Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

07 July 2021

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Development Committee to be held in The Chamber, Magherafelt and by virtual means Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, BT45 6EN on Wednesday, 07 July 2021 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

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

Yours faithfully

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive

AGENDA

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
   Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
3. Chair's Business
4. Deputation: Killeeshil & Galbally First Responders

<u>Matters for Decision</u>

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<u>Matters for Information</u>

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

Matters for Decision

19. Irish Language Activity Funding Programme 2021/22 and Irish Language Action Plan 2021/22
20. Economic Development - CBFD

Matters for Information

21. Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 17 June 2021

Report on	Cyclical Leisure Equipment Replacement Programme
Date of Meeting	7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure
Contact Officer	Sean Cavlin, Leisure and Business Development Manager

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To seek member's approval to re-allocate and utilise remainder of the 2021/22 budget assigned to 7 year cyclical leisure fitness equipment capital replacement programme for the current purposes of addressing areas for equipment replacement and/or additions where health and safety issues have been highlighted.
	Background
2.1	Previously, in July 2018 (minute reference: D159/18) Members approved a cyclical fitness equipment replacement plan within the leisure department and that a phased approach be adopted in line with Mid Ulster District Council Procurement guidelines. As part of this approval, Officers were asked to develop and implement a cyclical replacement plan for all leisure facilities equipment that would see its replacement on a 7 year cycle. This would support the leisure transformation agenda by ensuring Council facilities and equipment are modern and of sufficient quality.
2.2	In October 2018 (minute reference: PR199/18), Members approved the release of budget for the 7 year cycle at £300,000 per annum. This has been included within the approved Capital Framework.
2.3	In January 2019 (minute reference: DO12/19) Members approved the schedule which itemised years 1-7 investment plan. To date, the refurbishment of fitness suites at Cookstown LC, Dungannon LC and Maghera LC have been completed, alongside the installation of bespoke cycle studios at Greenvale LC and Cookstown LC. Additionally, new spin bikes have been purchased for Dungannon LC along with various items of leisure equipment to support the ongoing group exercise coaching programme within the leisure facilities.
2.4	The next phase of this project has focused on the year 4 priority, which is the refurbishment of the fitness suite at Greenvale Leisure Centre and Members approved the tender award "in committee" at its June 2021 Development Committee (minute reference: D119/21)

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	As part of the approved £300,000 budget allocation within the 2021/22 financial year and following the award of the fitness suite refurbishment contract at Greenvale Leisure Centre, it has been identified that there will be an underspend within the overall budget for this year.
3.2	As an exponential growth in outdoor recreation has been experienced over the last 12-18 months due to the covid pandemic and various restrictions/lockdowns etc, Officers within the leisure department have identified some health and safety issues and negative user experiences at a small number of its outdoor pitches.
3.3	The issue focused on pitches where there are structured and organised sporting club activities taking place and where there are co-joining opportunities for informal recreational use by walkers/runners via designated walking trails around the perimeters of pitches.
3.4	In these cases there is an absence of low level fencing and ball stops to assist with segregating the structured pitch sporting activities with that of the informal recreational use on the surrounding walking trails. (i.e. stray footballs impacting walkers/runners, children moving between the designated walking trail and entering the pitch while structured sporting activities are ongoing, etc).
3.5	This has mainly been identified at Moneymore Recreation Centre, Ballygawley Playing Fields and Benburb Playing Fields along with issues of ballstop nets at a number of sites that are not in place and/or have fell into dis-repair.
3.6	Therefore, in line with Council's procurement processes, it is proposed to permit Officer to utilise the anticipated under-spend from the current year budget to address these issues by seeking to procure and install low level, accessible fencing solutions at designated sites along with the addition/replacement of ballstop nets.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: These costs are estimated at £65,000 and are within the current Capital Framework and within the levels previously agreed by Members in October 2018, with the 7 year cycle at £300,000 per annum.
	Human: Leisure staff will be required to dedicate time to the procurement of specific equipment, with key staff identified to liaise with the successful supplier(s) before and during install.
	Risk Management: In line with Council Policies and Procedures.

4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None anticipated.
	Rural Needs Implications: None anticipated.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	That Members note the contents of this report and approve the recommendation to re-allocate and utilise remainder of the 2021/22 budget assigned to the 7 year cyclical leisure fitness equipment capital programme for the current purposes of addressing areas for equipment replacement and/or additions at outdoor pitches where health and safety issues have been highlighted.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	N/A

Report on	Moyola River Inclusive Angling Partnership Project
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Nigel Hill Head of service
Contact Officer	Paul Bailie Parks Manager

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	Approval for Council Partnership with Moyola Angling Association to provide inclusive angling facilities on Moyola River.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Moyola Angling Association formed in 1982 provides affordable Salmon and Trout angling along 27 miles of the Moyola River. The Moyola Angling Association is a cross community organisation who have worked hard to provide accessible angling to everyone young, old, able-bodied and those with mobility difficulties. The Association have been central to the creation and maintenance of angling opportunities to members and visitors along significant stretches of the Moyola River for the past forty years and have been hosts and supporters of the council's Coarse Angling Summer Schools.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The opportunity to develop inclusive angling facilities at Curren on the Moyola River is the partnership project that Moyola Angling Association and Mid Ulster District Council have identified for submission under the Department for Communities Accessibility and Inclusion Programme 2021/22. The project will aim to provide two new inclusive angling stands and improved picnic facilities at Curren Picnic Area.
3.2	Curren Picnic Area is the property of the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) and is maintained, managed and insured by Mid-Ulster District Council. The addition of two new inclusive angling stands will offer accessibility for people with mobility issues to fish the higher reaches of the river, which is currently not an option. There are only four other inclusive angling stands along the 27 miles of river.
3.3	Council will, subject to approval submit an application to Department for Communities Accessibility and Inclusion Programme 2021/22. The council's financial contribution is estimated at £1,500 (10% of estimated project cost). Projected annual maintenance allocation from existing Parks Service budget £1,000.

