department for Communities (DfC) under Historic Parks, Gardens, and Demesnes (Register T-017).

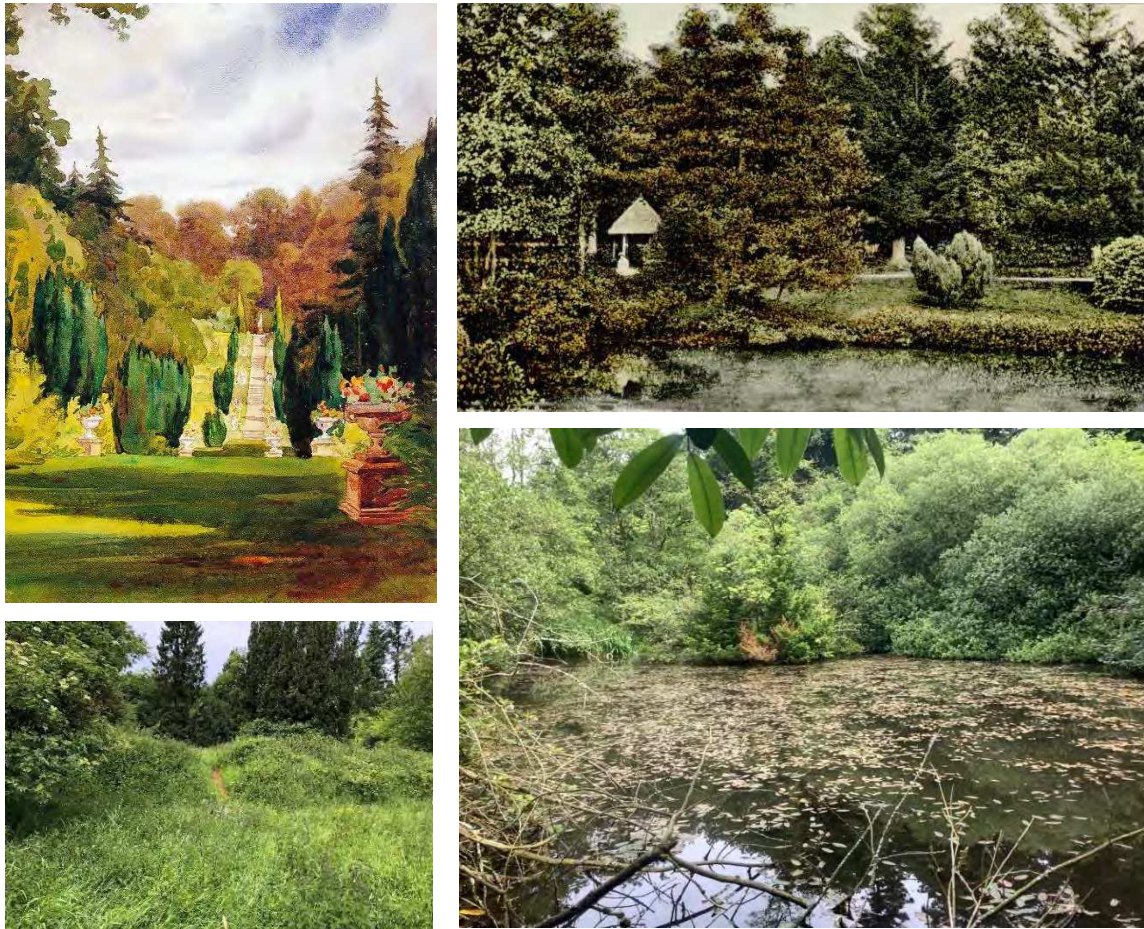
The Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Drumcairne House (Listed Building) is not accessible to the public. However, the forest that used to form part of the formal gardens associated with the house offers the public a glimpse into this fine residence's history, with the remains of steep Italian terracing and ornamental ponds sited near the public car park.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://apps.communities-ni.gov.uk/NISMR-public/docs/TYR/TYR\\_039/TYR\\_039\\_003/Public/SM7-TYR-039-003.pdf](https://apps.communities-ni.gov.uk/NISMR-public/docs/TYR/TYR_039/TYR_039_003/Public/SM7-TYR-039-003.pdf)



This Georgian garden-scape has been 'left to nature' and is overgrown to the point that the terraces and ponds are barely distinguishable as built landscape features. Any designed landscape and deliberately designed features will be a key consideration for planning any future development.



*Figure 6 - Clockwise from top left: Pre WW1 postcard image of the Italian-terraces, pre WW1 postcard image of the pond, Present day photo of the pond (June 2021), Present day photo of terracing (June 2021)*

### 2.3 External Site Linkages

Drumcaine Forest is surrounded by private land and is only accessible via public roads. Stewartstown Village, 1 mile away from the Forest entrance, is the closest population centre and the one with closest community links to the site. The Lisaclore, Aghalarg, and Ballygittle Roads linking Stewartstown to the Forest are on-road sections of National Cycle Network Route 95<sup>2</sup>, which also forms the Section of EuroVelo 1 touring route that passes through Northern Ireland. National Cycle Network Route 94 which 'laps the Lough' (Lough Neagh) also diverts directly past the site. These designations have the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-a-route-on-the-national-cycle-network/route-95>

potential to draw in a small level of sustainable tourism to the area in the form of long-distance touring cyclists.



## 2.4 Existing Outdoor Recreation Provision

### 2.4.1 Walking Trails

Recreational walking across the whole of Drumcairne Forest has seen various states of formal provision throughout its history since Georgian times as Drumcairne House's Demesne. A network of trails, pathways, and gardens is recorded in historical mapping within the site since as far back as early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, evolving into what is seen today as a mixture of Forest Service NI and community-maintained routes for walking, totalling approximately 5km of a network. The local Stewartstown Community Group has recently installed waymarkers to define routes within the forest. Although relatively informal, often attached to trees and existing infrastructure, this waymarking goes a long way to improving legibility of routes for users.

Relatively early in the COVID pandemic, beginning ~March 2020, Forest Service NI recognised an increase in people seeking access to the forest for local walking, so they undertook some basic but effective site maintenance and general 'tidying' across the site, including re-opening access to the car park and refreshing a small (~1km) section of trail with coarse stone. Until this time, the car park at the site had been closed for a significant period, estimated at 15 years, in part due to anti-social



*Figure 7 - Clockwise from top left: Trail upgraded with coarse stone, car park, community-installed wayfinding, typical trail surface.*



behaviour. During this time the public accessed the site by foot or by parking along the access lane. Since re-opening the car park the anti-social behaviour has not returned

Existing walking trail surfaces are typically defined by a compacted stone surface. Many of these routes have deteriorated through years of vegetation deposition and weathering/erosion, tree-root growth, and lack of general maintenance. Most routes are sound underfoot with good drainage and relatively even surface, meandering pleasantly through the woodland. Gradients are relatively favourable throughout the trail network and a basic level of fitness and sure-footedness can be accommodated. The minimum effective width of the existing trail surface is approximately 1 metre.

There are occasional sections of trail where the surface has deteriorated to mud and where poor vegetation clearance and management obscures the path, but these areas are not widespread, and community-installed infrastructure is often in place to help overcome these issues.



*Figure 8 - Clockwise from top left: Poor drainage in occasional spots, poor forestry vegetation clearance, trail surface with tree roots, stone/gravel sub-base across most trails obscured by build-up of organic debris*



### 2.4.3 Signage, Interpretation and Wayfinding

Drumcairne Forest is represented at its entrance by roadside signage and a Forest Service entrance sign. These have been present for quite some time, and despite public access to the car park having been shut off for many years up until 2020, these signs have offered confirmation/indication that the area was still open to the visiting public to an extent.



*Figure 9 - Signage at the entrance to Drumcairne Forest Park (nb. The spelling of Drumcairn/e varies)*

There is no interpretive experience at the site, despite historic links and features that many people are likely to have an interest in.

There is no trailhead panel or detailed pre-visit information available that might help visitors plan their time in the forest.

The Stewartstown Community Group has recently installed waymarkers to assist visitors to navigate routes within the forest. Although relatively informal, often attached to trees and existing degraded infrastructure, this waymarking goes a long way to improving legibility for users.



*Figure 10 - Community waymarking*



#### 2.4.4 Mountain Biking

Mountain biking (MTB) activity is noted across the site, though there is no formal provision for this, it is long established. Its impact on existing walking trails appears minimal with no in-line features, obstacles, signs of erosion on existing trails, or user conflict reported during public consultation. In fact, mountain bikers have been credited to an extent for keeping trails 'open'. Publicly observable digital 'Strava' tracks indicates occasional use of the site for MTB from a small number of people, reportedly from within the local surrounding community.

Forest Service NI acknowledges mountain biking and other 'wheeled' activity on the site through attention signage close to the site entrance, stating:

*No cycling, mountain biking, or motorised vehicles permitted on waymarked pedestrian footpaths.*



Figure 11 - Attention signage from Forest Service relating to use of waymarked trails, and an off-track route used by MTBs with some built features along a 'natural' trail surface.

#### 2.4.5 Shooting/Gun Club

It is understood that FSNi have issued a license for shooting activity on the site to a gun club, valid until 2024.



Figure 12 - 'Shooting Preserved' sign close to Drumcairne Forest entrance

### 3 Assessment of Need

#### 3.1 Strategic Context

The development of outdoor recreation and local community facilities, in general, fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies and strategic organisations.

Outdoor Recreation NI has taken care to ensure that the consideration of any proposed developments at Drumcairne aligns with these policies and strategies at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

Table 2 outlines those strategies having the most strategic relevance to o developing Drumcairne Forest fully and appropriately as a local multi-activity hub. A detailed assessment of Strategic Context is presented in Appendix 1.

*Table 2 - Relevant policies and strategies for Drumcairne Forest*

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10-year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> <li>–</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA’s Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA “Our Passion, Our Place” Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>

<b>Equality</b>	– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)
<b>Community Planning</b>	– Village Plans for Galbally & Cappagh, Ballygawley and Stewartstown.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of each of these documents, identifying their specific relevance to this Scoping Study and any proposed development at Drumcairne.

In summary, this strategic review highlights the importance that the Northern Ireland Executive and government departments (at a regional level) and the Council (at a sub-regional level), place on outdoor recreation and access to forests and quality greenspace for the social, economic, physical, mental, and environmental well-being of our local communities.

Outdoor Recreation NI considers that proposed developments/enhancements within Drumcairne offer a strong fit with each of the strategies outlined in Table 2, because the recommendations have the potential to:

- Contribute to, or kick-start in some cases, the regeneration of rural communities through the investment in and provision of quality outdoor activities and experiences.
- Improve the health (mental and physical) and wellbeing (including social inclusion) of local people and visitors through the development of sports, leisure, and recreation infrastructure within the area in order to provide formal and informal opportunities for people to engage in physical activity and to better access green spaces.
- Protect our natural environment through the development of environmentally sensitive trails and components with an educational dimension.
- Conserve and enjoy the unique built heritage of Mid Ulster.
- Contribute to the development of a strong and shared community by unlocking the potential of the leisure sector as an instrument for positive change.
- Encourage active citizenship through volunteering and social enterprise opportunities.
- Contribute to long-term economic growth through the development of the tourism industry of the Council area, offering a distinct and complementary sustainable outdoor recreation product to that is currently under-developed in the Council area.

### 3.2 Drumcairne Public Survey

A Public survey was rolled out in March 2021, advertised within local press and across relevant social media outlets, to obtain public feedback and sentiment in a consultative manner. The survey remained open online and in hard copy format for a six-week period, concluding on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Survey questions and the full suite of results is presented in Appendix 3. Output from the survey is used to support statements in Section 3.3-3.5 to inform the assessment of need for development at Drumcairne Forest.

There were 704 responses to the public survey.

### 3.3 Local Access to Quality Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Local opportunities for outdoor recreation around the Stewartstown area are currently limited. Besides embracing the existing informal offer at Drumcairne, the closest off-road walking opportunity can be found 4 miles away from the village at the Washing Bay where a short (1km) perimeter trail of a football grounds is cited as proving popular, with a wide catchment area. Further walking opportunities exist along Coalisland Canal (trailhead 4 miles away) Drum Manor Forest Park in Cooktown (9 miles away), and Peatlands Park (8 miles away).

*“It has become very apparent during the pandemic that we are very restricted in this area to developed outdoor spaces. The recently developed walkway at Washingbay has proven successful. However, it has a very high footfall and another area for locals to walk would be greatly appreciated”.*

- Public survey respondent

The Drumcairne public survey indicated that besides Drumcairne Forest, 76% of respondents walk/run/cycle on local roads for outdoor recreation and outdoor leisure time. Regular travel to other forest parks and trails is common, within (65% of respondents) and outside (50% of respondents) their council area, including places like Peatlands Park, Cabin Wood, Loughry, Washingbay, Drum Manor, Gosford, North Coast beaches, Pomeroy Forest, Davagh, Lough Fea, and the Mourne Mountains.

Regionally relevant evidence exists<sup>3</sup> to support the need for improved *local* access to spaces for outdoor recreation in general, citing sustainability benefits, health, and wellbeing benefits, and improved social benefits. For example, Darkley Forest in Co. Armagh launched a 5km network of multi-use trails in 2018 on a site of similar scale and setting to Drumcairne, located approximately 1km from a local village centre. Using a robust Social Return on Investment methodology to assess its impact, **the total social value generated over the lifespan (25 years) of Darkley Forest Community Trail will see a £10 return on investment for every £1 spent to create the trail.** Further detail on this specific study is included in Appendix 2.



Figure 13 - Social Return on Investment 1:10 for Darkley Forest, Co Armagh

A Village Plan for Stewartstown drafted by Mid Ulster District Council Stewartstown has identified several development opportunities relevant to outdoor recreation provision in the area, summarised in Table 3. Drumcairne Forest has been highlighted as a valuable asset within this community.

Table 3 - Stewartstown Village Plan Outdoor Recreation Summary

	Key characteristics	Development opportunity
<b>Stewartstown Village Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Within the top 20-30% most deprived wards in NI.</li> <li>– Drumcairne Forest is a valuable asset.</li> <li>– Crieve Lough – significant link to Hugh O'Neill.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enhanced play provision building on existing play park for younger and older children.</li> <li>– More leisure facilities and opportunities for employment of youth</li> <li>– Redevelopment of Crieve Lough: improve access from village, develop lough area with seating, enhance wildlife and create new walks.</li> <li>– Develop Drumcairne Forest: new walks, trails, parking and wildlife, playpark, stock ponds with fish, toilets, and signage.</li> <li>– Development of a Trim Trail at GAA Club with play facilities and signage</li> <li>– Map walking and cycling routes around village.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> [https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People\\_Nature\\_and\\_Health\\_NI\\_March\\_2021\\_report\\_1\\_.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People_Nature_and_Health_NI_March_2021_report_1_.pdf)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National Cycling Route at Drumcairne</li> <li>– Henderson’s Park – develop play for older age group of children (10+), enhance community links and improve signage</li> </ul>
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### 3.4 Drumcairne Visitor Profile

Data from counters or user intercept surveys does not currently exist for Drumcairne Forest. At the beginning of the COVID-era in 2020, Forest Service responded to an observed increase in demand and use by providing small elements of upgrade and provision at the site, such as re-opening the gate to the car park and installing some fresh coarse surface dressing on a short section of trail. However, no objective usage data is known to have been used in decision-making.

Of those who responded to the public survey, 93% said they have visited Drumcairne Forest before. The reported frequency of visits across the past year is shown in Figure 14.

Walking or hiking is recorded as the recreation activity by far most undertaken within the forest (71% of visits). Cycling makes up 14% of reported visits, with running, picnicking, and observing wildlife making up most of the remaining recreational pursuits. “Other” forest recreation activity makes up 5% of responses and includes horse riding, shooting, photography, and enduro moto.

On a typical visit to Drumcairne Forest, the majority of respondents report that they visit with family (56%). 12% visit on their own, and 1.5% visit as part of an organised group. Dog walking and football team training has been cited within survey notes as other reasons for visiting Drumcairne.

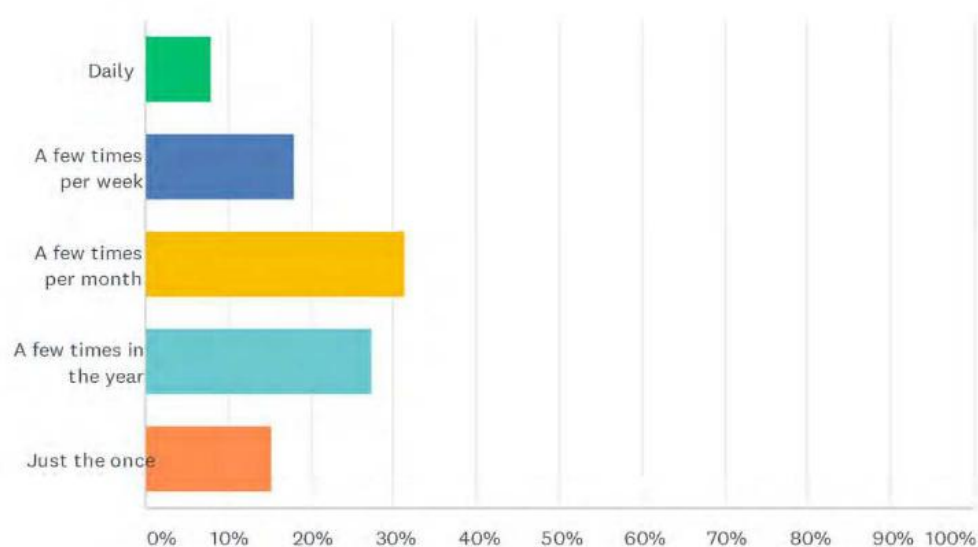


Figure 14 - Frequency of visits to Drumcairne Forest in the past year



### 3.5 Community Demand

84% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Drumcairne Forest is ‘very important’ to the local community. Just 2% of respondents indicated they did not see development as important for the local community.

The responses captured within the public survey reflects existing sentiment observed within local press<sup>4</sup> and on social media, even pre-pandemic, for Drumcairne to have a level of investment that will help unlock its potential.

*“Drumcairne Forest is a wonderful asset to the local community and those visiting the area. It has massive potential. However, it has been left unmaintained and underdeveloped for far too long”*

- Councillor Ronan McGinley, July 2019, Mid Ulster Mail

Five distinct key priorities have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and are summarised in Figure 15.



Figure 15 - Priority Themes for Drumcairne Development from the Community Perspective

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. <https://www.midulstermail.co.uk/news/environment/drumcairne-forest-wonderful-asset-people-stewartstown-2031187>

Several respondents indicated that an inclusive and accessible experience is very important to them. 8% of survey respondents, representing 55 individuals, indicated that they have reduced/limited mobility or another disability.

*If the pathways were more accessible for wheelchair users... the terrain is stoney and difficult for me to push my wheelchair through, took all my strength to get around the pathway. People in wheelchairs like a good walk in the forest too. I wish this would be taken into consideration when planning walks. I have to travel to Peatlands or Gosford to get a decent walk.*

- Public survey respondent

There is a small proportion of demand for mountain biking access to the site. Engagement with local mountain bikers has indicated that a natural trail surface is preferred over a formally built sustainable surface.

A small demand for horse-riding trails has been indicated.

Survey respondents were asked how frequently they would envisage themselves visiting Drumcairne Forest, should facilities be developed, with most responding that they would visit a few times per week (Figure 16).

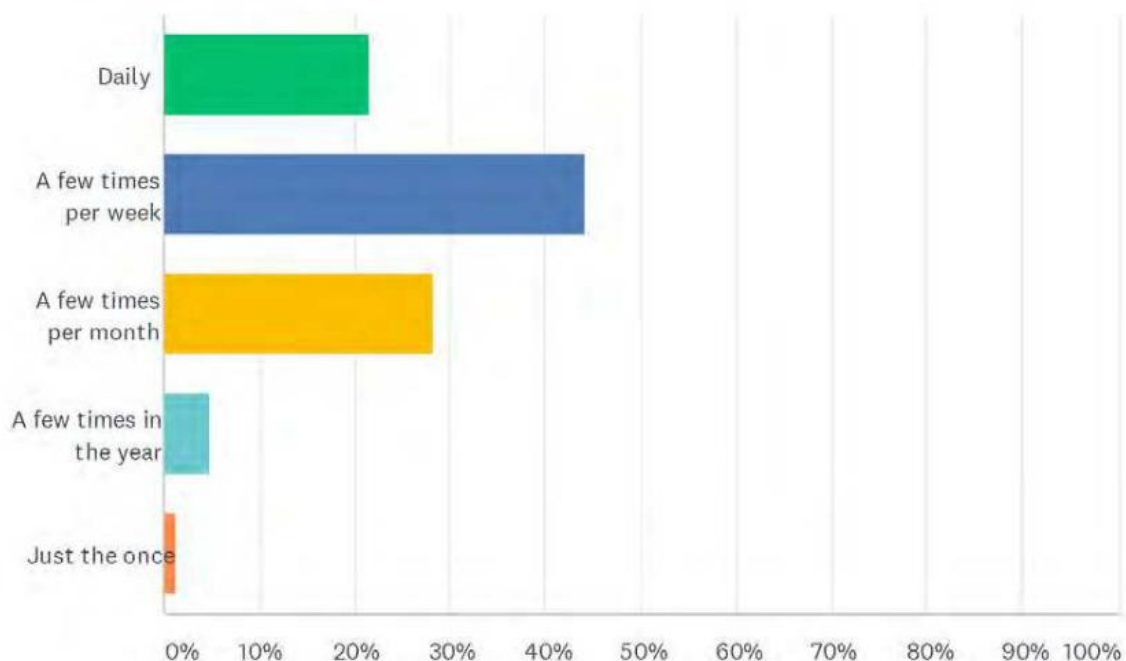


Figure 16 - Anticipated frequency of visits to Drumcairne Forest should developments happen.



### 3.6 Regional and International Tourism

For Mid Ulster, Tourism Northern Ireland Visitor Attitude Survey (2018)<sup>5</sup> reports a much higher proportion of leisure visitors from within Northern Ireland (NI), particularly day-trippers, compared with other Council Districts. Great Britain is the area's largest out of state source market, followed by North America and the Republic of Ireland but makes up a small proportion of visitors.

Visitors to Mid Ulster are most likely to be visiting to see a particular attraction, with historic monuments/sites and forest parks/gardens especially popular.

Note that statistics are not available to reflect a post-COVID-19 era but it is assumed that the proportion of leisure visitors from within NI is likely to have increased, with a more local catchment than ever.

*“Drumcairne Forest is a wonderful local resource which has unfortunately been left neglected for some years. Modest investment would really encourage those unfamiliar with the forest, as well as locals, to avail of the facility. There is a real opportunity for creating a resource which could add to the health, economic, and tourism benefits using an existing space of local and historical interest”.*

- Public survey respondent

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<sup>5</sup> Tourism Northern Ireland: Visitor Attitude Survey 2018, Cognisense Ltd. Base: n=138

## 4 SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Representation from a constituted community group (Stewartstown Community Group) with a strong interest in Drumcairne enhancements.
- Strong community support for site-appropriate development/enhancements.
- Site is already publicly accessible and in use as a recreational space.
- Existing trail network.
- Unique woodland demesne with a variety of habitats and tree species.
- Easy gradients.
- Existing car parking facilities are considered site-appropriate in scale.

### Weaknesses

- Lack of ongoing maintenance has led to degradation of site landscape features that will require a committed level of investment to reinstate.
- Reported anti-social behaviour (though this could be attributed to lack of formality of site).
- Limited visitor servicing e.g. no toilets.
- no accessible trails.

### Opportunities

- Restoration, preservation, and enhancement of woodland habitat and built landscape features.
- Immediate 'easy win' in upgrading existing trail surfaces.
- Provide an immersive inclusive experience for people with mobility issues - favourable gradients increase across the site reinforce the potential of this opportunity.
- Increase community value and involvement.
- Increase educational value of site.
- Define and highlight the natural and cultural significances of the site through community engagement and interpretation.
- Contribute to regional tourism development, including directly or indirectly supporting private sector business development.

### Threats

- 'Overdevelopment' would detract from visitor experience and conservation aims.
- Site designations to be considered
- Relatively small site means capacity and visitor load needs carefully considered
- There may be some conflicting demand from existing users of the site e.g. walking, gun club, mountain biking, equestrian.
- Forestry operations to be considered.
- Poor public awareness of the site outside the region.

## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Target Market and Segments

Mid Ulster District Council, through the commission of this Scoping Study, has already indicated an awareness of the need to develop Drumcairne Forest as a local multi-activity hub; a site developed primarily for the local community.

The need is indeed greatest within the local community, and that is where the greatest Social Return on Investment (SRoI) lies. Similar in scope and setting to Darkley Forest in Co. Armagh (see Appendix 2), a SRoI of £10 for every £1 spent on developing trails and associated visitor services for the local community is very likely to be achieved.

Drumcairne Forest is unlikely to be a major regional or international tourism generator, nor arguably is it appropriate to create the visitor capacity to be able to accommodate this. However, incidental tourism benefits are likely to arise by increasing the area's offer and so increasing the value of local providers of accommodation, food, etc.

Existing and anticipated use of the site indicates that the largest user segment is **local people visiting a few times per week for walking, engaging with nature, and enjoying the Demesne landscape**. This includes:

- Family groups and lone parents with children.
- Friends meeting up.
- People of retirement age.
- Regular dog walkers.
- People enjoying purposeful exercise e.g. running or family cycling.

### 5.2 Engaging the Local Community

Development proposals presented within this Scoping Study are supported by the Stewartstown Community Group. Notably, this community group grew out of a now-defunct separate group called 'Friends of Drumcairne'. Stewartstown Community Group is now a fully constituted group representing the wider Stewartstown area but continues its work within Drumcairne, campaigning for its restoration and taking direct action to waymark trails and carry out minor site management.

Engagement with Stewartstown Community Group should continue throughout all phases of development/enhancement of the Forest. The local community are a significant asset to the good custodianship of the Forest and are amenable to being engaged in a more formal set of agreed

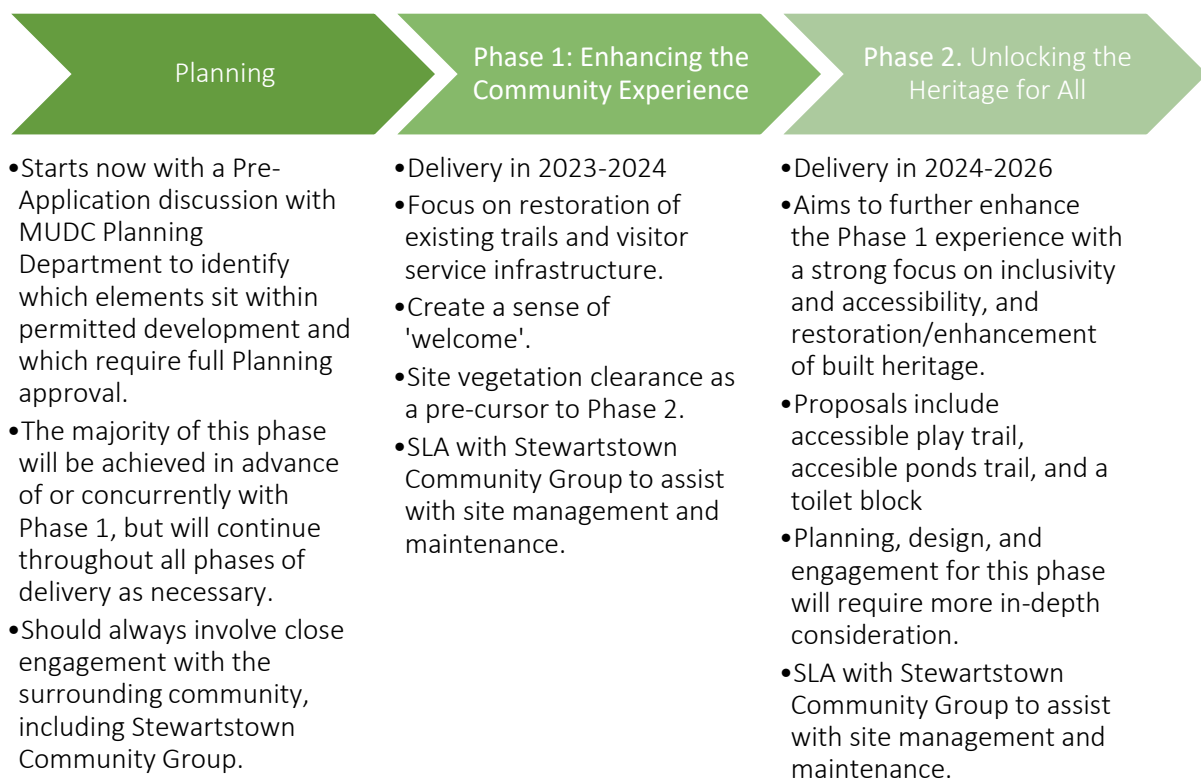
parameters to help manage and maintain the site through a future voluntary or SLA arrangement with the Council.

### 5.3 Management Model

It is recommended that Mid Ulster District Council lease Drumcairne Forest in its entirety from Forest Service Northern Ireland. The scale of the Forest and the nature of its heritage mean that to isolate specific areas or activities under a variety of licences would lead to ambiguity in management systems. ORNI recommends that full Council control, with agreed parameters of community support, is the most appropriate approach.

### 5.4 Drumcairne Development Proposals

Overview maps of development proposals are shown in Figure 19 and Figure 20. Proposals focus on the **restoration, preservation, and enhancement** of the existing offer across two delivery phases, offering the most sustainable and site-sympathetic solution to satisfy community need.



## **5.4.2 Restoration**

### **5.4.2.1 Trails**

Drumcairne Forest benefits from a generous network of existing, though degraded, trails. A coherent two-loop option network of trails, highlighted in the proposals map (Figure 19), should be restored as multi-use trails as an ‘easy-win’ priority. A gently undulating terrain and some localised narrowing through established trees mean even when upgraded, existing trails are unlikely to be accessible to all. However, an improved surface and a least-restrictive access approach to trail restoration will widen its reach to as many people as possible from within the surrounding communities. A proposed two-loop multi-use trail system means visitors can choose a short (1.5km) or a longer (3.25km) option to suit their abilities and needs.

### **5.4.2.2 Car Parking and Existing Site Entry**

The footprint of the existing car park is considered site-appropriate in scale, but will benefit from a formal layout plan, white-lining, and one-directional entry/exit instruction. The existing entry road is considered appropriate for the site but could benefit from the addition of a passing point. The above items should be formally considered and designed through the commissioning of a traffic/car park engineer, architect, or similar.

### **5.4.2.3 Built Heritage**

Following discussions with HED and MUDC Planning, a key first-step in any heritage restorative work at Drumcairne is site vegetation clearance to reveal the former features and geometry of the terraced gardens, and the true outline of the ponds, to aid subsequent decision-making and more accurate costing of next restorative steps. Much of the clearance will be of long grasses and low-lying scrub and could be carried out by the local community with some council guidance and parameter-setting. However, more significant consideration must be given to dealing with over-grown rhododendron, laurels, and other ornamental planting associated with the former Demesne. It is recommended that any vegetation management other than grasses is undertaken according to recommendations arising from a specifically commissioned vegetation, tree, and habitat management plan, with consideration for responsible preservation, and with an eye on future site enhancements.

## **5.4.3 Preservation**

A key objective of Council and community management of Drumcairne Forest should be to preserve, by doing no harm and by preventing any further harm, to the natural and built heritage value of the site, ensuring it remains a place to locally immerse in nature, and ensuring future generations can

enjoy the gardens and ponds in a safe, welcoming, and sustainable way. Carrying out works in a fully consultative manner with HED and the Natural Environment Division (NED) of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency will be key to achieving this objective.

#### **5.4.4 Enhancement**

##### **5.4.4.1 Creating an Inclusive Experience**

Drumcainne's setting and relatively favourable gradients has the potential to offer an inclusive nature and heritage experience through a combination of developing new accessible play and picnic trail and restoring and enhancing paths around the pond areas. Inclusive play integrated into the accessible trail, including water's edge access via an accessible pond platform, and a step-free environment, means that people of all abilities and their families and social circles can enjoy what the site has to offer.

##### **5.4.4.2 Interpretation, Play, and Creating a Sense of 'Welcome'**

The Association for Heritage Interpretation defines interpretation as 'a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, a site, collection or event'. It can:

- Bring meaning to a cultural or environmental resource, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better understanding. As a result, visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource.
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This will lead to increased income and create employment opportunities.
- Enable communities to better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their home area. As a result, individuals may identify with lost values inherent in their culture.

It has also been described by Freeman Tilden, one of the founders of modern interpretation, as 'an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships using original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information'.

Drumcainne Forest should be subject to a whole-site Brand and Signage Plan and Interpretation Framework, the implementation of which should be delivered across all phases of development with a key objective of creating a sense of welcome.

All trail and site furniture including wayfinding, interpretation, play features, bench seating and picnic benches, should fall within the site Brand and Signage Plan and Interpretation Framework



that ties the whole experience together, and should aim to maximise accessibility.

Integrated play in the form of an accessible trail with 3-5 key feature points using natural materials and nature-engaging methods is ideal for Drumcairne, rather than focusing on a stand-alone play park that does little to draw visitors into the key forest areas.



Figure 17 - A fully immersive interpretive experience offered through a consistent brand image for Drumcairne should include 'natural' and accessible play, engagement with the water of the ponds, benches, picnic tables and sculptures.

#### 5.4.4.3 Visitor Servicing

A toilet block with male, female, and disabled toilet will complement the aim of creating a more inclusive experience, the design of which should fit within the whole-site visual brand and interpretive experience.



*Figure 18 - Toilet Block example*

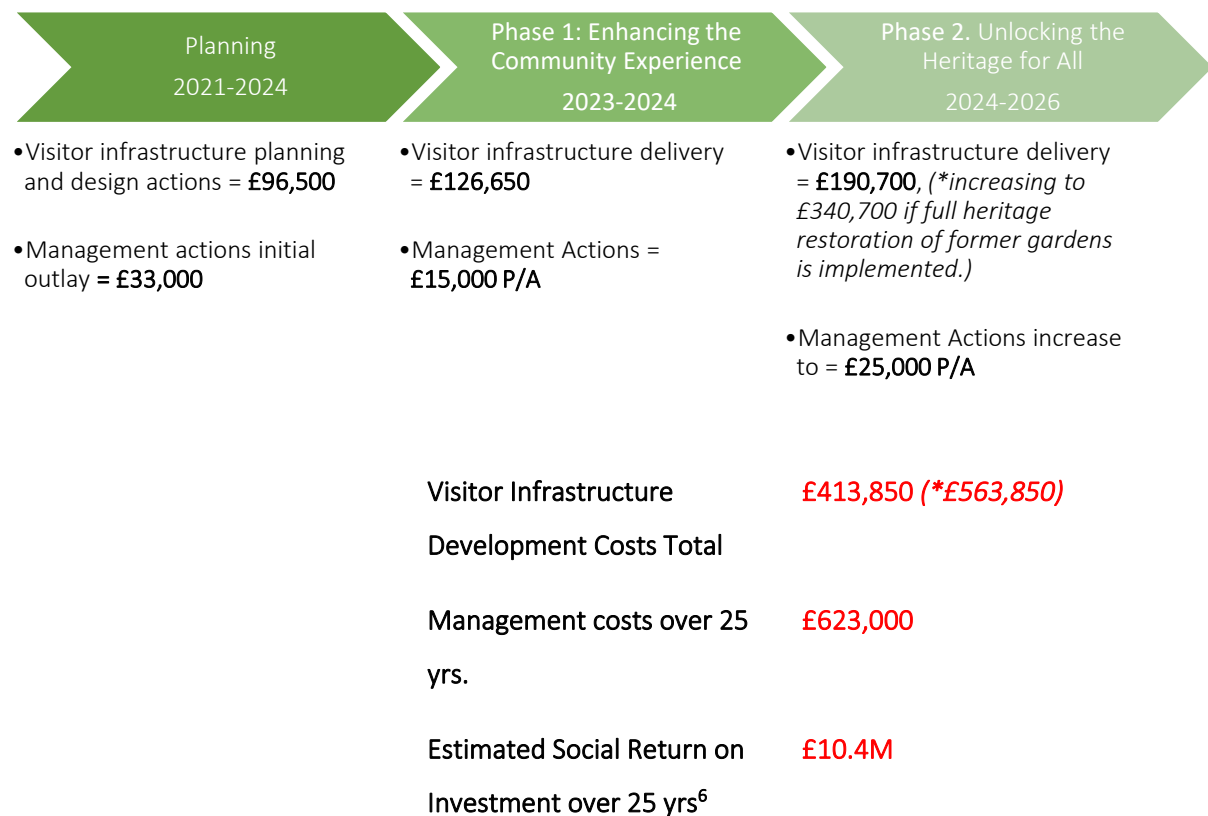
#### 5.4.4.4 Community Enterprise

Mid Ulster District Council should consider the licensing of site-appropriate mobile catering, e.g. coffee cart, to be based within or adjacent to the car parking area. Where possible within Council procurement processes, priority for this commercial opportunity should be given to providers that create an employment opportunity from within the immediate surrounding community.



## 5.5 Summary and Outline Cost of Development Proposals

Visitor Infrastructure proposals are presented in maps in Figure 19 and Figure 20. A Phased Implementation Plan showing a breakdown of costs is provided in Section 6 of this Scoping Study report.



