

Report on	Virtual Tours – Hotel Cluster
Date of Meeting	13 th May 2021
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Charmain Bell

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Propose supporting the Mid Ulster Hotel Cluster with the development of virtual tours for weddings and conferences.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Hotel Cluster is one of the four Mid Ulster cluster groups, established as part of the Tourism Development Group under the Mid Ulster District Tourism Strategy.
2.2	It is a platform for all nine designated hotels within the district to meet and work collaboratively together, facilitated by council officers.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Hotels have been affected significantly by COVID closures. Within the past year, April 2020-March 2021 hotels have been closed for 245 days (67%), 82 days (22%) operated under tight restrictions, and 38 days (10%) operating under restrictions with a curfew.
3.2	The hotel sector for Mid Ulster have a strong wedding and conference business which contributes substantially to the economic development of the area with bed-nights and visitor spend. Weddings and conferences are key revenue generators for the hotel industry.
3.3	Hotels have found it extremely challenging to showcase their wedding/conference proposition, especially during the peak seasons for engagements i.e. Christmas, New Year and Valentine's Day. Hotels are not permitted to show perspective couples or business representatives around their premises, which is directly affected by the uncertainty of the re-opening date.
3.4	To help attract and secure wedding and conference bookings, it is proposed to support the hotels within the district who are registered with Tourism Northern Ireland, to produce virtual tours. This will allow a 'virtual' walk through of the hotel to help sell to customers.

3.5	The videography and imagery will also provide the necessary collateral for content on the new Mid Ulster Tourism Website, which will be essential to help promote the wedding and conference business in Mid Ulster post COVID.
3.6	It is proposed that each hotel will receive financial support to produce a 2 minute virtual video. The estimated cost is £500 per hotel which will include 4 hours video and still photography, 6 hours editing, and production of the video with copyright free music.
3.7	An expression of interest will be issued to each hotel for completion. A quotation specification will be developed and issued by council officers to ensure best value for money.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: £4,500 if all nine hotels participate. Existing tourism budget.
	Human: Support by council officers to manage and deliver the project
	Risk Management:
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:
	Rural Needs Implications:
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To support the production of virtual tours for Mid Ulster Hotels.
6.0	Documents Attached & References