4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Funding Application to Department for Communities, Access & Inclusion Programme 2021-22. Estimated cost of project £15,000 (90% DFC / 10% MUDC). Allocated annual maintenance £1,000 from existing budgets.
	Human: Current staff structure sufficient to deliver on outcomes.
	Risk Management: Council staff will manage and monitor the project aims and outcomes to ensure compliance to council policies and procedures and associated funders criteria throughout the delivery of the project.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with council policy and procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with council policy and procedures.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Members are asked to approve the project as described and provide projected match funding of £1,500 from Council Capital Outdoor Recreation Strategy allocation subject to successful DfC application for the Curren Inclusive Angling Development project.
5.2	Members are asked to approve to extend current management, maintenance and insurance to cover the new additional angling stands and associated improvement works subject to obtaining approval from the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) for the installation of the additional services.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	N/A

Report on	Iniscarn Forest, (TRPSI) Development Project
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Nigel Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	Anne Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To seek approval from Members for the development of Iniscairn forest and to update on the application made to DAERA for TRPSI funding to assist in the development of Iniscairn Forest.
1.2	To seek Members approval in securing match funding from the Outdoor Recreation capital budget and to enter into a lease agreement with Forest Service NI (FSNI) to allow for the creation of a carpark and play area within the forest.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	In 2015 legacy Magherafelt District Council entered into a licence agreement with FSNI over Iniscarn Forest.
2.2	This licence provides Council with the remit to develop and maintain all aspects of recreation within the site.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Iniscarn Forest provides an outdoor resource that has the potential for supporting the delivery of long-term health and well-being for residents across Northern Ireland and in particular the people of Mid Ulster District. The Council recognises that access to this green space and opportunities for enjoying the outdoors must be improved for all sections of the community especially those who do not have regular access to the outdoor environment.
3.2	Local consultation has taken place with the community group (Protect Slieve Gallion) and the key findings are detailed below: • Desire to have outdoor classroom/safe space for children to learn and develop • Desire to have infrastructure that would support young children and their families • The site has become run down and tired, as is indicative of a gradual reduction in usage and lack of investment;

	• The forest has the potential to be a valued community resource; • There is a strong desire from the local community to be involved in its development;
3.3	The development of Iniscarn Forest project is a result of taking consideration of previous scoping exercises, research and studies: • The Forest Recreation Audit, Outdoor Recreation NI on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council, 2015, • Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan March 2020 and on-going community consultation.
3.4	This project seeks to provide a safe environment for taking part in outdoor recreation by up-grading the existing walking trails within the Forest, creating a new play area to include provision for all-ability play, providing picnic and rest benches along the walking trails, the creation of a carpark, the creation of an outdoor classroom and interpretation and way-marking.
3.5	In May 2021 an application for funding to help develop the site was lodged with DAERA for TRPSI (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation) funding.
3.6	Discussions and site visits with FSNI have confirmed that a lease agreement is required for the development of a carpark & play area within the forest. In principal FSNI have indicated that they are supportive of the proposed plans.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Estimated total project cost: £275,000.00 Funding DAERA: £206,250.00 (yet to be approved) Council: £68,750.00 Council funding for the project would be allocated from the Outdoor Recreation Strategy capital allocation that has been approved by Council (£250k annually).
	Human: Current staff structure sufficient to deliver on outcomes
	Risk Management: Council staff and appointed ICT will manage and monitor the project aims and outcomes to ensure compliance to council policies and procedures and associated funders criteria throughout the delivery of the project.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**

	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Members are asked to approve the development proposal for Iniscairn project as described in the report.
5.2	Members approval is sought to present the Iniscairn Forest development proposal to the Policy and Resources committee for approval of the Council match funding subject to funding being approved from DEARA as part of the TRPSI funding allocation.
5.3	Members are asked to approve the request to enter into a lease agreement with FSNI to allow for the development of a carpark & play area within Iniscarn Forest.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix - Proposed Iniscarn Forest Development Plan.

Def
117.1
INISCARN ROAD
Well
New timber post & 3 rail fence to match existing to be set back 3m from road edge
Grass verge
New timber Post & 3 rail Fence
114.8
Existing Shelter & Bin to be retained
Proposed Carpark Location
Existing Gravel Layby Retained
Gravel stone carpark & standard road kerb edge
Existing Timber post & 3 rail fence retained in new location
New height barrier to be installed
114.1
Existing Trees retained
New Access to carpark
Existing Barrier to be retained
General Maintenance works to access road
112.3
110.0
General accommodation works around playpark
Sinks
Proposed Playpark Location
Existing Trees retained
BM 108.04
Ise
Picnic Area
N
Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster District Council

Report on	Sliabh Beagh Masterplan
Date of Meeting	7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Mary McGee

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**
	The purpose of the report is to seek Members' approval to establish a Sliabh Beagh Partnership and to progress the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan in partnership with Omagh and Fermanagh District Council and Monaghan County Council.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Sliabh Beagh region stretches across 250 miles square, it spans from Monaghan in the south, across Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster in the north. Straddling the traditional County borders of Tyrone, Fermanagh and Monaghan. In Mid Ulster the region takes in the villages of Aughnacloy, Augher, Clogher and Fivemiletown and the surrounding Clogher Valley countryside.
2.2	Sliabh Beagh, translated from the Irish as the Mountain of Bith, the Irish King. The area measures some 250 sq. miles and it spans from County Monaghan in the south, to the districts of Fermanagh and Omagh (FODC) and Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) in the north. There is a point in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, where the three counties of Fermanagh, Monaghan and Tyrone meet, known locally as "Three County Hollow".
2.3	The Sliabh Beagh landscape is comprised of blanket bog, windswept moors, deep woodlands, lakes and rolling pastures. Shaped by centuries of cultivation, peat extraction and forestry (significant parts in the ownership of Forest Service NI), the area is home to an abundance of flora and fauna.
2.4	Sliabh Beagh is sparsely populated, consisting of a network of small villages and hamlets connected by narrow winding roads. This includes inner gateways (Cooneen, Knocks, Knocktallon) and outer gateways (Aughnacloy, Clogher, Fivemiletown Brookeborough, Maguriesbridge, Newtownbutler, Rosslea, Magheraveely, Clones, Scotstown, Monaghan and Emyvale,).