<sup>6</sup> Based on anticipated 1:10 SRoI modelled for Darkley Forest, Co. Armagh – See Appendix 2

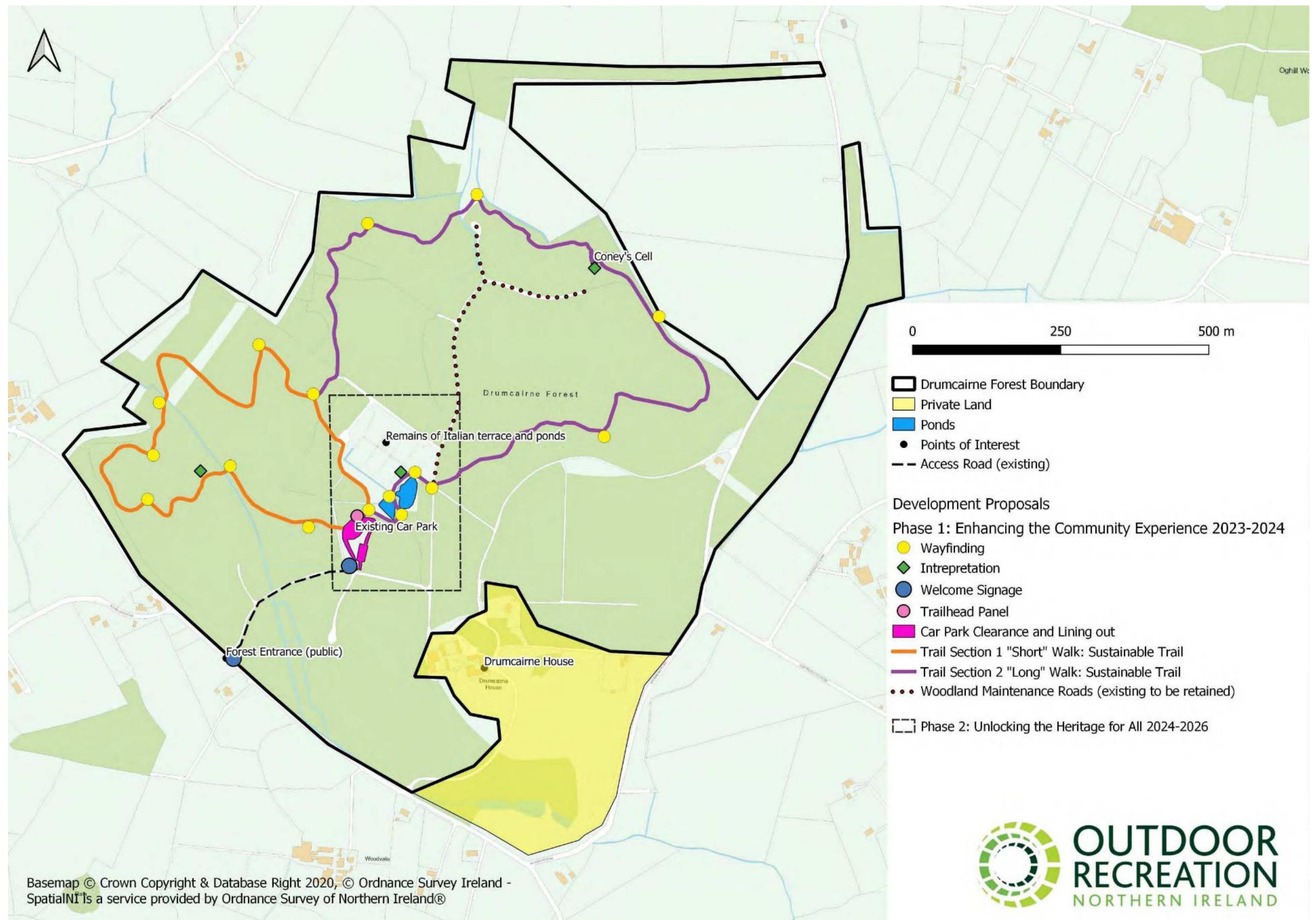


Figure 19 - Overview Map of Development Proposals



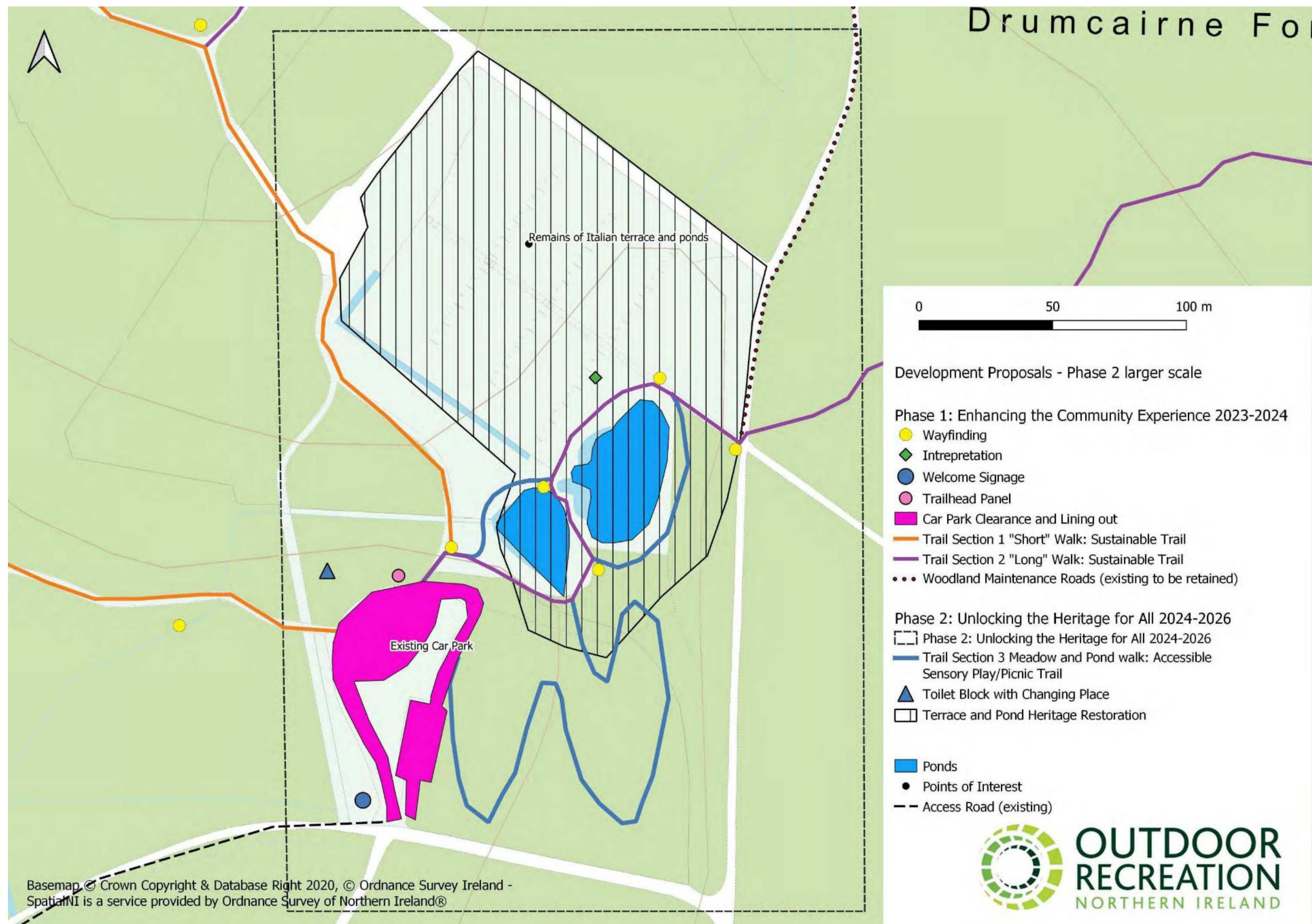


Figure 20 - Larger Scale Overview Map of Phase 2 Development Proposals

## 6 Drumcairne Phased Implementation Plan

### DRUMCAIRNE VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIONS & COSTS

CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING 2021 - 2024	PHASE 1 : Enhancing the Community Experience 2023-2024	PHASE 2: Unlocking the Heritage for All 2024-2026
Brand and Interpretation	1 External Navigation Signage (Brown Signage)	Brand and Signage Strategy	Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000	-
	2 Welcome Signage	Interpretation Framework	Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000	-
	3 Interpretation	The above may be applied across multiple forest sites as a value-for-money exercise and to deliver consistency across the Council area. They must consider the proposed two-phased development and delivery, and should identify opportunities for community co-curation.  To align with respective infrastructure items and proposed phases.  £20,000	Design, production, and installation x 2 £5,000	Design, production, and installation x 2 £5,000
Trail Network	4 Visitor Counter	Professional fees for advancement of development concept for upgrade of existing trails:	Installation x 2 £6,000	Installation x 1 £3,000
	5 Trailhead Panel	- Planning Approvals PAD dependent (not costed, assumed permitted development as outcome pf PAD for existing trails upgrades)	Design, production, and installation £2,000	Design, production, and installation £2,000
	6 Trail Build Section 1 “short” Walk: 1.5km	- Applications for funding	Trail upgrade Cat 3 Multi-use trail 1500m x £30/m £45,000	-
	7 Trail Build Section 2 “Long” Walk 1.75km	- Trail prescription for contract specification	Trail upgrade Cat 3 Multi-use trail 1750m x £30/m £52,500	-
	8 Wayfinding	- Contractor procurement - Project management of trail build  £15,000	Post & Disc Est. 25No @ £150 £3,750	Post & Disc Est. 10 No @ £150 £1,500
	9 Trail Build Section 3 Meadow and Pond Walk: Accessible sensory Play/Picnic Trail	Professional fees for advancements of development concept for new build trails: - Refined cost estimate - Application for funding - Commissioning of ecological, heritage impact surveys. - Planning Approvals - Trail prescription for contract specification - Contractor procurement  £30,000	Vegetation clearance (community scale) and mown grass path.       Community-led	Vegetation clearance (capital scale).  New Trail Build 500m x £80/m, wheelchair accessible surface and gradients. Recommended bound gravel surface.  This further includes accessible ‘pads’ for trail furniture (items 12-15) @ 50m².  £45,000
Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services	10 Car Park	Professional fees for design associated with upgrade to existing car park. Commission engineer for layout plan within existing footprint for maximum capacity ~40 spaces. £1,500	Car Park Upgrade: grass cutting, edging, and car park markings.  £6,000	N/A. Monitor capacity.
	11 Toilet Block	Professional fees - Refined cost estimate - Detailed architectural and technical design	-	Toilet Block Build

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Approvals</li> <li>- Contractor/supplier procurement</li> </ul> <p>£5,000</p>		£100,000
Trail Furniture	12	Play	<p>Specification to be fully incorporated into whole site brand and interpretation plan.</p> <p>Professional fees for commissioning of site-appropriate play trail features consistent with Brand and Interpretation Plan:</p> <p>£5,000</p>	-	<p>Natural play features to be integrated into Meadow and Pond Walk (item 9)</p> <p>£25,000</p>
	13	Picnic Tables		-	<p>5No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each Integrated into Meadow Walk, to include wheelchair accessible tables and base/surface.</p> <p>£3,000</p>
	14	Bench Seating		<p>8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each</p> <p>£2,400</p>	<p>4No. wooden benches throughout extended trail system @ £300 each</p> <p>£1,200</p>
	15	Accessible Pond Platforms			<p>2No. Boardwalk-style resin-grip coated pond platform graded to conform to accessible path specification</p> <p>£8,000</p>
Heritage Restoration	16	Pond and Terrace Restoration	<p>Professional Fees: Heritage feasibility Study engaging a heritage architect/landscape architect to assess the social heritage value of a full restoration of built landscape features, to include recommendations on future management and maintenance of a fully restored site, with appropriate consultation with HED</p> <p>Applications for heritage restoration funding as appropriate.</p> <p>£20,000</p>		<p>Full restoration of Drumcaine Demesne built landscape features</p> <p>£150,000</p>
Phased Totals			£96,500	£126,650	£190,700 without full heritage restoration (£340,700 with heritage restoration)
Grand Total					£413,850 (£563,850 with heritage restoration)



DRUMCAIRNE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS & COSTS

CATEGORY		Item	PLANNING	PHASE 1 : Enhancing the Community Experience 2023-2024	PHASE 2: Unlocking the Heritage for All 2024-2026
Third Party Agreements	1	Forest Service	Council to adopt a whole-forest management approach. Agree a whole-forest Lease arrangement between Forest Service and Council.  Cost: Nominal	-	-
	2	Stewartstown Community Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convening of community group to relay Councillor-ratified outcome of the scoping study.</li> <li>Engagement and participation with planning process and elements of co-design as appropriate.</li> <li>Community-involved interpretation research.</li> </ul> Professional fees for externally delivered community engagement: £8,000	SLA and/or volunteer agreement for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste/Litter Collection.</li> <li>General visitor facilities – issues reporting.</li> <li>Opening/closing gates.</li> </ul> £5,000 P/A	SLA/volunteer agreement extension for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include a mowing/strimming regime on mown grass trails/areas.</li> <li>Management of Toilet Facilities</li> </ul> Increased to £10,000 P/A
	3	Private Enterprise	Seek expressions of interest for site-appropriate third-party mobile catering e.g. Coffee cart.	Grant third party license for mobile catering – trading begins.	Review & extend third party license for mobile catering.
Community Engagement	4		Press releases to announce planned investment.	Launch event and community volunteer recruitment.	Launch event and community volunteer recruitment.
Future Site Management	5	Site Management Plan	Develop an over-arching site management plan with respective constituent parts 5-7 corresponding to the phase of development.  £25,000	Implementation of Site Management Plan (in addition to SLA): £10,000 P/A	Implementation of Site Management Plan (additional) Increased to £15,000 P/A
	6	Vegetation, Tree, and Habitat Management		Ongoing implementation of Vegetation, Tree, and Habitat management Plan following initial capital clearance works. Included in item 5	Ongoing implementation of Vegetation, Tree, and Habitat management Plan Included in item 5
	7	Built Heritage Management		Implementation of Built Heritage Management Plan Included in item 5	Implementation of Built Heritage Management Plan Included in item 5
Phased Totals			£33,000	£15,000 P/A	£25,000 P/A



## 7 Funding Streams

Several funding options may be available for a project of this kind, including the following:

### **Initiatives to Tackle Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**

DAERA TRPSI fund has the potential be a good fit for developments such as those proposed within this Scoping Study.

For example, over the past 4 years DAERA has committed £5.7m from its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme to 17 Forest Park Enhancement Schemes. This significant financial commitment has levered in a further £3.9m through partnerships formed with Councils and other grant aiding bodies. These projects contribute to the health and well-being of the residents of the surrounding areas to the Forests/Trails by developing safe, way marked, off-road cycling/walking trails that will accommodate a wide range of users and helping locals and visitors alike to stay healthy and happy, both physically and mentally.

Successful application for funding would be dependent on MUDC securing match funding of (currently 15% for 2021/22 funding programme).

Further detailed information can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/initiatives-tackle-rural-poverty-and-social-isolation-trpsi>

### **DAERA Environmental Challenge Fund**

DAERA's Environmental Challenge Fund aims to support projects that will deliver outcomes in at least one of their strategic priorities, including Implementation of actions that are essential to delivery of DAERA's strategic outdoor recreation priorities, to increase sustainable public enjoyment and understanding of land and seascapes including: a) Delivery of core path networks and strategic routes, primarily in partnership with councils; b) Promotion of environmental responsibility and good practice; c) Projects on NIEA sites, particularly for those for whom access is currently difficult.

Overarching factors that will be taken into account in shortlisting and allocating funding to projects include;

- Scale
- Evidence of need
- Environmental impacts
- Value for money (including match funding options)

- Sustainable impact

Further detailed information can be found at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/ef-environment-fund-2019-22-overarching-criteria-environmental-impact>

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund**

National Lottery funds projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional, and local heritage of the UK. They provide different levels of funding to heritage of all shapes and sizes, with grants ranging from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. The Heritage Fund prioritises heritage projects that meet six of their outcomes as follows:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage.
- The funded organisation will be more resilient.
- People will have greater wellbeing.
- People will have developed skills.
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit.
- The local economy will be boosted.

All projects are also expected to demonstrate that they are building long-term environmental sustainability and inclusion into their plans.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1 Strategic Context (Detailed Version)

The development of outdoor recreation and the supporting local community facilities fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies and strategic organisations. Outdoor Recreation NI has taken care to ensure that the proposed development(s) outlined in this Scoping Study, aligns with these policies and strategies at a regional and local level.

The following strategies and policies were identified as having most strategic relevance.

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10 year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA's Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA "Our Passion, Our Place" Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)</li> </ul>
<b>Community Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Village Plans for Cappagh &amp; Galbally, Ballygawley and Stewartstown</li> </ul>

Table 4: Relevant Strategies and Policies for this study

The following is a brief synopsis of each document considered in the Strategic Context to be of significance in terms of how the proposed development and recommendations made in this Scoping Study do align to and/or could contribute towards the delivery of key regional and sub-regional policies and strategies.

Regional Strategic Context
<p><b><i>Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)</i></b></p> <p>The draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework sets out the aspirations of the Executive for society and provides a strategic context for other key strategies and policies. The PfG was also to shape the development of the Executive's budget over the course of the current mandate and provide a mechanism for ensuring funds are best directed to where they can contribute most.</p> <p>The Framework contains 14 strategic outcomes and connect to every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and education, economic success and building confident and peaceful communities. The following outcomes are of relevance to this Scoping Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outcome 2: Live and work sustainably – protecting the environment;</li> <li>– Outcome 4: Enjoy long, healthy, active lives;</li> <li>– Outcome 12: Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest;</li> <li>– Outcome 14: Give our children and young people the best start in life.</li> </ul> <p>These outcomes are supported by 42 indicators, with each indicator accompanied by a measure which is largely derived from existing statistics to monitor performance. The following indicators are of relevance to this Scoping Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indicator 2: Reduce health inequality</li> <li>– Indicator 3: Increase healthy life expectancy</li> <li>– Indicator 6: Improve mental health</li> <li>– Indicator 30: Improve our attractiveness as a destination and our international reputation.</li> </ul> <p>Key to the success of the PfG is the ability of Departments to work collaboratively with not only themselves but also with other public bodies and the voluntary and private sector.</p>
<p><b><i>Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD, 2010)</i></b></p>

This Strategy is designed to deliver the spatial aspects of the PfG and is intended to inform the spatial aspects of other Government Departments, Councils' decisions and investments, and guide investment by the private sector. Relevant aims of the Strategy for this Scoping Study include:

- Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential
- Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities
- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake

The Strategy highlights the importance of improving facilities for walking and cycling as part of infrastructure investment.

### ***A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022***

Obesity is a major public health challenge facing Northern Ireland and this Framework aims to empower people to make healthier choices by creating an environment that supports a physically active lifestyle and healthy diet. It recognises the factors that underpin weight gain are complex and cover factors such as social and individual psychology, physiology, food consumption, individual activity and built environment.

In addition, many wider determinants of poor health such as health inequalities, poverty, mental health, deprivation and structural barriers also play an important role. Of relevance, the Strategy outlines how environmental factors affect choices and behaviours, for example lack of access to green space reduces physical activity opportunities. Other barriers include poor urban environments, limited safe play facilities and community safety, and sedentary lifestyles.

### ***Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)***

The new Health Strategy recognises that the Health Service faces growing demand driven by successful interventions and improving life expectancy. As a result, there is a need to move beyond managing illness and instead ensure that people are supported to live well; physically, mentally and emotionally. To do this, the onus is on Departments and Agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes.

Core to PfG Outcome 4 of people leading long, healthy and active lives is improving people's health. The Strategy outlines a future in which people are supported to keep well with the information, education and support to make informed choices and take control of their own health and wellbeing.



This requires the circumstances for people to stay healthy, well, safe and independent in the first place. There is a need to:

- Build capacity in communities and in prevention to reduce inequalities and ensure the next generation is healthy and well
- Work with communities to support them to develop their strengths and use their assets to tackle the determinants of health and social wellbeing
- Tap into the innovative ideas and energies in communities themselves, and in the community and voluntary sectors.
- In all communities, every child and young person should have the best start in life, people should have a decent standard of living, and all citizens should be supported to make healthier and better-informed life choices
- Work alongside all communities to enable social inclusion and tackle health inequalities and the underlying contributory factors including poverty, housing, education and crime.

#### ***Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)***

Commissioned by Sport NI and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), this Action Plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities that there are to participate, not only in rural areas but also in the urban fringes.

Due to the recognition that access to green space enhances physical health and mental wellbeing, and addresses issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion, the vision of the Action Plan is “a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland”.

It provides key recommendations for actions and challenges that need to be addressed to make Northern Ireland a place where outdoor recreation can deliver:

- Healthy active lifestyles for local people from all communities;
- Economic growth through encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors; and
- Protection of landscapes and ecosystems for future generations.

To achieve this vision, the aim is for Northern Ireland to be a place where:

- There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities;
- There are accompanying benefits to local communities, especially those who are socially excluded in terms of health, social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and economic development;
- People enjoy the outdoors and show a high degree of responsibility for themselves, towards others and towards the environment they are using, and play their part in maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage.

#### ***A New Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)***

As of April 2021, the DfC was still in the process of public consultation for this new, 10-year draft strategy. Having been drafted during the Covid-19 pandemic period, this Strategy specifically highlights that sport and physical activity and the associated benefits that these bring, will play an important role in Northern Ireland's recovery.

The draft Strategy now defines 'sport' in a broader context, as 'all forms of physical activity which, through casual organised participation, aimed at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.

The proposed Vision is 'Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity leads to an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence'.

To deliver this vision, six Key Themes have been identified. Goals relating to the achievement of each theme, that are relevant to this Study have been highlighted in bold and listed:

1. Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity
2. **Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement**
  - Improved physical and mental health and well being
  - Sport and physical activity is inclusive, safe, diverse, shared and offers equality of opportunity to participate for all
  - Children and young people are given the best start in life through sport and physical activity opportunities
3. Promoting excellence in sport
4. **The importance of partnership and integration**
  - Better outcomes for communities through a collaborative approach to the development of sport and physical activity
  - Outcomes for communities are improved by a focus on co-design and co-production
  - Strengthened sports and physical activity partnerships at local, regional, national and international level
  - An increasing proportion of our facilities are shared across sports, clubs, schools and communities
5. **Providing inclusive and shared spaces**
  - Everyone has access to inclusive, shared, welcoming and high-quality sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - A safe, economically and environmentally sustainable local and regional sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - Our sports and physical activity sector and infrastructure are enabled by innovative and emerging technologies
6. Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity

Underpinning these Key Themes and their goals, are three cross-cutting principles:

- **Developing inclusive, shared communities**
- Developing capacity and governance in sport and physical activity
- Developing national and international linkages

Those which are of relevance to this Scoping Study are highlighted in **bold**.

### ***Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025***

The vision of the Sport NI Plan is the same as the new, draft Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for NI: ‘...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’. Sport NI’s mission statement is: “We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all”.

To achieve this, Sport NI has identified two strategic outcomes over the next 5 years:

- Outcome 1: People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and recreation
- Outcome 2 NI Athletes among the best in the world

### ***Sustainability for the Future, DAERA’s Plan to 2050***

This Plan frames DAERA’s strategic priorities for the next 30 years. DAERA’s vision and purpose, outlined in this Plan, is “Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”.

The Plan states that a “sustainable approach creates a healthy environment to live in, which will underpin a healthy population and stimulate healthy economic rural communities” therefore acknowledging the link between a healthy environment, access to it and the health and well-being of communities. It states that “a healthy population depends on access to a healthy diet and a healthy, enjoyable environment” and “enhancing our environment matters, as a healthy environment is interlinked with our health and wellbeing”.

In the Plan, the Natural Environment is one of four strategic priorities – ‘to protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all’. Directly related to achieving this is one of the Plan’s ten goals –

*“9. Health and wellbeing for All - we will focus on using and enhancing our natural resources to improve the health and wellbeing for all of Northern Ireland. We will encourage people to spend more time in nature. We will work collectively to develop and showcase the tourism opportunities of our wonderful environment and NI’s world class food and drink production”.*

The Plan highlights that DAERA has a responsibility for 113,000 Ha forests which represents an obvious asset and resource to achieving the above.

### ***NIEA “Our Passion, Our Place” Strategic Priorities 2012-2022***

The priorities for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as outlined in this document, under the following themes, includes:

#### ***Healthy Natural Environment***

- A well-functioning network of protected sites and areas including enhancing the management of designated sites to benefit site features and protecting and conserving the historic environment
- Sustainable, diverse landscapes with rich biodiversity which are resilient to change

#### ***People and Places***

- Extensive opportunity for everyone to appreciate and enjoy the natural and built environment
- Common understanding of the role the environment plays in the health and wellbeing of people
- Greater business and community involvement in the environment including through volunteering and community stakeholder groups
- The natural environment and built heritage assets meet the needs of society and communities

#### ***Sustainable Economic Growth***

- The value of natural and built assets to the economy is fully realised
- The best outcome for the environment is obtained whilst minimising cost to business.

### ***Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board & Forest Service, 2013)***

This study highlighted findings from a research study that set out proposals for tourism development in Northern Ireland’s forests. The study was set in the context of the Forest Service’s policy to realise further opportunities for the recreational and social use of forests, in partnership with local authorities and other recreation providers.

The study established a vision for forest related tourism which was to “use the forest estate to deliver an exceptional visitor and short break experience for all, which will increase the economic impact of forest related tourism in Northern Ireland.”

To achieve this vision, the study set out the following supporting aims:

- To increase the economic impact of forest related tourism
- To encourage visitor experience and product development opportunities that will provide an exceptional visitor experience in line with the Northern Ireland brand principles



- To promote and enable effective partnership working.

### ***Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006***

This Strategy aims to tackle issues of poverty and social exclusion by targeting efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need. The priorities identified include:

- Eliminating poverty
- Eliminating social exclusion
- Tackling area-based deprivation
- Eliminating poverty from rural areas
- Tackling health inequalities
- Tackling cycles of deprivation

The goals and targets set out include the following:

- Allowing all children and young people to experience a happy and fulfilling childhood, while equipping them with the education, skills and experience to achieve their potential
- Ensuring that everyone has the potential to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

The development of community access to green space and outdoor recreation provision across the Mid Ulster forests aligns with this Strategy and has the potential to contribute to eliminating social exclusion and poverty and tackling health inequalities.

### ***The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)***

The Northern Ireland Executive's vision for volunteering is a society where:

- Everyone values the vital contribution that volunteers make to community wellbeing
- Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful and enjoyable volunteering experience.

The growth and development of outdoor recreation across three forest areas provides a unique opportunity for people to volunteer and become involved in their local communities.

### ***Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)***

NI Water's Strategy have identified 5 strategic priorities – Economy ....

Much of the Strategy is heavily centred on optimising the operation, management and impacts of the water supply business of NI Water. However, under strategic priority 'Economy' there are 3 objectives:

- Funding world class economic infrastructure
- Efficient and affordable services
- Sustainable growth

Under the 'sustainable growth' and 'nature' priorities NI Water acknowledge that they are one of Northern Ireland's largest public landowners and therefore have a role to play in tourism. One of the actions is to "seek opportunities to utilise our catchment land, raw water reservoirs and assets to maximise the community benefits, working closely with local councils'.

### ***Recreation & Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)***

This 2-year policy provides a framework defining what access is permitted to NI Water owned lands and waters, and how access arrangements for recreational use will be communicated, controlled and governed.

Key factors in determining access for recreational use are summarised here as risk, cost, sustainability, biodiversity and conservation and protection of water quality and supply.

### **Sub-Regional Strategic Context**

Consideration is also given to relevant Council strategic documents and the positive benefits and impact outdoor recreation can make on the objectives of the Council's draft Local Development Plan, Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Economic Development Plan and Tourism Strategy.

### ***Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024***

This Plan has been influenced by the Council's Community Plan, Economic Development Plan, Tourism Strategy and draft Local Development Plan.

The Plan has 5 strategic themes, of which 'Environment' and 'Communities' are two. In addition, 'addressing rurality' and 'working collaboratively across public, private, community and voluntary sectors to achieve shared objectives' are identified as cross-cutting corporate commitments. Commitment which the recommendations for development in this Scoping Study fulfil.

Within the Environment theme, 1 of 4 priorities is to 'increase the protection of, access to and development of our heritage assets, both natural and man-made, including our strategic visitor sites'.

Within the Communities theme, the Council aim to 'make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of local people, and contribute to the creation of viable and vibrant, safe and prosperous communities'. Accessibility to the outdoors and access to opportunities to adopt a more active lifestyle in a greater range of settings are highlighted, as well as the 'benefits of the outdoors for physical and mental health'. Priorities for the Council under this theme are to –

- Open up and sustain accessible pathways to participation in leisure and outdoor recreation activities which enhance health and well-being by providing high quality, accessible facilities in local communities and through programmes tailored to community need
- Continue to support the sustainable development of our parks, forests and green spaces, together with access to outdoor assets, including walking and cycling trails, and water recreation
- Along with our community planning partners, work to address poverty and deprivation across the Mid Ulster region
- We will continue, through our community development programmes, grant aid schemes and our partnership-working, to support local communities and to build capacity in the community and voluntary sector

#### ***Our Community Plan: 10-year Plan for Mid Ulster (2017)***

The Council has identified 15 outcomes structured under 5 themes to deliver the Community Plan. This Scoping Study fits into 5 themes and 11 of the 15 outcomes, as outlined below:

Theme	Outcomes
-------	----------

Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy</li> <li>– We have more people working in a diverse economy</li> <li>– Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Improved attractiveness as a tourism destination</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased no. of social economy businesses</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased performance of our towns and villages</i></li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased environmental sustainability</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased protection, access and enjoyment of our natural and built heritage</i></li> </ul>
Education and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We give our children and young people the best chance in life</li> <li>– We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased number of schools which have community access</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved child development</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved mental health and resilience in children and young people</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased innovation in our economy</i></li> </ul>
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We are better enabled to live longer, healthier and more active lives</li> <li>– We care for those most vulnerable and in need</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased healthy life expectancy</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved mental health</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased quality of life and opportunities for people with disabilities</i></li> <li>– <i>Reduced health inequality</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved child development</i></li> </ul>
Vibrant and Safe Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We are a safer community</li> <li>– We have a greater value and respect for diversity</li> <li>– We have stronger communities with less disadvantage and poverty</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p>



- *Reduced anti-social behaviour*
- *Increased respect for each other*
- *Increased shared space*
- *Reduced level of deprivation and poverty*
- *Greater coordination of community delivery*
- *Increased community capacity, volunteering and delivery*
- *Increased private led community initiatives*

#### ***Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)***

As of May 2021, the final Plan is yet to be published. This spatial plan will set out the Council's vision for planning land use up until 2030, incorporating housing, infrastructure, transport and relevant to this project – tourism, community and recreational facilities.

#### ***Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)***

Key priorities for growing tourism in Mid Ulster are:

- History and Heritage
- Outdoor Activities
- Seamus Heaney

The latter 2 propositions are described as 'significant and prominent, but so far undeveloped'. Current tourism is largely based on rural and outdoor activities and tied into the area's natural attributes - the recommendations in this Scoping Study fit this current profile.

Key issues for the growth and management of tourism that have implications for this scoping study are –

- While day visitation to the area is important, the reasons to visit are not well articulated
- The visibility of Mid Ulster's natural heritage, outdoor activity and historic and archaeological heritage are lost partly because they are spread across the area and also because these attributes haven't been pulled together into distinct propositions for visitors.
- There is a weak accommodation base, exacerbated by variable occupancy levels (and thus viability) throughout the year

- The SME and microbusiness characteristics of the tourism sector in the area exacerbate challenges of communicating and engaging with the trade and developing collaborative projects across the trade
- The geographical dispersal of the area – in terms of scale, distance and character – suggests a challenge in creating both a tourism identity for Mid Ulster itself and for a hierarchy of individual communities that have identities and propositions that could encourage visitation
- Continuing constraints in countryside access limit the opportunity to exploit the natural environment to its full potential for outdoor activities

Opportunities for the future that have been identified and align with the recommendations in this Scoping Study are –

- The opportunity exists to exploit Mid Ulster’s central location within NI and improving access (completion of the Magherafelt Bypass; A6 dualling; Randalstown (M22) to Castledawson). The central location of Mid Ulster could also boost camping and caravanning based in the area. However, historically strong dependence on the NI domestic day and overnight market for visitation highlights the need to encourage more overnight stays from out-of-state markets and their greater expenditure.
- Outdoor tourism sites and experiences, including the presence of very successful outdoor activity providers, suggest that the outdoor tourism product can be exploited further right across the area
- An invigorated district wide programme of marketing and promotion is achievable, including events, enhanced signage, technology use, visitor information services and limiting print production.

To grow tourism in Mid Ulster there are 5 aims and objectives that actions and development should be centred on –

1. To develop three strategic tourism strands, around which the attributes of the area and the industry can cluster and to attract visitors –
  - i. Seamus Heaney
  - ii. Archaeological sites, history and heritage
  - iii. Outdoor Activities
2. To grow tourism as an economic driver for Mid Ulster
3. To manage the destination and create the preconditions for successful tourism
4. To profile and promote Mid Ulster to enhance the visibility of the area and boost visitation and spend
5. To support the dispersal of visitor spend and investment across the area

This Scoping Study and any subsequent development of the recommendations can be tied to the ‘Heritage and History’ and ‘Outdoor Activities’ themes.

For Heritage & History, the Plan highlights that Mid Ulster is the only place to appreciate the history and importance of the O’Neill family – there are many features and remnants of the O’Neills in Cappagh area. Dunmoyle is also rich in heritage features and Drumcaine is a historic garden and demesne.

Walking, cycling, mountain biking, canoeing, angling, multi-adventure centres (e.g. Todds Leap, and Jungle NI) plus a number of activity tourism providers in the area are key propositions for outdoor activities in Mid Ulster. Horse riding and golf add further value to the product offering

and visitor experience. Except for golf, all of the forests are well positioned and have the potential to provide some or all of these activities.

Lastly, for the tourism vision Mid Ulster to be achieved, the Plan highlights the importance of local communities buying into the wider 'Mid Ulster identity'. It also highlights the importance of public realm quality, quality standards, food availability, access to information, etc within each community to ensure the visitor experience is positive and consistent across the area.

### ***Mid Ulster Economic Development DRAFT Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)***

The Council's previous Economic Development Plan expired in 2020. The purpose of this Draft Action Plan is to 'focus on the activity and actions that support businesses, high streets and economic recovery' in response to and amidst the backdrop of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The Draft Action Plan has multiple themes all aimed at driving recovery during the pandemic and building the foundations for sustained recovery.

Themes and outputs relevant to this study are –

Theme	Output
Physical Regeneration / improving Infrastructure	Rural Regeneration Projects – work in partnership with RDP to deliver Village Regeneration projects in Mid Ulster over 4 years
Strategic Projects	Delivery of Mid South West (MSW) Regional Economic Strategy – Develop a range of collaborative economic development projects as part of Growth Deal, e.g. Developing the O'Neill tourism proposition
Rural Business support / attracting investment	Micro business development scheme (TRPSI) – small capital grants for business development activities
Mid Ulster LEADER RDP Programme 2016-2020	Activities relating to the final delivery of 'Rural Business Investment Scheme', 'Rural Services Scheme' and 'Village Renewal Scheme' projects before closure of programme

### ***Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan (MUDC, 2020)***

This report and Action Plan sets out the future direction for the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation across the Mid Ulster district over a 5-year period, from 2020 to 2025.

In this strategy, outdoor recreation is recognised as having significant benefits across society, from the individual level in terms of health, to the wider society in terms of education, the economy and environment.

The report identifies the following key issues and opportunities relating to the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation that are relevant to this project:

- All 22 forests in the area provide local recreation opportunities but some, if developed appropriately, have the potential to attract visitors from outside the area
- whilst the area already has several informal walking trails around villages and along river corridors, there is an overwhelmingly demand for a formal network of Community Trails to be developed across the area
- few mechanisms exist within MUDC to encourage collaboration between the many different organisations and interest groups involved in outdoor recreation across the area. These include landowners/land managers, NGBs, private sector activity providers and service providers
- some of the more niche customers such as camping and caravans are provided with good levels of information, but the more 'mass' offering to local people or visitors on outdoor recreation and parks is insufficient.
- there is an expressed desire by local people in the MUDC area to have better access to information on the outdoor recreation opportunities available across MUDC.

The Action Plan makes 24 recommendations aimed at improving the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation over the next 5 years. Of the 24 recommendations, 14 are relevant to this project:

#### ***Management Structures***

- Put in place an adequately resourced rolling maintenance programme for all current and future outdoor recreation facilities.
- Monitor existing and develop where appropriate new SLAs with Community Groups for the ongoing maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities.



### ***Masterplanning***

- Undertake Master Planning/Feasibility Studies for six Local Sites, including
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 3-4)
- Develop a Community Trail Plan for each DEA

### ***Product Development***

- Develop 3 regional multi-use activity hubs
- Develop 9 local multi-use activity hubs:
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 2-3)
- Develop short and medium distance walking trails
- Develop a network of Community Trails across the area

### ***Promotion / Marketing***

- Prepare a 5-year Marketing Strategy and tactical Marketing Action Plan.
- Develop visitor information and signage guidelines for all forest recreation sites.
- Undertake a review of signage, visitor information and waymarking at all outdoor recreation sites.
- Implement new visitor information and signage guidelines at all outdoor recreation sites across the area.
- Develop an Outdoor Recreation Participation Plan.
- Develop partnerships with the private sector to deliver outdoor recreation participation programmes.

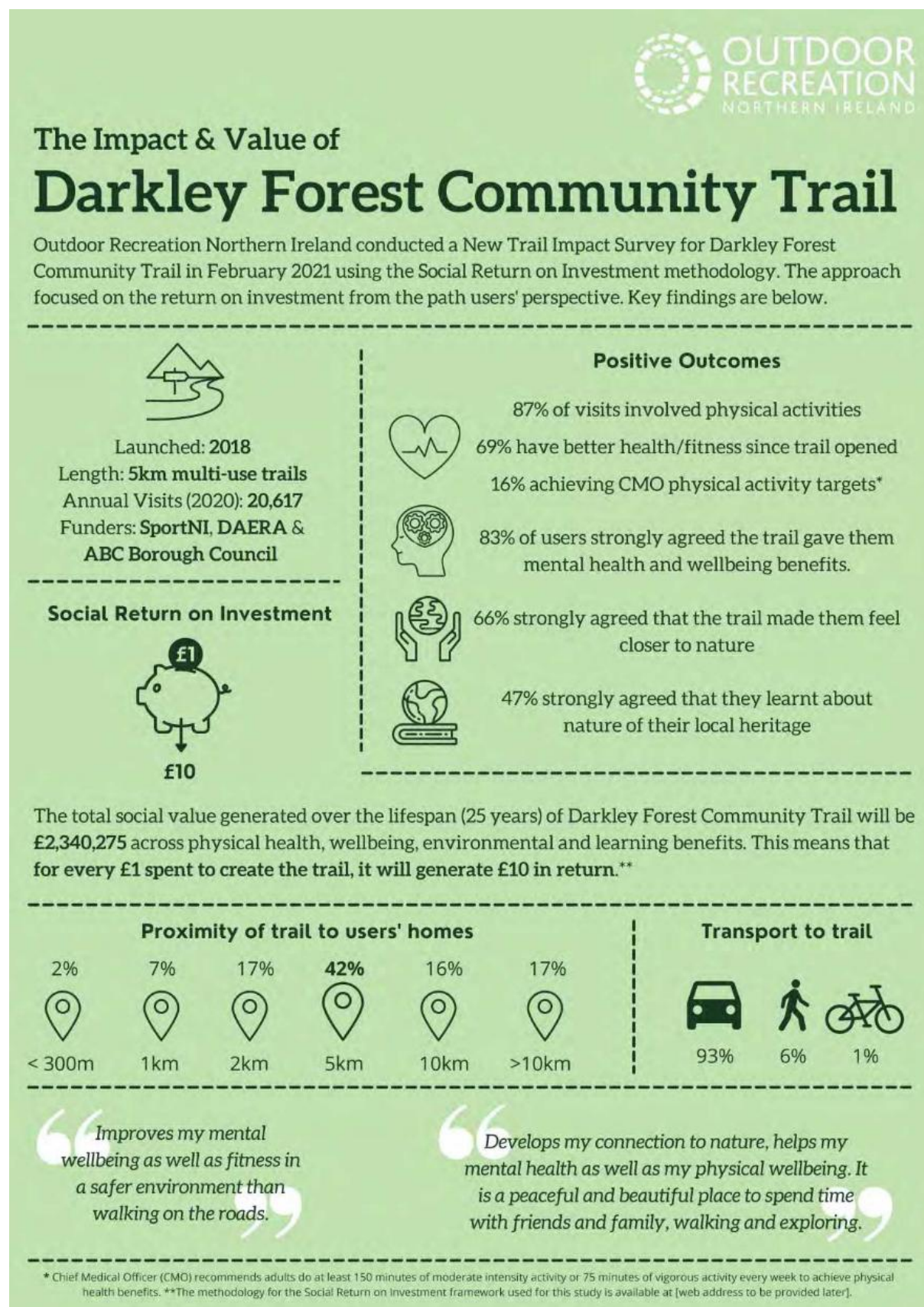
### ***Public Parks and Play Five Year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (MUDC, 2021)***

This report and Action Plan provides a comprehensive picture of the status of current public parks and play park facilities, as well as opportunities for future development, in the Mid Ulster district.