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	A Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in 2017 to establish a strategic vision for the future of this rural area. The delivery of the Masterplan was coordinated by the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership (BCEEP), as there was no partnership group in Sliabh Beagh at this time and this will be one of the actions to be progressed.
3.2	The Masterplan report summarised the findings of the research process and sets out aims, objectives and a series of projects for the future of the region. It seeks to set in place a road map for regeneration, helping the area to fulfil its potential as a visitor destination, while contributing to its needs for continued environmental protection, cultural interpretation and economic and community development. This report includes an action plan of 10 proposed projects for delivery over the short, medium and long term by a range of stakeholders.
3.3	Further to recent meetings held with representatives from Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, and the County Manager of Monaghan County Council, it was agreed to progress the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan.
3.4	In progressing the Masterplan the following steps will be taken: • Recognition by Mid Ulster District Council that as they did not participate in the preparation of the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan and they will regularise their commitment through Council; • Community and Business representation will be essential to the formation of a Sliabh Beagh Partnership, the entity to agree and progress the Plan. It is suggested that two representatives from each of the three Council areas are identified and invited to participate; • It is proposed that the Sliabh Beagh Partnership will consist of twelve members (Councillors - 6, Community Representatives - 3 and Business Representatives - 3), serviced and supported by Tourism Development Officers from the three Councils, with the proposed first meeting to take place in September 2021; • In the short term, the following actions are to be considered: ➢ road signage from all main routes (Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (RoI)) and directional signage within the Sliabh Beagh area; ➢ discussion on shared branding ➢ explore and scope out funding opportunities for capital schemes set out in the Masterplan.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: N/A

	Human: The required support will be included in the work plan for the Tourism team. Due to the wide range of activity set out in the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan, there may be a need for other Council teams (Economic and Community Development) to support this work.
	Risk Management: Virtual meetings and programme delivery are features all members at this stage are comfortable working with.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: The initiatives described above have the potential to further promote equality within the district.
	Rural Needs Implications: All initiatives will support and promote rural businesses.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Two Mid Ulster Council members to be nominated to join the new Sliabh Beagh Partnership with first meeting proposed for September 2021.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Sliabh Beagh MasterPlan

SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

Lough Nabul
(Photo by Rory Sheehan)

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FOREWORDS

Cathy Bennett
Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council
Councillor

Seamus Coyle
Cathaoirleach of Ballybay Clones Municipal District
Councillor

Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh Council have enjoyed a long-standing and fruitful cross border partnership, known as Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership. This has delivered many practical initiatives across the Ballybay Clones Erne East region over the last ten to fifteen years, benefiting communities in many ways.

Two years ago, Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership turned its attention to the Sliabh Beagh region. We saw an area which has experienced great hardship in the past, and continues to face significant challenges going forward, including being isolated physically, being an uplands area with marginal farmland, social isolation issues around rural transport, lack of broadband, and an ageing population. The picture is far from all negative, however; the area has tremendous natural resources, including pristine waters. It is a haven for wildlife, has outstanding natural beauty, a dark night sky, is a walker's paradise and lies within easy reach of Ireland's two largest urban population centres.

We saw an opportunity to support the communities across the region to identify what their area has to offer tourists and to help them to develop the region as a sustainable tourist destination. The development of this Masterplan provided us with an opportunity to engage with the communities across the region, and to come to a shared understanding of how the region should be protected and developed going forward.

The extensive consultation process which was undertaken during the formation of this Masterplan enabled us to listen to the community and gain a greater understanding of the needs and the aspirations of the people living in the region. This will without doubt be of great benefit to us all as we work together to implement the Masterplan in the coming years.

We would like to thank the staff of The Paul Hogarth Company for their work on this project, and I would like to pay particular commendation to the staff of Monaghan and Fermanagh & Omagh Councils, without whose input on a daily basis, the work of the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership could not happen. Such close collaboration is hugely important, and makes it so much easier to find solutions to the unique issues which living and working in a border region can give rise to.

Monaghan
County Council

Howard Thornton
Chairman, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Councillor

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and the legacy Fermanagh District Council have enjoyed a strong working relationship with our partners in Clones and Monaghan since 2004, when the original Clones Erne East Partnership was formed. It was subsequently expanded to include Ballybay in 2015, to form the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership.

This partnership has, since its formation, aimed to deliver practical initiatives across this cross border region and also lobby for improved infrastructure and services, bringing benefits to a community that has experienced many challenges in the past.

The elected members of Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership have long been aware of the needs of the Sliabh Beagh region, but also recognised the opportunities for the development of this unique upland area. Sliabh Beagh, like many other rural border areas, has suffered severely from deprivation in the past and continues to face significant challenges currently and indeed into the future. These include remoteness, being an upland area with marginal farmland, social isolation due to poor infrastructure including rural transport networks and broadband, as well as an ageing population.

However, the area has also much to commend it as it has a wealth of natural resources, including beautiful landscapes and pristine waters. The region can be easily reached from major urban population centres, it is a haven for wildlife and a paradise for walkers.

As local elected representatives, we recognised that an opportunity presented itself to support the communities across the region to firstly identify what the area had to offer to visitors and secondly, to help them to develop Sliabh Beagh as a sustainable tourism destination and an attractive place in which to live and work. The development of this masterplan provided us with an opportunity to engage with those communities and to come to a shared understanding of how the region should be protected, as well as developed in a sustainable way.

Following an extensive consultation process, by Paul Hogarth Associates, who were commissioned to deliver this Masterplan, the elected members of the Ballybay Clones Erne East Partnership, together with officers from the Councils and Tourism NI, met with the local community, to gain a greater understanding of their needs and aspirations. This groundwork will be of great benefit to us all as we work together to implement the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan in the coming years.

I would like to thank the staff of The Paul Hogarth Company for their work on this project and I would also like to commend the officers of both Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, without whose continuing input the work of the Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership could not happen. The cross border collaboration between Councils has always been very important and will become increasingly so, as we seek to find solutions to the unique issues that arise for people living and working in a border region, as well as enhancing experiences for people visiting the unique area that is Sliabh Beagh.

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

a shared way of life
Clones
Erne East
2007

INTRODUCTION

1

The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council in 2017 to establish a strategic vision for the future of this important rural area.

The plan was researched and written by Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, working in close consultation with local residents, community organisations and elected members of both Councils.

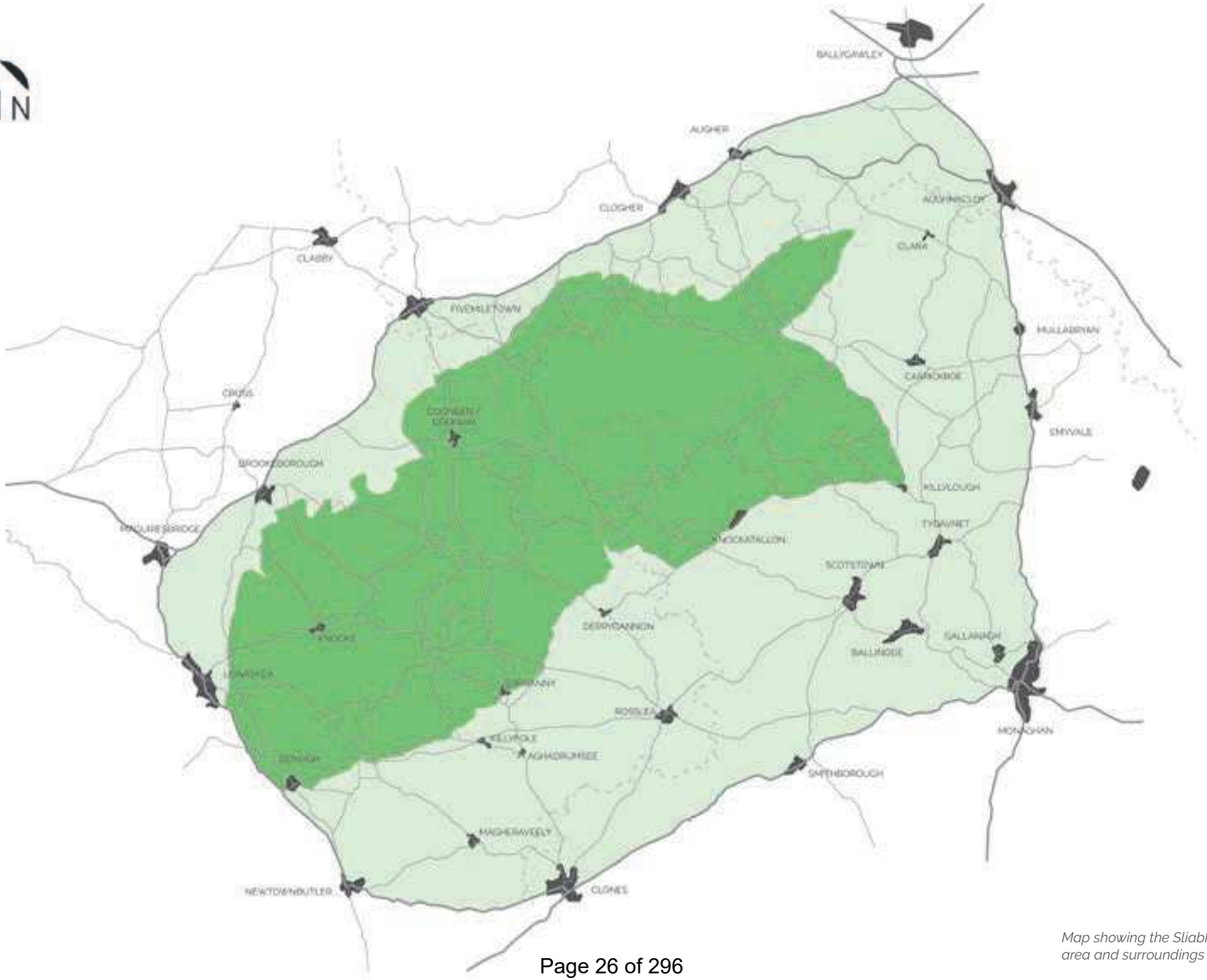
This report summarises the findings of the research process and sets out aims, objectives and a series of projects for the future of the region. It seeks to set in place a road map for regeneration, helping the area to fulfill its potential as a visitor destination, while contributing to its needs for continued environmental protection, cultural interpretation and economic development.

This report concludes with an action plan of 10 proposed projects for delivery over the short, medium and long term by a range of stakeholders.

"The wild hare hops across the moor, the beagle cries behind,
Eishmore looms high above it all, bedecked with spruce and pine,
On a moss-clad swamp behind the lake, a moorhen shy is wadin',
While a bumblebee drones through the air with heather honey laden.
These sights I see, these sounds I hear on the Mountain of Sliabh Beagh."

-'The Mountain of Sliabh Beagh', by Peter Keenan

View from Carn Rock viewpoint (March 2017)



Map showing the Sliabh Beagh area and surroundings

THE PLACE

Sliabh Beagh, translated from Irish as the Mountain of Bith, the Irish king, is a special landscape with a wealth of natural and cultural riches. Measuring some 250 square miles, it spans from Monaghan in the south, to the districts of Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster in the north, straddling the traditional county borders of Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone and the national borders of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The landscape is comprised of blanket bog, windswept moors, deep woodlands, tranquil lakes and rolling pastures. Shaped by centuries of cultivation, peat extraction and forestry, they are now home to an abundance of flora and fauna.

Sliabh Beagh is sparsely populated, consisting of a network of small villages and hamlets, connected by narrow winding roads. Yet they travel through a landscape steeped with history, cultural tradition and legends, helping make Sliabh Beagh a special place, cherished by all who live there.

ROLE OF THIS PLAN

With such a wealth of assets and rich stories, Sliabh Beagh is a place of importance and potential. Yet like many rural areas, it must address challenges and find ways in which its population and local economy can thrive and prosper for future generations.

This plan serves to:

1] provide a shared vision for the future
2] identify projects through which this potential can be fulfilled. The projects range in scale and ambition, designed for delivery over a 10 year period by a range of parties.

The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan is to be read in conjunction with the plans and policies of both jurisdictions, including the Monaghan County Development Plan and the Fermanagh Area Plan 2007.

MASTERPLAN PROCESS

Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (March 2017)

The Sliabh Beagh masterplan has been the result of a thorough analysis of the area's existing strengths and weaknesses, informed by desktop study and site analysis.

Another valuable source of information was the consultation process carried out through the preparation of the plan. The input of local residents, business owners and elected members, gathered in events held at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel and the Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall, underpins this plan. This demonstrates strong attachment to Sliabh Beagh from local people.

ANALYSIS

2

Before shaping a vision for Sliabh Beagh, it is essential that we ensure a good understanding of the area. What makes Sliabh Beagh special? This process has been informed by a desktop review of plans and policies, by site visits to the area and by a consultation process with local residents.

Sliabh Beagh has many qualities. Identifying them and articulating their importance helps us protect and sensitively enhance them. These issues and their impact need to be fully understood so that sustainable solutions can be found.

Our Lady of Banneux, Mulligan Hill, Knockatallon (March 2017)

Open air mass (2015)

People

While Sliabh Beagh is visibly defined by its landscape, it is its people, their culture and traditions that give the area its unique character and depth of personality.