MUDC comprises over 100 public park and play facility sites ranging from small play parks to formal pitches/MUGA's to open parkland. One of the key findings of the report is that there is a disparity in provision with some areas in greatest needs suffering from a lack of provision while other areas are over provided for. This report provided an assessment of each facility, in terms of need, condition and spatial distribution.

In addition to site-specific recommendations, 11 over-arching, strategic recommendations were made. These are summarised as:

- Thorough Community Consultation
- Play should be inclusive
- Development of 'public parks' to plug the gap in open/green space across the Council area
- Develop woodland play
  - o Drumcairne Forest is recommended as a 'small woodland park' site with a budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
  - o Altmore Forest is also identified as a 'small woodland park' site with budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
- Compatibility with other Council strategies, including ORS, Tourism Strategy and Sports Facility Strategy
- Conduct Play Value assessments which considers the 'play experience'
- Adopt a risk-benefit approach to play provision
- Consider other public land sites and working in partnership with other public bodies to develop play provision
- Planning - protect the loss of open/green space except where there is a substantial community benefit
- Staff resource/maintenance and manning should be factored into future development projects when considering the development of play facilities



## Appendix 3 Community Survey and Results



# **Scoping Study for the Development of Dunmoyle Forest, Ballygawley**

August 2021

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI  
*on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council*



**OUTDOOR  
RECREATION**  
NORTHERN IRELAND

## Executive Summary

### The Site

Dunmoyle Forest is made up of five Forest Management Blocks totalling 400Ha (4km<sup>2</sup>). Owned, managed, and maintained by Forest Service Northern Ireland, the site spans the council boundary between Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, around 5km north of the village of Ballygawley and 1km from the strategic A5 road corridor.

The Forest is made up of a high proportion of coniferous woodland, with some smaller areas with native broadleaved species as well as areas of open bog.

### The Scoping Study

*This Scoping Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Dunmoyle Forest as a local multi-activity hub.*

Initial scoping has proposed one of the five blocks for viable development as a local multi-activity hub. Referred to as Dunmoyle 1 throughout the study, this forest block covers an area of 160Ha and sits wholly within MUDC area. It is a hilly site, offering elevated views, and with some steep-sided terrain and ravine-like site drainage. There is established infrastructure associated with forestry activity including a well-maintained stone access lane with a steel forestry gate and entrance at Todd's Leap Road, and similar access at Greenhill Road from the direction of Ballygawley.

### The Need for Development

There is clear community interest in developments at Dunmoyle from residents within surrounding areas, including the nearby village of Ballygawley. There is also interest from local third-party experience providers who recognise the added-value forest developments could bring to economic operations within the area. Largely, however, developments at Dunmoyle will focus on community provision to provide improved local access to outdoor spaces, particularly in light of recent increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ballygawley is ranked in the 10-20% bracket of most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. Dunmoyle has the potential to be a valuable community asset in helping overcome deprivation issues. 82% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Dunmoyle Forest is 'very important' to the local community.

Several development priorities for Dunmoyle Forest have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and are summarised as follows:



### Development proposals

Development proposals reflect community sentiment, high-level technical feasibility, and assessment of need, with planning proposed to start in 2021 and visitor infrastructure delivered across two phases between 2023 and 2026. These are shown in Map 1 and summarised as follows:



## Development Costs

An investment of **£70,000** for the 'planning' element of works reflects external professional fees required to work up all phases of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that much of this could be delivered 'in-house' by Mid Ulster District Council staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single-year budgets.

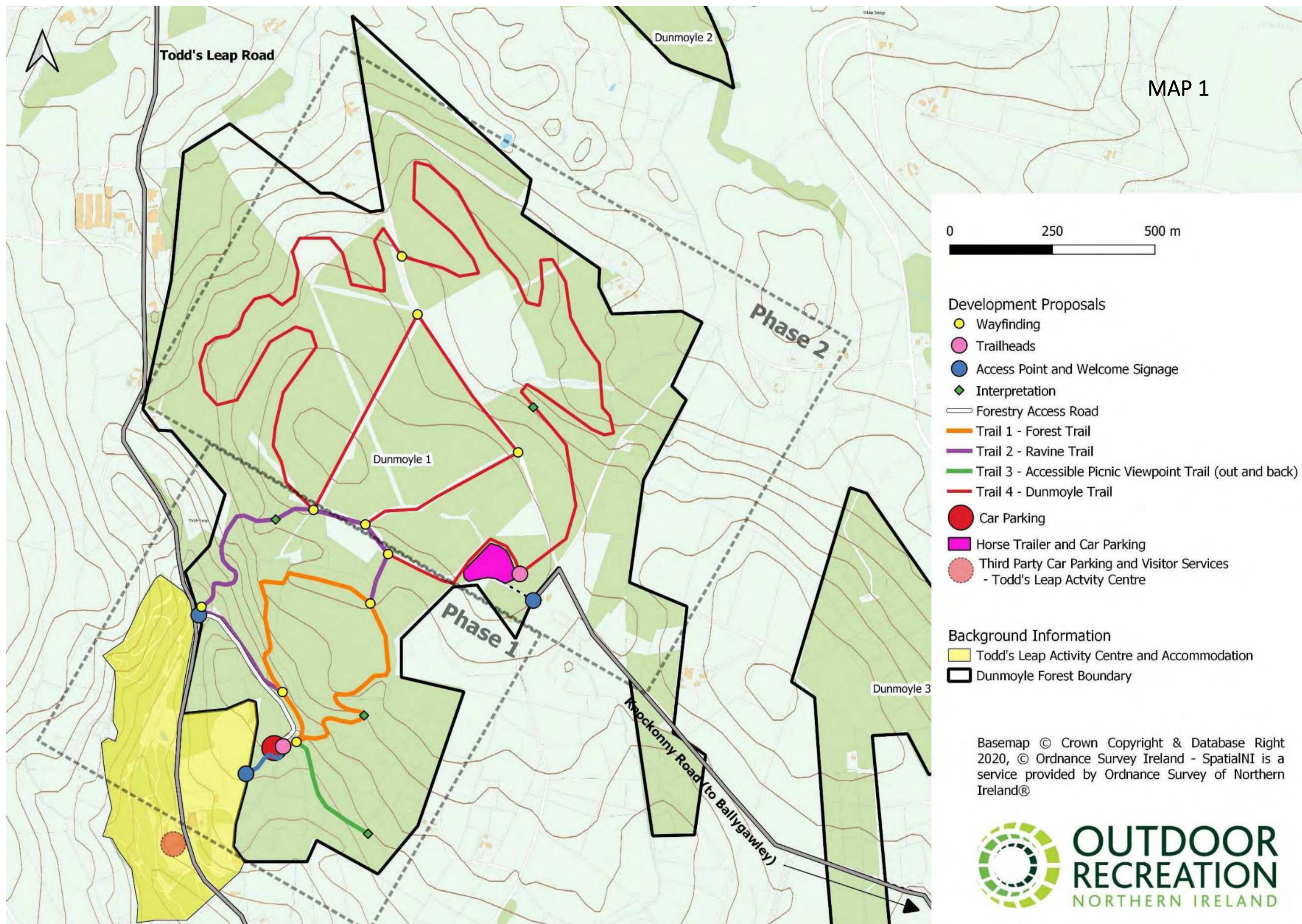
Phase 1 2023-2024 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at **£157,300**.

Phase 2 2024-2026 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at **£249,200**

## Social Return on Investment

Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, the Estimated Social Return on Investment for Dunmoyle Forest development is estimated at **£11M over 25 yrs.**







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## 1 Introduction

In February 2021, Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) appointed Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) to undertake a scoping study for the proposed development of Dunmoyle Forest, near Ballygawley, in County Tyrone (Figure 1)).

This study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Dunmoyle Forest as a local multi-activity hub.

MUDC defines a local multi-activity hub as a site developed primarily for the local community, to include a range of outdoor recreation and environmental products, accompanied by appropriate visitor servicing.

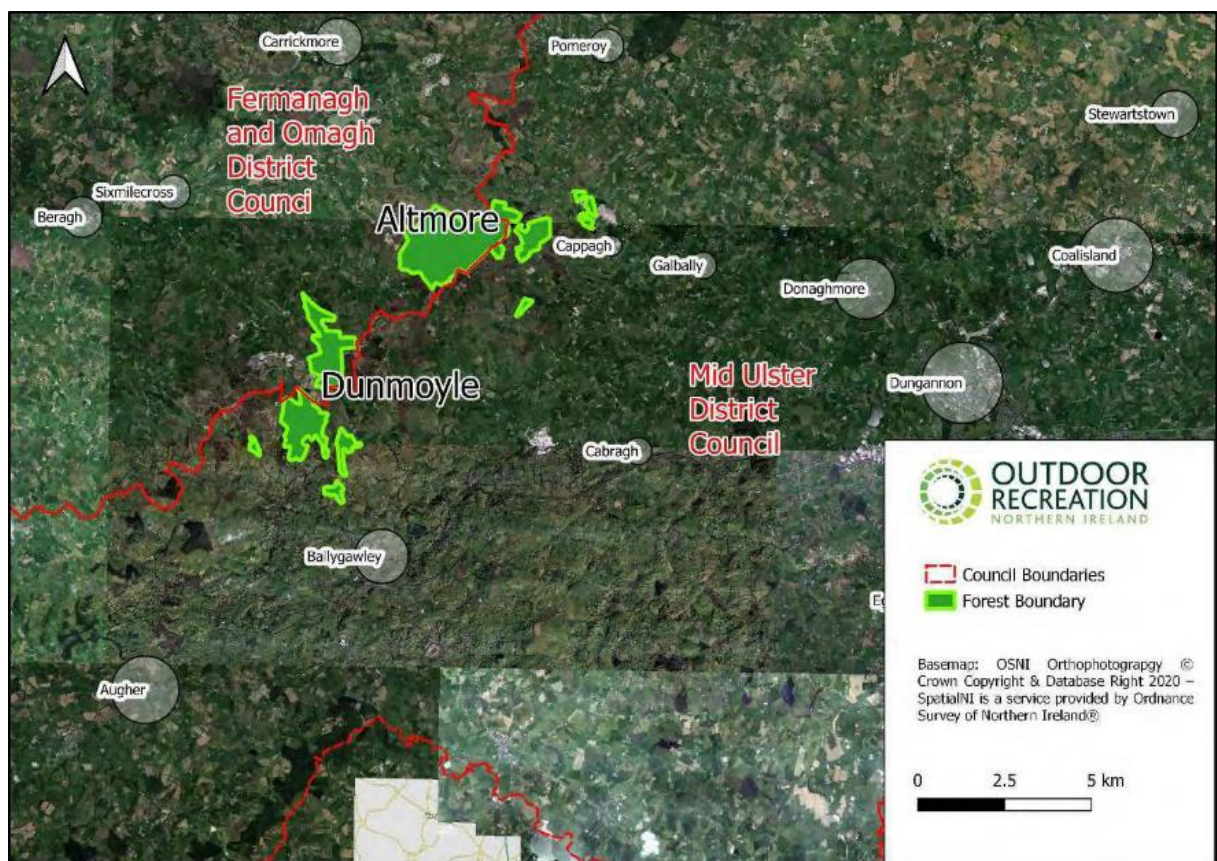


Figure 1 - Dunmoyle Forest Location



## 1.1 Scope of Study

The Scoping Study has been approached in two stages:

### Stage 1

- Desktop review of existing strategies applicable to the region.
- Consultation with agencies/stakeholders, local community, Council staff and Councillors to ensure incorporation of ideas and feedback.
- SWOT Analysis
- Identification of land ownership and land management status and opportunities.
- Exploration of a sustainable balance between the economic, environmental, and social functions of the forest.
- Current infrastructure & condition audit.
- Exploration of the opportunity for linkages and routes within and external to the forest.  
Explore how the forest offers access to the village, local landscapes, and other neighbouring visitor attractions.
- Identification of any potential barriers to development.
- Determination of what is currently available within the site for outdoor recreation, to include any visitor data, and explore what capacity there is within the site to accommodate further outdoor recreation and educational activities.

### Stage 2

- Identification of phased, viable and sustainable recreational, educational, and social activities which could be delivered within the scope of the development plan. Proposals aim to enhance user/visitor experience, whilst supporting biodiversity and local heritage.
- Exploration of potential local business/social economy options to use the site.
- Recommendation and Actions.
- Detailed Development Plan costs and profiled timetable of expenditure.
- Identification of suitable funding streams and timetables.

## 1.2 Approach

Table 1 summarises ORNI's approach to undertaking the Scoping Study, with key dates provided where relevant.

*Table 1 – Scoping Study Approach and Key Dates*

Activity		Status
<b>Stage 1</b>	Desk-based assessments of population demographics, strategic context at Council and Regional scale, geography and geology, environmental and heritage opportunities and constraints, land use opportunities and constraints, forest planning and zoning.	Throughout
	Initial site walkovers.	26 <sup>th</sup> February, 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
	Bespoke engagement with select individuals representing themselves, a community group, or club within the surrounding community.	Complete (Ongoing as required)
	Promotion and marketing of scoping study, public survey, and virtual public meeting (Zoom).	Public meeting 14 <sup>th</sup> April. Formal public engagement for 6 weeks concluded 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2021.
	Meetings with key stakeholders including Forest Service NI to facilitate clear decision-making around future planning.	Complete (ongoing as required)
	Interim presentation to Council Officers and feedback period	Virtual Presentation 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Stage 2</b>	Detailed site walkover survey	28th June 2021
	SWOT analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and final reporting	July 2021
	Presentation to Elected Members	Pending

## 2 The Site

Dunmoyle Forest is made up of five discrete forest blocks totalling 400Ha (4km<sup>2</sup>). Two of the blocks, referenced within this report as Dunmoyle 1 and Dunmoyle 2, accounts for the majority of the forested area, with three further smaller blocks making up the remainder, as shown in Figure 3.

*Please note, going forward 'Dunmoyle Forest' is used to refer to all five blocks as a whole, where specific mention is made to one block, its number will be used, i.e. 'Dunmoyle 1'.*

The forestry spans the council boundary between MUDC and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC).

The Forestry area is made up of a high proportion of coniferous woodland, with some smaller area with native broadleaved species as well as areas of open bog.

Dunmoyle 1 covers an area of 160Ha and sits wholly within MUDC area. It is a hilly forest site, offering elevated views, and with some steep-sided terrain and ravine-like site drainage. There is established infrastructure associated with forestry activity including a well-maintained stone access lane with a



Figure 2 - Stone access lane at Todd's Leap Road entrance to Dunmoyle 1

steel forestry gate and entrance at Todd's Leap Road. There is similar access at Greenhill Road. There is evidence of informal recreational use of Dunmoyle 1.

The largest block, Dunmoyle 2, is 173Ha of forestry and sits wholly within FODC area. The block is segmented by several local roads (Altamuskin, Whitebridge, Foremass, and Shane Roads), effectively separating it into numerous sub-blocks. It is situated at an elevation where the landscape plateaus, offering a relatively flat forestry area.

Blocks 3, 4, and 5 make up a small proportion of the overall forestry area, and all sit wholly within the MUDC area.

## 2.1 Landownership and Land Management Status

All lands shown within the forest boundaries shown in Figure 3 is owned, managed, and maintained by Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) as a singular management block.

Dunmoyle 2 Forest block falls entirely within FODC, with the remainder blocks sitting entirely within MUDC area, though neither Council is currently understood to have any management or maintenance responsibility for forestry lands at present.



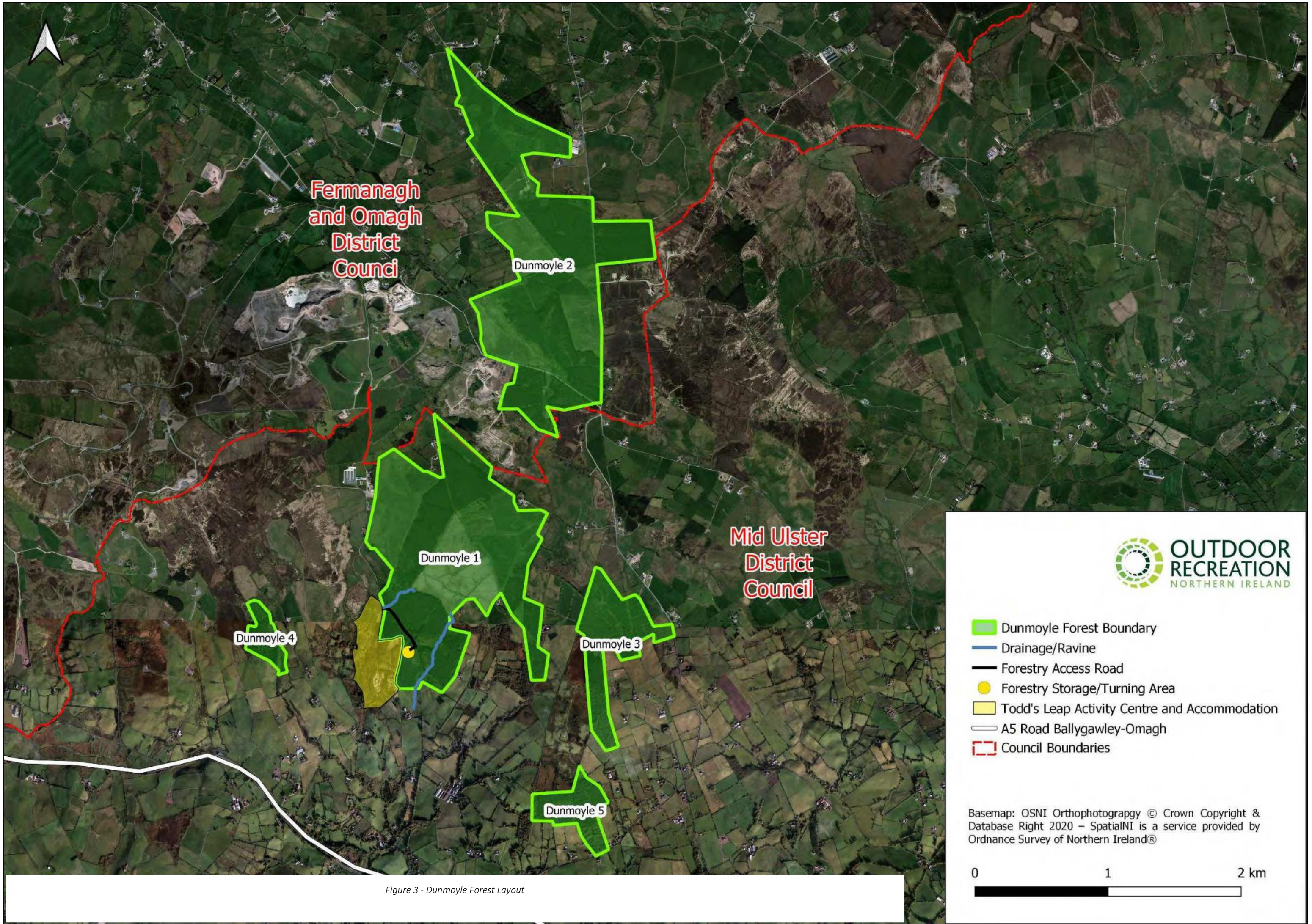


Figure 3 - Dunmoyle Forest Layout



## 2.2 Heritage Designations

### 2.2.1 Environment

Dunmoyle Forest and its surroundings do not fall within any designated Environmentally Protected Area.

Small areas of the Forest, and to a wider extent its surroundings, are made up of peat deposits. Some of this peat is registered by Northern Ireland Environment Agency as priority habitat.

No other priority habitat is registered in the immediate vicinity of the Dunmoyle Forest.

### 2.2.2 Built Heritage

Built heritage across the forest areas is limited with some features present in Dunmoyle 2 only (FODC areas). These features include an 'enclosure' of uncertain origin (SMR TYR 044:044) with substantial remains, and Dunmoyle Church of Ireland (Listed Building HB11/20/003).

Field notes for the enclosure indicate that the area around the feature was clear felled in 2001, with work inside the enclosure carried out by hand. The area was not re-planted. Notes indicate that it seems likely that this feature was built as a landscape feature for Dunmoyle Estate, established in the 1880s and demolished in 1965, with limited known remnants other than the enclosure.

Both features can be directly accessed from Shane Road.

## 2.3 External Site Linkages

Dunmoyle Forest is surrounded and intersected by a dense network of rural roads.

Dunmoyle 1 sits immediately adjacent to Todd's Leap Activity Centre, a private activity provider specialising in outdoor adventure. Todd's Leap is also a tourism generator for the area. This is just 1 mile from the strategic A5 Ballygawley-Omagh road which facilitates visitors at a regional and national scale. The Todd's Leap Centre ownership boundary, particularly the section of the site that offers overnight accommodation, immediately adjoins Dunmoyle 1 and there is evidence of an informal desire line linking between the two.

An 'upper' entrance to Dunmoyle 1 via Greenhill Road offers an alternative back-road local link to residents of Ballygawley and surrounding area, avoiding the need to use the A5 Road for this short journey. Ballygawley village sits 5km south of Dunmoyle 1, accessible along a network of quiet rural roads.

## 2.4 Existing Outdoor Recreation Provision

There is no existing formal provision for outdoor recreation within Dunmoyle Forestry. A network of forest roads and informal roadside parking around the periphery of the forest blocks means that entry on an informal basis can be facilitated, and is known to occur, mainly for people accessing on foot.

In Dunmoyle 1 there is evidence of use extending beyond the forest roads in the form of desire lines observable on the ground and on Strava (publicly available digital route tracking). There are minor indications of mountain biking within Dunmoyle 1, as well as tyre tracks from scramblers – the latter of which was also reported through public consultation.

Dunmoyle 2 is segmented by public roads to such an extent that there is no observable coherent network of desire lines or routes. Nor are there any desire lines observable on Strava.

Dunmoyle 3,4 and 5 do not exhibit any indications of existing use for outdoor recreation, nor was any reported during the public consultation process

There is no existing signage, interpretation, wayfinding, or pre-visitor information for Dunmoyle Forest.



*Figure 4 - Clockwise from top left: Informal roadside car parking; steel gated entry to Dunmoyle 1 at Todd's Leap Road; internal Forest roads in Dunmoyle 1; recreation desire lines in Dunmoyle 1*

### 2.4.1 Private Operator – Todd's Leap Activity Centre

Todd's Leap Activity Centre<sup>1</sup>, adjacent to Dunmoyle 1, offers an abundance of options for many forms of adventure activities ranging from archery and crate climbing to off-road motor vehicle driving. While the Centre's everyday activity offer does not routinely make use of Dunmoyle Forest, the owners have used Dunmoyle 1 for occasional, one-off activities under license with Forest Service. These have mainly consisted of 'mud-run' type events.

Notably, Todd's Leap Activity Centre offers outdoor learning opportunities aimed at discovery, experimentation, learning about nature, connecting with nature, and engaging in outdoor adventures, activities, and sports. They offer this though their offer of formal instructor-led sessions or a more informal approach to experiencing the natural world to gain a knowledge and understanding or appreciation of nature.

*'Whether you're climbing to the top of a zip tower (or flying down), finding your way through the woodland and eco trails, pausing to listen to the streams, building your own outdoor den, or finding where animals inhabit during winter, you'll be laughing whilst slipping on rain soaked muddy pathways'.*

- [ToddsLeap.com](https://toddsleap.com)

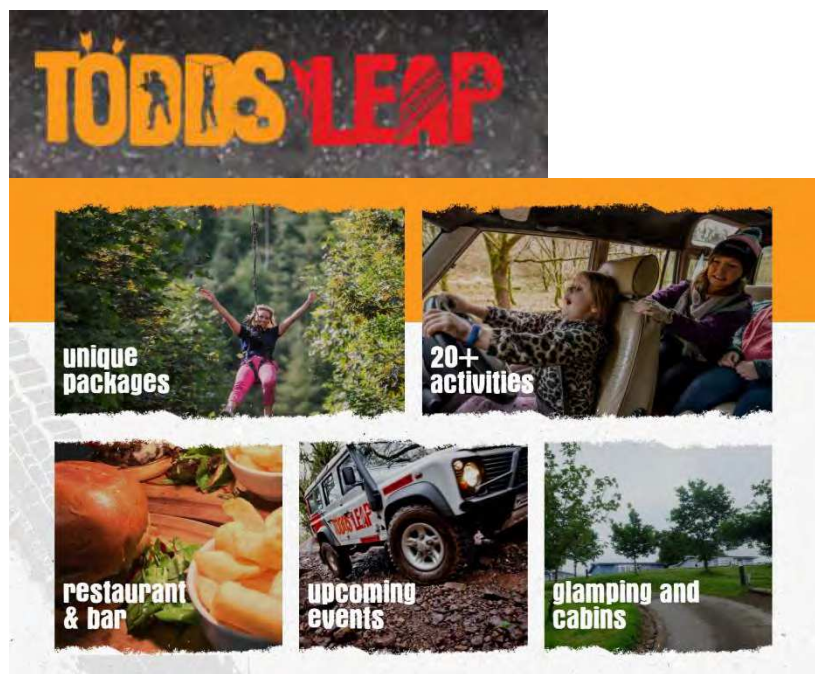


Figure 5 - Todd's Leap Activity Centre offer

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<sup>1</sup> <https://toddsleap.com/>



### 3 Assessment of Need

#### 3.1 Strategic Context

The development of outdoor recreation and local community facilities, in general, fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies and strategic organisations.

Outdoor Recreation NI has taken care to ensure that the consideration of any proposed developments at Dunmoyle aligns with these policies and strategies at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

Table 2 outlines strategies identified as having most strategic relevance this study to provide an indication of proposed works required to develop Dunmoyle Forest fully and appropriately as a local multi-activity hub. A detailed assessment of Strategic Context is presented in Appendix 1.

*Table 2 - Relevant policies and strategies for Dunmoyle Forest*

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10-year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA's Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA "Our Passion, Our Place" Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>

<b>Equality</b>	– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)
<b>Community Planning</b>	– Village Plans for Galbally & Cappagh, Ballygawley and Stewartstown.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of each of these documents, identifying their specific relevance to this Scoping Study and any proposed development at Dunmoyle.

In summary, this strategic review highlights the importance that the Northern Ireland Executive and government departments (at a regional level) and the Council (at a sub-regional level), place on outdoor recreation and access to forests and quality greenspace for the social, economic, physical, mental, and environmental well-being of our local communities.

Outdoor Recreation NI considers that proposed developments/enhancements within Dunmoyle offer a strong fit with each of the strategies outlined in Table 2, because the recommendations have the potential to:

- Contribute to, or kick-start in some cases, the regeneration of rural communities through the investment in and provision of quality outdoor activities and experiences.
- Improve the health (mental and physical) and wellbeing (including social inclusion) of local people and visitors through the development of sports, leisure, and recreation infrastructure within the area in order to provide formal and informal opportunities for people to engage in physical activity and to better access green spaces.
- Protect our natural environment through the development of environmentally sensitive trails and components with an educational dimension.
- Conserve and enjoy the unique built heritage of Mid Ulster.
- Contribute to the development of a strong and shared community by unlocking the potential of the leisure sector as an instrument for positive change.
- Encourage active citizenship through volunteering and social enterprise opportunities.
- Contribute to long-term economic growth through the development of the tourism industry of the Council area, offering a distinct and complementary sustainable outdoor recreation product to that is currently under-developed in the Council area.

### 3.2 Dunmoyle Public Survey

A Public survey was rolled out in March 2021, advertised within local press and across relevant social media outlets, to obtain public feedback and sentiment in a consultative manner. The survey remained open online and in hard copy format for a six-week period, concluding on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Survey questions and the full suite of results is presented in Appendix 3. Output from the survey is used to support statements in Section 3.3-3.5 to inform the assessment of need for development at Dunmoyle Forest.

There were 495 responses to the public survey.

### 3.3 Local Access to Quality Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The public were asked ‘besides Dunmoyle Forest, what sites/facilities do you use most regularly for outdoor recreation and outdoor leisure time?’. Responses dominantly indicated that the following sites are used on a regular basis:

- Favour Royal Forest (5 miles south of Ballygawley), offering several waymarked trails including a section of the Ulster Way, and built heritage experiences.
- Knockmany Forest (7 miles west of Ballygawley) provides walking and a built heritage experience.
- Gortin Glen (25 miles north of Ballygawley).
- Loughmacrory (13 miles north of Ballygawley).

Other reported sites visited include Gosford forest Park (27 miles), Parkanaur (9 miles), and Peatlands Park (25 miles).

There is limited mention of a known 1km long ‘pavilion’ walkway at the heart of Ballygawley village within survey responses, which could indicate that this facility is viewed by the public as one with different objectives to provision within forest-type environments.

*“The development of Dunmoyle is a necessary asset to an ever-increasing populous town of Ballygawley. Given the amount of new developments in the area it is important to have sufficient recreation facilities in the area. Also, it would be a necessary counter balance for Knockmany which has become busy and over-run”.*

- Survey Respondent

The public survey further indicated that besides using Dunmoyle Forest, most respondents (72%) will walk/run/cycle/horse ride on local roads for outdoor recreation and outdoor leisure time.

Regionally relevant evidence exists<sup>2</sup> to support the need for improved *local* access to spaces for outdoor recreation in general, citing sustainability benefits, health, and wellbeing benefits, and improved social benefits. For example, Darkley Forest in Co. Armagh launched a 5km network of multi-use trails in 2018 located approximately 1km from a local village centre. Using a robust Social Return on Investment methodology to assess its impact, **the total social value generated over the lifespan (25 years) of Darkley Forest Community Trail will see a £10 return on investment for every £1 spent to create the trail.** Further detail on this specific study is included in Appendix 2. Although the setting and scale of Dunmoyle forest differs slightly from this Darkley example (Dunmoyle is further away from the closest village of Ballygawley and is a larger forest), its potential Strategic Return on Investment is assumed to be of a similar magnitude because:

- Dunmoyle is the closest forest site to Ballygawley, and one of the best potential sites for a Ballygawley ‘community trail’.
- There is a perception of forest connectivity and adjacency as villagers do not have to enter the strategic road network to access Dunmoyle as they do to get to other nearby sites.
- An observed sense of community ‘ownership’ of Dunmoyle Forest exists, perhaps due to its adjacency to community assets such as Errigal Ciaran GAA club and Todd’s Leap Activity Centre. Ballygawley residents will travel directly past Dunmoyle en-route to these community facilities.



Figure 6 - Social Return on Investment 1:10 for Darkley Forest, Co Armagh

A Village Plan for Ballygawley drafted by Mid Ulster District Council has identified several development opportunities relevant to outdoor recreation provision, summarised in Table 3. Notably, Dunmoyle forest boundary sits just outside the Ballygawley Ward to which the Plan applies, but the

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<sup>2</sup> [https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People\\_Nature\\_and\\_Health\\_NI\\_March\\_2021\\_report\\_1\\_.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People_Nature_and_Health_NI_March_2021_report_1_.pdf)



document makes strong reference to an existing strategy to develop recreational and social use of forests.

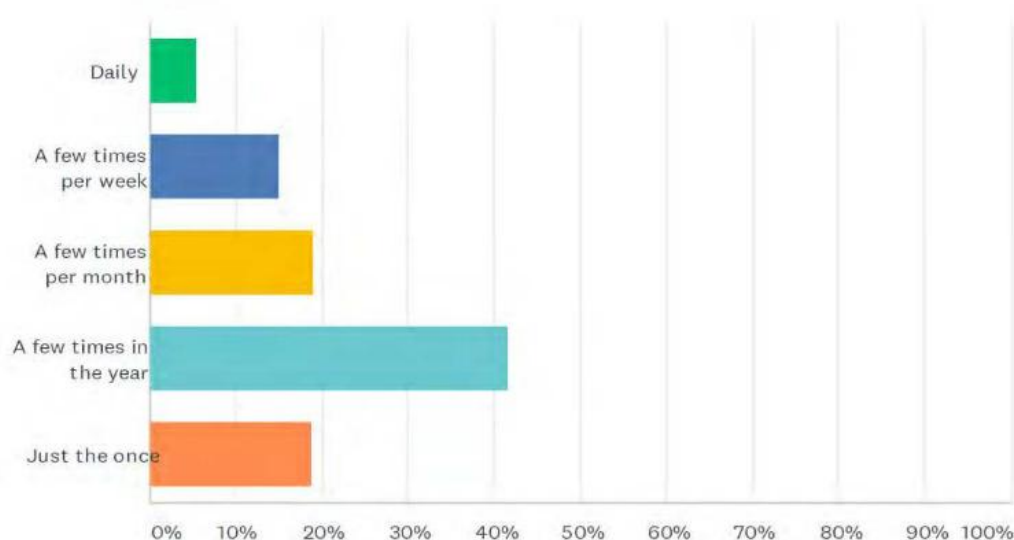
*Table 3 - Ballygawley Village Plan Outdoor Recreation Summary*

Key characteristics		Development opportunity
<b>Ballygawley Village Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ballygawley ward is ranked 10-20% most deprived wards in NI</li> <li>– MUGA and play park (funded by RDP 2013-2015 programme) with walkway around pitches.</li> <li>– Poorly lit walkway around the pavilion</li> <li>– The Recreation Park is a good resource for the community.</li> <li>– Limited community integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Playground needs refurbished.</li> <li>– Potential to link in with surrounding villages.</li> <li>– Install lighting and drainage along pavilion walkway.</li> <li>– Forests Strategy: “That our forests will become key venues for outdoor recreation and tourism, offering opportunities to appreciate and enjoy biodiversity, and a wide choice of activities for an increasing number of visitors”.</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Dunmoyle Visitor Profile

Visitor data from counters or user intercept surveys does not currently exist for Dunmoyle Forest, reflecting that there is currently no formal provision at the site.

Of those who responded to the ORNI public survey, 62% said they have visited Dunmoyle Forest before. The reported frequency of visits across the past year is shown in Figure 7, with the highest proportion of respondents reporting that they visit just a few times in the year.



*Figure 7 - Frequency of visits to Dunmoyle Forest in the past year*

Walking or hiking is recorded as the recreation activity by far most undertaken within the Forest (81% of visits). Running makes up a further 5% , with the remaining small proportion reported as ‘day out or picnic’, cycling, observing wildlife, or ‘other’ at 4% (motorbiking features within ‘other’).

On a typical visit to Dunmoyle Forest, the majority of respondents report that they visit with family (60%). 16% visit on their own, and 1% visit as part of an organised group.

### 3.5 Community Demand

82% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Dunmoyle Forest is ‘very important’ to the local community. Less than 1% of respondents indicated they did not see development as important for the local community.

*In line with the GAA investment in sporting facilities in Dunmoyle, I feel investment in exercise outside of GAA sports would be beneficial to the community as a whole but also to bring others to this beautiful part of the country. I grew up running around the forests feeling like I was breaking the law and always being warned away. I would like my children to feel that the forests and local area are there to be explored and enjoyed.*

- Public survey respondent

5% of survey respondents, representing 27 individuals, indicated that they have reduced/limited mobility or another disability.

There is a small proportion of demand for mountain biking access to the site.

A proportionally small demand for horse-riding trails has been indicated.

Five distinct key priorities have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and are summarised in Figure 8.



Figure 8 - Priority Themes for Dunmoyle Forest Development from the Community Perspective

Survey respondents were asked how frequently they would envisage themselves visiting Dunmoyle Forest, should facilities be developed, with most responding that they would visit a few times per week, in contrast with the few times per year that people currently visit.

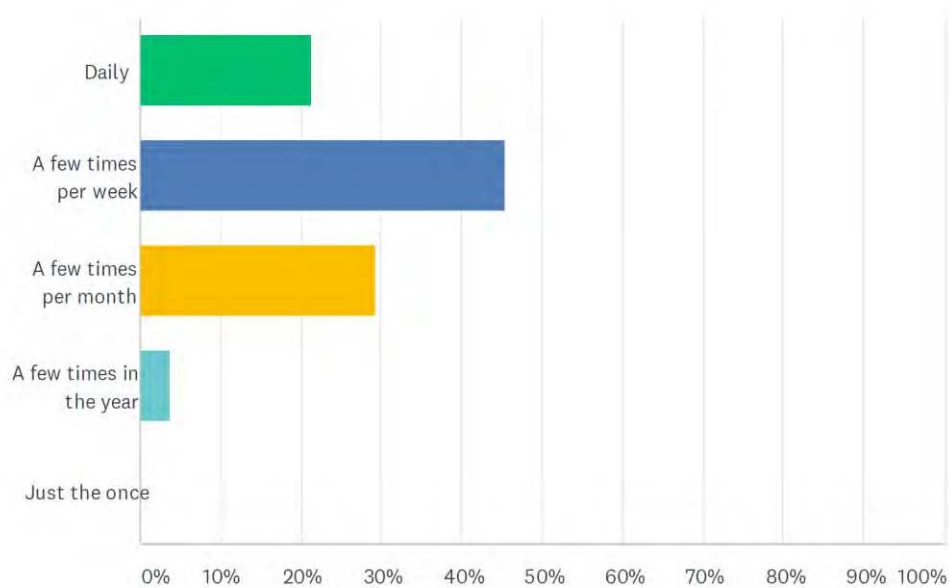


Figure 9 - Anticipated frequency of visits to Dunmoyle Forest should developments happen

### 3.6 Regional and International Tourism

For Mid Ulster, Tourism Northern Ireland Visitor Attitude Survey (2018)<sup>3</sup> reports a much higher proportion of leisure visitors from within Northern Ireland (NI), particularly day-trippers, compared with other Council Districts. Great Britain is the area's largest out of state source market, followed by North America and the Republic of Ireland but makes up a small proportion of visitors.

Visitors to Mid Ulster are most likely to be visiting to see a particular attraction, with historic monuments/sites and forest parks/gardens especially popular.

Note that statistics are not available to reflect a post-COVID-19 era but it is assumed that the proportion of leisure visitors from within NI is likely to have increased, with a more local catchment than ever. Sentiment from within the public survey indicates a strong desire for the development of Dunmoyle for a community-scale/local audience, but with good understanding of the benefits it could bring to the local economy from incidental passers-by.

*I personally live in Dunmoyle near the forest and I think that this is a fantastic idea.  
It would certainly help bring more people to the area as well as get more people  
out for exercise.*

- Public survey respondent

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<sup>3</sup> Tourism Northern Ireland: Visitor Attitude Survey 2018, Cognisense Ltd. Base: n=138



## 4 Dunmoyle Forest SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Strong community support for site-appropriate development/enhancements
- Interest from Altamuskin Community Association and Ballygawley Area Development Association.
- Close to a strategic road network for regional/national visitors.
- Local quiet road access from nearby Ballygawley Village for local visitors.
- Good views across surrounding countryside.

### Weaknesses

- Some areas of steep gradients in Dunmoyle 1 inhibit accessibility.
- Dunmoyle 2 is intersected into numerous smaller forest blocks by public roads.
- Dunmoyle 3,4, and 5 are small sites of limited recreational value.
- A sense of remoteness (from a social safety perspective).
- Forest management area spans the border between two council areas.

### Opportunities

- Development of community trails network and associated visitor infrastructure.
- Increase community value and involvement.
- Increase educational value of site.
- Define and highlight the natural and cultural significances of the site through community engagement and interpretation.
- Contribute to regional tourism development, including directly or indirectly supporting private sector business development.
- Mutually beneficial provision between private operators and Mid Ulster District Council, as an economic generator.

### Threats

- Beaureaucratic barriers associated with forestry management area spanning two council areas.
- 'Overdevelopment' would detract from visitor experience, conservation aims, and the will of the local community.
- Forestry operations to be considered.
- Reported anti-social behaviour, particularly fly-tipping and inappropriate use of motorised vehicles on the site.
- Poor public awareness of the site outside the area.
- Perceptions of preferential treatment relating to mutually beneficial third party visitor servicing arrangements.

## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Target Market and Segments

Mid Ulster District Council, through the commission of this scoping study, has already indicated an awareness of the need to develop Dunmoyle Forest as a local multi-activity hub; a site developed primarily for the local community.

It is clear through the work of this scoping study that the market need is indeed greatest within the local community, and that is where the greatest Social Return on Investment (SRoI) lies. Similar in scope and setting to Darkley forest in Co. Armagh (see Appendix 2), a SRoI of £10 for every £1 spent on developing trails and associated visitor services for the local community is very likely to be achieved.

Dunmoyle Forest is unlikely to be a major regional or international tourism generator. However, incidental tourism benefits are likely to arise by increasing the area's offer and so increasing the economic value of local providers of accommodation, leisure activities, food, etc.

Existing and anticipated use of the site indicates that the largest user segment is **local people visiting a few times per week for walking, engaging with nature, and enjoying nature and the landscape**. This includes:

- Family groups and lone parents with children.
- Friends meeting up.
- People of retirement age.
- Regular dog walkers.
- People enjoying purposeful exercise e.g. running or walking.
- Sports clubs and groups (for training)
- Education groups
- Activity providers for organised events

Through consultation across various areas within MUDC council area it is also apparent there is a general demand and need for safe off-road areas for equestrian activity. Dunmoyle Forest has been assessed as having a landscape that may be suited to this type of activity. Therefore, an additional target user segment includes:

- Equestrian activity on multi-use trails (hacking facility), including individuals and family groups on horses, or horse-trekking experience providers.

## 5.2 Engaging the Local Community

Engagement with nearby community groups including Ballygawley Area Development Association, Altamuskin Community Association, local schools, GAA club, and local business providers should continue throughout any phase of development/enhancement of the Forest. The local community will be a significant asset to the good custodianship of the Forest and should be further engaged to explore the opportunity to set agreed parameters to help manage and maintain the site, or assist with visitor provision, through a voluntary or SLA arrangement with the Council.

## 5.3 Management Model

It is recommended that MUDC enter into a license agreement with Forest Service Northern Ireland for use of the site for activities outlined in this study. MUDC should further enter into lease agreements with FSNi for areas of car parking and visitor servicing.

MUDC should adopt an overall custodianship and regular management schedule for visitor servicing, but this could be supplemented through SLA arrangements with local community groups or economic providers within the vicinity of the Forest.

## 5.4 Dunmoyle Development Proposals

Development proposals within this report are recommended for Dunmoyle 1 only, because:

- Dunmoyle 2, while covering a large area, is sub-divided into smaller forest blocks by rural roads, limiting its coherence as a site with good outdoor recreation potential.
- It is acknowledged that there are some heritage features of interest within Dunmoyle 2 associated with the former Dunmoyle House. However, these are best placed in the context of a wider heritage experience for the entire Dunmoyle area, going beyond the Forest extents.
- Dunmoyle 2 sits entirely within Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area, so MUDC-led developments are not feasible in this forest block.
- Dunmoyle 3, 4, and 5 are small and of geometries such that a coherent outdoor recreation experience is of low value.

An Overview Map of development proposals is shown in Figure 11.

Proposals focus on the establishment of visitor infrastructure across a two delivery phases (following a period of planning), offering the most sustainable and site-sympathetic solution to satisfy community need in a way that complements and enhances the offering of local economic providers.



#### 5.4.1 Trails

A new multi-use trail network is recommended for Dunmoyle 1. The trail network would comprise four trails in total, in a stacked loop system, totalling c.7.5km. The trail system would be comprised of a mixture of new build trail and use of existing forest roads, and be designed and built with the following users in mind –

- Walkers
- Runners
- Horse riders (Trail 4 only)

There are two proposed trailheads; one at the Todd's Leap Road side of Dunmoyle 1, and one at the Greenhill Road side, closest to Ballygawley.

See Figure 11 for a map of the trails.

**Trail 1 Forest Trail:** A 1.4km Forest Trail largely follows existing desire lines in a loop, starting from a trailhead at the site's western side close to Todd's Leap at a proposed car park. Terrain can be steep in places but should be developed step-free, with gradients overcome using trail switchbacks to maximise accessibility.

**Trail 2 Ravine Trail:** A 2km 'Ravine Trail' begins on the Forest Trail but diverges off to offer an extended loop option taking in a more rugged and steep terrain using construction methods that include stone steps to overcome gradients. The Ravine Walk takes visitors along a scenic small, steep-sided valley with a mix of woodland features.

**Trail 3 Viewpoint Trail:** An 'out and back' picnic trail, close to the trailhead at the Todd's Leap Road entrance, bringing people to an elevated viewpoint close to their vehicles.



**Trail 4 Dunmoyle Trail:** A further 5km trail (option of additional 1.5m using forest roads) offering an extended walk and equestrian hack loop meanders through the elevated section of the Forest, linking to Greenhill Road (Ballygawley connection).



*Figure 10 - Clockwise from top left: 'Ravine Trail'; 'Ravine Trail existing desire line'; existing forest road; view across surrounding countryside from proposed picnic trail.*



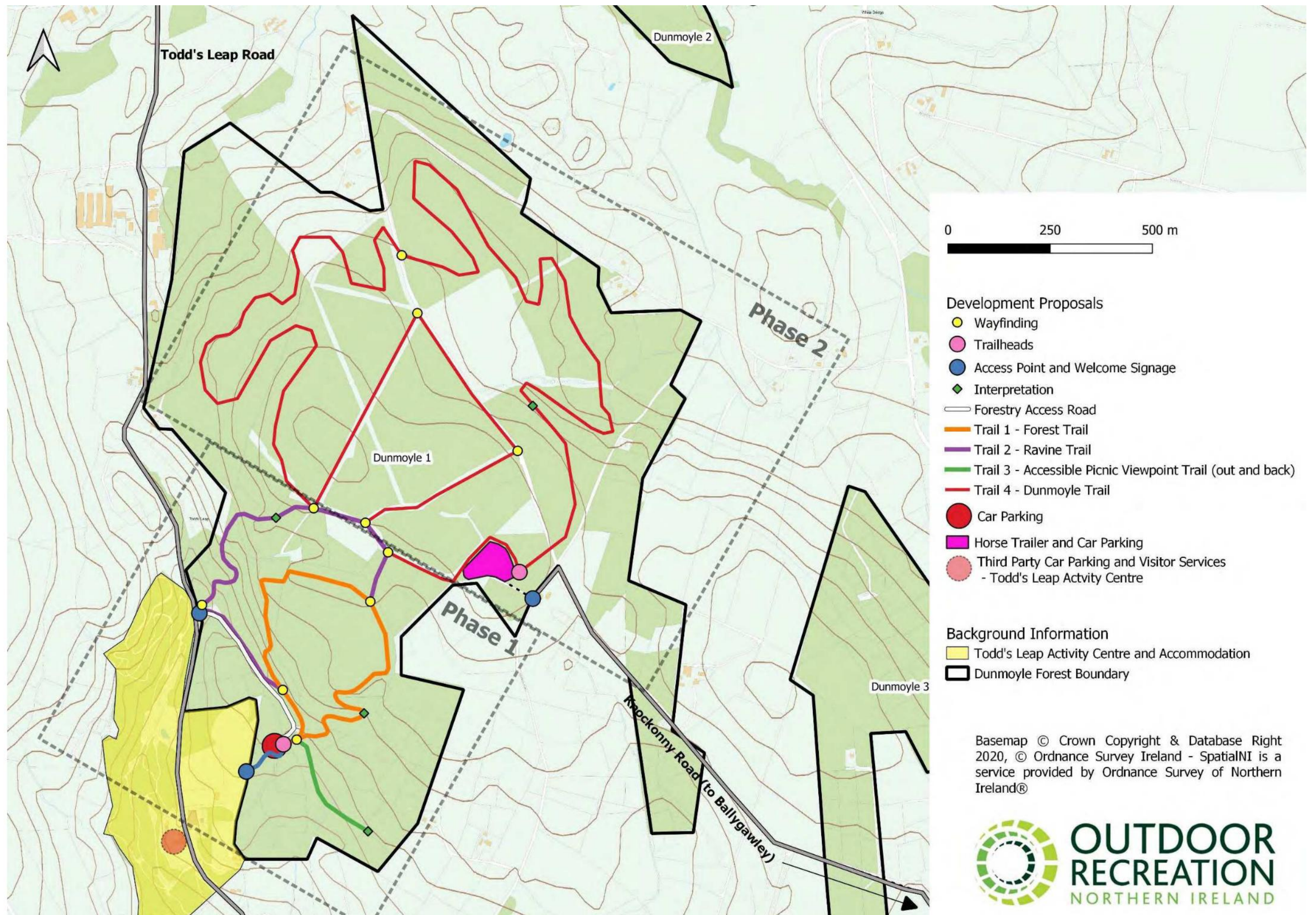


Figure 11 - Dunmoyle Forest Development Proposals



### 5.4.2 Car Parking and Site Entry

Formalisation of 3 new access points, with car parking, are proposed at the following locations:

1. Vehicular entry via Todd's Leap Road, just north of Todd's Leap Activity Centre. This makes use of an existing forestry entry point with gravel lane and steel gate entry. This entry is suitable for cars only (not horse trailers), as Trails 1 and 2 starting from this trailhead are not suitable for equestrian activity. An existing area of hardstanding is of an appropriate scale for a car parking.
2. Vehicular entry (cars and horse trailer parking) via Greenhill Road, as this offers local Ballygawley (and surrounding) residents a more coherent entry point from the village without having to enter the strategic road network and is 'en-route' to other community locations such as Errigal Ciaran GAA grounds.
3. Pedestrian entry directly from Todd's Leap Activity Centre, close to their accommodation, merging with entry point 1 above. Todd's Leap Activity Centre also offers car parking and other visitor servicing such as toilets and a café.



*Figure 12 - forest entry point and area proposed for car parking at Todd's Leap Road.*

### 5.4.3 Interpretation, Creating a Sense of 'Welcome', and Play

The Association for Heritage Interpretation defines interpretation as 'a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, a site, collection or event'. It can:

- Bring meaning to a cultural or environmental resource, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better understanding. As a result, visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource.
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This will lead to increased income and create employment opportunities.
- Enable communities to better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their home area. As a result, individuals may identify with lost values inherent in their culture.

It has also been described by Freeman Tilden, one of the founders of modern interpretation, as ‘an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships using original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information’.

Dunmoyle Forest should be subject to a whole-site Brand and Signage Plan and Interpretation Framework, the implementation of which should be delivered across all phases of development with a key objective of creating a sense of welcome to the Forest and setting the tone for its responsible use. These should take measured account of the objectives of any third-party providers.

All trail and site furniture including wayfinding, interpretation, bench seating and picnic benches, should fall within one coherent site brand image that ties the whole experience together.

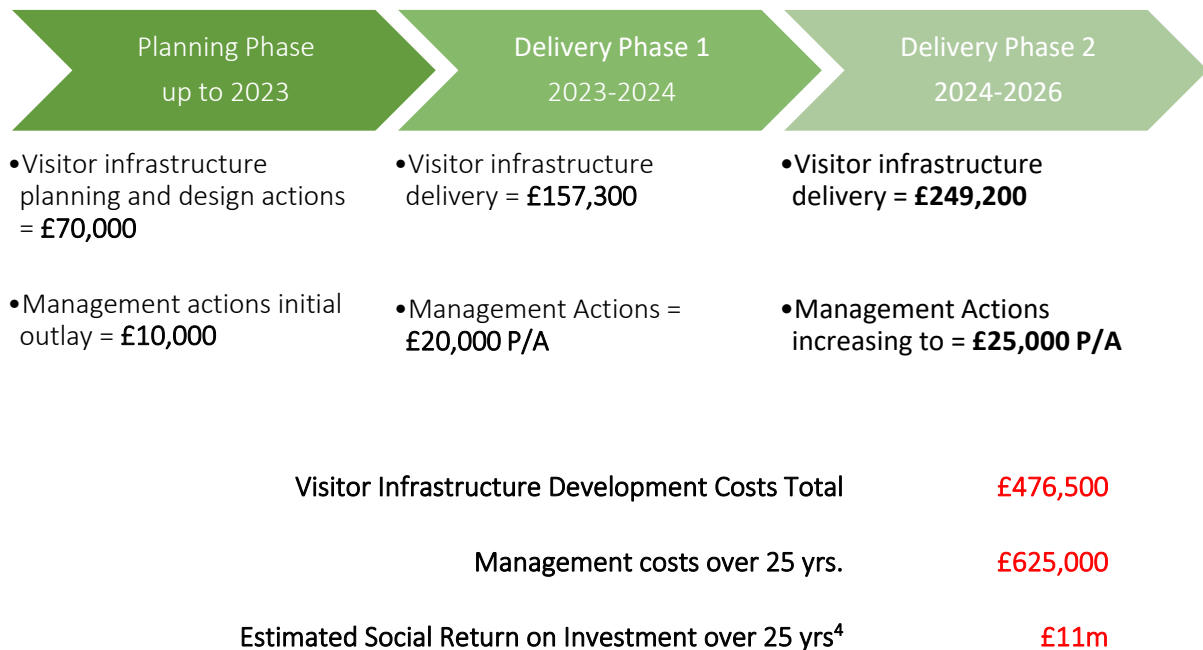
The public indicated a demand for play at the forest. However, forest development proposals have taken account of the wider community context and as a result bespoke play is not recommended as part of this package of works, because:

- Ballygawley Village Plan indicates a demand for improved play within the village, at a site that is likely to be more accessible by all from within the village community.
- Forest developments should not in any way conflict with/compete with the offer of existing economic operators, e.g. Todd’s Leap Activity Centre.



## 5.5 Summary and Outline Cost of Development Proposals

Visitor infrastructure proposals are presented in Figure 11. A Phased Implementation Plan showing a breakdown of costs is provided in Section 6 of this Scoping Study report.



<sup>4</sup> Based on anticipated 1:10 SRoI modelled for Darkley Forest, Co. Armagh – See Appendix 2

## 6 Dunmoyle Phased Implementation Plan

### VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIONS & COSTS

CATEGORY		Item	PLANNING PHASE 2021 - 2024	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2024	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2024-2026
Brand and Interpretation	1	External Navigation Signage	Brand and Signage Strategy	Design, production, and installation x 2 £4,000	
	2	Welcome Signage	Interpretation Framework	Design, production, and installation x 3 £5,000	
	3	Interpretation/ Viewpoint Panels	The above may be applied across multiple forest sites as a value-for-money exercise and to deliver consistency across the Council area. They must consider the proposed two-phased development and delivery, and should identify opportunities for community co-curation.  To align with respective infrastructure items and proposed phases. £20,000	Design, production, and installation £5,000	
Trail Network	4	Visitor Counter	Professional fees for advancements of development concept for new build trails:	Installation x 2 £6,000	Installation x 1 £3,000
	5	Trailhead Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refined cost estimate</li> <li>- Application for funding</li> <li>- Commissioning of ecological, heritage impact surveys.</li> <li>- Planning Approvals</li> <li>- Trail prescription for contract specification</li> <li>- Contractor procurement</li> </ul> £30,000	Design, production, and installation x 2 £4,000	
	6	Trail 1: Forest Trail		New Build Trail Cat 3 Multi-use trail 1500m (1.5m width) x £30/m £45,000	
	7	Trail 2: Ravine Trail		New Build Trail Cat 4 1000m additional to forest trail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cat 3 700m x £40/m</li> <li>- Stone steps/stone pitching 300m x £80/m</li> </ul> £52,000	
		Trail 3: Accessible Viewpoint Trail		New Build Cat 1 accessible gravel trail 300m x £30/m plus gravel pads for trail furniture. £10,000	
		Trail 4: Dunmoyle Trail			New Build Cat 2/3 Multi-use trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trail surface 5000m x £40/m – priced for 2m width and possible peat deposits.</li> </ul> £200,000
	8	Wayfinding		Post & Disc Est. 10No @ £150 £1,500	Post & Disc Est. 10No @ £150 £1,500
Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services	10	Car Parking	Professional fees for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposed layout plans for parking areas x 2</li> <li>- Planning approvals</li> <li>- Site ground investigation to inform construction build-up of Greenhill Road parking due to possibility of peat deposits, and to refine costs.</li> </ul> £20,000	Todd's Leap Road Forest car parking x 15 car spaces, gravel surface, upgrade existing space = £20,000.  £20,000	Greenhill Road car and horse trailer parking x 15 car spaces, 3 horse trailer spaces & turning room. New build gravel surface = £45,000  £45,000

	13	Picnic Tables		4No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each picnic trail £2,400	2No wooden picnic tables @ £600 each Greenhill Road entrance £1,200
	14	Bench Seating		8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each £2,400	
Phased Totals			£70,000	£157,300	£249,200
Total					£476,500

#### MANAGEMENT ACTIONS & COSTS

CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING PHASE	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2024	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2024-2026
Third Party Agreements	1	Forest Service Council to agree: Lease or license agreements to cover the accesspoints, access roads and trails, car parking areas and trails Cost: Nominal		
	2	Private Operators - Further engagement with any third party providers to discuss partnership opportunities.	SLA and/or volunteer agreement for: • Waste/Litter. • Opening/closing gates. • Car parking and other visitor service facilities. £10,000 P/A	Continued from Phase 1 £10,000 P/A
Community Engagement	3	- Engage local community groups - Press releases to announce planned investment.	Launch event and community volunteer/'Friends of the Forest' recruitment.	
Future Site Management	4	Site Management Plan Develop a Management Plan that clearly outlines what all party's roles and responsibilities will be, to be agreed with all parties in advance of forest developments. £10,000	Council implementation of Site Management Plan £10,000 P/A	Council implementation of Site Management Plan increasing to £15,000P/A
Phased Totals		£10,000	£20,000 P/A	£25,000 P/A

## 7 Funding Streams

Several funding options may be available for a project of this kind, including the following:

### **Initiatives to Tackle Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**

DAERA TRPSI fund has the potential be a good fit for developments such as those proposed within this Scoping Study.

For example, over the past 4 years DAERA has committed £5.7m from its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme to 17 Forest Park Enhancement Schemes. This significant financial commitment has levered in a further £3.9m through partnerships formed with Councils and other grant aiding bodies. These projects contribute to the health and well-being of the residents of the surrounding areas to the Forests/Trails by developing safe, way marked, off-road cycling/walking trails that will accommodate a wide range of users and helping locals and visitors alike to stay healthy and happy, both physically and mentally.

Successful application for funding would be dependent on MUDC securing match funding of (currently 15% for 2021/22 funding programme).

Further detailed information can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/initiatives-tackle-rural-poverty-and-social-isolation-trpsi>

### **DAERA Environmental Challenge Fund**

DAERA's Environmental Challenge Fund aims to support projects that will deliver outcomes in at least one of their strategic priorities, including Implementation of actions that are essential to delivery of DAERA's strategic outdoor recreation priorities, to increase sustainable public enjoyment and understanding of land and seascapes including: a) Delivery of core path networks and strategic routes, primarily in partnership with councils; b) Promotion of environmental responsibility and good practice; c) Projects on NIEA sites, particularly for those for whom access is currently difficult.

Overarching factors that will be taken into account in shortlisting and allocating funding to projects include;

- Scale
- Evidence of need
- Environmental impacts
- Value for money (including match funding options)



- Sustainable impact

Further detailed information can be found at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/ef-environment-fund-2019-22-overarching-criteria-environmental-impact>

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund**

National Lottery funds projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional, and local heritage of the UK. They provide different levels of funding to heritage of all shapes and sizes, with grants ranging from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. The Heritage Fund prioritises heritage projects that meet six of their outcomes as follows:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage.
- The funded organisation will be more resilient.
- People will have greater wellbeing.
- People will have developed skills.
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit.
- The local economy will be boosted.

All projects are also expected to demonstrate that they are building long-term environmental sustainability and inclusion into their plans.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1 Strategic Context (Detailed Version)

The development of outdoor recreation and the supporting local community facilities fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies, and strategic organisations. Outdoor Recreation NI has taken care to ensure that the proposed development(s) outlined in this Scoping Study, aligns with these policies and strategies at a regional and local level.

The following strategies and policies were identified as having most strategic relevance.

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10 year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> <li>– Exercise, Explore, Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways (DfI, 2016)</li> <li>– Mountain Bike Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 –2024</li> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA’s Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA “Our Passion, Our Place” Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)</li> </ul>

<b>Community Planning</b>	– Village Plans for Cappagh & Galbally, Ballygawley and Stewartstown
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*Table 4: Relevant Strategies and Policies for this study*

The following is a brief synopsis of each document considered in the Strategic Context to be of significance in terms of how the proposed development and recommendations made in this Scoping Study do align to and/or could contribute towards the delivery of key regional and sub-regional policies and strategies.

## **Regional Strategic Context**

### ***Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)***

The draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework sets out the aspirations of the Executive for society and provides a strategic context for other key strategies and policies. The PfG was also to shape the development of the Executive's budget over the course of the current mandate and provide a mechanism for ensuring funds are best directed to where they can contribute most.

The Framework contains 14 strategic outcomes and connect to every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and education, economic success and building confident and peaceful communities. The following outcomes are of relevance to this Scoping Study:

- Outcome 2: Live and work sustainably – protecting the environment;
- Outcome 4: Enjoy long, healthy, active lives;
- Outcome 12: Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest;
- Outcome 14: Give our children and young people the best start in life.

These outcomes are supported by 42 indicators, with each indicator accompanied by a measure which is largely derived from existing statistics to monitor performance. The following indicators are of relevance to this Scoping Study:

- Indicator 2: Reduce health inequality
- Indicator 3: Increase healthy life expectancy
- Indicator 6: Improve mental health
- Indicator 30: Improve our attractiveness as a destination and our international reputation.

Key to the success of the PfG is the ability of Departments to work collaboratively with not only themselves but also with other public bodies and the voluntary and private sector.



***Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD, 2010)***

This Strategy is designed to deliver the spatial aspects of the PfG and is intended to inform the spatial aspects of other Government Departments, Councils' decisions and investments, and guide investment by the private sector. Relevant aims of the Strategy for this Scoping Study include:

- Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential
- Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities
- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake

The Strategy highlights the importance of improving facilities for walking and cycling as part of infrastructure investment.

***A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022***

Obesity is a major public health challenge facing Northern Ireland and this Framework aims to empower people to make healthier choices by creating an environment that supports a physically active lifestyle and healthy diet. It recognises the factors that underpin weight gain are complex and cover factors such as social and individual psychology, physiology, food consumption, individual activity and built environment.

In addition, many wider determinants of poor health such as health inequalities, poverty, mental health, deprivation and structural barriers also play an important role. Of relevance, the Strategy outlines how environmental factors affect choices and behaviours, for example lack of access to green space reduces physical activity opportunities. Other barriers include poor urban environments, limited safe play facilities and community safety, and sedentary lifestyles.

***Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)***

The new Health Strategy recognises that the Health Service faces growing demand driven by successful interventions and improving life expectancy. As a result, there is a need to move beyond managing illness and instead ensure that people are supported to live well; physically, mentally and emotionally. To do this, the onus is on Departments and Agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes.

Core to PfG Outcome 4 of people leading long, healthy and active lives is improving people's health. The Strategy outlines a future in which people are supported to keep well with the information, education and support to make informed choices and take control of their own health and wellbeing. This requires the circumstances for people to stay healthy, well, safe and independent in the first place. There is a need to:

- Build capacity in communities and in prevention to reduce inequalities and ensure the next generation is healthy and well
- Work with communities to support them to develop their strengths and use their assets to tackle the determinants of health and social wellbeing
- Tap into the innovative ideas and energies in communities themselves, and in the community and voluntary sectors.
- In all communities, every child and young person should have the best start in life, people should have a decent standard of living, and all citizens should be supported to make healthier and better-informed life choices
- Work alongside all communities to enable social inclusion and tackle health inequalities and the underlying contributory factors including poverty, housing, education and crime.

#### ***Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)***

Commissioned by Sport NI and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), this Action Plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities that there are to participate, not only in rural areas but also in the urban fringes.

Due to the recognition that access to green space enhances physical health and mental wellbeing, and addresses issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion, the vision of the Action Plan is “a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland”.

It provides key recommendations for actions and challenges that need to be addressed to make Northern Ireland a place where outdoor recreation can deliver:

- Healthy active lifestyles for local people from all communities;
- Economic growth through encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors; and
- Protection of landscapes and ecosystems for future generations.

To achieve this vision, the aim is for Northern Ireland to be a place where:

- There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities;
- There are accompanying benefits to local communities, especially those who are socially excluded in terms of health, social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and economic development;
- People enjoy the outdoors and show a high degree of responsibility for themselves, towards others and towards the environment they are using, and play their part in maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage.

### ***A New Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)***

As of April 2021, the DfC was still in the process of public consultation for this new, 10-year draft strategy. Having been drafted during the Covid-19 pandemic period, this Strategy specifically highlights that sport and physical activity and the associated benefits that these bring, will play an important role in Northern Ireland's recovery.

The draft Strategy now defines 'sport' in a broader context, as 'all forms of physical activity which, through casual organised participation, aimed at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.

The proposed Vision is 'Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity leads to an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence'.

To deliver this vision, six Key Themes have been identified. Goals relating to the achievement of each theme, that are relevant to this Study have been highlighted in bold and listed:

1. Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity
2. **Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement**
  - Improved physical and mental health and well being
  - Sport and physical activity is inclusive, safe, diverse, shared and offers equality of opportunity to participate for all
  - Children and young people are given the best start in life through sport and physical activity opportunities
3. Promoting excellence in sport
4. **The importance of partnership and integration**
  - Better outcomes for communities through a collaborative approach to the development of sport and physical activity
  - Outcomes for communities are improved by a focus on co-design and co-production
  - Strengthened sports and physical activity partnerships at local, regional, national and international level
  - An increasing proportion of our facilities are shared across sports, clubs, schools and communities
5. **Providing inclusive and shared spaces**
  - Everyone has access to inclusive, shared, welcoming and high-quality sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - A safe, economically and environmentally sustainable local and regional sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - Our sports and physical activity sector and infrastructure are enabled by innovative and emerging technologies
6. Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity

Underpinning these Key Themes and their goals, are three cross-cutting principles:

- **Developing inclusive, shared communities**
- Developing capacity and governance in sport and physical activity
- Developing national and international linkages

Those which are of relevance to this Scoping Study are highlighted in **bold**.

#### ***Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025***

The vision of the Sport NI Plan is the same as the new, draft Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for NI: ‘...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’. Sport NI’s mission statement is: “We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all”.

To achieve this, Sport NI has identified two strategic outcomes over the next 5 years:

- Outcome 1: People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and recreation
- Outcome 2 NI Athletes among the best in the world

#### ***Sustainability for the Future, DAERA’s Plan to 2050***

This Plan frames DAERA’s strategic priorities for the next 30 years. DAERA’s vision and purpose, outlined in this Plan, is “Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone”.

The Plan states that a “sustainable approach creates a healthy environment to live in, which will underpin a healthy population and stimulate healthy economic rural communities” therefore acknowledging the link between a healthy environment, access to it and the health and well-being of communities. It states that “a healthy population depends on access to a healthy diet and a healthy, enjoyable environment” and “enhancing our environment matters, as a healthy environment is interlinked with our health and wellbeing”.

In the Plan, the Natural Environment is one of four strategic priorities – ‘to protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all’. Directly related to achieving this is one of the Plan’s ten goals –

*“9. Health and wellbeing for All - we will focus on using and enhancing our natural resources to improve the health and wellbeing for all of Northern Ireland. We will encourage people to spend more time in nature. We will work collectively to develop and showcase the tourism opportunities of our wonderful environment and NI’s world class food and drink production”.*



The Plan highlights that DAERA has a responsibility for 113,000 Ha forests which represents an obvious asset and resource to achieving the above.

### ***NIEA “Our Passion, Our Place” Strategic Priorities 2012-2022***

The priorities for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as outlined in this document, under the following themes, includes:

#### ***Healthy Natural Environment***

- A well-functioning network of protected sites and areas including enhancing the management of designated sites to benefit site features and protecting and conserving the historic environment
- Sustainable, diverse landscapes with rich biodiversity which are resilient to change

#### ***People and Places***

- Extensive opportunity for everyone to appreciate and enjoy the natural and built environment
- Common understanding of the role the environment plays in the health and wellbeing of people
- Greater business and community involvement in the environment including through volunteering and community stakeholder groups
- The natural environment and built heritage assets meet the needs of society and communities

#### ***Sustainable Economic Growth***

- The value of natural and built assets to the economy is fully realised
- The best outcome for the environment is obtained whilst minimising cost to business.

### ***Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board & Forest Service, 2013)***

This study highlighted findings from a research study that set out proposals for tourism development in Northern Ireland’s forests. The study was set in the context of the Forest Service’s policy to realise further opportunities for the recreational and social use of forests, in partnership with local authorities and other recreation providers.

The study established a vision for forest related tourism which was to “use the forest estate to deliver an exceptional visitor and short break experience for all, which will increase the economic impact of forest related tourism in Northern Ireland.”

To achieve this vision, the study set out the following supporting aims:

- To increase the economic impact of forest related tourism
- To encourage visitor experience and product development opportunities that will provide an exceptional visitor experience in line with the Northern Ireland brand principles
- To promote and enable effective partnership working.

### ***Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006***

This Strategy aims to tackle issues of poverty and social exclusion by targeting efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need. The priorities identified include:

- Eliminating poverty
- Eliminating social exclusion
- Tackling area-based deprivation
- Eliminating poverty from rural areas
- Tackling health inequalities
- Tackling cycles of deprivation

The goals and targets set out include the following:

- Allowing all children and young people to experience a happy and fulfilling childhood, while equipping them with the education, skills and experience to achieve their potential
- Ensuring that everyone has the potential to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

The development of community access to green space and outdoor recreation provision across the Mid Ulster forests aligns with this Strategy and has the potential to contribute to eliminating social exclusion and poverty and tackling health inequalities.

### ***The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)***

The Northern Ireland Executive's vision for volunteering is a society where:

- Everyone values the vital contribution that volunteers make to community wellbeing
- Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful and enjoyable volunteering experience.

The growth and development of outdoor recreation across three forest areas provides a unique opportunity for people to volunteer and become involved in their local communities.

### ***Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)***

NI Water's Strategy have identified 5 strategic priorities – Economy ....

Much of the Strategy is heavily centred on optimising the operation, management and impacts of the water supply business of NI Water. However, under strategic priority 'Economy' there are 3 objectives:

- Funding world class economic infrastructure
- Efficient and affordable services
- Sustainable growth

Under the 'sustainable growth' and 'nature' priorities NI Water acknowledge that they are one of Northern Ireland's largest public landowners and therefore have a role to play in tourism. One of the actions is to "seek opportunities to utilise our catchment land, raw water reservoirs and assets to maximise the community benefits, working closely with local councils'.

### ***Recreation & Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)***

This 2-year policy provides a framework defining what access is permitted to NI Water owned lands and waters, and how access arrangements for recreational use will be communicated, controlled and governed.

Key factors in determining access for recreational use are summarised here as risk, cost, sustainability, biodiversity and conservation and protection of water quality and supply.

### **Sub-Regional Strategic Context**

Consideration is also given to relevant Council strategic documents and the positive benefits and impact outdoor recreation can make on the objectives of the Council's draft Local Development Plan, Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Economic Development Plan and Tourism Strategy.

### ***Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024***

This Plan has been influenced by the Council's Community Plan, Economic Development Plan, Tourism Strategy and draft Local Development Plan.

The Plan has 5 strategic themes, of which 'Environment' and 'Communities' are two. In addition, 'addressing rurality' and 'working collaboratively across public, private, community and voluntary sectors to achieve shared objectives' are identified as cross-cutting corporate commitments. Commitment which the recommendations for development in this Scoping Study fulfil.

Within the Environment theme, 1 of 4 priorities is to 'increase the protection of, access to and development of our heritage assets, both natural and man-made, including our strategic visitor sites'.

Within the Communities theme, the Council aim to 'make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of local people, and contribute to the creation of viable and vibrant, safe and prosperous communities'. Accessibility to the outdoors and access to opportunities to adopt a more active lifestyle in a greater range of settings are highlighted, as well as the 'benefits of the outdoors for physical and mental health'. Priorities for the Council under this theme are to –

- Open up and sustain accessible pathways to participation in leisure and outdoor recreation activities which enhance health and well-being by providing high quality, accessible facilities in local communities and through programmes tailored to community need
- Continue to support the sustainable development of our parks, forests and green spaces, together with access to outdoor assets, including walking and cycling trails, and water recreation
- Along with our community planning partners, work to address poverty and deprivation across the Mid Ulster region
- We will continue, through our community development programmes, grant aid schemes and our partnership-working, to support local communities and to build capacity in the community and voluntary sector

### ***Our Community Plan: 10-year Plan for Mid Ulster (2017)***

The Council has identified 15 outcomes structured under 5 themes to deliver the Community Plan. This Scoping Study fits into 5 themes and 11 of the 15 outcomes, as outlined below:

Theme	Outcomes
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- Economic Growth
- We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy
  - We have more people working in a diverse economy
  - Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive

***Success Indicators***

- *Improved attractiveness as a tourism destination*
- *Increased no. of social economy businesses*
- *Increased performance of our towns and villages*

- Infrastructure
- We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children

***Success Indicators***

- *Increased environmental sustainability*
- *Increased protection, access and enjoyment of our natural and built heritage*

- Education and Skills
- We give our children and young people the best chance in life
  - We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative

***Success Indicators***

- *Increased number of schools which have community access*
- *Improved child development*
- *Improved mental health and resilience in children and young people*
- *Increased innovation in our economy*

- Health and Wellbeing
- We are better enabled to live longer, healthier and more active lives
  - We care for those most vulnerable and in need

***Success Indicators***

- *Increased healthy life expectancy*
- *Improved mental health*
- *Increased quality of life and opportunities for people with disabilities*
- *Reduced health inequality*
- *Improved child development*

- Vibrant and Safe Communities
- We are a safer community
  - We have a greater value and respect for diversity
  - We have stronger communities with less disadvantage and poverty

### ***Success Indicators***

- *Reduced anti-social behaviour*
- *Increased respect for each other*
- *Increased shared space*
- *Reduced level of deprivation and poverty*
- *Greater coordination of community delivery*
- *Increased community capacity, volunteering and delivery*
- *Increased private led community initiatives*

### ***Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)***

As of May 2021, the final Plan is yet to be published. This spatial plan will set out the Council's vision for planning land use up until 2030, incorporating housing, infrastructure, transport and relevant to this project – tourism, community and recreational facilities.

### ***Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)***

Key priorities for growing tourism in Mid Ulster are:

- History and Heritage
- Outdoor Activities
- Seamus Heaney

The latter 2 propositions are described as 'significant and prominent, but so far undeveloped'. Current tourism is largely based on rural and outdoor activities and tied into the area's natural attributes - the recommendations in this Scoping Study fit this current profile.

Key issues for the growth and management of tourism that have implications for this scoping study are –

- While day visitation to the area is important, the reasons to visit are not well articulated
- The visibility of Mid Ulster's natural heritage, outdoor activity and historic and archaeological heritage are lost partly because they are spread across the area and also because these attributes haven't been pulled together into distinct propositions for visitors.

- There is a weak accommodation base, exacerbated by variable occupancy levels (and thus viability) throughout the year
- The SME and microbusiness characteristics of the tourism sector in the area exacerbate challenges of communicating and engaging with the trade and developing collaborative projects across the trade
- The geographical dispersal of the area – in terms of scale, distance and character – suggests a challenge in creating both a tourism identity for Mid Ulster itself and for a hierarchy of individual communities that have identities and propositions that could encourage visitation
- Continuing constraints in countryside access limit the opportunity to exploit the natural environment to its full potential for outdoor activities

Opportunities for the future that have been identified and align with the recommendations in this Scoping Study are –

- The opportunity exists to exploit Mid Ulster’s central location within NI and improving access (completion of the Magherafelt Bypass; A6 dualling; Randalstown (M22) to Castledawson). The central location of Mid Ulster could also boost camping and caravanning based in the area. However, historically strong dependence on the NI domestic day and overnight market for visitation highlights the need to encourage more overnight stays from out-of-state markets and their greater expenditure.
- Outdoor tourism sites and experiences, including the presence of very successful outdoor activity providers, suggest that the outdoor tourism product can be exploited further right across the area
- An invigorated district wide programme of marketing and promotion is achievable, including events, enhanced signage, technology use, visitor information services and limiting print production.

To grow tourism in Mid Ulster there are 5 aims and objectives that actions and development should be centred on –

1. To develop three strategic tourism strands, around which the attributes of the area and the industry can cluster and to attract visitors –
  - i. Seamus Heaney
  - ii. Archaeological sites, history and heritage
  - iii. Outdoor Activities
2. To grow tourism as an economic driver for Mid Ulster
3. To manage the destination and create the preconditions for successful tourism
4. To profile and promote Mid Ulster to enhance the visibility of the area and boost visitation and spend
5. To support the dispersal of visitor spend and investment across the area

This Scoping Study and any subsequent development of the recommendations can be tied to the ‘Heritage and History’ and ‘Outdoor Activities’ themes.

For Heritage & History, the Plan highlights that Mid Ulster is the only place to appreciate the history and importance of the O’Neill family – there are many features and remnants of the O’Neills in Cappagh area. Dunmoyle is also rich in heritage features and Drumcaine is a historic garden and demesne.

Walking, cycling, mountain biking, canoeing, angling, multi-adventure centres (e.g. Todds Leap, and Jungle NI) plus a number of activity tourism providers in the area are key propositions for outdoor activities in Mid Ulster. Horse riding and golf add further value to the product offering and visitor experience. Except for golf, all of the forests are well positioned and have the potential to provide some or all of these activities.

Lastly, for the tourism vision Mid Ulster to be achieved, the Plan highlights the importance of local communities buying into the wider 'Mid Ulster identity'. It also highlights the importance of public realm quality, quality standards, food availability, access to information, etc within each community to ensure the visitor experience is positive and consistent across the area.

### ***Mid Ulster Economic Development DRAFT Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)***

The Council's previous Economic Development Plan expired in 2020. The purpose of this Draft Action Plan is to 'focus on the activity and actions that support businesses, high streets and economic recovery' in response to and amidst the backdrop of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The Draft Action Plan has multiple themes all aimed at driving recovery during the pandemic and building the foundations for sustained recovery.

Themes and outputs relevant to this study are –

Theme	Output
Physical Regeneration / improving Infrastructure	Rural Regeneration Projects – work in partnership with RDP to deliver Village Regeneration projects in Mid Ulster over 4 years
Strategic Projects	Delivery of Mid South West (MSW) Regional Economic Strategy – Develop a range of collaborative economic development projects as part of Growth Deal, e.g. Developing the O'Neill tourism proposition
Rural Business support / attracting investment	Micro business development scheme (TRPSI) – small capital grants for business development activities
Mid Ulster LEADER RDP Programme 2016-2020	Activities relating to the final delivery of 'Rural Business Investment Scheme', 'Rural Services Scheme' and 'Village Renewal Scheme' projects before closure of programme



### ***Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan (MUDC, 2020)***

This report and Action Plan sets out the future direction for the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation across the Mid Ulster district over a 5-year period, from 2020 to 2025.