Research for this plan revealed a strong community spirit, deep local knowledge and clear sense of pride in the area. By working together over recent years local groups have achieved notable successes, such as the establishment of the Sliabh Beagh Hotel and the restoration of Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall.

Harnessing, growing and sustaining the strong community spirit of Sliabh Beagh will be a driving force behind the fulfillment of its potential.

View of the Eshbrack Bog (2011)

Natural Quality & Beauty

Sliabh Beagh is comprised of a diverse and attractive landscape, largely unspoilt by development. During the consultation and research process, breathtaking views and scenery were resoundingly identified as Sliabh Beagh's most valuable of assets.

Not only is Sliabh Beagh beautiful, but also a high quality environment, recognised through its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA). These particularly relate to the blanket bog and dystrophic lakes.

Enjoying and accessing this natural beauty, which requires to be carefully managed and maintained to ensure its longevity, must therefore be a central aspect to its plans for the future. This includes underpinning the quality of life for residents and attracting more visitors to the region.

Nocturnal map

Tranquility

In an ever busy, urbanised world, finding getaways from cities and towns is increasingly important to the visitor. The calm and tranquility of Sliabh Beagh, with large areas unaffected by noise and light pollution, makes it another special quality of the area.

Economic development and the sustaining of a local population and businesses must remain a priority for the region as a whole. However, through careful planning and creative proposals, doing so in a manner that preserves this special quality, will greatly underpin its value as a place for wildlife, recreation and tourism.

Hen Harrier

Wildlife & Ecosystems

Sliabh Beagh is home to very important natural habitats supporting protected and endangered species of flora and fauna, native to the area and rarely found in the rest of the island. Sliabh Beagh has designated protected areas (NHA, SAC and SPA).

Ongoing work to protect and enhance wildlife are essential to the sustainability of the region. This includes the breeding grounds of endangered species such as the Hen Harrier and Curlew, with Sliabh Beagh now being one of only 12 sites left in Ireland and the UK for the latter.

These habitats must be regarded in the context of the wider ecosystem and the vital range of ecosystem services Sliabh Beagh has to offer, from agriculture to tourism.

Importantly this work must continue to involve local people, with awareness raised amongst schools and community groups.

Cooneen/Coonian Parish Church (March 2017)

Heritage & Culture

Sliabh Beagh is also bestowed with a vibrant culture that reflects the area's personality, history and the communities that live within.

There are some fine examples of built elements with scope to become touristic destinations, such as Cooneen Parish Church, the Mass Rock, Mullaghfad Church and the Ceili Houses.

Art in its varied forms is also deep-rooted in Sliabh Beagh, as shown through the Traditional Music and, more recently, the Modern Arts and the Digital Arts Projects.

Furthermore, interesting historic figures and other stories surround the mountains of Sliabh Beagh, such as Shane Barnagh (the Highway Man), and the Cooneen/ Coonian Ghost.

This plan will look at preserving and promoting these valuable features for future generations of residents and visitors.

Sliabh Beagh Hotel sign

Tourism infrastructure

Sliabh Beagh has modest provisions in place for tourism at present. In many regards this is part of its charm, unspoilt by over development. Furthermore, many of the investments that have taken place, such as walking routes, history programme and the hotel, are of a high quality and to be valued.

Yet to grow as a visitor destination, further investment will be required, helping the visitor to find their way to and around the area, to places of interest, things to do and places in which to eat, drink and stay.

The area has potential, if the investments in this plan are carefully developed, to appeal to core visitor profiles, such as the Culturally Curious and the Great Escaper. Ecotourism, walking and other sports (cycling, horse riding, fishing) will be key attractions in this context.

Map of the Sliabh Beagh Way WalkNI brochure

Accessibility

Sliabh Beagh is strategically well located between Monaghan Town, Enniskillen and Omagh, the largest towns in this part of the island. In addition, it is relatively accessible from the larger cities of Belfast and Dublin, between 1.5 and 2 hours drive away respectively. Potential infrastructure investment in the region, most notably the A5 / N2 road corridor, as well as the Ulster Canal greenway and the A4 and A34 roads, present opportunities to further improve its accessibility.

However, work will be required at local level to facilitate the safe and appropriate access by vehicles and people to more remote locations. For that purpose, providing sustainable transport and rural social transport should be explored.

National Map showing Sliabh Beagh's location

Administration & Brexit

The location of Sliabh Beagh across three county borders and straddling the national borders of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is a unique attribute. However, it also poses practical challenges to managing and promoting the landscape in a cohesive and unified manner. This plan has nonetheless been jointly commissioned, which shows the will for cooperation to take Sliabh Beagh forward. Further provision for cross border administration and formal understandings between councils may be necessary to ensure a holistic approach to its management.

Furthermore, the decision of the UK to leave the European Union in a process known as Brexit, places major uncertainties around the future of border locations such as Sliabh Beagh. It will therefore be vital to monitor ongoing negotiations closely in order to mitigate against problems and respond to opportunities as they arise.