In this strategy, outdoor recreation is recognised as having significant benefits across society, from the individual level in terms of health, to the wider society in terms of education, the economy and environment.

The report identifies the following key issues and opportunities relating to the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation that are relevant to this project:

- All 22 forests in the area provide local recreation opportunities but some, if developed appropriately, have the potential to attract visitors from outside the area
- whilst the area already has several informal walking trails around villages and along river corridors, there is an overwhelmingly demand for a formal network of Community Trails to be developed across the area
- few mechanisms exist within MUDC to encourage collaboration between the many different organisations and interest groups involved in outdoor recreation across the area. These include landowners/land managers, NGBs, private sector activity providers and service providers
- some of the more niche customers such as camping and caravans are provided with good levels of information, but the more 'mass' offering to local people or visitors on outdoor recreation and parks is insufficient.
- there is an expressed desire by local people in the MUDC area to have better access to information on the outdoor recreation opportunities available across MUDC.

The Action Plan makes 24 recommendations aimed at improving the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation over the next 5 years. Of the 24 recommendations, 14 are relevant to this project:

#### ***Management Structures***

- Put in place an adequately resourced rolling maintenance programme for all current and future outdoor recreation facilities.

- Monitor existing and develop where appropriate new SLAs with Community Groups for the ongoing maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities.

### ***Masterplanning***

- Undertake Master Planning/Feasibility Studies for six Local Sites, including
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 3-4)
- Develop a Community Trail Plan for each DEA

### ***Product Development***

- Develop 3 regional multi-use activity hubs
- Develop 9 local multi-use activity hubs:
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 2-3)
- Develop short and medium distance walking trails
- Develop a network of Community Trails across the area

### ***Promotion / Marketing***

- Prepare a 5-year Marketing Strategy and tactical Marketing Action Plan.
- Develop visitor information and signage guidelines for all forest recreation sites.
- Undertake a review of signage, visitor information and waymarking at all outdoor recreation sites.
- Implement new visitor information and signage guidelines at all outdoor recreation sites across the area.
- Develop an Outdoor Recreation Participation Plan.
- Develop partnerships with the private sector to deliver outdoor recreation participation programmes.

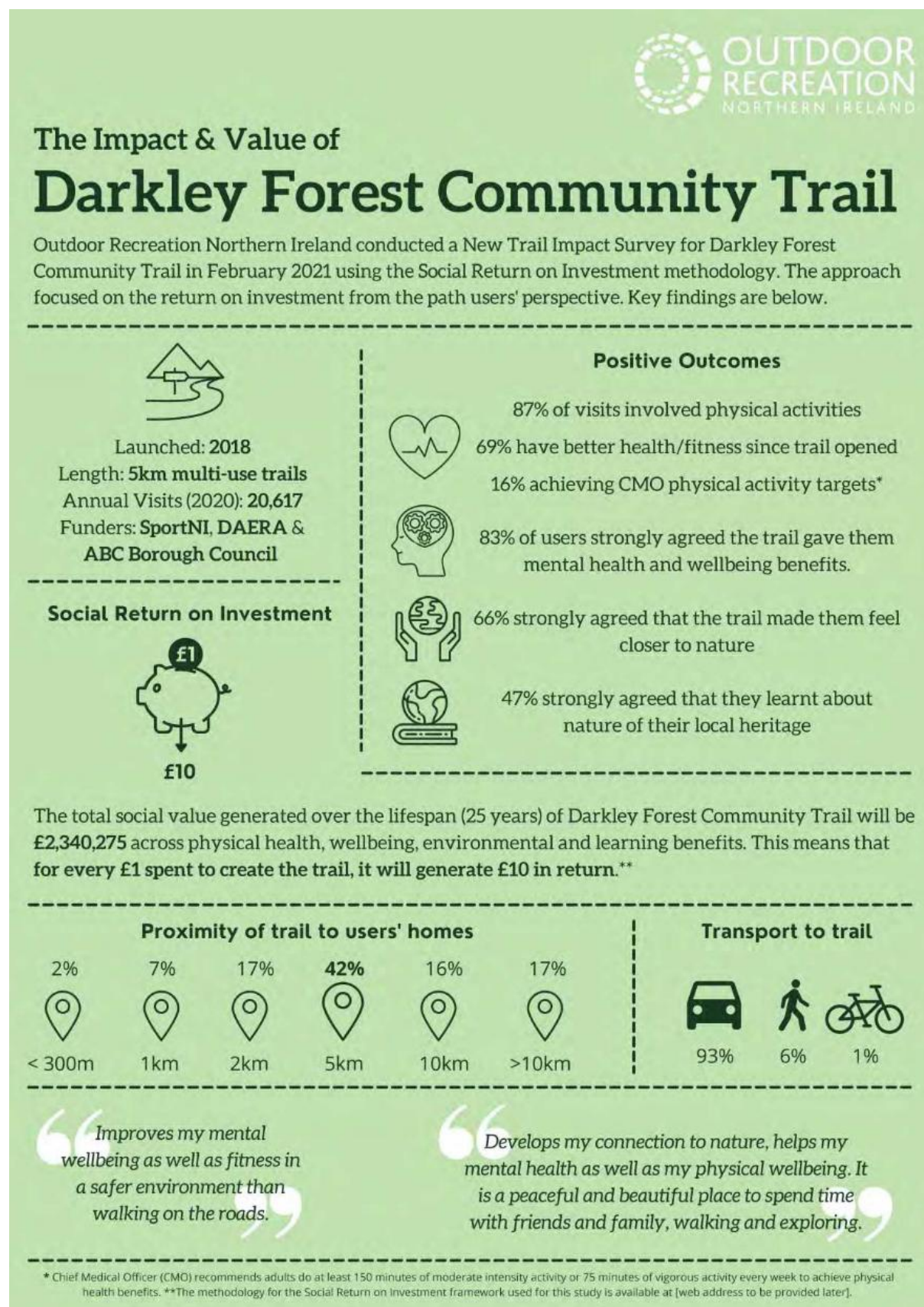
### ***Public Parks and Play Five Year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (MUDC, 2021)***

This report and Action Plan provides a comprehensive picture of the status of current public parks and play park facilities, as well as opportunities for future development, in the Mid Ulster district.

MUDC comprises over 100 public park and play facility sites ranging from small play parks to formal pitches/MUGA's to open parkland. One of the key findings of the report is that there is a disparity in provision with some areas in greatest needs suffering from a lack of provision while other areas are over provided for. This report provided an assessment of each facility, in terms of need, condition and spatial distribution.

In addition to site-specific recommendations, 11 over-arching, strategic recommendations were made. These are summarised as:

- Thorough Community Consultation
- Play should be inclusive
- Development of 'public parks' to plug the gap in open/green space across the Council area
- Develop woodland play
  - o Drumcairne Forest is recommended as a 'small woodland park' site with a budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
  - o Altmore Forest is also identified as a 'small woodland park' site with budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
- Compatibility with other Council strategies, including ORS, Tourism Strategy and Sports Facility Strategy
- Conduct Play Value assessments which considers the 'play experience'
- Adopt a risk-benefit approach to play provision
- Consider other public land sites and working in partnership with other public bodies to develop play provision
- Planning - protect the loss of open/green space except where there is a substantial community benefit
- Staff resource/maintenance and manning should be factored into future development projects when considering the development of play facilities





## Appendix 3 Community Survey and Results

**Scoping Study**  
**For the Development of Altmore, Cappagh, as a Local  
Multi Activity Hub**

August 2021

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI  
*on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council*



## Executive Summary

### The Site

Altmore is a rural upland landscape distinctive for its areas of land associated with forestry and reservoirs, on the outskirts of the Village of Cappagh in Co. Tyrone. There is a dispersed rural population throughout the area.

Six forest blocks make up a single forest management unit known as Altmore Forest. Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) owns and manages the Forest, totalling an area of 570Ha. The largest forest block spans the land boundary between Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC).

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) owns and manages a sequence of lands, impounded waterbodies, and a water treatment plant spanning the valley between Altmore Forest's largest block and Cappagh Village. Two reservoirs; the Upper Pond and the Lower Pond, are designated 'out of service' as public water supplies.

### The Scoping Study

*The Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Altmore Forest as a 'local multi-activity hub'.*

In addition to Altmore Forest, the Scoping Study has been strongly influenced by the recreational opportunities associated with Northern Ireland Water lands. Therefore, the Study area of Altmore embraces all lands reaching as far east as Cappagh Village, rather than just the forested area.

### The Need for Development

Despite an abundance of publicly owned lands in Altmore there is no formal provision for outdoor recreation within the Study Area. Altmore Super Output Area falls within the top 10-20% band of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, and with such limited existing recreational opportunities, the public lands have the potential to be a valuable community asset for people from the nearby villages of Cappagh, Galbally, Carrickmore, Pomeroy, and Donaghmore.

92% of people who responded to a public survey (focused on the Forest area only at the early stages of the project) indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Altmore is 'very important' to the local community. Notably, much of the feedback within open survey comments emphasised the importance of looking at assets beyond just the forest, to include the reservoirs and NIW lands, and this has strongly influenced the direction of this Scoping Study.

Key development priorities for Altmore have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from public survey results, and summarised as follows:



### Development Proposals

Development proposals reflect Community sentiment, high-level technical feasibility, and assessment of need. They have been developed in consultation with key landowners including FSNI and NIW, and also FODC. *These relationships must continue throughout all proposed stages of planning and development to ensure deliverability of proposals and alignment with each organisation's aims and objectives.*

Development proposals are presented across three Zones:

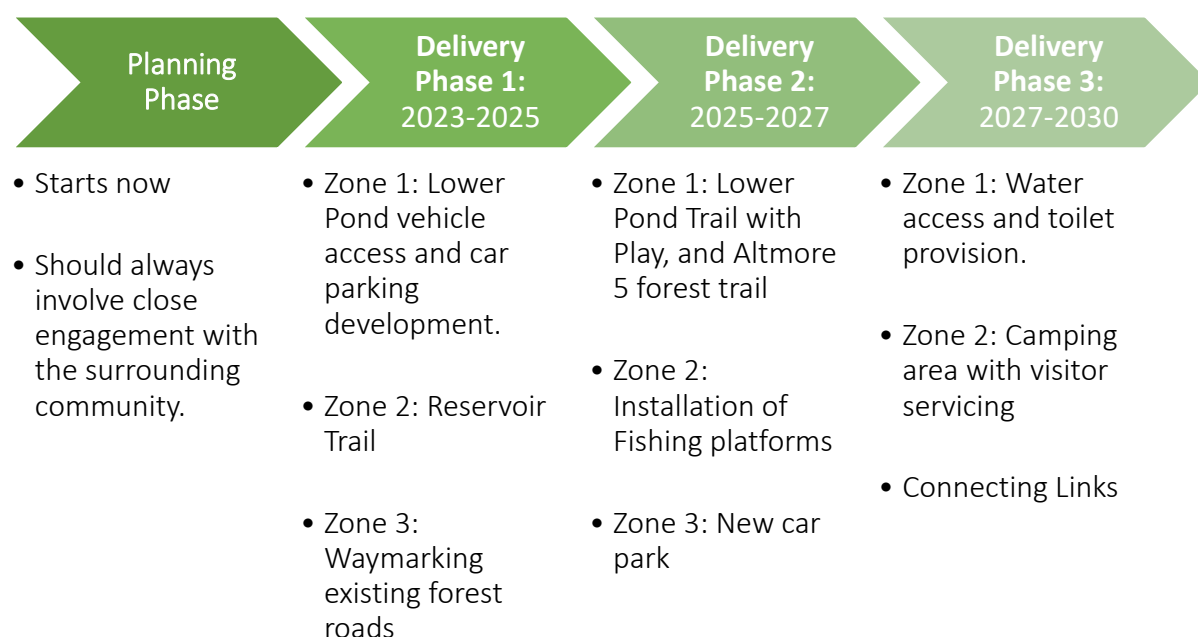
- **Zone 1: The Lower Pond and Cappagh Village** (Map 1)
- **Zone 2: The Upper Pond** (Map 2)
- **Zone 3: Altmore 1** (Map 3)

Further to this, opportunities for connectivity across the zones have been considered, as

- **Connecting Links** (Map 4)



Planning is proposed to start in late 2021, with visitor infrastructure delivered across three phases between 2023 -2030. Phasing is independent of Zones. Phasing of key actions is summarised as follows:



An investment of **£243,000** for the ‘planning’ element of works is a high-level estimate for external professional fees required to work up all phased of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that some of this could be delivered ‘in-house’ by MUDC staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single year budgets.

Phase 1 2023-2025 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at **£349,900**

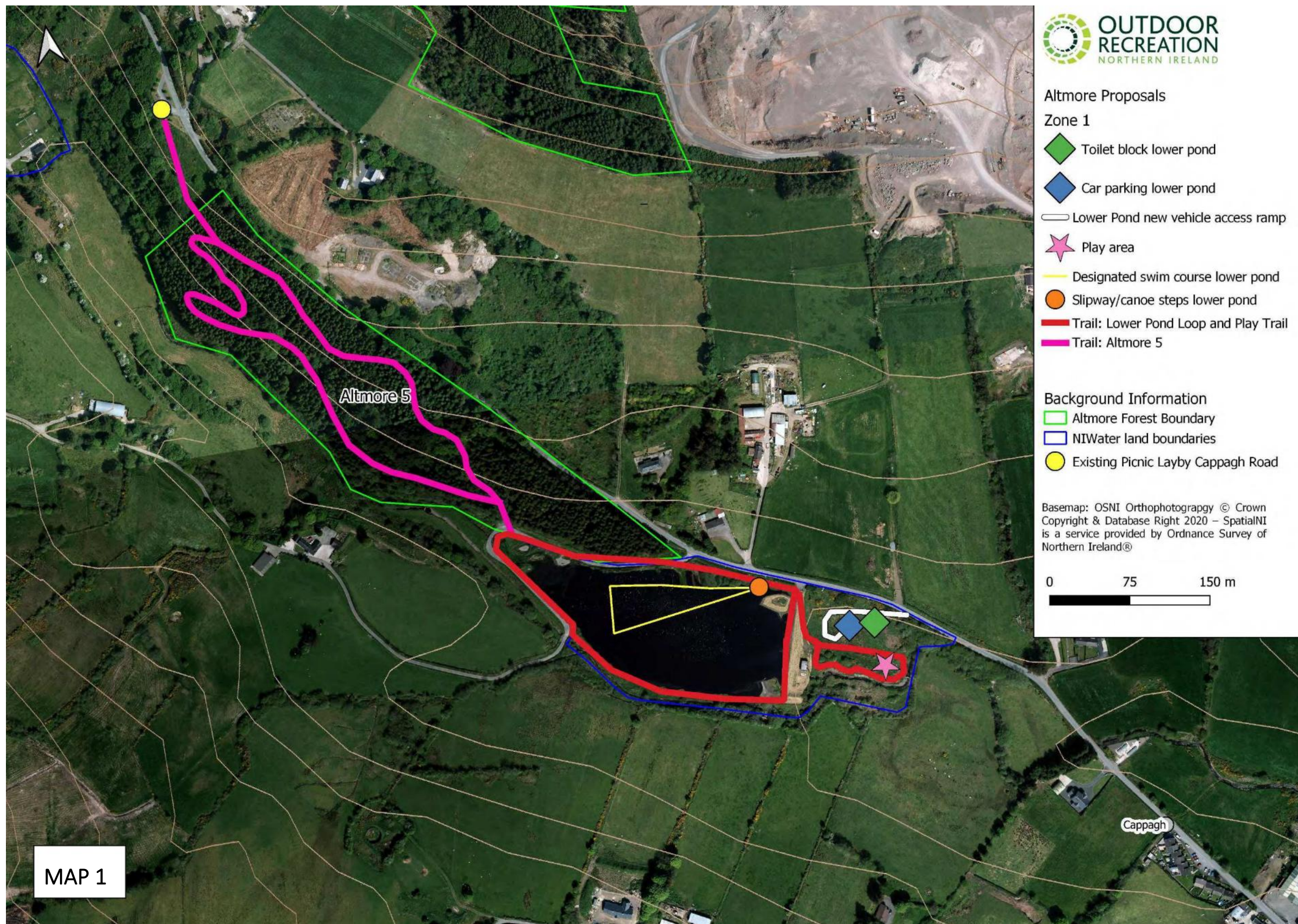
Phase 2 2025-2027 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at **£401,000**

Phase 3 2027-2030 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at **£422,100**

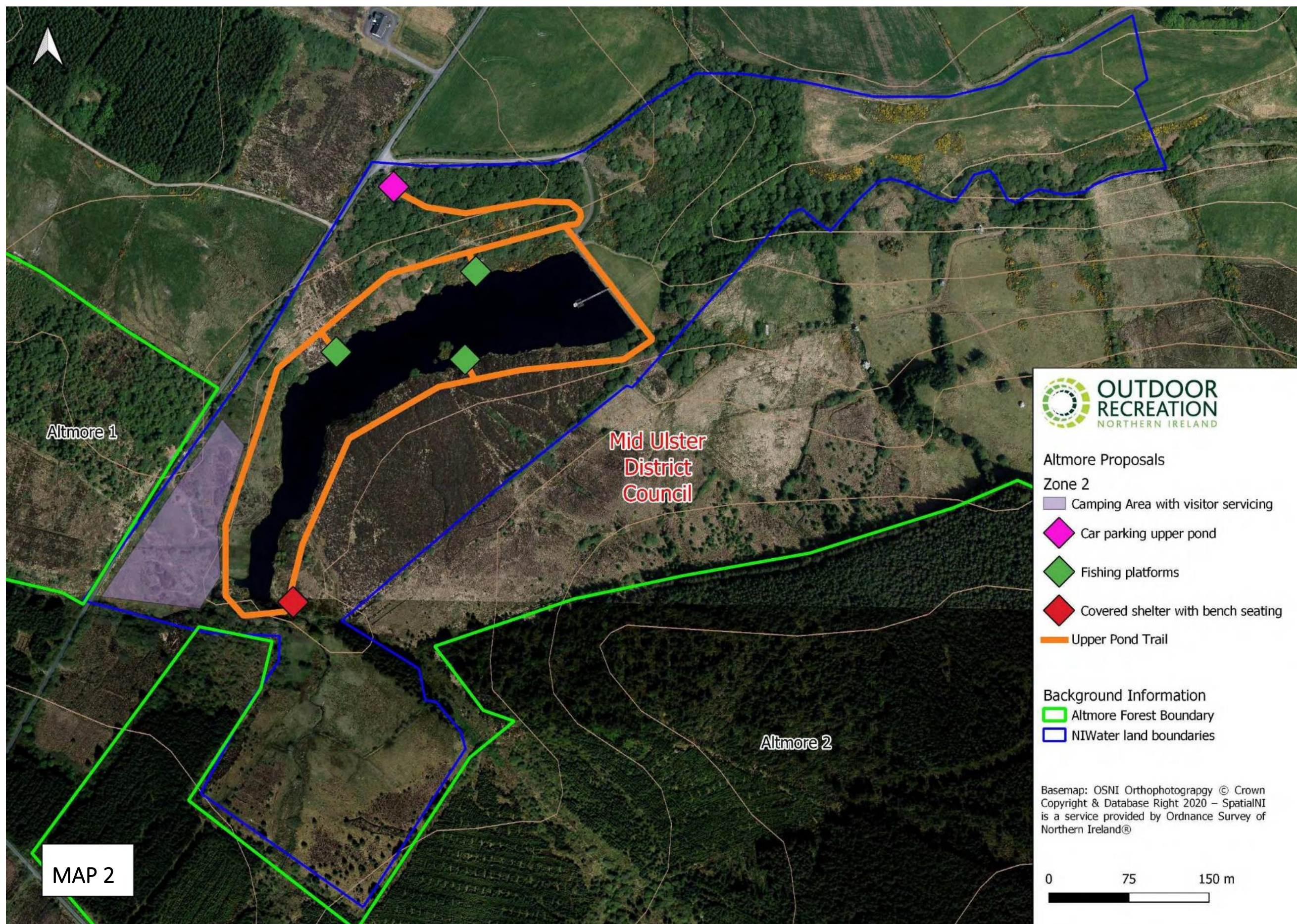
### Social Return on Investment

Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, and taking account of the population of the area, the estimated Social Return on Investment is estimated to be capped at £11M over 25 years.

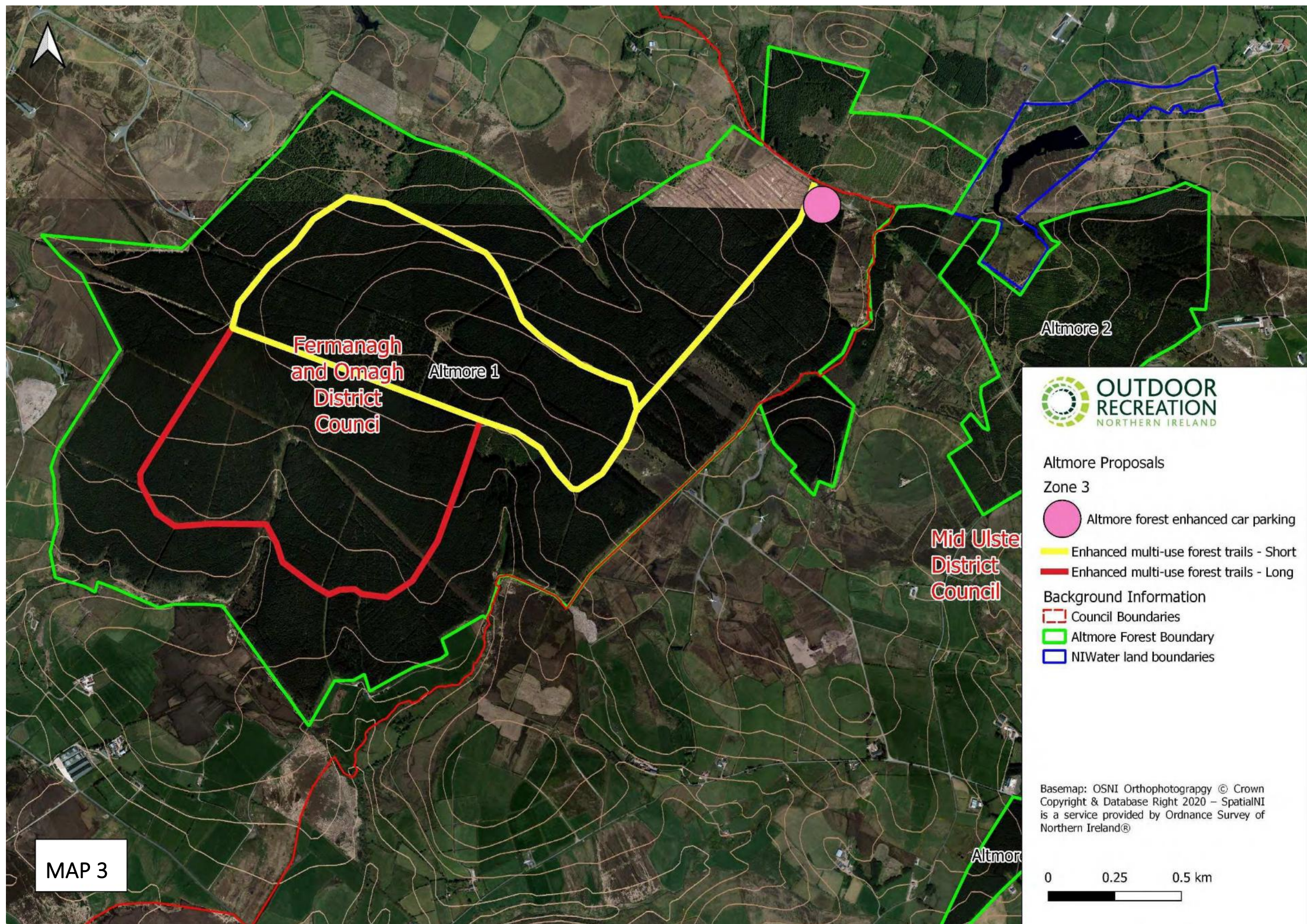




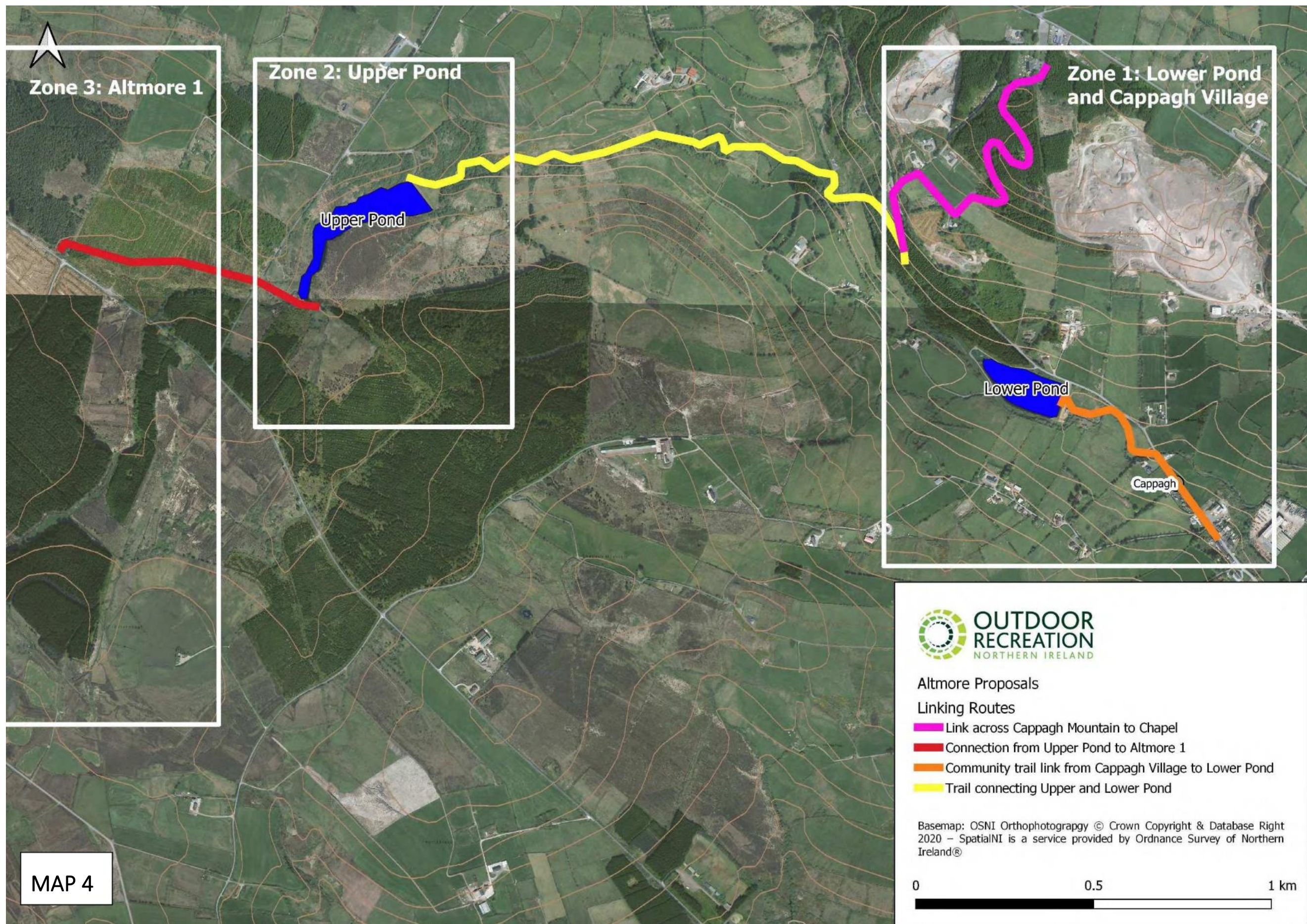














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## 1 Introduction

In February 2021, Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) appointed Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) to undertake a Recreational Scoping Study for Altmore Forest, near Cappagh, Co. Tyrone (Error! Reference source not found.).

The project has been strongly influenced by the recreational opportunities associated with Northern Ireland Water lands and therefore the Study area of Altmore embraces all lands reaching as far east as Cappagh Village, rather than just the forested area.

The Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Altmore as a 'local multi-activity hub'.

MUDC defines a local multi-activity hub as a site developed primarily for the local community, to include a range of outdoor recreation and environmental products, accompanied by appropriate visitor servicing.

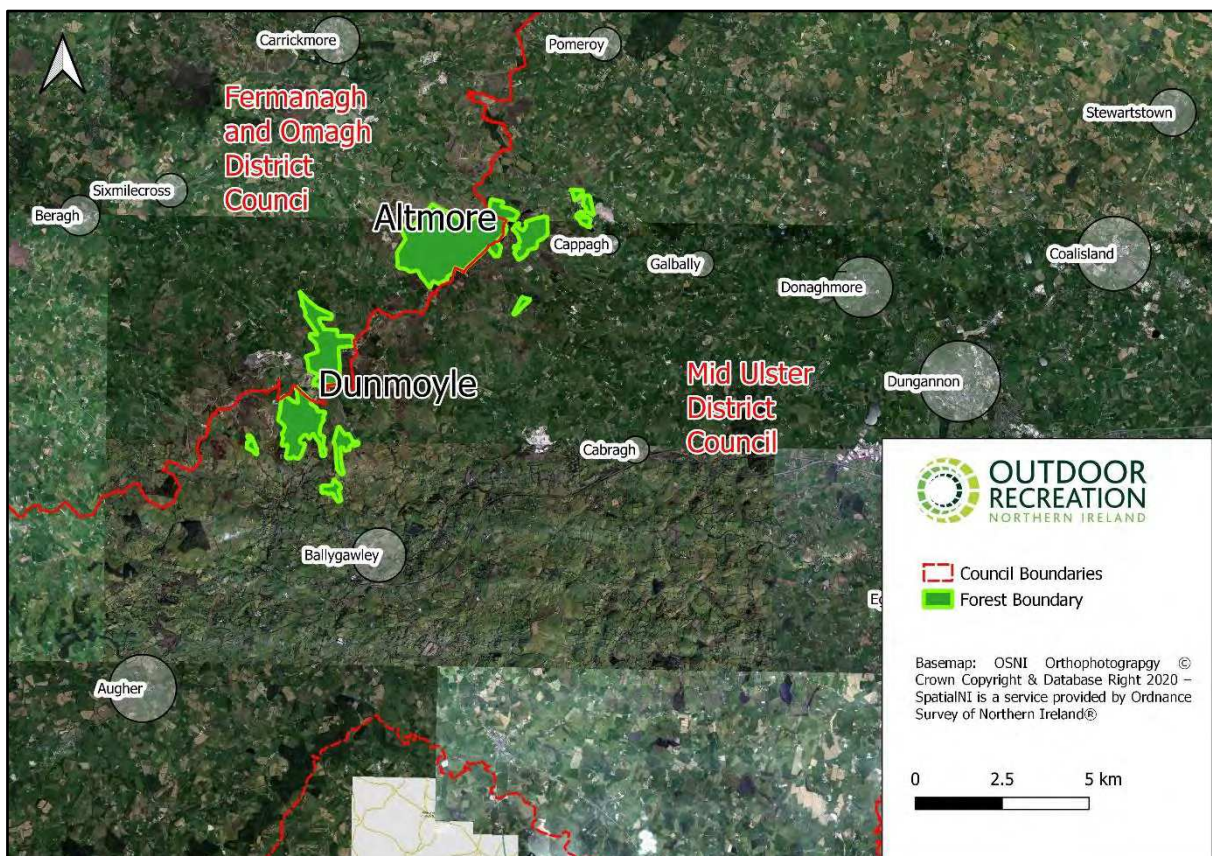


Figure 1 - Altmore Forest Location



## 1.1 Scope of Study

The Scoping Study included two stages:

### Stage 1

- Desktop review of existing strategies applicable to the region.
- Consultation with agencies/stakeholders, local community, Council staff and Councillors to ensure incorporation of ideas and feedback.
- SWOT Analysis
- Identification of land ownership and land management status and opportunities.
- Exploration of a sustainable balance between the economic, environmental, and social functions of the forest.
- Audit of current infrastructure and condition
- Exploration of the opportunity for linkages and routes within and external to the Forest including how the Forest offers access to the village, local landscapes, and other neighbouring visitor attractions.
- Identification of any potential barriers to development.
- Determination of what is currently available within the site for outdoor recreation, including any visitor data, and exploring what capacity there is within the site to accommodate further outdoor recreation and educational activities.

### Stage 2

- Identification of phased, viable and sustainable recreational, educational, and social activities which could be delivered within the scope of the Development Plan. The proposals aim to enhance user/visitor experience, whilst supporting biodiversity and local heritage.
- Exploration of potential watersport and renewable energy options associated to the neighbouring reservoirs.
- Recommendations and Actions.
- Detailed Development Plan costs and profiled timetable of expenditure.
- Identification of suitable funding streams and timetables.

## 1.2 Approach

Table 1 summarises ORNI's approach to undertaking the Scoping Study, with key dates provided where relevant.

*Table 1 – Scoping Study Approach and Key Dates*

	Activity	Status
<b>Stage 1</b>	Desk-based assessments of population demographics, strategic context at Council and Regional scale, geography and geology, environmental and heritage opportunities and constraints, land use opportunities and constraints, forest planning and zoning.	Throughout
	Initial site walkovers.	26 <sup>th</sup> February, 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
	Bespoke engagement with select individuals representing themselves, a community group, or club within the surrounding community.	Complete (Ongoing as required)
	Promotion and marketing of scoping study, public survey, and virtual public meeting (Zoom).	Public meeting 13 <sup>th</sup> April. Formal public engagement for 6 weeks concluded 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2021.
	Meetings with key stakeholders including Forest Service NI and Northern Ireland Water to facilitate clear decision-making around future planning.	Complete (ongoing as required)
	Interim presentation to Council Officers and feedback period	Virtual Presentation 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
<b>Stage 2</b>	Detailed site walkover survey	28th June 2021
	SWOT analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and final reporting	July 2021
	Presentation to Elected Members	Pending

## 2 The Study Area

The Study Area, shown in Figure 3, extends approximately 7km from East to West.

The area lies within what is colloquially referred to as the Mountains of Pomeroy, an upland hummocky landscape reaching elevations of around 300m above sea level. It spans the Council boundary between MUDC and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) and offers a sense of remoteness, though is accessible via a dense network of typically single-track rural roads just 8km from the strategic A4 Belfast-Ballygawley Road. The landscape is interspersed with rural dwellings and the small villages of Cappagh and Galbally, not far from Carrickmore, Pomeroy, and Donaghmore. The upland landscape also hosts several windfarms, and active quarrying takes place throughout the area, evidenced by landscape scarring.

Two in-line reservoirs (Altmore reservoirs) lie within the Study Area. Locally referred to as ‘Cappagh Ponds’ – upper and lower – these drain from a main forestry area down-gradient towards the village of Cappagh, forming the head of the river Torrent that drains into the Blackwater near Lough Neagh.



*Figure 2 - View facing east across the Upper Pond (Altmore upper reservoir) towards Cappagh quarry*

### 2.1 Landownership and Land Management Status

A map of the Study Area, with known public land ownership boundaries, is shown in Figure 3.

### 2.1.1 Forest Service Northern Ireland

Six discrete blocks make up the single forest management unit known as Altmore Forest. Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) own, manage, and maintain the Forest, totalling an area of 570Ha (5.7km<sup>2</sup>). These blocks are separated by third-party lands and rural roads. Forest block Altmore 1 (see Figure 3) is the largest block, making up 82% (469Ha) of the total area owned by FSNI. This block sits almost entirely within the FODC Council area, with the remaining blocks sitting within MUDC. To date, neither Council have been involved in managing or maintaining the forest blocks.

*Note: Going forward within this report 'Altmore Forest' is used to refer to the whole forest management unit. Where specific mention is made to one forest block, its number will be used i.e. 'Altmore 1'.*

### 2.1.2 Northern Ireland Water

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) owns, manages, and maintains a sequence of lands, impounded waterbodies, and a water treatment plant spanning the valley between Altmore 1 and Cappagh Village, all within MUDC area. The two reservoirs; the Upper Pond and the Lower Pond, are designated 'out of service' as public water supplies and include:

- Upper Pond land area = 40Ha (0.4km<sup>2</sup>)
- Upper Pond water area = 3Ha (0.03km<sup>2</sup>)
- Lower Pond land area = 4Ha (0.04km<sup>2</sup>)
- Lower Pond water area = 2Ha (0.02km<sup>2</sup>)

In 2014, NIW issued an expression of interest relating to the disposal of the reservoirs and associated lands, but issues around the management and on-going maintenance resulted in no interest from other bodies. The local community had, and still have, an active interest in realising the recreational value of the reservoir and lands. Since 2014, the Water and Sewerage Services Act<sup>1</sup> and the Reservoirs Bill<sup>2</sup> have been introduced meaning that NIWater must effectively retain control of their Altmore assets in the interest of social, environmental, climate change, and health and safety matters.

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1

[https://www.niwater.com/sitefiles/resources/htmlfiles/information\\_management/water\\_and\\_sewerage\\_services\\_northern\\_ireland\\_order\\_2006.pdf](https://www.niwater.com/sitefiles/resources/htmlfiles/information_management/water_and_sewerage_services_northern_ireland_order_2006.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/agriculture-and-rural-development/reservoirs/ni-water-.pdf>



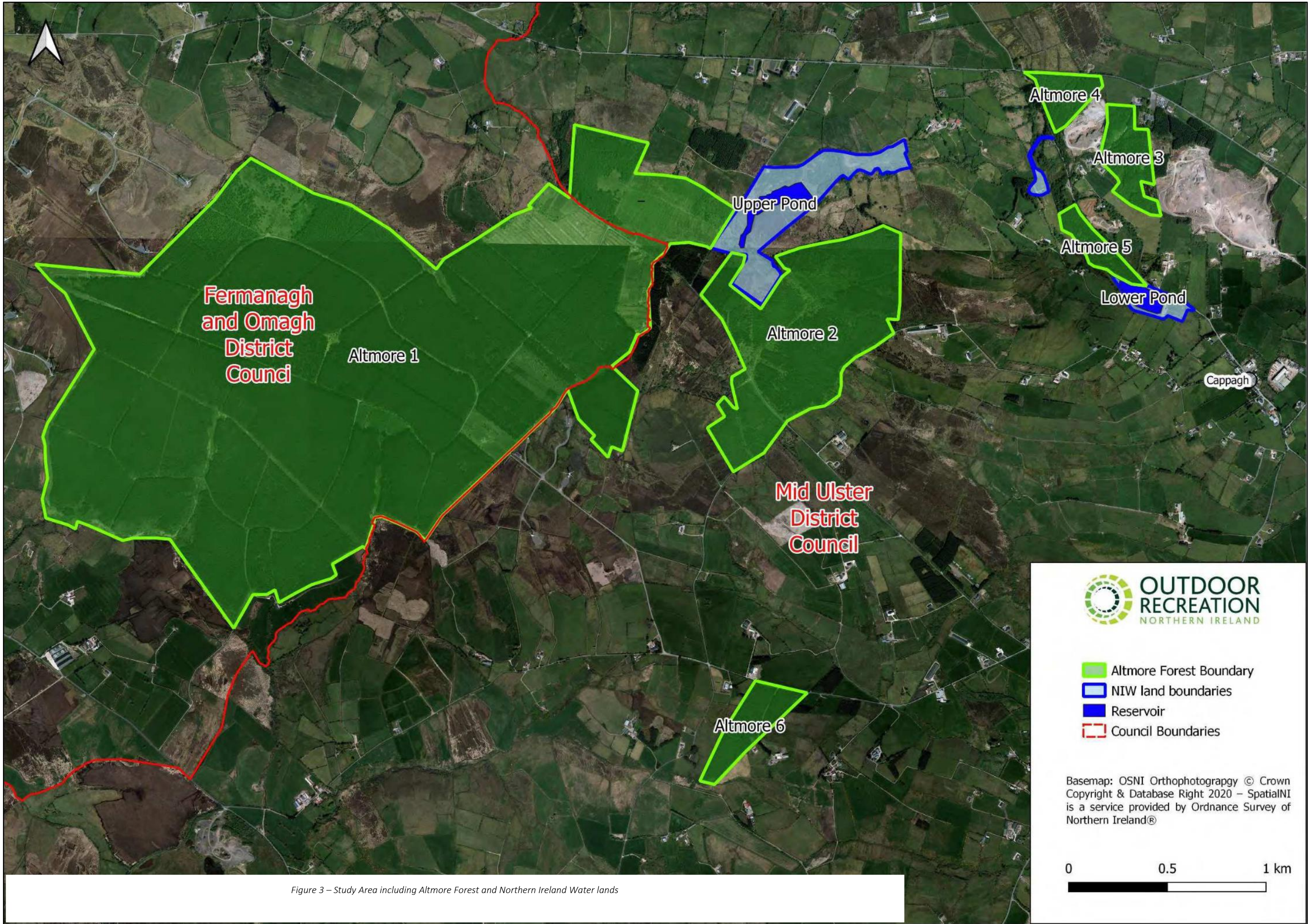


Figure 3 – Study Area including Altmore Forest and Northern Ireland Water lands



## 2.2 Heritage Designations

### 2.2.1 Environment

The Study Area exhibits relatively limited registered Environmental features<sup>3</sup>. However, considerations for the surrounding area include:

- A rock exposure at a quarry site at Lurgylea, just north of Cappagh Village, which was declared an Area of Special Scientific Interest<sup>4</sup> in 2007 because of its important geology and the rock exposures at the site that allow the geology's observation. The same site is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site. However, the quarry site is still known to be active, and arguably sits just outside the study area being considered within the scope of this report.
- Extensive areas of Peatland priority habitat are registered across the Study Area, with much of it referenced as 'peat cutting'.
- Towards the western extent of the Study Area there are indication of priority species of 'breeding Waders'.

### 2.2.2 Built Heritage

The Study Area is host to a dispersed but abundant array of local and regionally important heritage ranging from recent industrial features to Bronze-Age prehistoric burial grounds.

Registered heritage<sup>5</sup> features include:

- Listed buildings (bridges): HB13/14/004
- Fortified mound, Scheduled zone: TYR045:011
- Shane Barnagh's Sentry Box (non-antiquity – rock outcrop): TYR045:001
- Bronze Age Cist Burial (unlocated): TYR045:013
- Non-antiquity natural sink hole: TYR045:017

Other heritage features, unregistered but known through local literature and local knowledge include:

- O'Neill herb garden

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<sup>3</sup> Registered by Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/Lurgylea-ASSI-citation-documents-and-map.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities Historic Environment Register

- Altmore Barracks
- King James' Well
- Moat of Crannogue
- Altmore Cairn



*Figure 4 - King James' Well, along the roadside just west of Cappagh Village*

### 2.3 External Site Linkages

Cappagh Village has close community links to nearby Galbally village (3km to the east), effectively sharing community facilities such as the Galbally Pearses GAC that sits between the two small villages, and a primary school.

Public transport access to the area is limited, with most residents and visitors accessing the area by car. The surrounding road network includes many poor-quality peat roads, but is just 8km away from the strategic A4 Belfast-Ballygawley Road by car.

The Study Area has clear links to a wider area of heritage interest, not least that associated with what is locally known as 'Tyrone's Ancient Highway'.

The array of heritage features within, and extending beyond, the study area has been documented within a book produced by Camowen Partnership, called 'Tyrone's Ancient Highway'. The route is said

to have passed through Cappagh, along Cappagh Road, and appears best known for a journey by King James in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century:

*“in 1689, King James II made a journey through the heartland of County Tyrone on his way from Dublin to Derry which, at that time was under siege from his army. In doing so he was following in the footsteps of countless previous generations of people to have travelled this portion of the ancient route between Tara and Derry”.*

## 2.4 Existing Outdoor Recreation Provision

Despite the vast availability of public lands, the Study Area lacks formal provision for outdoor recreation. Informal sites used by the local community are described below.

### 2.4.1 Altmore 1

Just prior to the onset of the COVID pandemic in 2020, the largest forest block, Altmore 1, was subject to clearfelling along Barnagh’s Road. Internal forest roads and a vehicular entrance to the forest were developed/upgraded to facilitate FSNI’s felling activities. This exposed the local public to the forest’s potential for recreation, showing a distinct, more welcoming, and ‘open’ point of access. There was a reported increase in people accessing Altmore 1 for walking, running, and off-road bicycling, particularly as the pandemic took hold and people sought more local spaces for exercise and accessing the outdoors. It has been reported through community consultation and engagement with FSNI that prior to these forestry works, very few knew the extent or potential of Altmore 1 for existing informal or future formal recreation.

There is no formal provision for car parking, with visitors making use of locally widened ‘splays’ and laybys along the surrounding narrow public roads. Public vehicular access to the internal forest roads is prevented by a steel gate at the site’s entrance.

Existing trails used for recreation are limited to long, wide and straight forestry roads, surfaced with coarse gravel to facilitate the movement of large forestry vehicles. This is confirmed through Strava records. Although these roads provide a highly functional facility for purposeful exercise, they result in a very homogenous experience for the walker with little exposure or views to the surrounding countryside and its features.



There is no welcome signage, interpretation, or wayfinding across the site.



*Figure 5 – Altmore 1 Clockwise from top: Recent clearfell and forest entrance from Bernaghs Road, typical internal forest road with drainage ditch, internal forest road used by large Forest Service NI vehicles*

### 2.4.2 Upper Pond

No official access exists to the Upper Altmore Reservoir, known locally as the 'Upper Pond'. Although fenced off, there are clear tracks at the site's western end and a stile leading to the water's edge. No clear desire lines exist beyond the stile. It is thought this stile may be in place either for maintenance access or for fishing access, though the Upper Pond is not known to be stocked or licensed for fishing.



*Figure 6 - Western extent of the Upper Pond, Altmore*

The eastern extent of the impounded Upper Pond is defined by a large, flat-topped earth dam which is easily accessible to the public despite there being no official formal public access. From here visitors have excellent views across the valley to the east and the reservoir and upland forests to the west.

This area is serviced by a maintenance access lane, closed off with a steel gate, but with enough space on the public side to allow for informal parking and turning of vehicles.

The area is known to have been subject to anti-social behaviour/loitering, fly-tipping, and littering, attributed to its remoteness yet relative ease of access.

It is not considered feasible to walk along the reservoir edges to complete a loop of the water due to rough vegetation, nor are there any indications that the public already do so, with the limit of recreational walking confined to a short line along the flat top of the earth dam only.



There is no provision for swimming or water access at the Upper Pond by way of slipways, canoe steps, or similar.



*Figure 7 - Eastern extent of the Upper Pond. Clockwise from top left: Steel gate leading to earth dam, View across the Upper Pond towards the west, Downslope of the earth dam, Impounded water level behind earth dam.*

### 2.4.3 Lower Pond

The Lower Altmore Reservoir, or the 'Lower Pond', sits on the outskirts of Cappagh Village. Like the Upper Pond, it is possible to access the reservoir with relative ease. Around one third of the reservoir is bound by a public road and a shared concrete access lane. If walking in a clockwise direction around the reservoir's perimeter, this lane projects onto unimpeded and walkable grassy access to the reservoir's southern embankment. The ability to complete a walking loop of the pond is impeded by the presence of a shallow reservoir spillway.

There is no provision for swimming or water access at the Lower Pond by way of slipways, canoe steps, or similar.



*Figure 8 - Lower Pond. Clockwise from top left: Earth Dam and vehicular access to lands at toe of dam, Unimpeded access to the reservoir embankment along its southern edge, Walking along the reservoir's southern edge, Shallow spillway draining into river Torrent*

#### 2.4.4 Altmore 2 – 6

No existing formal or informal recreation provision takes place in forest blocks Altmore 2 – Altmore 6.



### 3 Assessment of Need

#### 3.1 Strategic Context

The development of outdoor recreation and local community facilities, in general, fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies and strategic organisations. Care has been taken in this study to ensure that the proposed development across the Altmore Study Area align with these policies and strategies at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

Table 2 outlines those strategies with the best ‘strategic fit’ for the proposed works required to develop Altmore fully and appropriately as a local multi-activity hub.

*Table 2 - Relevant policies and strategies for Altmore*

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10-year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA’s Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA “Our Passion, Our Place” Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)</li> </ul>

<b>Community Planning</b>	– Village Plans for Galbally & Cappagh, Ballygawley and Stewartstown.

See Appendix A for a detailed summary of the above documents, identifying their specific relevance to this Scoping Study and any proposed development at Altmore.

In summary, this strategic review highlights the importance that the Northern Ireland Executive and government departments (at a regional level) and the Council (at a sub-regional level), place on outdoor recreation and access to forests and quality greenspace for the social, economic, physical, mental, and environmental well-being of our local communities.

The proposed developments/enhancements within Altmore offer a strong fit with each of the strategies outlined in Table 2, as the recommendations have the potential to:

- Contribute to, or kick-start in some cases, the regeneration of rural communities through the investment in and provision of quality outdoor activities and experiences.
- Improve the health (mental and physical) and wellbeing (including social inclusion) of local people and visitors through the development of sports, leisure, and recreation infrastructure within the area in order to provide formal and informal opportunities for people to engage in physical activity and to better access green spaces.
- Protect our natural environment through the development of environmentally sensitive trails and components with an educational dimension.
- Conserve and enjoy the unique built heritage of Mid Ulster.
- Contribute to the development of a strong and shared community by unlocking the potential of the leisure sector as an instrument for positive change.
- Encourage active citizenship through volunteering and social enterprise opportunities.
- Contribute to long-term economic growth through the development of the tourism industry of the Council area, offering a distinct and complementary sustainable outdoor recreation product to that is currently under-developed in the Council area.

### 3.2 Altmore Public Survey

As part of the consultation process, a 6-week public survey was carried out both online and in paper format. 488 responses were received. See Appendix C for detailed results. The survey results have been used to inform the recommendations set out in Section 5.

There were 488 responses to the public survey.

### 3.3 Local Access to Quality Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The public were asked ‘besides Altmore, what sites/facilities do you use most regularly for outdoor recreation and outdoor leisure time?’ The following 7 other sites (distance from Cappagh Village provided for reference) were popular

- Pomeroy (5 miles)
- Dungannon Park (10 miles)
- Loughmacrory (10 miles)
- Parkanaur (6.5 miles)
- Knockmany (15 miles)
- Gortin Glens (25 miles)
- Gosford (30 miles)

Respondents also reported use of the local Galbally Pearse’s GAC football grounds for walking as well as using the local road network for walking, running, cycling and horse riding.

“The development of Altmore Forest is essential for the local and wider community. Also, as an additional point, it would benefit the environment as people wouldn’t be travelling to forests further away if they had facilities near home”

- Public Survey Respondent

Regionally relevant evidence exists<sup>6</sup> to support the need for improved *local* access to spaces for outdoor recreation in general, citing sustainability benefits<sup>7</sup>, health, and wellbeing benefits, and improved social benefits. For example, Darkley Forest in Co. Armagh launched a 5km network of

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<sup>6</sup> [https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People\\_Nature\\_and\\_Health\\_NI\\_March\\_2021\\_report\\_1\\_.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/4dc93b5ea821bcd4cf748e/files/2e0da6ff-abb9-4f10-82a1-f33dcd77e4d3/People_Nature_and_Health_NI_March_2021_report_1_.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/blog/reducing-the-need-to-travel/>



multi-use trails in 2018 located approximately 1km from a local village centre. Using a robust Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology to assess its impact, **the total social value generated over the lifespan (25 years) of Darkley Forest Community Trail will see a £10 return on investment for every £1 spent to create the trail.** Further detail on this specific study is included in Appendix B

Although the setting and potential for the development of the Altmore Study Area differs from Darkley due to development potential in multiple ‘zones’, its potential SROI, should trail development of a similar scale be realised, and based on the comparable population of the village of Cappagh to that of Darkley, is assumed to be of a similar magnitude.



Figure 9 - Social Return on Investment 1:10 for Darkley Forest, Co Armagh

The Village Plan for Cappagh and Galbally, drafted by Mid Ulster District Council in 2017 identified several development opportunities relevant to outdoor recreation provision, summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 – Galbally and Cappagh Village Plan Outdoor Recreation Summary

	Key characteristics	Development opportunity
<b>Galbally and Cappagh Village Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Service provision in Cappagh is extremely limited.</li> <li>– Altmore SOA is in the 10-20% band of most deprived wards in NI.</li> <li>– Cappagh Village Regeneration Group and Galbally Community Association are instrumental in the delivery of many community initiatives, events and groups, e.g. social programme for third age, play groups, etc.</li> <li>– Lack of available community space in Cappagh.</li> <li>– Few opportunities for young people especially if not interested in sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To develop Cappagh’s green space as both casual leisure and visitor attraction asset.</li> <li>– To develop and celebrate the area’s history and culture.</li> <li>– To build on cross-community contact to position Cappagh/Galbally as an inclusive, safer rural community.</li> <li>– Potential to develop partnerships with adjacent communities/agencies to address issues such as poverty, emotional health and wellbeing, young people.</li> <li>– Opportunity to build on the work of Altmore Fisheries in bringing visitors to the area via development of the reservoirs and green/natural assets e.g. walking and cycling.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Limited play space for families and children.</li> <li>– No services in village to attract footfall.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reservoir is an asset that should be enhanced and developed.</li> <li>– Explore potential for enterprise/industrial units in the area and support local people in social enterprise initiatives.</li> <li>– Cappagh/Galbally area - carry out scoping exercise of local natural resources with tourism potential.</li> </ul>
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### 3.4 Altmore Visitor Profile

Currently no visitor data exists for the Altmore Study Area.

Given Altmore 1 currently provides the main recreational opportunity in the area, albeit informally, the public survey focused on gathering information on visitor profiles across the area. Of those who

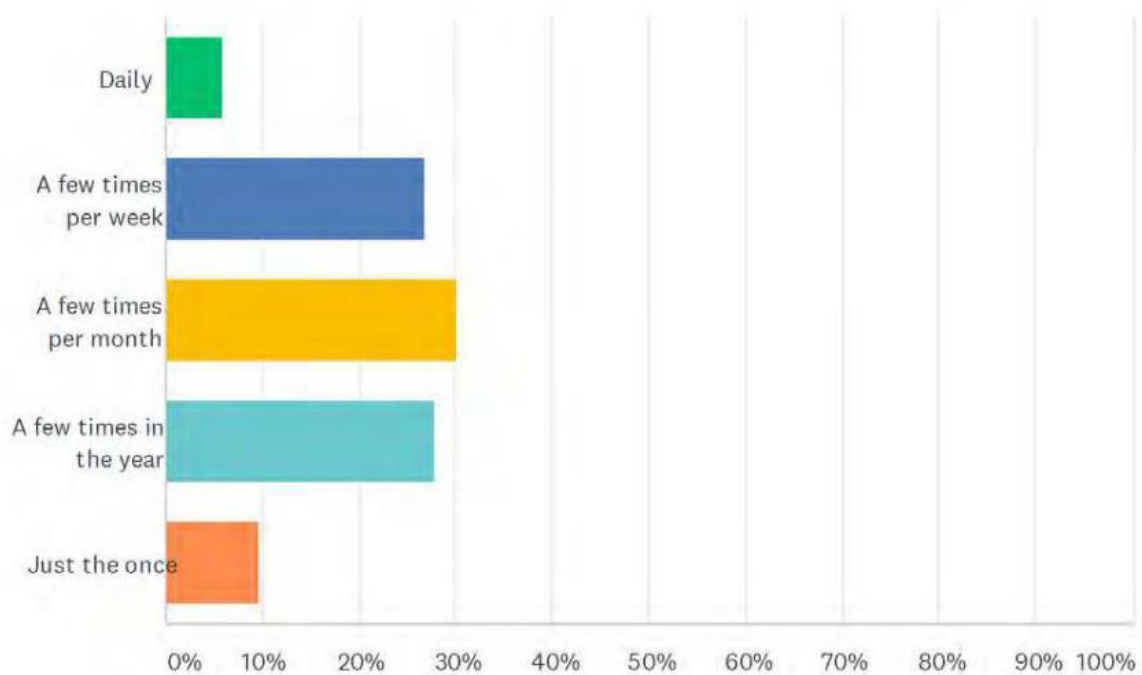


Figure 10 - Frequency of visits to Altmore Forest

responded to the public survey, 82% reported they had visited Altmore Forest previously. The reported frequency of visits across the past year is shown in Figure 10, with the highest proportion of respondents reporting that they visit a few times per month, closely followed by those reporting they visit a few times per week.

Walking or hiking is recorded as the most popular recreation activity undertaken within the forest (75% of visits). Running makes up a further 13% , with the remaining small proportion reported as 'day out or picnic', cycling, observing wildlife, or 'other' (motorsports features within 'other').

On a typical visit to Altmore Forest, the majority of respondents report that they visit with family (55%). 15% visit on their own, 14% visit with friends, 12% with a spouse or partner, and 1% visit as part of an organised group.

### 3.5 Community Demand

92% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Altmore Forest is 'very important' to the local community. Fewer than 0.5% indicated they did not see development as important for the local community. ***Notably, much of the feedback within open survey comments emphasised the importance of looking at assets beyond just the forest, to include the reservoirs and NIW lands, and this has strongly influenced the direction of this Scoping Study.***

8% of survey respondents, representing 38 individuals, indicated that they have reduced/limited mobility or another disability.

There is clear community sentiment towards a sense of under-investment across the area over a prolonged period, a sense of 'neglect' that goes beyond the need for recreational infrastructure, and indications of troubles-related impacts.

*"Cappagh has been starved of investment in the previous thirty years, the area has everything stacked against it... we are on the edge of the Council boundary, we are blocked from using the nearest recycling facility, Carrickmore, as it's not in our Council district, and we are split by two parish areas".*

-

*"This is an area that has been hugely neglected by both local and central government in terms of investment. Which is sad because it is a strong community with a rich history that goes back hundreds of years, and scenery you'll be hard pressed to find elsewhere".*

- Public Survey Respondents

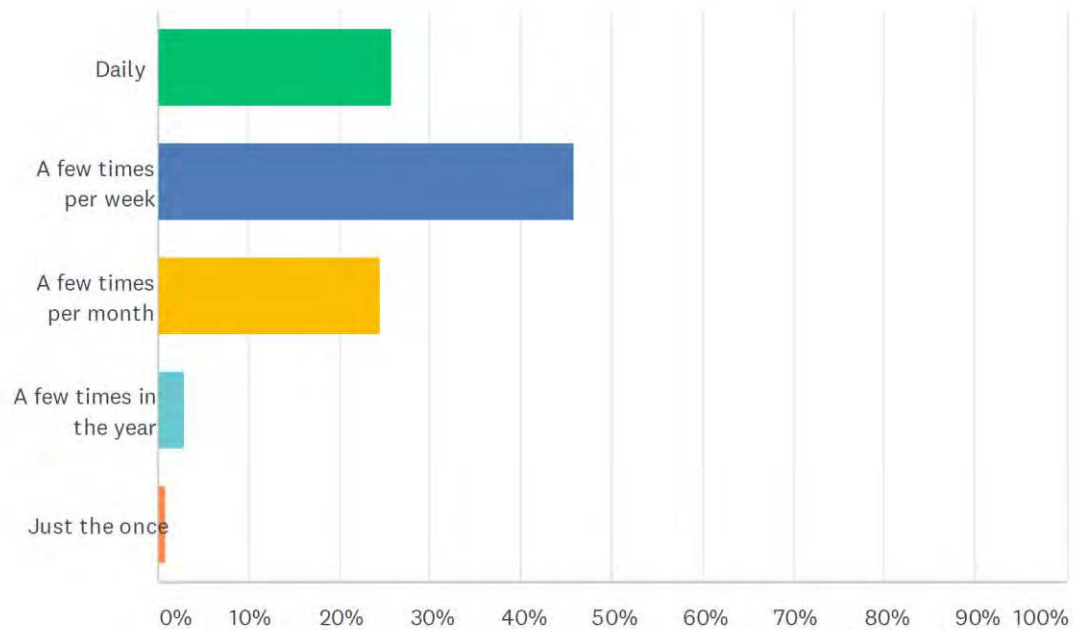


Several distinct key priorities have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and are summarised in Figure 11.



Figure 11 - Priority themes for the development of Altmare Study Area, from the Community Perspective (derived from survey statistics and reflecting feedback in open comments)

Survey respondents were asked how frequently they would envisage themselves visiting Altmore Forest, should facilities be developed, with most responding that they would visit a few times per week. While the early timing of the survey was such that this question specifically focused on proposals for forest developments only, these figures are considered to reflect demand for visits to any recreation site developed within the study area.



*Figure 12 - Anticipated frequency of visits to Altmore Forest, should developments take place. These figures are considered to reflect demand for visits to any recreation site within the study area, not just the forest, should they be developed.*

### 3.6 Regional and International Tourism

For Mid Ulster, Tourism Northern Ireland Visitor Attitude Survey (2018)<sup>8</sup> reports a much higher proportion of leisure visitors from within Northern Ireland (NI), particularly day-trippers, compared with other Council Districts. Great Britain is the area's largest out of state source market, followed by North America and the Republic of Ireland but makes up a small proportion of visitors.

Visitors to Mid Ulster are most likely to be visiting to see a particular attraction, with historic monuments/sites and forest parks/gardens especially popular.

Note that statistics are not available to reflect a post-COVID-19 era, but it is assumed that the proportion of leisure visitors from within NI is likely to have increased, with a more local catchment than ever. Sentiment from within the public survey indicates a strong desire for the development of Altmore for a community-scale/local audience, but with good understanding of the benefits it could bring to the local economy.

*This area has been neglected for so long. This is an opportunity to regenerate Cappagh and Altmore, enhance community morale, and bring visitors to the area which would help sustain local business.*

- Public survey respondent

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<sup>8</sup> Tourism Northern Ireland: Visitor Attitude Survey 2018, Cognisense Ltd. Base: n=138

## 4 Altmore SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Strong community support for development/enhancements
- Very strong interest from Cappagh Village Regeneration Group.
- Large areas of publicly owned land.
- Diverse landscape that includes opportunities in forestry, hills, and water.
- Good views across surrounding countryside.
- Demonstrated existing community demand (use of Altmore 1).

### Weaknesses

- A sense of remoteness (from a social safety perspective)
- Reported anti-social behaviour, particularly fly-tipping and inappropriate use of motorised vehicles across some areas.
- Poor road network throughout, and external to, the study area and limited public transport options.
- Recreational development is "starting from scratch", meaning a cautious development approach to ensure sustainability of investment is required.
- Poor public awareness of the site outside the area.

### Opportunities

- Development of community trails network and associated visitor infrastructure.
- To pioneer a diversification model with NIW for improved public access to 'Out Of Service' reservoirs and lands.
- Increase community value and involvement.
- Increase educational value of site.
- Define and highlight the natural and cultural significances of the site through community engagement and interpretation.
- Contribute to regional tourism development, including directly or indirectly supporting private sector business development.
- Mutually beneficial provision between private operators and Mid Ulster District Council, as an economic generator.

### Threats

- Large Study Area means all proposals may not be able to be realised.
- Bureaucratic barriers associated with forestry management area spanning two council areas.
- Health and safety constraints relating to development of around/on/in water activities relating to Altmore reservoirs.
- Development constraints associated with limitations on alterations to reservoir structures.
- Extensive deposits of deep peat in some parts of the Study Area are a constraint on viability of development.
- Reported deep peat deposits in forestry areas.
- Forestry operations to be considered.



## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Target Market and Segments

The key market and ultimate beneficiaries for the development of Altmore as a local multi-activity hub is undoubtedly the local communities of Cappagh and Galbally villages. However, it is anticipated that any new developments will also positively impact on the villages of Carrickmore, Sixmilecross, Beragh (all within FODC area), and Pomeroy, Donaghmore (MUDC area), all within approximately a 10km radius from the centre of the Study Area.

Existing and anticipated use of the site indicates that the largest user segment is **people from across ~10km radius rural catchment visiting a few times per week for walking, engaging with nature, and enjoying nature and the landscape**. This includes:

- Family groups and lone parents with children.
- Friends meeting up.
- People of retirement age.
- Regular dog walkers.
- People enjoying purposeful exercise e.g. running, family cycling, organised water activity.

Due to the area's undeveloped nature, effectively 'starting from scratch' in terms of recreational provision, long-term and sustained major capital investment in supporting infrastructure, including roads, would be required to realise the Altmore area as a major regional or international tourism generator.

### 5.2 Engaging the Local Community

Engagement with nearby community groups including Cappagh Village Regeneration Group, Galbally Pearses GFC, and local business providers should continue throughout any phase of development of Altmore. The local community will be a significant asset to the good custodianship of the area and should be further engaged to explore the opportunity to set agreed parameters to help manage and maintain any sites, or assist with visitor provision, through a voluntary or SLA arrangement with the Council.

### 5.3 Environmental Net Gain

Opportunities for environmental net gain should be considered and embraced at detailed design stage of any development. This could include complementing tree planting programmes that are under consideration by NIWater, planting of native tree and plant species in available and appropriate

spaces, preservation and restoration of peatlands, wildflower meadows, and ensuring there is a strong interpretive experience about natural surroundings and outdoor classrooms to engage and connect people with nature.

#### 5.4 Brand and Interpretation Strategy

The Association for Heritage Interpretation defines interpretation as ‘a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, a site, collection or event’. It can:

- Bring meaning to a cultural or environmental resource, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better understanding. As a result, visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource.
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This will lead to increased income and create employment opportunities.
- Enable communities to better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their home area. As a result, individuals may identify with lost values inherent in their culture.

It has also been described by Freeman Tilden, one of the founders of modern interpretation, as ‘an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships using original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information’.

A brand and interpretation strategy for all developments across the Altmare Study Area should be developed, ensuring it aligns with MUDC’s existing vision for branding and interpretation across its portfolio. The experiences should be co-curated with the local community as far as possible and practicable. A key objective should be to create a sense of welcome to the recreational space/s and set the tone for their responsible use, but also to tell the stories of the local area that the community are so passionate about.

Trail and site furniture including any wayfinding, interpretation, bench seating and picnic benches, and play, should fall within one coherent site brand image that ties the whole experience together.

##### 5.4.1 History and Heritage

With the area being steeped in heritage, it is recommended that the local community leads on the production of a digital package of heritage interpretation e.g a Memory Map like that created recently

in Co. Fermanagh through the Culcagh to Cleenish project<sup>9</sup>. The Memory Map is an online interactive story-telling map for exploring the area's rich natural, built, archaeological and cultural heritage, with over 90 points of interest to discover. The map features music, stories, old and new community-made films, natural recordings, and photographs.



Figure 13 - A screen shot from the Culcagh to Cleenish: A Great Place Memory Map

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.c2c.org.uk/memory-map/>

## 5.5 Altmore Development Proposals

Development proposals within the Altmore Study Area are presented across three distinct zones:

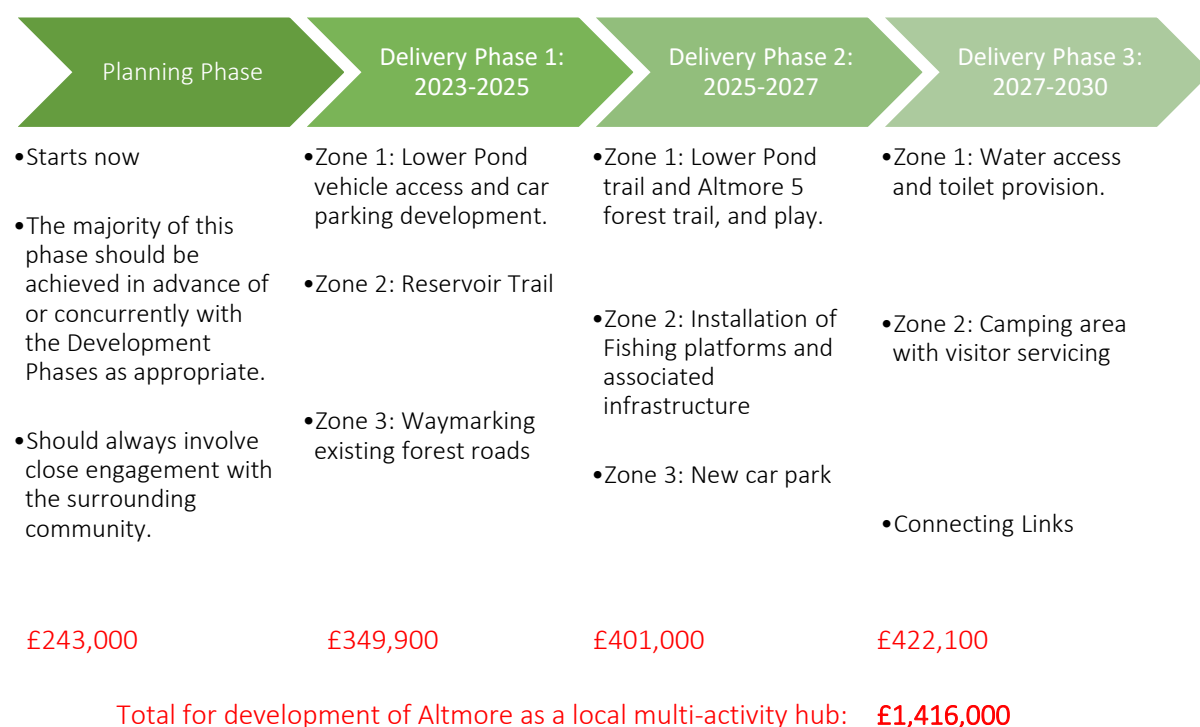
- Zone 1: The Lower Pond and Cappagh Village
- Zone 2: The Upper Pond
- Zone 3: Altmore 1 (*large forest block*)

Further to this, opportunities for connectivity across the zones have been included , as **Connecting Links** .

Figure 14 provides an overview of the development zones.

Zoning offers a geographic approach to organising development proposals. The proposed phasing of product delivery is independent of zoning (i.e. there is no priority delivery of zones, but priority delivery within each zone). This is largely influenced by sequencing over time what delivery options are considered feasible at the earliest possible opportunity. This has been assessed against priority need, and the resultant sequence is considered the most appropriate approach to delivering infrastructure as a local multi-activity hub for the community.

### 5.5.1 Summary of Key Actions and Total Costs





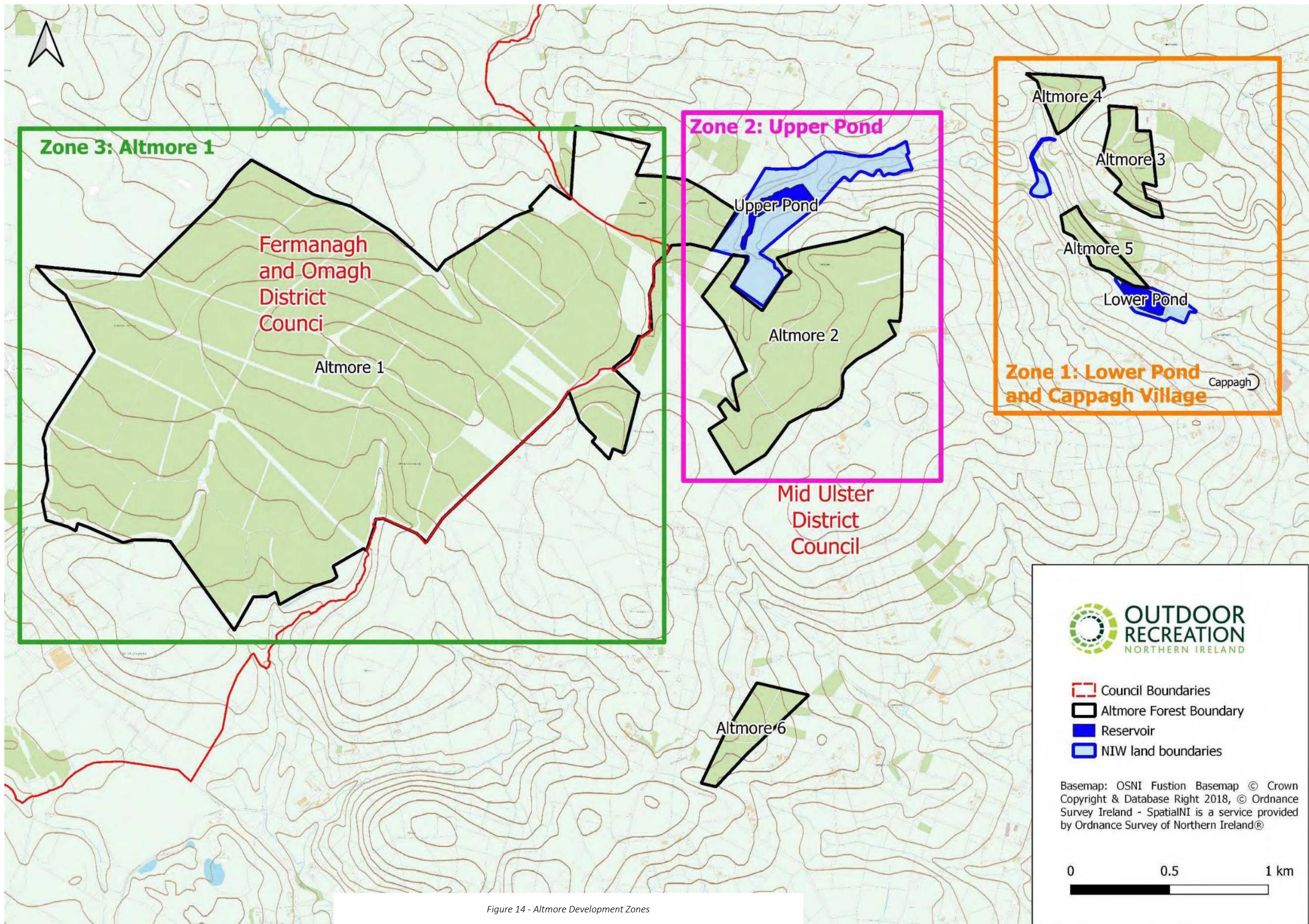


Figure 14 - Altmore Development Zones



## *5.5.2 Zone 1: The Lower Pond and Cappagh Village*

### *5.5.2.1 Summary*

Zone 1 sits close to Cappagh Village, just 500m from the village centre.

Development proposals for Zone 1 are shown in Figure 19.

Proposals are centred around community trail development, consisting of a walking loop around the Lower Pond and a forest trail within Altmore 5.

The proposed trailhead is in a flat area of NIWater land at the toe of the earth dam, with provision for play, a toilet facility, and a car parking area.

A slipway or canoe steps is proposed for facilitating in/on the water activities, including open water swimming.

### *5.5.2.2 Development Constraints*

Consultation with NIW has indicated that the organisation is enthusiastic about diversification of use of lands and waters within their ownership, particularly at sites designated as ‘out of service’.

However, development proposals must be considerate of fundamental engineering and health and safety principles relating to reservoir construction, including (but not limited to):

- Long-term earth dam stability
- Spillways, overflows, outflows and inlets for maintaining water levels
- Ensuring good water quality

Recommendations for developments within this study suggest proposals that are structurally independent of reservoir features as far as is practicable.

Any proposals in the vicinity of the reservoir that may be considered to have any impact on the asset should be subject to risk assessment, including engineering assessment, in close consultation with NIW.

### *5.5.2.3 Management Model*

At the earliest opportunity, MUDC should enter continued and sustained close communication with NIW to ensure proposals adhere to their organisational aims and objectives.

Long-term management and maintenance protocols are recommended as follows:

- MUDC should seek to lease lands from NIWater at the toe of the Lower Pond for the development of a trail head to include car parking, a toilet block, a short stretch of trail, and play facilities.
- MUDC should obtain a license from NIWater for use of lands (and waters for floating walkways) surrounding the reservoir for a loop trail.
- MUDC should obtain a license from NIWater for water-based activity.
- MUDC should obtain a license from Forest Service NI for the development of a trail within Altmore 5.

MUDC should adopt an overall custodianship and regular management schedule for all leased lands and licensed activities, and visitor servicing, but this could be supplemented through SLA arrangements with local Community Groups.

#### 5.5.2.4 Trails

Two trails are proposed for Zone 1; a Lower Pond Loop and a Forest Trail within Altmore 5.

**Lower Pond Loop:** This trail is a 1km route that will consist of several components:

- A short 'play trail' at the toe of the earth dam, close to the car park and taking advantage of a short stretch of the meandering river.
- Use of the existing NIWater access ramp to get up-gradient from the trailhead (pedestrians only as part of these proposals).
- Use of the existing concrete access lane just off Cappagh Road. This is well maintained, with a wide grassy verge, and only very lightly trafficked for access only.
- Use of floating pontoon-style walkway to 'bypass' the reservoir spillway structurally independently, with similar to be used along any areas of embankment where engineering assessments indicate structural independence is the most feasible solution.

**Forest Trail:** A 1km trail consisting of a gravel surface, built largely parallel to contours using bench-cut techniques to overcome side-slope gradients and using switchbacks to maximise accessibility up- and

down- slope. There may be an option of linking to Cappagh picnic area at the trail's upper end at limited extra cost, subject to detailed design and land ownership clarifications.

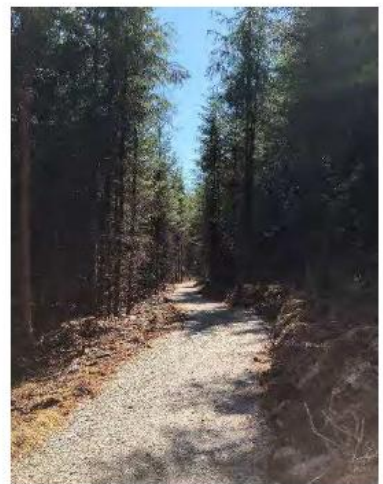


Figure 15 Clockwise from top: Acres Lake floating boardwalk in Leitrim - similar proposed for sections of the Lower Pond, Play features - woodland xylophone and disc swing, Bench cut woodland trail, Bench seating, Switchback gravel trail in woodland.



#### 5.5.2.5 *Water-Based Activity*

Provision for water-based activity including swimming and kayaking (community-led) is proposed for the Lower Pond.

NIWater have historically prohibited swimming at their sites, and the key message to not swim in reservoirs remains as a default message to be fully respected. However, consultation with NIWater has indicated a desire to diversify, particularly with 'out of use' lands and reservoirs, to maximise community benefit from these assets and ensure a sustainable model for responsible public access.