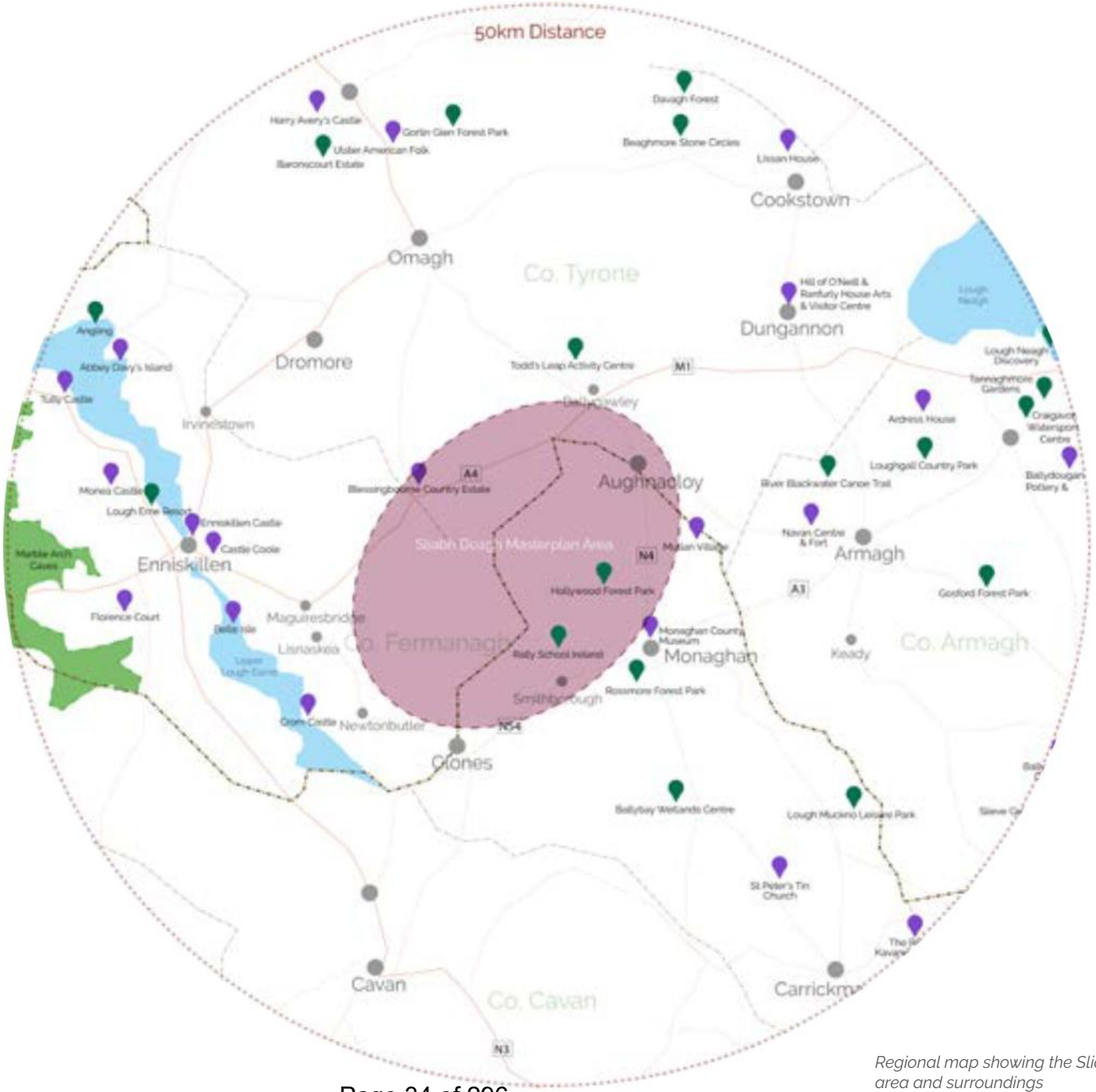
"WHERE IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

A commonly encountered question during the process to research this plan was "Where exactly is Sliabh Beagh?"

This points to a key issue for the development and promotion of Sliabh Beagh as a destination for tourism and investment more generally.

A number of different names are used to refer to the location by local people, including Bragan, which relates primarily to areas of upland heath. However, Sliabh Beagh is widely agreed to be an appropriate name for region as a whole, with resonance to those living across the area.

Therefore the challenge is to further define Sliabh Beagh, to promote it widely across the island and to ensure that adequate publications, signage and promotions are in place to increase familiarity with its name.



Regional map showing the Sliabh Beagh area and surroundings

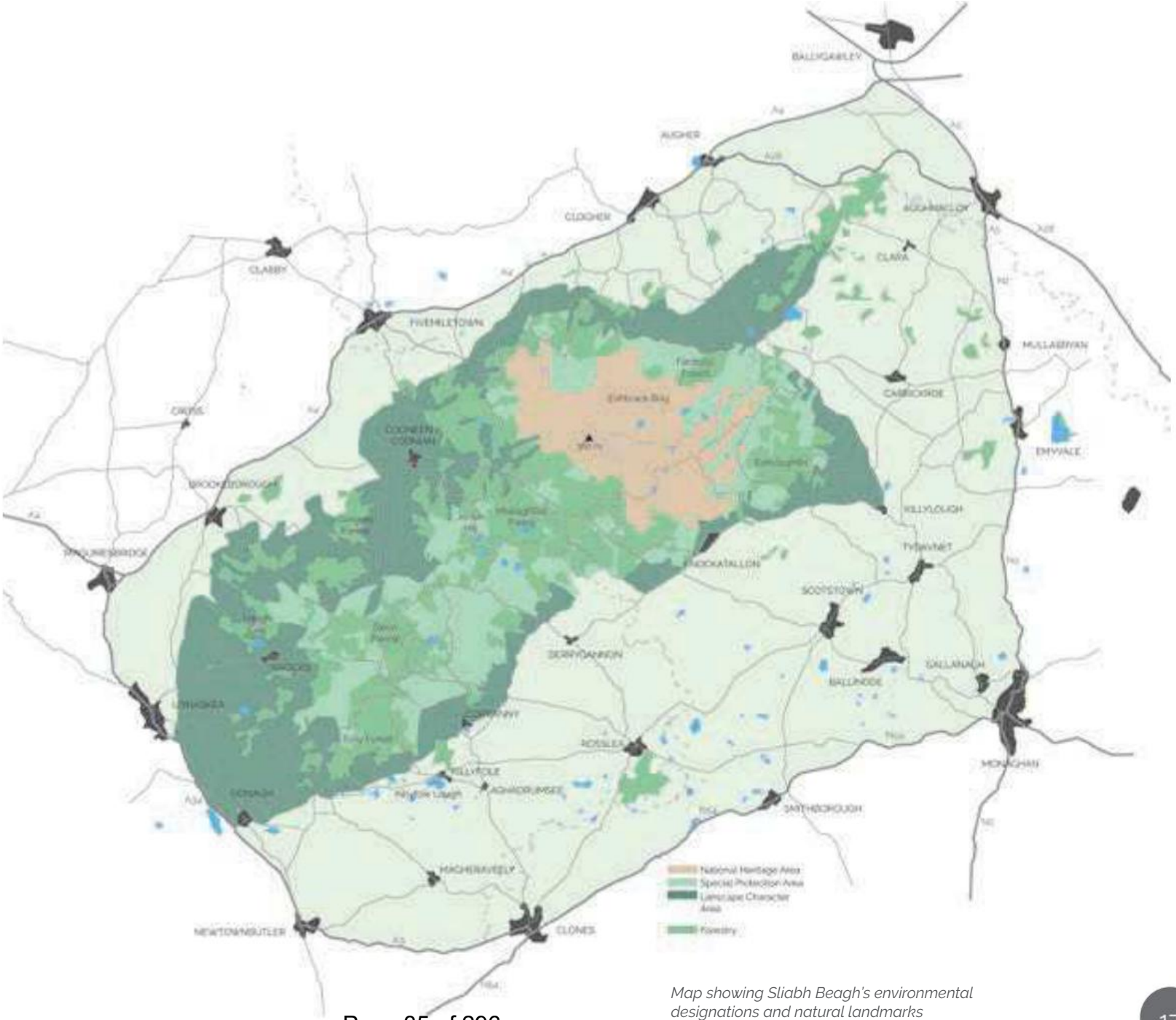
"WHAT IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

Another key question for this masterplanning process is "What is Sliabh Beagh?"