The Open Water Swimming Society's Guide to Inland Bathing Areas<sup>10</sup> outlines various models for facilitating – or at a most primitive level not prohibiting – water access (including to reservoirs), that include:

- The Unsupervised Access Model
- Managed Bathing Facilities
  - o Non-lifeguarded
  - o Lifeguarded

Subject to appropriate risk assessment and any mitigation measures, **a Non-lifeguarded managed bathing facility** is recommended for the Lower Pond, that is, one where a risk assessment has indicated the space is suitable for swimming following implementation of measures highlighted in the risk assessment. Examples of such facilities in reservoirs in Northern Ireland include:

- **Camlough Lake, Newry.** Camlough Lake enjoys a strong community presence relating to Open Water Swimming, and the reservoir has been host to triathlons, swimming festivals, and championship swimming events as well as facilitating casual public swim access. It is an Out of Service reservoir with an earth dam and shallow spillway, similar to Cappagh's Lower Pond. The water body benefits from a slipway for water access, and a designated swim zone consisting of buoys to guide swimmers around a course, managed by Newry Mourne and Down District Council.
- **Loughmacrory, Co. Tyrone.** This water body is an active reservoir servicing the Omagh Area and has been in use for open water swimming, kayaking, and fishing for many years. A very strong community group has been the driver behind developments at the

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Guide-To-Inland-Bathing-Areas-2018\\_small.pdf](https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Guide-To-Inland-Bathing-Areas-2018_small.pdf)

lake, and licensing and lease arrangements for the lake's use are directly between NIWater and the Community Group with no Council involvement. Although an Active reservoir, from an engineering perspective it is characteristically different from Camlough or the reservoirs at Altmore as it is not impounded by a dam and does not have the same level of engineering infrastructure. A slipway and a designated swim zone is installed and managed by the local community.

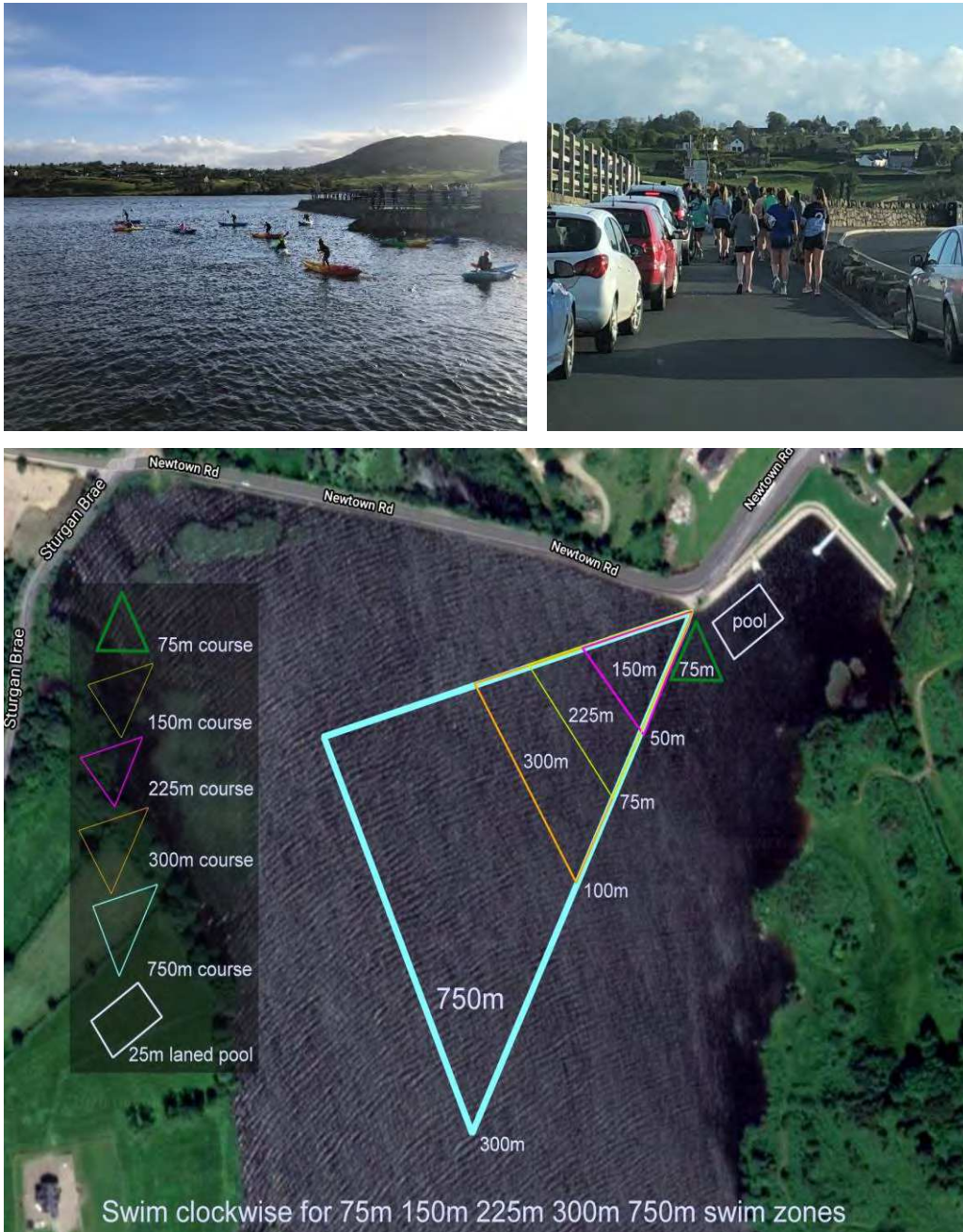


Figure 16 - Clockwise from top: Kayaking activity and spectators at Camlough Lake, Local football club members heading for a post-training dip at Camlough, Designated swim course at Camlough

#### 5.5.2.6 Car Parking and Visitor Servicing

Due to a dispersed rural population throughout the Study Area it is anticipated that most visitors will access the Lower Pond site by car, . There is no complete footpath link to connect the site to the village and this is explored further in 'Connecting Links' (Section 5.5.5) to maximise options relating to equality of access and sustainability.

Car parking is proposed for the flat area at the toe of the earth dam. Development should be sited far enough away to be structurally independent of reservoir structures. This will require engineering assessments including ground investigation and detailed analysis of any sub-surface services, in close partnership with NIWater. An existing steep single-lane vehicular service access comes down from Cappagh Road and runs along the face of the dam. The existing configuration is unlikely to be suitable for public vehicle access without significant upgrade due to narrow width and steep gradient, so a new site entrance and access lane is proposed towards the western extent of the site, retaining independence from the existing functions of the service access which would instead be adopted as part of the trail network.

Parking capacity for approximately 20 vehicles is recommended, though available space would allow for more should it be required (and be appropriate) in future.



*Figure 17 - Existing service access running along the front of the dam. New public vehicular access is proposed with this space becoming part of the walking trail network.*



Public Toilets are proposed for the space close to the car park. The design of any toileting space should be an integral part of an overall brand and interpretive design to contribute to an overall sense of welcome and cohesion.



*Figure 18 - Public toilets. Architecture and finish should contribute to an overall cohesive branding and interpretive experience of the site*

#### *5.5.2.7 Community Enterprise*

Mid Ulster District Council should consider the licensing of site-appropriate mobile catering, e.g. coffee cart, to be based within or adjacent to the car parking area. Where possible within Council procurement processes, priority for this commercial opportunity should be given to providers that create an employment opportunity from within the immediate surrounding community.

#### *5.5.2.8 Other Community Facilities*

There is strong demand for further community facilities in this space beyond outdoor recreation, including a community hall or similar such building or meeting space. Provision for this is not included within this scoping study. However, it is considered that there is enough space within the NIWater lands that should the Council wish to incorporate this into overall plans for Cappagh Village, this is likely to be a viable proposal and should form part of a collective lease of the space.



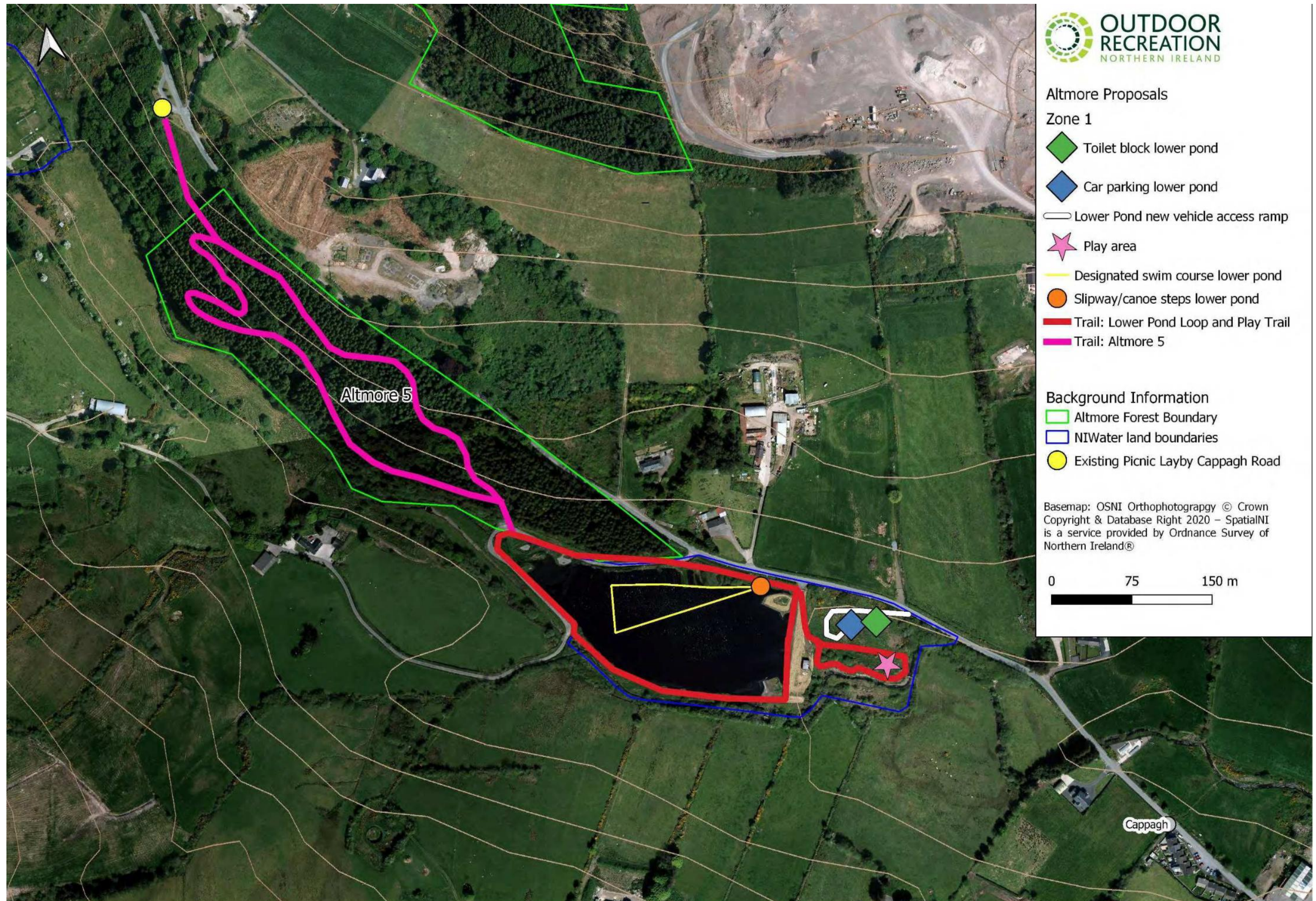


Figure 19 - Development Proposals for Zone 1 - Lower Pond and Cappagh Village



### *5.5.3 Zone 2: The Upper Pond*

#### *5.5.3.1 Summary*

Zone 2 is located approximately 3km west from Cappagh Village within MUDC, not far from its boundary with FODC

Development proposals for Zone 2 are shown in Figure 24.

Proposals include a 1.5km community trail loop around the perimeter of the Upper Pond, with fishing platforms and a covered shelter for respite in poor weather.

A car park for approximately 30 cars is proposed along Barnagh's Road on a plot of land made up of existing hardstanding.

Outline proposals for a camping area with associated visitor servicing are included, though the case for its inclusion should be subject to further assessment of community benefit.

#### *5.5.3.2 Development Constraints*

Consultation with NIWater has indicated that the organisation is enthusiastic about diversification of use of lands and waters within their ownership, particularly at sites designated as 'out of service'.

However, development proposals must be considerate of fundamental engineering and health and safety principles relating to reservoir construction, including (but not limited to):

- Long-term earth dam stability
- Spillways, overflows, outflows and inlets for maintaining water levels
- Ensuring good water quality

Recommendations for developments within this study suggest proposals that are structurally independent of reservoir features as far as is practicable.

Any proposals in the vicinity of the reservoir that may be considered to have any impact on the asset should be subject to risk assessment, including engineering assessment, in close consultation with NIWater.

#### *5.5.3.3 Management Model*

At the earliest opportunity, MUDC should enter continued and sustained close communication with NIWater to ensure proposals adhere to organisational aims and objectives.

Long-term management and maintenance protocols are recommended as follows:



- MUDC should seek to lease lands from NIWater for the area of car parking at Barnagh's Road
- MUDC should consider a future lease from NIWater and subsequent sub-let arrangements for the outlined camping area.
- MUDC should obtain a license from NIWater for use of lands surrounding the reservoir for a loop trail.
- MUDC should facilitate agreements between local fishing clubs and relevant licensing departments (agreements between club and DAERA/NIWater as appropriate) for stocking and fishing of the watercourse.

MUDC should adopt an overall custodianship and regular management schedule for all leased lands and licensed activities, and visitor servicing, but this could be supplemented through SLA arrangements with local Community Groups.

#### 5.5.3.4 Trails

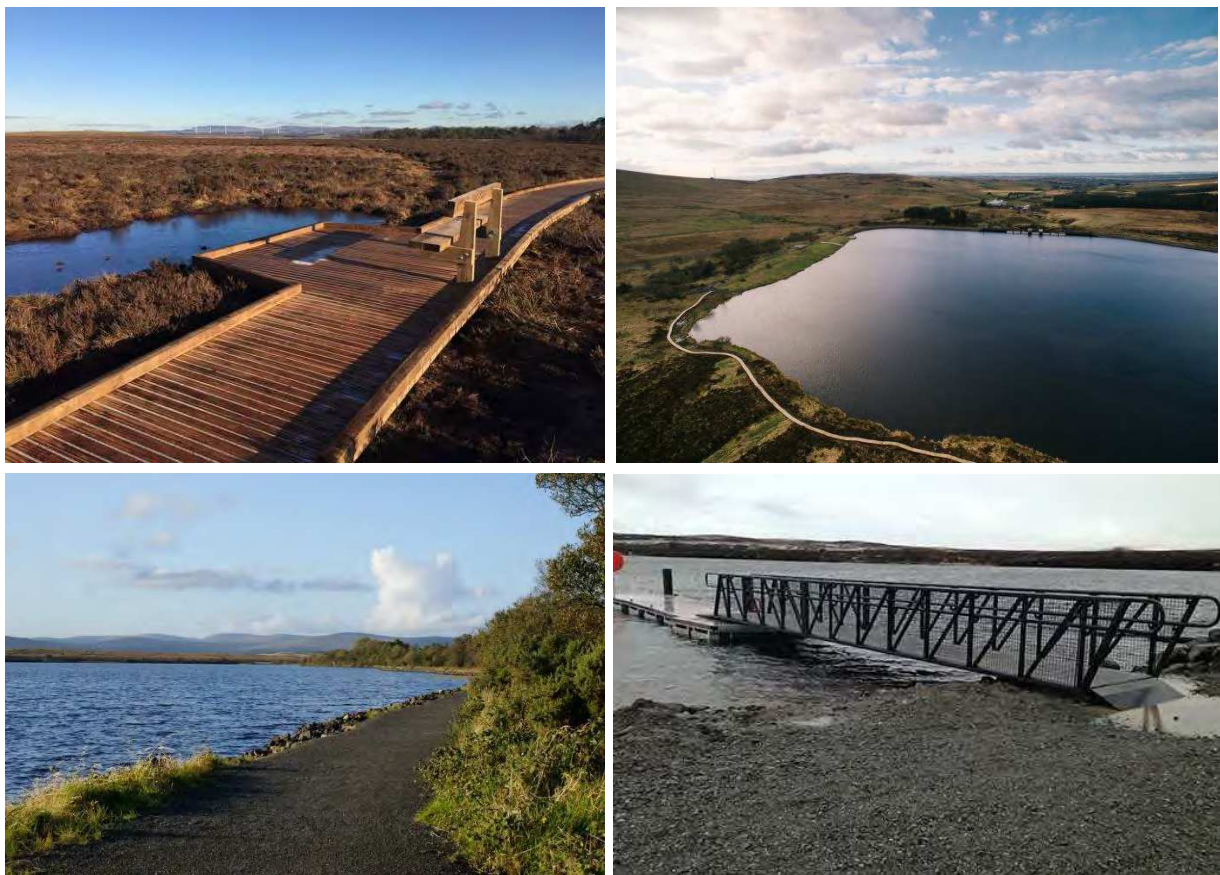
A single 1.5km trail loop is proposed for Zone 2, which will bring visitors on a complete loop around the reservoir. Around 30% of the trail is estimated to be on peat and will require a boardwalk-style construction, with the remainder of trail being built on a competent sub-base of near-surface rock and around the flat top of the earth dam.



Figure 20 - Earth dam of the Upper Pond (Zone 2)

At the reservoir's western edge there are numerous small water inlets that will require bridging structures up to ~10m. It is expected that these could take the form of boardwalk-bridges in a style continuous with a boardwalk path.

The trail also aims to provide fishing access, with up to three fishing platforms recommended to be integrated. Similar facilities exist at Lough Fea, close to Cookstown.



*Figure 21 - Clockwise from top left: Example of Boardwalk style path, Arial view of boardwalk example at similar setting at Alnahinch Reservoir in Antrim, Fishing platform at Lough Fea in Cookstown, Gravel trail at Lough Fea.*

#### 5.5.3.5 Water-Based Activity

Water based activity at the site is considered feasible as much as it is in Zone 1, but in the context of proposals for the whole study area, a pilot model for water-based activity is considered more appropriate for the area closest to Cappagh village. Should this be a success, water-based activity in the future should be considered for Zone 2 and may be best approached in the context of outline proposals for a camping area with respective visitor servicing.



#### *5.5.3.6 Car Parking and Visitor Servicing*

Due to a dispersed rural population throughout the Study Area it is expected that most visitors will access the Upper Pond site by car. Car parking is proposed in an area of existing hardstanding just off Barnagh's Road, and this existing space is estimated to be able to provide space for approximately 30 cars. The area identified is fenced off and appears to be a form of storage area, within NIWater ownership boundaries. The area has become overgrown, and a stand of Japanese Knotweed was observed.

No other visitor servicing (e.g. toilets) is proposed for Zone 2.



*Figure 22 - Existing hardstanding space identified for visitor car parking*



#### 5.5.3.7 Community Enterprise

The area outlined as a camping area with visitor servicing, subject to further assessment of viability, could be sub-let through Council-set parameters to provide a commercial opportunity for camping/glamping/activity centre.



*Figure 23 - Clockwise from top left: Area identified as potential camping/glamping area, Camping area water access at reservoir's western extent, Example of an Out of Service reservoir use for camping/glamping and water-based activity in Belfast (Let's Go Hydro resort)*



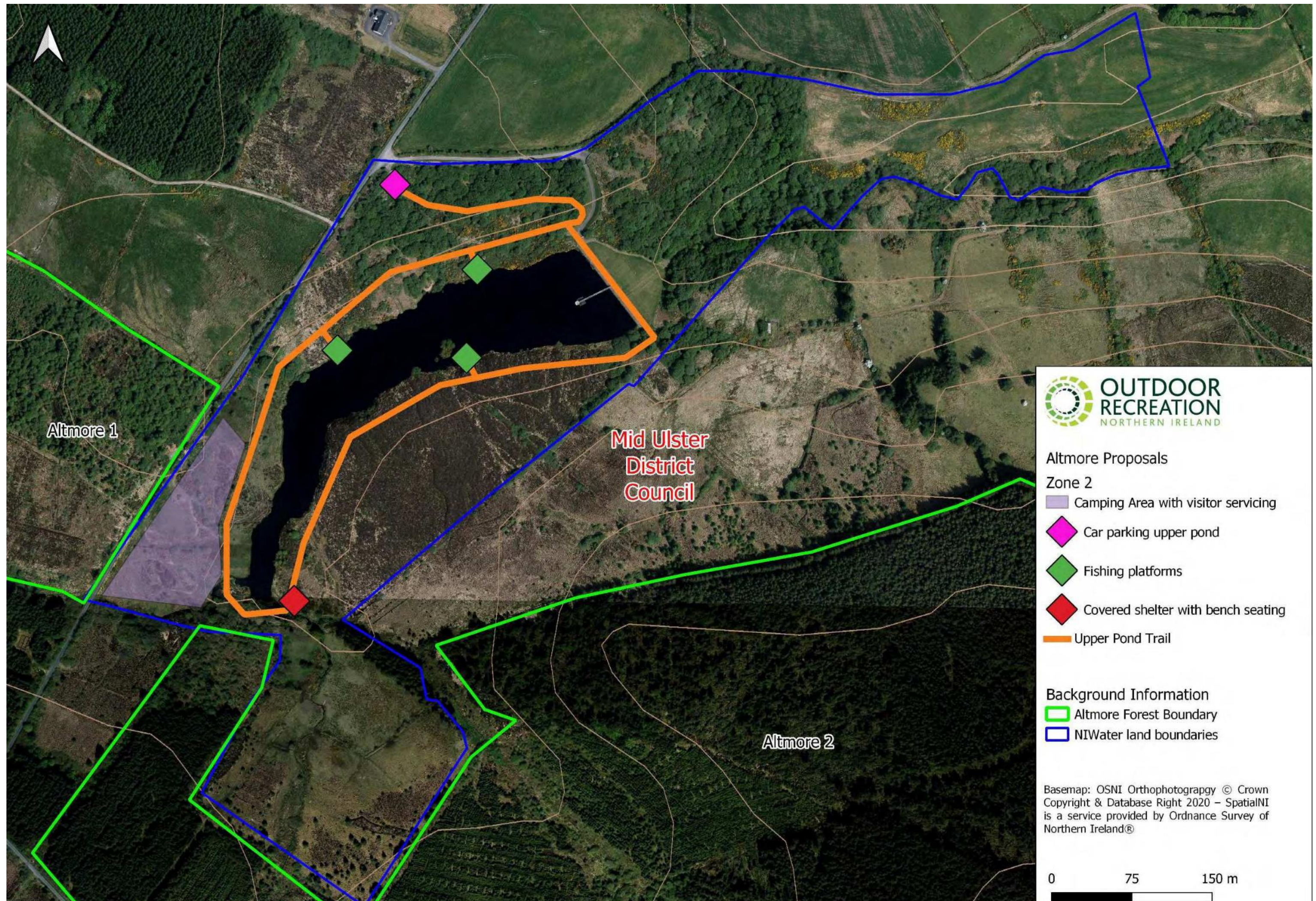


Figure 24 - Development Proposals for Zone 2 – Upper Pond



### **5.5.4 Zone 3: Altmore 1**

#### **5.5.4.1 Summary**

Zone 3 is focused on Altmore 1, the largest forest block within the Altmore Forest management unit, and the one already used informally for recreation by the local community.

The vast majority of Altmore 1's area sits within Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Area.

Development proposals for Zone 3 are shown in Figure 25.

Proposals focus on enhancing the use of existing internal forest roads through wayfinding, and interpretation.

#### **5.5.4.2 Development Constraints**

Forest Service NI has indicated support in principle for recreational development within Altmore 1. However, it highlighted issues regarding significant depths of peat that make forestry activity difficult, and warnings that any development or even construction access would likely be prohibitively expensive and would risk de-stabilising the tree crop.

The site spans between two council areas, MUDC and FODC, with most of the site within FODC. This scenario presents challenges in terms of leading projects and could risk 'no action' on a bureaucratic basis, something the surrounding communities claim to have suffered with for many years. Rather than considering the split site as a constraint, there are opportunities to be taken advantage of from joined jurisdiction of sites and it is recommended that in the short-term, MUDC take a lead role in engaging with FODC on the shared progress of proposals on the following basis:

- The trailhead sits right on the Council boundary. Therefore, one Council will be required to take the lead and to date MUDC has been the driver for developments.
- Demand evaluated from the community survey was predominantly from ratepayers within MUDC. Geographically, residents from MUDC are considered the greatest beneficiaries of any developments within Altmore 1.
- Given the deep peat constraint, proposals are limited to basic enhancement of existing forest roads and are therefore a low-cost, quick, easy win for nearby communities.



#### *5.5.4.3 Management Model*

It follows the recommendation in 5.5.4.2 that MUDC take a lead on developing proposals, that the same Council also take the lead on entering into a license agreement for use of the forest for recreational activity from Forest Service NI.

Consultation as part of this Scoping Study indicated that some FODC Councillors were interested in the development of Altmore, so there may be opportunity to share the burden of cost and ongoing management resource. Support with any initial capital funding and ongoing resource should be negotiated and sought from FODC if possible. However, it is understood that Altmore is not a priority for development within FODC.

The lease of an area for car parking will be required between FSNI and the lead Council.

#### *5.5.4.4 Trails*

The Altmore 1 trail experience will change very little from its current form. Physical development constraints relating to deep peat mean the most feasible option to formalise recreation is to use existing forest roads but enhance them in a basic way with wayfinding and trail furniture, to create a more welcoming and interactive experience.

A stacked trail system will consist of a 5km main loop, with a further 2.6km available to create a longer loop. This gives a maximum continuous 7.6km of route suitable for purposeful exercise, and a quiet space to go for a long walk away from public roads.

#### *5.5.4.5 Car Parking and Visitor Servicing*

Due to a dispersed rural population throughout the Study Area it is expected that most visitors will access the site by car. Car parking should aim to accommodate approximately 20 vehicles. Geological mapping shows small areas along Barnagh's Road where peat is shallow, meaning that construction methods and costs associated with a car park build can potentially be minimised if these areas are targeted.

No other visitor servicing (e.g. toilets) is proposed for Zone 3.



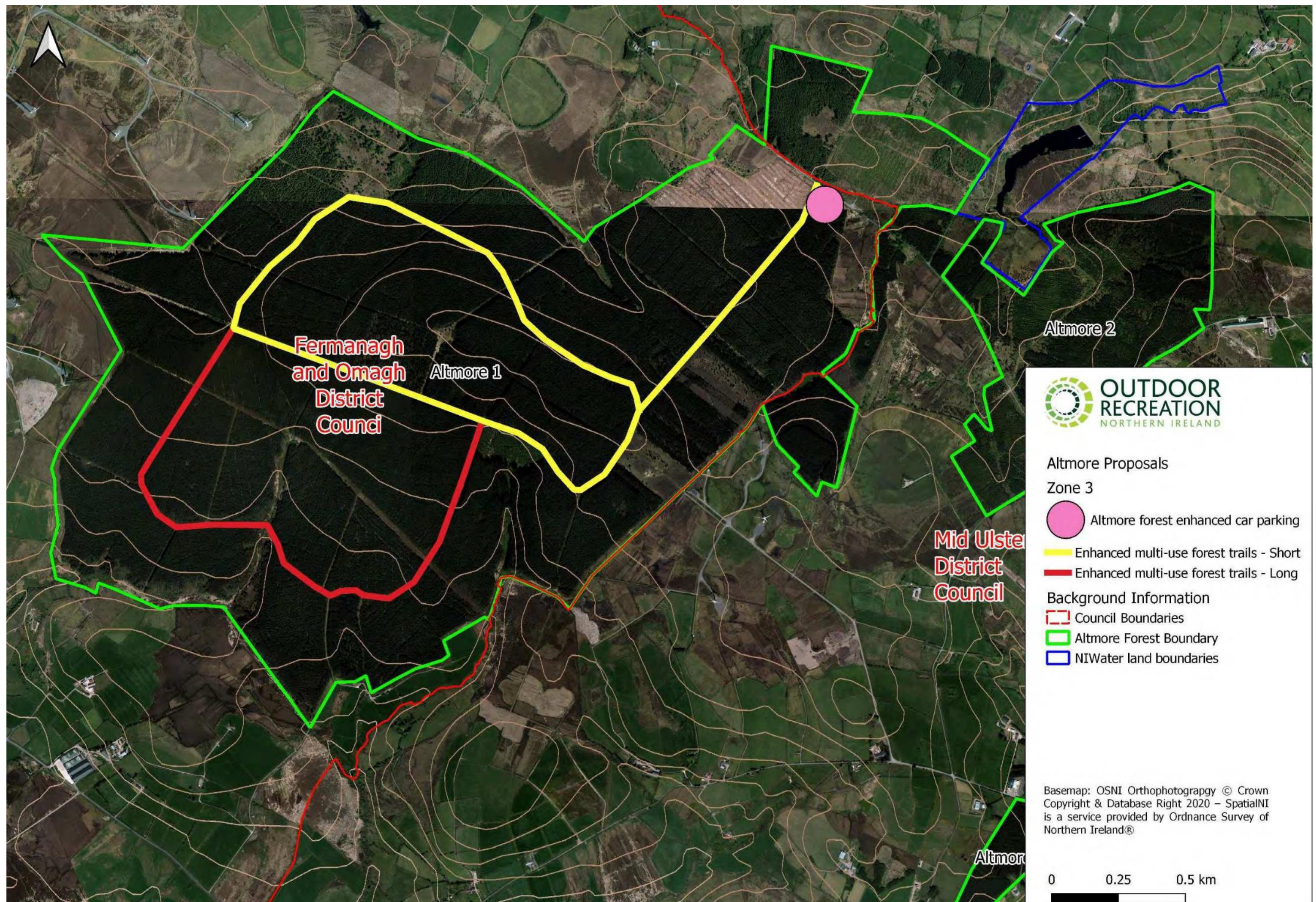


Figure 25 - Development Proposals for Zone 3 – Altmore 1



### *5.5.5 Connecting Links*

There are opportunities associated with creating connecting recreational links within and across zones to maximise the value of individual developments. Four key links have been identified:

- Cappagh Village to the Lower Pond
- Lower Pond over Cappagh Mountain to the Chapel
- Lower Pond to the Upper Pond
- Upper Pond to Altmore 1

#### *5.5.5.1 Cappagh Village to the Lower Pond*

This is an approximately 500m valuable link that will physically connect Cappagh Village, traffic-free, to any developments at the Lower Pond. Such a link will provide ‘doorstep’ opportunity for outdoor recreation to those who potentially need it most and would secure the Lower Pond as a true community-focused asset. The land available to connect the two spaces is not all publicly owned. To realise the link, further discussions with local landowners will be required to select the most appropriate route option, whether a roadside footpath or an off-road trail.

#### *5.5.5.2 Lower Pond over Cappagh Mountain to the Chapel*

This link sits wholly within Zone 1. However, as an out-and-back route it is considered a link rather than an integral part of recreational developments of Zone 1 as its objective is to connect people within Cappagh Village to the local chapel along a traffic-free route. Much of the connecting lands are owned and managed by FSNI (Altmore 3 and Altmore 5), but some private landowner discussions are required to realise the full value of the link as a pleasant and safe route to connect the public lands.

#### *5.5.5.3 Lower Pond to Upper Pond*

Should developments at both Zone 1 and Zone 2 be realised, a subsequent exercise to connect the two would result in a recreational product spanning a large area, thus increasing the value of the assets, particularly with a view to drawing in external visitors (e.g. day-trippers from across Northern Ireland). The feasibility of such a route would require further assessment, but high-level indications suggest it is possible from both a physical and a landownership point of view.

#### *5.5.5.4 Upper Pond to Altmore 1*

Should developments at both Zone 2 and Zone 3 be realised, a relatively short connecting link between the two is deliverable wholly within public lands.



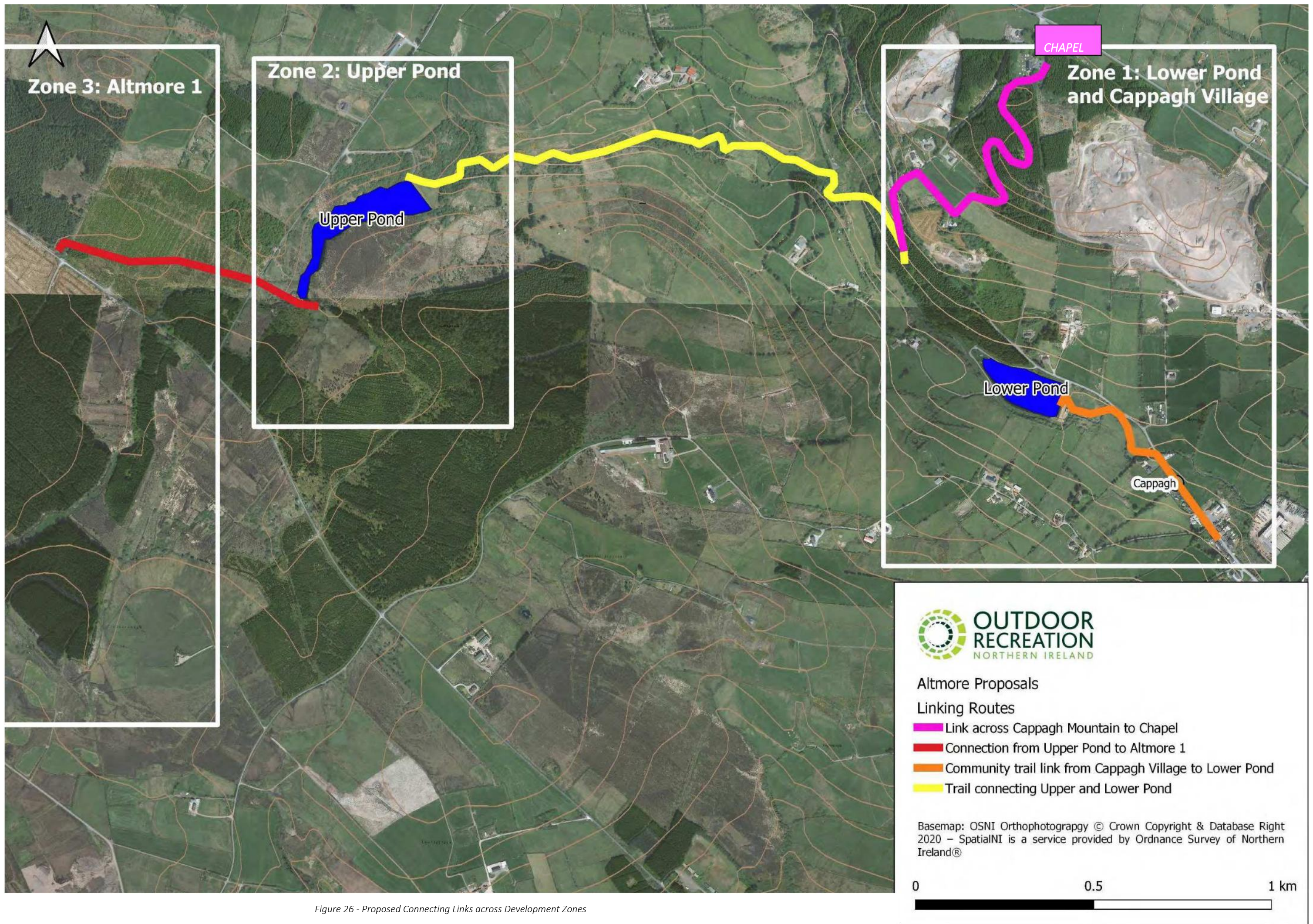


Figure 26 - Proposed Connecting Links across Development Zones



## 6 Phased Implementation Plan

### 6.1 Zone 1 Visitor Infrastructure Actions and Costs

ZONE	CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING PHASE (starts now, runs throughout)	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2025	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2025-2027	DELIVERY PHASE 3 2027-2030
ZONE 1: LOWER POND AT CAPPAGH VILLAGE	Brand and Interpretation	External Navigation Signage	Brand and Signage Strategy		Design, production, and installation x 2 £4,000	
		Welcome Signage	Interpretation Framework		Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000	
		Interpretation	The above may be applied across multiple forest sites as a value-for-money exercise and to deliver consistency across the Council area. They must consider the proposed two-phased development and delivery, and should identify opportunities for community co-curation. To align with respective infrastructure items and proposed phases. £20,000		Design, production, and installation x 2 £5,000	
	Trail Network & Water Access	Visitor Counter	Professional fees for advancements of development concept for new build trails:		Installation x 2 £6,000	
		Trailhead Panel	- Refined cost estimate - Engineering assessments relating to reservoir structures to be advised by NIW. - Commissioning of ecological and other heritage surveys as required.		Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000	
		Trail Build Pond loop	- Planning Approvals. - Trail prescription for contract specification.		New build trail 1km consisting of - 100m floating boardwalk @£800/m - 650m new build gravel trail @ £30/m - 250m existing concrete lane £99,500	
		Trail Build Altmore 5 Forest walk	- Contractor procurement. £30,000	*Could be delivered within Delivery Phase 1 if detailed design deems a link to Cappagh Picnic Area viable (i.e. trailhead parking availability)*	*Could be delivered within Delivery Phase 1 if detailed design deems a link to Cappagh Picnic Area viable (i.e. trailhead parking availability)*  New build trail 1km with bench cut @£40/m and small areas of stone stepping @ £80/m £52,000	
		Wayfinding			Post & Disc Est. 6No @ £150 £900	
		Water Access	Professional fees for advancement of water access model, including structured ongoing engagement with NIW, detailed site risk assessment with output of mitigation measures required. £25,000			- Slipway/canoe steps: Detailed design dependent on outcomes of Risk Assessment and mitigation measures required. - Other mitigation measures may include vegetation/weed clearance and embankment works.

							Cost provided is high-level estimate only £50,000
	Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services		Car Parking	Professional fees including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Proposed layout plans for parking area.</li><li>- Engineering assessments relating to impact on reservoir structures, services, and to advise on detailed design and build-up of car park (cost also includes for access ramp, toilet and play area).</li><li>- Engineering design and Roads Service approvals for access ramp.</li><li>- Refined cost estimate.</li><li>- Commissioning of ecological and other heritage surveys as required.</li><li>- Planning Approvals.</li><li>- Contractor procurement.</li></ul> £50,000	New build bitmac surface car park @£2,000 per space x 20 spaces. £40,000		
			New site access and earthworks ramp		Planning phase should rule out feasibility/preferred option to use existing service access ramp along face of earth dam (nb this space is also required as trail section) before proceeding as follows:  New build site entrance from Cappagh Road with earthworks ramp to include vehicular restraint barriers above and below as required.  Cost provided is high-level estimate only £120,000		
			Toilet Block				Toilet block architectural design and installation £200,000
	Trail Furniture and Play		Play	Specification to be fully incorporated into whole-site brand and interpretation Strategy.		Play features to be integrated into whole-site design and delivered in sequence as soon as feasible. £25,000	
			Bench Seating	Professional fees for commissioning of site-appropriate play trail and site furniture features consistent with brand and interpretation strategy £10,000		8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each £2,400	
		Picnic benches			2No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each £1,200		
	Phased Totals			£135,000	£160,000	£200,000	£250,000
Total							£745,000



## 6.2 Zone 2 Visitor Infrastructure Actions and Costs

ZONE	CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING PHASE (starts now, runs throughout)	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2025	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2025-2027	DELIVERY PHASE 3 2027-2030
ZONE 2: UPPER POND	Brand and Interpretation	External Navigation Signage	Brand and Signage Strategy  Interpretation Framework	Design, production, and installation x 2  £4,000		
		Welcome Signage	The above may be applied across multiple forest sites as a value-for-money exercise and to deliver consistency across the Council area. They must consider the proposed two-phased development and delivery, and should identify opportunities for community co-curation. To align with respective infrastructure items and proposed phases  Cost excluded as already included in Zone 1 costings £20,000	Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000		
		Interpretation		Design, production, and installation x 2  £5,000		
	Trail Network & Fishing Access	Visitor Counter		Installation x 1 £3,000		
		Trailhead Panel	Professional fees for advancements of development concept for new build trails: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refined cost estimate</li> <li>- Engineering assessments relating to reservoir structures to be advised by NIW.</li> <li>- Commissioning of ecological and other heritage surveys as required.</li> <li>- Planning Approvals.</li> <li>- Trail prescription for contract specification.</li> <li>- Contractor procurement.</li> </ul> £30,000	Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000		
		Trail Build reservoir loop		New build trail 1.5km consisting of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 500m boardwalk trail with localised bridging structures @ £120/m</li> <li>- 1000m new build gravel trail @ £40/m priced to include vegetation clearance.</li> </ul> £100,000		
		Fishing Platforms and associated infrastructure			Design, production, and installation (similar spec to Lough Fea delivered for MUDC by AG Wilson Civil engineering) £150,000	
		Wayfinding		Post & Disc Est. 4No @ £150 £600		

	Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services		Car Parking	Professional fees including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Refined cost estimate.</li><li>- Commissioning of ecological and other heritage surveys as required.</li><li>- Planning Approvals.</li><li>- Contractor procurement.</li></ul> <div>£15,000</div>	Vehicular entrance from Barnaghs Road and new gravel surface car park @£1,900 per space x 30 spaces. <div>£60,000</div>		
	Trail Furniture		Bench Seating	Specification to be fully incorporated into whole-site brand and interpretation Strategy.	8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each <div>£2,400</div>		
			Picnic benches		2No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each <div>£1,200</div>		
	Community Enterprise		Camping area with Visitor Servicing	Professional fees for specific assessment of community need, delivery models, economic sustainability etc. <div>£10,000</div>			Implementation – third party enterprise. <div>Nominal cost to MUDC</div>
	Phased Totals			£55,000	£177,800	£150,000	Nominal
Total							£382,800

### 6.3 Zone 3 Visitor Infrastructure Actions and Costs

ZONE	CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING PHASE (starts now, runs throughout)	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2025	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2025-2027	DELIVERY PHASE 3 2027-2030
ZONE 3: Altmore 1	Brand and Interpretation	External Navigation Signage	Brand and Signage Strategy  Interpretation Framework		Design, production, and installation x 2  £4,000	
		Welcome Signage	The above may be applied across multiple forest sites as a value-for-money exercise and to deliver consistency across the Council area. They must consider the proposed two-phased development and delivery, and should identify opportunities for community co-curation.  To align with respective infrastructure items and proposed phases  Cost excluded as already included in Zone 1 costings £20,000		Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000	
		Interpretation			Design, production, and installation x 2  £5,000	
	Trail Network	Visitor Counter	Professional fees for implementation.   £3,000	Installation x 2 £6,000		
		Trailhead Panel		Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000		
		Trail Build		N/A – uses existing forest roads		
		Wayfinding		Post & Disc Est. 10No @ £150 £1,500		
	Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services	Car Parking	Professional fees including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ground investigation for siting car park where bedrock is near-surface, to avoid deep peat and so minimise construction costs.</li><li>- Commissioning of ecological and other heritage surveys as required.</li><li>- Planning Approvals.</li><li>- Contractor procurement.</li></ul> £15,000		Vehicular entrance from Barnaghs Road and new gravel surface car park @£1,900 per space x 20 spaces.  £40,000	
	Trail Furniture	Bench Seating	Specification to be fully incorporated into whole-site brand and interpretation Strategy.	8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each £2,400		
		Picnic benches		2No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each £1,200		
	Phased Totals		£18,000	£12,100	£51,000	N/A
Total						£81,100



## 6.4 Connecting Links

ZONE	CATEGORY	Item	PLANNING PHASE (starts now, runs throughout)	DELIVERY PHASE 1 2023-2025	DELIVERY PHASE 2 2025-2027	DELIVERY PHASE 3 2027-2030
Connecting Links	Brand and Interpretation	External Navigation Signage	Whole-site Brand and Interpretation Strategy, identifying opportunities for community co-curation.			Design, production, and installation x 2  £4,000
		Welcome Signage	Note that this could be a piece of work common to and scalable and applicable across multiple zones and sites as a value-for-money exercise. Cost excluded as already included in Zone 1 costings £25,000			Design, production, and installation x 1 £2,000
		Interpretation				Design, production, and installation x 2  £5,000
	Trail Network	Visitor Counter	Next steps: Feasibility studies required to advance links in priority order: 1) Cappagh Village to Lower Pond 2) Upper and Lower Pond (dependent on advancement of delivery) 3) Upper Pond to Altmore 1 4) Cappagh Mountain and Chapel  4 studies at £5,000-£10,000 each to include trail prescriptions for working up to shovel-ready stage if feasible. £35,000			Installation x 4 £12,000
		Trailhead Panel				Design, production, and installation x 2 £4,000
		Trail Build				Estimated 3.5km of trail. Assume new build gravel surface @ £40/m. Cost provided is high-level estimate only. £140,000
		Wayfinding				Post & Disc Est. 10No @ £150  £1,500
	Trailhead Infrastructure and Visitor Services	Car Parking				N/A uses existing/newly developed
	Trail Furniture	Bench Seating	Specification to be fully incorporated into whole-site brand and interpretation Strategy.			8No. wooden benches throughout trail system @ £300 each £2,400
		Picnic benches				2No. wooden picnic tables @ £600 each £1,200
	Phased Totals		£35,000			£172,100
Total						£207,100

## 6.5 Altmore Management Actions and Costs

Management actions and costs are variable dependent on the eventual level of development realised, but full development is assumed.

Category	Item	Planning Phase	Development Phases +
Third Party Agreements		Forest Service  MUDC to secure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- License for development of trail within Altmore 5.</li><li>- Lease for development of car parking area at Altmore 1</li></ul> <b>Cost: Nominal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Licenses relating to future development of connecting links within Altmore 2, 3, or 4.</li></ul> <b>Cost: Nominal</b>
		Northern Ireland Water  MUDC to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enter into a formalised and structured dialogue with NIW at the earliest opportunity, and form an agreed working relationship to advance proposals in line with NIW’s organisational aims and objectives.</li><li>- Secure license for activity on NIW lands</li><li>- Secure license for activity on NIW Waters</li><li>- Secure lease for lands at the Lower Pond close to Cappagh Village for use as car park and visitor servicing area.</li></ul>	
		Fermanagh and Omagh District Council  MUDC should communicate the findings of this scoping study with their nearest Council neighbours FODC to seek a joint approach to delivery of facilities within Altmore 1 that spans the council boundary.	
		Community  	SLA and/or volunteer agreement for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waste/Litter.</li><li>• Opening/closing gates.</li><li>• Light maintenance of car parking and other visitor service facilities (e.g. strimming)</li></ul> <b>Est. £15,000 P/A based on full development</b>
Community Engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Engage local community groups in co-curation of development features, including interpretive experiences.</li><li>- Press releases to announce planned investment.</li></ul>	Launch event and community volunteer/’friends of Altmore recruitment. <b>Community-led</b>
Future Site Management		Site Management Plan  Develop a management plan that clearly outlines what all party’s roles and responsibilities will be, to be agreed with all parties in advance of developments.  Based on full study Area development, parties include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- MUDC</li><li>- FSNI</li><li>- NIW</li><li>- FODC</li><li>- Community groups</li></ul> <b>£30,000</b>	MUDC implementation of Site Management Plan (in addition to SLA with community groups)          <b>£10,000 P/A</b>
Phased Totals		<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£25,000 P/A</b>

## 7 Funding Streams

Options for partnership funding or development support from both NIW and FODC should be explored, given MUDC-led developments are likely to help fulfil the aims and objectives of both these organisations.

Several external funding options may be available for a project of this kind, including the following:

### **Initiatives to Tackle Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**

DAERA TRPSI fund has the potential be a good fit for developments such as those proposed within this Scoping Study.

For example, over the past 4 years DAERA has committed £5.7m from its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme to 17 Forest Park Enhancement Schemes. This significant financial commitment has levered in a further £3.9m through partnerships formed with Councils and other grant aiding bodies. These projects contribute to the health and well-being of the residents of the surrounding areas to the Forests/Trails by developing safe, way marked, off-road cycling/walking trails that will accommodate a wide range of users and helping locals and visitors alike to stay healthy and happy, both physically and mentally.

Successful application for funding would be dependent on MUDC securing match funding of (currently 15% for 2021/22 funding programme).

Further detailed information can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/initiatives-tackle-rural-poverty-and-social-isolation-trpsi>

### **DAERA Environmental Challenge Fund**

DAERA's Environmental Challenge Fund aims to support projects that will deliver outcomes in at least one of their strategic priorities, including Implementation of actions that are essential to delivery of DAERA's strategic outdoor recreation priorities, to increase sustainable public enjoyment and understanding of land and seascapes including: a) Delivery of core path networks and strategic routes, primarily in partnership with councils; b) Promotion of environmental responsibility and good practice; c) Projects on NIEA sites, particularly for those for whom access is currently difficult.

Overarching factors that will be taken into account in shortlisting and allocating funding to projects include;



- Scale
- Evidence of need
- Environmental impacts
- Value for money (including match funding options)
- Sustainable impact

Further detailed information can be found at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/ef-environment-fund-2019-22-overarching-criteria-environmental-impact>

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund**

National Lottery funds projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional, and local heritage of the UK. They provide different levels of funding to heritage of all shapes and sizes, with grants ranging from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. The Heritage Fund prioritises heritage projects that meet six of their outcomes as follows:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage.
- The funded organisation will be more resilient.
- People will have greater wellbeing.
- People will have developed skills.
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit.
- The local economy will be boosted.

All projects are also expected to demonstrate that they are building long-term environmental sustainability and inclusion into their plans.

## Appendices

## Appendix A Strategic Context (Detailed Version)

The development of outdoor recreation and the supporting local community facilities fulfils the aims and agendas of a variety of several government departments, agencies and strategic organisations. Outdoor Recreation NI has taken care to ensure that the proposed development(s) outlined in this Scoping Study, aligns with these policies and strategies at a regional and local level.

The following strategies and policies were identified as having most strategic relevance.

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD 2010)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024 (MUDC, 2020)</li> <li>– Our Community Plan: 10 year plan for Mid Ulster (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022</li> <li>– Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</li> <li>– Mid Ulster Economic Development Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)</li> <li>– A New Sport &amp; Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)</li> <li>– Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025</li> <li>– Outdoor Recreation Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> <li>– Parks and Play Strategy (MUDC, 2021)</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment &amp; Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sustainability for the Future, DAERA's Plan to 2050</li> <li>– NIEA "Our Passion, Our Place" Strategic Priorities 2012-2022</li> <li>– Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board &amp; Forest Service, 2012)</li> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006</li> <li>– The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)</li> <li>– Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)</li> <li>– Recreation &amp; Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006)</li> </ul>
<b>Community Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Village Plans for Cappagh &amp; Galbally, Ballygawley and Stewartstown</li> </ul>



Table 4: Relevant Strategies and Policies for this study

The following is a brief synopsis of each document considered in the Strategic Context to be of significance in terms of how the proposed development and recommendations made in this Scoping Study do align to and/or could contribute towards the delivery of key regional and sub-regional policies and strategies.

Regional Strategic Context
<p><b><i>Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)</i></b></p> <p>The draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework sets out the aspirations of the Executive for society and provides a strategic context for other key strategies and policies. The PfG was also to shape the development of the Executive's budget over the course of the current mandate and provide a mechanism for ensuring funds are best directed to where they can contribute most.</p> <p>The Framework contains 14 strategic outcomes and connect to every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and education, economic success and building confident and peaceful communities. The following outcomes are of relevance to this Scoping Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outcome 2: Live and work sustainably – protecting the environment;</li> <li>– Outcome 4: Enjoy long, healthy, active lives;</li> <li>– Outcome 12: Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest;</li> <li>– Outcome 14: Give our children and young people the best start in life.</li> </ul> <p>These outcomes are supported by 42 indicators, with each indicator accompanied by a measure which is largely derived from existing statistics to monitor performance. The following indicators are of relevance to this Scoping Study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indicator 2: Reduce health inequality</li> <li>– Indicator 3: Increase healthy life expectancy</li> <li>– Indicator 6: Improve mental health</li> <li>– Indicator 30: Improve our attractiveness as a destination and our international reputation.</li> </ul> <p>Key to the success of the PfG is the ability of Departments to work collaboratively with not only themselves but also with other public bodies and the voluntary and private sector.</p>
<p><b><i>Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DfRD, 2010)</i></b></p> <p>This Strategy is designed to deliver the spatial aspects of the PfG and is intended to inform the spatial aspects of other Government Departments, Councils' decisions and investments, and guide investment by the private sector. Relevant aims of the Strategy for this Scoping Study include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential</li> <li>– Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities</li> </ul>

- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake

The Strategy highlights the importance of improving facilities for walking and cycling as part of infrastructure investment.

### ***A Fitter Future for All: Preventing and Addressing Obesity 2012-2022***

Obesity is a major public health challenge facing Northern Ireland and this Framework aims to empower people to make healthier choices by creating an environment that supports a physically active lifestyle and healthy diet. It recognises the factors that underpin weight gain are complex and cover factors such as social and individual psychology, physiology, food consumption, individual activity and built environment.

In addition, many wider determinants of poor health such as health inequalities, poverty, mental health, deprivation and structural barriers also play an important role. Of relevance, the Strategy outlines how environmental factors affect choices and behaviours, for example lack of access to green space reduces physical activity opportunities. Other barriers include poor urban environments, limited safe play facilities and community safety, and sedentary lifestyles.

### ***Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (DoH, 2016)***

The new Health Strategy recognises that the Health Service faces growing demand driven by successful interventions and improving life expectancy. As a result, there is a need to move beyond managing illness and instead ensure that people are supported to live well; physically, mentally and emotionally. To do this, the onus is on Departments and Agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes.

Core to PfG Outcome 4 of people leading long, healthy and active lives is improving people's health. The Strategy outlines a future in which people are supported to keep well with the information, education and support to make informed choices and take control of their own health and wellbeing. This requires the circumstances for people to stay healthy, well, safe and independent in the first place. There is a need to:

- Build capacity in communities and in prevention to reduce inequalities and ensure the next generation is healthy and well
- Work with communities to support them to develop their strengths and use their assets to tackle the determinants of health and social wellbeing
- Tap into the innovative ideas and energies in communities themselves, and in the community and voluntary sectors.

- In all communities, every child and young person should have the best start in life, people should have a decent standard of living, and all citizens should be supported to make healthier and better-informed life choices
- Work alongside all communities to enable social inclusion and tackle health inequalities and the underlying contributory factors including poverty, housing, education and crime.

### ***Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)***

Commissioned by Sport NI and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), this Action Plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities that there are to participate, not only in rural areas but also in the urban fringes.

Due to the recognition that access to green space enhances physical health and mental wellbeing, and addresses issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion, the vision of the Action Plan is “a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland”.

It provides key recommendations for actions and challenges that need to be addressed to make Northern Ireland a place where outdoor recreation can deliver:

- Healthy active lifestyles for local people from all communities;
- Economic growth through encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors; and
- Protection of landscapes and ecosystems for future generations.

To achieve this vision, the aim is for Northern Ireland to be a place where:

- There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities;
- There are accompanying benefits to local communities, especially those who are socially excluded in terms of health, social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and economic development;
- People enjoy the outdoors and show a high degree of responsibility for themselves, towards others and towards the environment they are using, and play their part in maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage.

### ***A New Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland (DfC, Consultation Document, 2021)***

As of April 2021, the DfC was still in the process of public consultation for this new, 10-year draft strategy. Having been drafted during the Covid-19 pandemic period, this Strategy specifically highlights that sport and physical activity and the associated benefits that these bring, will play an important role in Northern Ireland’s recovery.

The draft Strategy now defines ‘sport’ in a broader context, as ‘all forms of physical activity which, through casual organised participation, aimed at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels’.

The proposed Vision is ‘Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity leads to an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence’.

To deliver this vision, six Key Themes have been identified. Goals relating to the achievement of each theme, that are relevant to this Study have been highlighted in bold and listed:



1. Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity
2. **Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement**
  - Improved physical and mental health and well being
  - Sport and physical activity is inclusive, safe, diverse, shared and offers equality of opportunity to participate for all
  - Children and young people are given the best start in life through sport and physical activity opportunities
3. Promoting excellence in sport
4. **The importance of partnership and integration**
  - Better outcomes for communities through a collaborative approach to the development of sport and physical activity
  - Outcomes for communities are improved by a focus on co-design and co-production
  - Strengthened sports and physical activity partnerships at local, regional, national and international level
  - An increasing proportion of our facilities are shared across sports, clubs, schools and communities
5. **Providing inclusive and shared spaces**
  - Everyone has access to inclusive, shared, welcoming and high-quality sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - A safe, economically and environmentally sustainable local and regional sports and physical activity infrastructure
  - Our sports and physical activity sector and infrastructure are enabled by innovative and emerging technologies
6. Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity

Underpinning these Key Themes and their goals, are three cross-cutting principles:

- **Developing inclusive, shared communities**
- Developing capacity and governance in sport and physical activity
- Developing national and international linkages

Those which are of relevance to this Scoping Study are highlighted in **bold**.

### ***Sport NI Corporate Plan (Draft) 2020-2025***

The vision of the Sport NI Plan is the same as the new, draft Sport & Physical Activity Strategy for NI: ‘...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’. Sport NI’s mission statement is: “We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all”.

To achieve this, Sport NI has identified two strategic outcomes over the next 5 years:

- Outcome 1: People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and recreation
- Outcome 2 NI Athletes among the best in the world

### ***Sustainability for the Future, DAERA's Plan to 2050***

This Plan frames DAERA's strategic priorities for the next 30 years. DAERA's vision and purpose, outlined in this Plan, is "Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone". The Plan states that a "sustainable approach creates a healthy environment to live in, which will underpin a healthy population and stimulate healthy economic rural communities" therefore acknowledging the link between a healthy environment, access to it and the health and well-being of communities. It states that "a healthy population depends on access to a healthy diet and a healthy, enjoyable environment" and "enhancing our environment matters, as a healthy environment is interlinked with our health and wellbeing".

In the Plan, the Natural Environment is one of four strategic priorities – 'to protect and enhance our natural environment now and for future generations whilst advocating its value to and wellbeing for all'. Directly related to achieving this is one of the Plan's ten goals –

*"9. Health and wellbeing for All - we will focus on using and enhancing our natural resources to improve the health and wellbeing for all of Northern Ireland. We will encourage people to spend more time in nature. We will work collectively to develop and showcase the tourism opportunities of our wonderful environment and NI's world class food and drink production".*

The Plan highlights that DAERA has a responsibility for 113,000 Ha forests which represents an obvious asset and resource to achieving the above.

### ***NIEA "Our Passion, Our Place" Strategic Priorities 2012-2022***

The priorities for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency as outlined in this document, under the following themes, includes:

#### ***Healthy Natural Environment***

- A well-functioning network of protected sites and areas including enhancing the management of designated sites to benefit site features and protecting and conserving the historic environment
- Sustainable, diverse landscapes with rich biodiversity which are resilient to change

#### ***People and Places***

- Extensive opportunity for everyone to appreciate and enjoy the natural and built environment
- Common understanding of the role the environment plays in the health and wellbeing of people
- Greater business and community involvement in the environment including through volunteering and community stakeholder groups
- The natural environment and built heritage assets meet the needs of society and communities

#### ***Sustainable Economic Growth***

- The value of natural and built assets to the economy is fully realised
- The best outcome for the environment is obtained whilst minimising cost to business.

***Assessment of Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from NI Forests (NI Tourist Board & Forest Service, 2013)***

This study highlighted findings from a research study that set out proposals for tourism development in Northern Ireland's forests. The study was set in the context of the Forest Service's policy to realise further opportunities for the recreational and social use of forests, in partnership with local authorities and other recreation providers.

The study established a vision for forest related tourism which was to "use the forest estate to deliver an exceptional visitor and short break experience for all, which will increase the economic impact of forest related tourism in Northern Ireland."

To achieve this vision, the study set out the following supporting aims:

- To increase the economic impact of forest related tourism
- To encourage visitor experience and product development opportunities that will provide an exceptional visitor experience in line with the Northern Ireland brand principles
- To promote and enable effective partnership working.

***Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2006***

This Strategy aims to tackle issues of poverty and social exclusion by targeting efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need. The priorities identified include:

- Eliminating poverty
- Eliminating social exclusion
- Tackling area-based deprivation
- Eliminating poverty from rural areas
- Tackling health inequalities
- Tackling cycles of deprivation

The goals and targets set out include the following:

- Allowing all children and young people to experience a happy and fulfilling childhood, while equipping them with the education, skills and experience to achieve their potential
- Ensuring that everyone has the potential to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life.

The development of community access to green space and outdoor recreation provision across the Mid Ulster forests aligns with this Strategy and has the potential to contribute to eliminating social exclusion and poverty and tackling health inequalities.

***The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, 2011)***

The Northern Ireland Executive's vision for volunteering is a society where:



- Everyone values the vital contribution that volunteers make to community wellbeing
  - Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful and enjoyable volunteering experience.
- The growth and development of outdoor recreation across three forest areas provides a unique opportunity for people to volunteer and become involved in their local communities.

### ***Our Strategy 2021-2046 (NI Water, 2021)***

NI Water's Strategy have identified 5 strategic priorities – Economy ....

Much of the Strategy is heavily centred on optimising the operation, management and impacts of the water supply business of NI Water. However, under strategic priority 'Economy' there are 3 objectives:

- Funding world class economic infrastructure
- Efficient and affordable services
- Sustainable growth

Under the 'sustainable growth' and 'nature' priorities NI Water acknowledge that they are one of Northern Ireland's largest public landowners and therefore have a role to play in tourism. One of the actions is to "seek opportunities to utilise our catchment land, raw water reservoirs and assets to maximise the community benefits, working closely with local councils'.

### ***Recreation & Access Policy (NI Water, 2020)***

This 2-year policy provides a framework defining what access is permitted to NI Water owned lands and waters, and how access arrangements for recreational use will be communicated, controlled and governed.

Key factors in determining access for recreational use are summarised here as risk, cost, sustainability, biodiversity and conservation and protection of water quality and supply.

## **Sub-Regional Strategic Context**

Consideration is also given to relevant Council strategic documents and the positive benefits and impact outdoor recreation can make on the objectives of the Council's draft Local Development Plan, Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Economic Development Plan and Tourism Strategy.

### ***Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024***

This Plan has been influenced by the Council's Community Plan, Economic Development Plan, Tourism Strategy and draft Local Development Plan.

The Plan has 5 strategic themes, of which 'Environment' and 'Communities' are two. In addition, 'addressing rurality' and 'working collaboratively across public, private, community and voluntary sectors to achieve shared objectives' are identified as cross-cutting corporate commitments. Commitment which the recommendations for development in this Scoping Study fulfil.

Within the Environment theme, 1 of 4 priorities is to 'increase the protection of, access to and development of our heritage assets, both natural and man-made, including our strategic visitor sites'.

Within the Communities theme, the Council aim to 'make a tangible difference to the health and well-being of local people, and contribute to the creation of viable and vibrant, safe and prosperous communities'. Accessibility to the outdoors and access to opportunities to adopt a more active lifestyle in a greater range of settings are highlighted, as well as the 'benefits of the outdoors for physical and mental health'. Priorities for the Council under this theme are to –

- Open up and sustain accessible pathways to participation in leisure and outdoor recreation activities which enhance health and well-being by providing high quality, accessible facilities in local communities and through programmes tailored to community need
- Continue to support the sustainable development of our parks, forests and green spaces, together with access to outdoor assets, including walking and cycling trails, and water recreation
- Along with our community planning partners, work to address poverty and deprivation across the Mid Ulster region
- We will continue, through our community development programmes, grant aid schemes and our partnership-working, to support local communities and to build capacity in the community and voluntary sector

### ***Our Community Plan: 10-year Plan for Mid Ulster (2017)***

The Council has identified 15 outcomes structured under 5 themes to deliver the Community Plan. This Scoping Study fits into 5 themes and 11 of the 15 outcomes, as outlined below:

Theme	Outcomes
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy</li> <li>– We have more people working in a diverse economy</li> <li>– Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Success Indicators</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Improved attractiveness as a tourism destination</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased no. of social economy businesses</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased performance of our towns and villages</i></li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Success Indicators</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased environmental sustainability</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased protection, access and enjoyment of our natural and built heritage</i></li> </ul>

Education and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We give our children and young people the best chance in life</li> <li>– We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased number of schools which have community access</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved child development</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved mental health and resilience in children and young people</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased innovation in our economy</i></li> </ul>
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We are better enabled to live longer, healthier and more active lives</li> <li>– We care for those most vulnerable and in need</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Increased healthy life expectancy</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved mental health</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased quality of life and opportunities for people with disabilities</i></li> <li>– <i>Reduced health inequality</i></li> <li>– <i>Improved child development</i></li> </ul>
Vibrant and Safe Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We are a safer community</li> <li>– We have a greater value and respect for diversity</li> <li>– We have stronger communities with less disadvantage and poverty</li> </ul> <p><b>Success Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Reduced anti-social behaviour</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased respect for each other</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased shared space</i></li> <li>– <i>Reduced level of deprivation and poverty</i></li> <li>– <i>Greater coordination of community delivery</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased community capacity, volunteering and delivery</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased private led community initiatives</i></li> </ul>
<b>Mid Ulster Local Development Plan 2030, Draft Plan Strategy (MUDC, 2020)</b>	
As of May 2021, the final Plan is yet to be published. This spatial plan will set out the Council's vision for planning land use up until 2030, incorporating housing, infrastructure, transport and relevant to this project – tourism, community and recreational facilities.	
<b>Our Plan to Develop Tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021 (MUDC, 2017)</b>	
Key priorities for growing tourism in Mid Ulster are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– History and Heritage</li> <li>– Outdoor Activities</li> <li>– Seamus Heaney</li> </ul>	



The latter 2 propositions are described as ‘significant and prominent, but so far undeveloped’. Current tourism is largely based on rural and outdoor activities and tied into the area’s natural attributes - the recommendations in this Scoping Study fit this current profile.

Key issues for the growth and management of tourism that have implications for this scoping study are –

- While day visitation to the area is important, the reasons to visit are not well articulated
- The visibility of Mid Ulster’s natural heritage, outdoor activity and historic and archaeological heritage are lost partly because they are spread across the area and also because these attributes haven’t been pulled together into distinct propositions for visitors.
- There is a weak accommodation base, exacerbated by variable occupancy levels (and thus viability) throughout the year
- The SME and microbusiness characteristics of the tourism sector in the area exacerbate challenges of communicating and engaging with the trade and developing collaborative projects across the trade
- The geographical dispersal of the area – in terms of scale, distance and character – suggests a challenge in creating both a tourism identity for Mid Ulster itself and for a hierarchy of individual communities that have identities and propositions that could encourage visitation
- Continuing constraints in countryside access limit the opportunity to exploit the natural environment to its full potential for outdoor activities

Opportunities for the future that have been identified and align with the recommendations in this Scoping Study are –

- The opportunity exists to exploit Mid Ulster’s central location within NI and improving access (completion of the Magherafelt Bypass; A6 dualling; Randalstown (M22) to Castledawson). The central location of Mid Ulster could also boost camping and caravanning based in the area. However, historically strong dependence on the NI domestic day and overnight market for visitation highlights the need to encourage more overnight stays from out-of-state markets and their greater expenditure.
- Outdoor tourism sites and experiences, including the presence of very successful outdoor activity providers, suggest that the outdoor tourism product can be exploited further right across the area
- An invigorated district wide programme of marketing and promotion is achievable, including events, enhanced signage, technology use, visitor information services and limiting print production

To grow tourism in Mid Ulster there are 5 aims and objectives that actions and development should be centred on –

1. To develop three strategic tourism strands, around which the attributes of the area and the industry can cluster and to attract visitors –
  - i. Seamus Heaney
  - ii. Archaeological sites, history and heritage
  - iii. Outdoor Activities
2. To grow tourism as an economic driver for Mid Ulster
3. To manage the destination and create the preconditions for successful tourism
4. To profile and promote Mid Ulster to enhance the visibility of the area and boost visitation and spend
5. To support the dispersal of visitor spend and investment across the area
- 6.

This Scoping Study and any subsequent development of the recommendations can be tied to the 'Heritage and History' and 'Outdoor Activities' themes.

For Heritage & History, the Plan highlights that Mid Ulster is the only place to appreciate the history and importance of the O'Neill family – there are many features and remnants of the O'Neills in Cappagh area. Dunmoyle is also rich in heritage features and Drumcaine is a historic garden and demesne.

Walking, cycling, mountain biking, canoeing, angling, multi-adventure centres (e.g. Todds Leap, and Jungle NI) plus a number of activity tourism providers in the area are key propositions for outdoor activities in Mid Ulster. Horse riding and golf add further value to the product offering and visitor experience. Except for golf, all of the forests are well positioned and have the potential to provide some or all of these activities.

Lastly, for the tourism vision Mid Ulster to be achieved, the Plan highlights the importance of local communities buying into the wider 'Mid Ulster identity'. It also highlights the importance of public realm quality, quality standards, food availability, access to information, etc within each community to ensure the visitor experience is positive and consistent across the area.

#### ***Mid Ulster Economic Development DRAFT Action Plan 2021/2022 (MUDC, 2021)***

The Council's previous Economic Development Plan expired in 2020. The purpose of this Draft Action Plan is to 'focus on the activity and actions that support businesses, high streets and economic recovery' in response to and amidst the backdrop of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The Draft Action Plan has multiple themes all aimed at driving recovery during the pandemic and building the foundations for sustained recovery.

Themes and outputs relevant to this study are –

Theme	Output
Physical Regeneration / improving Infrastructure	Rural Regeneration Projects – work in partnership with RDP to deliver Village Regeneration projects in Mid Ulster over 4 years
Strategic Projects	Delivery of Mid South West (MSW) Regional Economic Strategy – Develop a range of collaborative economic development projects as part of Growth Deal, e.g. Developing the O'Neill tourism proposition
Rural Business support / attracting investment	Micro business development scheme (TRPSI) – small capital grants for business development activities
Mid Ulster LEADER RDP Programme 2016-2020	Activities relating to the final delivery of 'Rural Business Investment Scheme', 'Rural Services Scheme' and 'Village Renewal Scheme' projects before closure of programme

#### ***Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan (MUDC, 2020)***

This report and Action Plan sets out the future direction for the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation across the Mid Ulster district over a 5-year period, from 2020 to 2025.

In this strategy, outdoor recreation is recognised as having significant benefits across society, from the individual level in terms of health, to the wider society in terms of education, the economy and environment.

The report identifies the following key issues and opportunities relating to the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation that are relevant to this project:

- All 22 forests in the area provide local recreation opportunities but some, if developed appropriately, have the potential to attract visitors from outside the area
- whilst the area already has several informal walking trails around villages and along river corridors, there is an overwhelmingly demand for a formal network of Community Trails to be developed across the area
- few mechanisms exist within MUDC to encourage collaboration between the many different organisations and interest groups involved in outdoor recreation across the area. These include landowners/land managers, NGBs, private sector activity providers and service providers
- some of the more niche customers such as camping and caravans are provided with good levels of information, but the more 'mass' offering to local people or visitors on outdoor recreation and parks is insufficient.
- there is an expressed desire by local people in the MUDC area to have better access to information on the outdoor recreation opportunities available across MUDC.

The Action Plan makes 24 recommendations aimed at improving the development, management and promotion of outdoor recreation over the next 5 years. Of the 24 recommendations, 14 are relevant to this project:

#### ***Management Structures***

- Put in place an adequately resourced rolling maintenance programme for all current and future outdoor recreation facilities.
- Monitor existing and develop where appropriate new SLAs with Community Groups for the ongoing maintenance of outdoor recreation facilities.

#### ***Masterplanning***

- Undertake Master Planning/Feasibility Studies for six Local Sites, including
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 3-4)
- Develop a Community Trail Plan for each DEA

#### ***Product Development***

- Develop 3 regional multi-use activity hubs
- Develop 9 local multi-use activity hubs:
  - o Altmore Cappagh (Year 1-2)
  - o Drumcairne Forest (Year 2-3)
- Develop short and medium distance walking trails
- Develop a network of Community Trails across the area

#### ***Promotion / Marketing***



- Prepare a 5-year Marketing Strategy and tactical Marketing Action Plan.
- Develop visitor information and signage guidelines for all forest recreation sites.
- Undertake a review of signage, visitor information and waymarking at all outdoor recreation sites.
- Implement new visitor information and signage guidelines at all outdoor recreation sites across the area.
- Develop an Outdoor Recreation Participation Plan.
- Develop partnerships with the private sector to deliver outdoor recreation participation programmes.

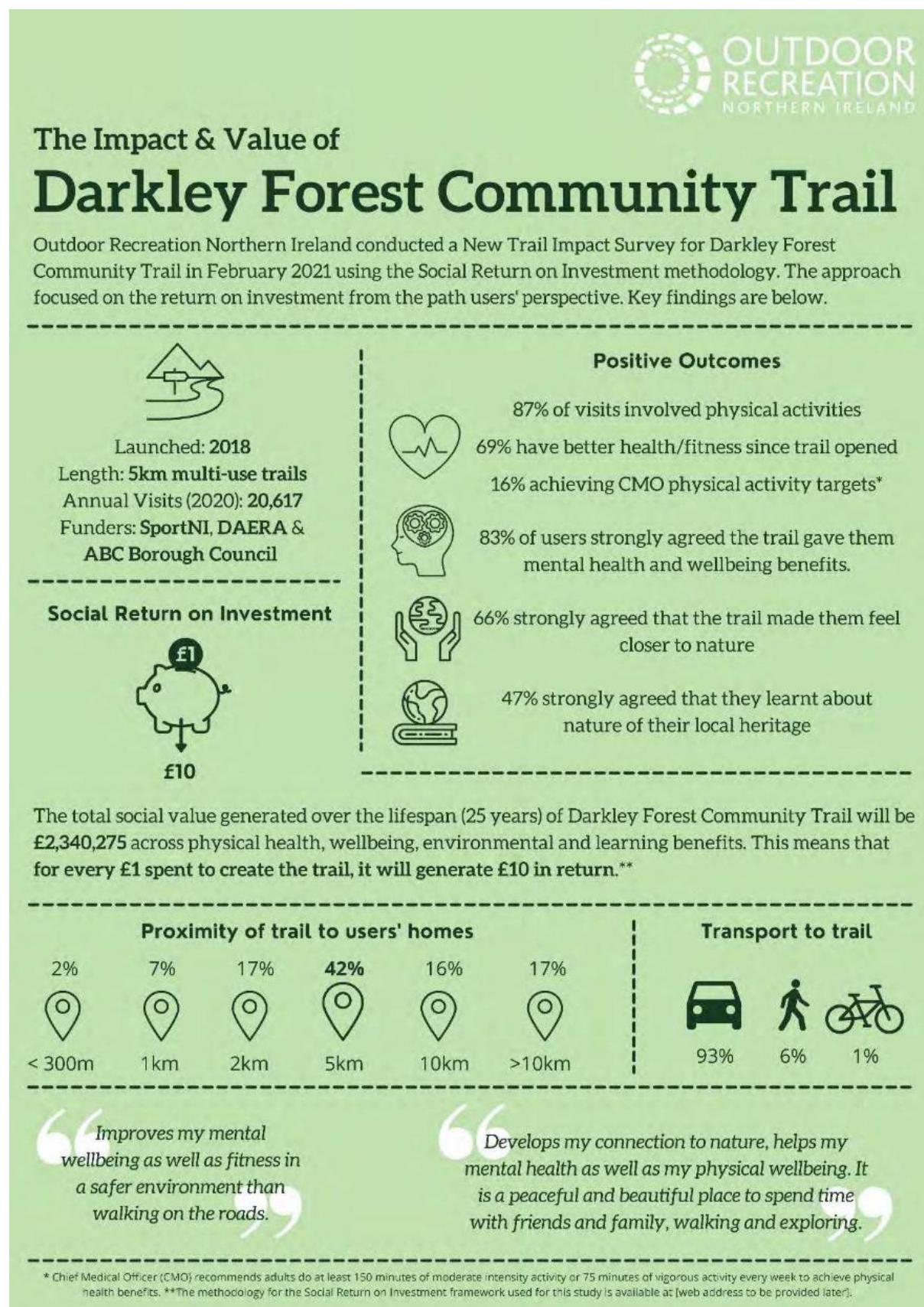
### ***Public Parks and Play Five Year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (MUDC, 2021)***

This report and Action Plan provides a comprehensive picture of the status of current public parks and play park facilities, as well as opportunities for future development, in the Mid Ulster district.

MUDC comprises over 100 public park and play facility sites ranging from small play parks to formal pitches/MUGA's to open parkland. One of the key findings of the report is that there is a disparity in provision with some areas in greatest needs suffering from a lack of provision while other areas are over provided for. This report provided an assessment of each facility, in terms of need, condition and spatial distribution.

In addition to site-specific recommendations, 11 over-arching, strategic recommendations were made. These are summarised as:

- Thorough Community Consultation
- Play should be inclusive
- Development of 'public parks' to plug the gap in open/green space across the Council area
- Develop woodland play
  - o Drumcairne Forest is recommended as a 'small woodland park' site with a budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
  - o Altmore Forest is also identified as a 'small woodland park' site with budget of £25,000 to be delivered in Year 5+
- Compatibility with other Council strategies, including ORS, Tourism Strategy and Sports Facility Strategy
- Conduct Play Value assessments which considers the 'play experience'
- Adopt a risk-benefit approach to play provision
- Consider other public land sites and working in partnership with other public bodies to develop play provision
- Planning - protect the loss of open/green space except where there is a substantial community benefit
- Staff resource/maintenance and manning should be factored into future development projects when considering the development of play facilities



## Appendix C Community Survey and Results





Phase 1 Delivery			£4,033	£4,033	£4,033							£12,100	
Phase 2 Planning			£5,000	£5,000	£5,000							£15,000	£81,100
Phase 2 Delivery					£17,000	£17,000	£17,000					£51,000	
<b>Annual Sub-Total Altmore Zone 3</b>	£1,500	£1,500	£9,033	£9,033	£26,033	£17,000	£17,000	£0	£0	£0			
Altmore CONNECTING LINKS													
Phase 1-3 Planning	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833						£35,000	
Phase 3 Delivery							£43,025	£43,025	£43,025	£43,025		£172,100	£207,100
<b>Annual Sub-Total Altmore Zone 3</b>	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£5,833	£43,025	£43,025	£43,025	£43,025			