That is to say, how is Sliabh Beagh physically defined and what role should it play in the context of places to visit across this part of the Island?

A physical definition of Sliabh Beagh is illustrated on the adjacent map, informed by the extents of existing policy designations from both jurisdictions. Importantly, however, Sliabh Beagh should not be characterised solely by its landscape character. The social and cultural definition of the area and the affinity and sense of belonging felt by local communities must also be taken into full account.

Further defining the role of Sliabh Beagh in this context, drawing upon its tangible assets, is a focus of this masterplan.



Map showing Sliabh Beagh's environmental designations and natural landmarks

POLICY CONTEXT: FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Comhairle Ceantair Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

The Fermanagh and Omagh Community Plan 2030 provides the principal policy reference for the District. The Plan is outcomes based, with an overall vision and three themes:

People and Communities Theme:
1. Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally.
2. Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives.
3. Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered .
4. Our people have the best start in life with lifelong opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Theme
5. Our economy is thriving, expanding and outward looking.
6. Our district is a connected place.

Environment Theme
7. Our outstanding natural environment and built and cultural heritage is sustainably managed and, where possible, enhanced.
8. Our district is an attractive and accessible place.

'Our Vision is of a welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed.'

Vision, Fermanagh & Omagh Community Plan 2030

The District's Tourism Strategy aims to grow tourism in the District.

The Objectives are:-
- To establish Fermanagh and Omagh as a 'must visit' destination (Marketing),
- Develop the tourism assets (Tourism Products and Product Development)
- Work with and support tourism businesses (Business Engagement and Development)
- Ensure an exemplary visitor experience (Destination management)
- Ensure best structures are in place to deliver (Organisation and Management)

Finally, in development at the time of writing is a proposition for the Fermanagh Lakelands. This will significantly raise the international profile of Fermanagh and deliver a step change in tourism, by attracting more international visitors, higher spend and an extended season. The proposition will draw on the strengths and assets of the Geopark to which the landscape of Sliabh Beagh relates.

'Fermanagh and Omagh will generate 5% per annum growth in tourism to 2020 by value and volume, by building on being one of Ireland's leading tourism destinations, with all stakeholders and businesses collaborating to maximise visibility, market appeal, the quality of welcome and experience of visitors and tourism's economic value across the whole district'.

Vision, Tourism Development Strategy 2016-2019

POLICY CONTEXT: MONAGHAN COUNTY

A key point of reference for Monaghan County is the Monaghan Local Development Strategy, This sets out the following objectives of relevance to Sliabh Beagh.

Theme 1: Economic/Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Sub-theme: Rural Tourism
1. Support for development and marketing of tourism accommodation
2. Encourage the development and marketing of rural tourism leisure amenities, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions
3. Develop and support County tourism network
4. Support for utilisation of old buildings for the provision of tourism activities

Sub-theme: Enterprise Development
1. Support new start-up and expansion of Small to Medium Enterprise's
2. Promote and assist the development of social enterprises
3. Support the development of the artisan foods, handcrafts and farm diversification

Sub-theme: Rural Towns
1. Pilot a Heritage Towns Initiative in two of the five towns in Co Monaghan
2. Support development of new guesthouses /B&B's /selfcatering / hostels in rural towns
3. Support the development of the arts/community infrastructure in towns

Theme 3: Rural Environment
Sub-theme: Protection of Biodiversity
1. Support for programmes and training which raise awareness and public interest in maintaining and protecting biodiversity.
2. Support for the practical implementation of biodiversity projects within rural areas

Monaghan County Council

The County Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2015 - 2020) serves to guide the development, inward investment and marketing of the county during the period outlined. It sets out a series of 10 priorities through which visitors numbers will be increased:

1. Focus on the development of the key Amenity sites and on Walking & Cycling Trails
2. Continue to lobby for and work on the Re Opening of the Ulster Canal
3. Assist Festivals and events to increase numbers and deliver bednights
4. Develop the potential of Heritage Tourism
5. Develop a central border area 'destination' with Monaghan at its centre
6. Increase online presence and engage with Social Media
7. Improve Tourism Signage & Interpretation and Improve Visitor Servicing
8. Develop County Brand
9. Develop networking among trade providers and encourage crossselling
10. Provide information on funding opportunities to existing tourism businesses, community groups or potential startups

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

3

To establish a vision for the future of Sliabh Beagh, it is necessary to identify a series of Aims and Objectives for this masterplan.

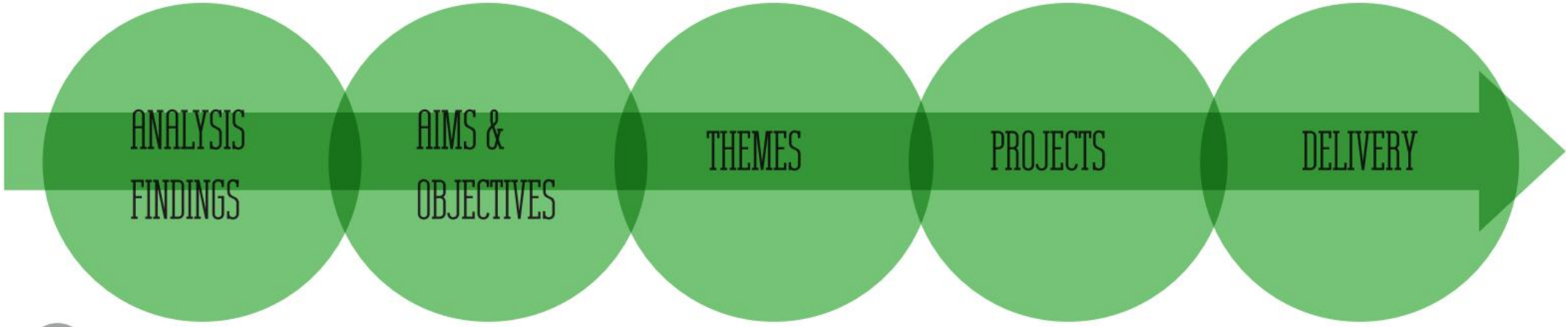
These are informed by the research and consultation process and represent key priorities for future investment and development in the region.

Critically they pertain to Sliabh Beagh in its entirety. This take into account administrative boundaries, distinctive localities and communities, while recognising the value and potential of managing, developing and promoting Sliabh Beagh as one destination.

Hall of the Church

VISION

"Sliabh Beagh is a unique cross border region of Ireland whose high quality natural environment provides a haven for wildlife and an opportunity to connect with and explore the natural world. Its natural assets are cherished and protected by the local communities, who work together, supported by Local Authorities, to develop improved access to the region's many natural and cultural delights. The Sliabh Beagh visitor experience is community-based, sensitively managed and focused on promoting the exploration of the wonderful natural and cultural landscape of this unspoilt uplands area."



AIMS

1

A Haven for Wildlife

Cherish and Enhance our natural environment

The primary asset of Sliabh Beagh is our natural landscape of bogs, lakes, woodlands and pastures. We must continue to value and protect these places for future generations, while finding opportunities to enhance them.

View of forest in Sliabh Beagh

2

A Great Place to Live and Work

Support and grow quality of life and economic development

To be sustainable, Sliabh Beagh must flourish as a place in which to live, work and prosper. Continued investment is required in facilities and connections, providing for existing and attracting new residents and businesses.

Phoenix Song, Corranny (June 2017)

3

A wonderful place to visit and explore

Grow the visitor economy and establish Sliabh Beagh as a uniquely authentic destination

We are proud of Sliabh Beagh and will work to welcome more people to join us in exploring its natural beauty, cultural curiosities, events and adventures. In doing so we will shape an authentic destination and experience.

Walking in the hills of Sliabh Beagh

OBJECTIVES

I

Protect, manage and enhance natural habitats

The natural habitats of Sliabh Beagh and the wildlife they support are a special feature of this landscape. They must continue to be protected, managed appropriately and enhanced where possible, with the aim of sustaining and increasing populations of key species.

View of the blanket bog

II

Strengthen networks and infrastructure

Improving the movement of people, vehicles and information to, from and around Sliabh Beagh will be an essential component of its increased success as a place to live, work and visit. The infrastructure for transport, communications and communities must be strengthened to sustain and grow residential and business populations.

Irish National RR Championship

III

Define and develop place identity

Sliabh Beagh has a unique identity and culture, shaped by its landscape and history, which has been expressed through language and the arts. To preserve and enrich the shared place identity of Sliabh Beagh, it must be further understood, defined and developed, increasing meaning to all who live there and visit.

Map showing Sliabh Beagh (2011)

IV

Increase tourism infrastructure and capacity

Those who visit Sliabh Beagh are met with a warm welcome and a fascinating landscape to explore. As a key part of our economy, we will seek to increase visitor numbers through effective promotion.

The Sliabh Beagh Hotel's main entrance

THEMES & PROJECTS

4

The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan comprises a total of 10 themes and 30 individual projects. These are drawn directly from the findings of the research and consultation process and seek to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives set out for the area.

The projects are diverse in scale and complexity, with some for delivery in the short term, others for the medium to longer terms. They are designed to be led by a range of different parties from the public, private and community sectors. All projects are subject to the availability of funding and where necessary, statutory approvals.

Mullaghfad Forest (March 2017)

Bragan sign
(Photo by Donal Muldoon)

10 THEMES

A} PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION

B} IDENTITY & PROMOTION

C} CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

D} DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

E} GATEWAYS

F} ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

G} PATHS & SIGNAGE

H} DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES

I} EVENTS & FESTIVALS

J} HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION

A

PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION

A unique feature of Sliabh Beagh is that it straddles three administrative areas comprised of County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland and Fermanagh and Omagh District and Mid Ulster District in Northern Ireland.

This presents a challenge to the ability to coherently manage, plan and promote one landscape such as Sliabh Beagh, with potential for further complications in the future related to Brexit. It will therefore be essential that excellent levels of partnership and coordination are maintained to progress this plan.

Increased collaboration between communities, businesses and interest groups will be critical to the success of this plan and the ability to advance shared projects of benefit to the entirety of Sliabh Beagh.

1} Re-establishment and support of a Sliabh Beagh wide forum

It is proposed to establish a new forum for the entire Sliabh Beagh area, representing the interests of communities, businesses and local authorities.

The role of the group will be to act as a network for sharing ideas and information across Sliabh Beagh, thereby promoting increased levels of partnership and collaboration.

Local authorities and elected members will play a key role in facilitating this group, comprised of representative from across the area.

Consideration must be given to guaranteeing this group is adequately skilled and resourced for its day to day administrative needs and able to acquire professional support when required.

B

IDENTITY & PROMOTION

A place is not only defined by its natural and built landscape, but also by the stories and culture that develop around it over generations. This 'intangible' heritage must be preserved, understood and shared with everyone in Sliabh Beagh.

Doing so will not only reinforce the identity of Sliabh Beagh as a place in which to live and learn, but also assist in the process of sharing and celebrating its unique culture with visitors.

1} Social History collation, digital archiving and communication

In our ever changing times, it can be easy to overlook the importance of memories and stories handed down through the generations. However, these are critically important pieces of historic information that contribute to our shared understanding of Sliabh Beagh. It is therefore proposed to conduct a social history project across Sliabh Beagh, working with local people to capture those special memories and insights about the area. Older residents in particular would be encouraged to share their recollections, contributing to the creation of an invaluable digital archive of Sliabh Beagh's history and culture. Local schools and libraries have scope to play a useful role in the delivery of this action.

2} Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes

So rich is the heritage and cultural interest in Sliabh Beagh that a specific process is required to research its different strands and to organise them into themes suited for further study, interpretation and promotion. This process will draw upon a wealth of literature, historical records and social histories. to examine topics such as mythology and folklore, neolithic and ancient activity, clans and battles, religion and ecclesiastical significance, traditional music, farming and rural customs, border life in the 20th century and contemporary arts and creativity.

To further increase awareness about some of the features existing in the area, an application may be made to ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) to name them as Cultural Heritage Sites.

Penal Cross, Eshbrack Bog

Sliabh Beagh Arts Project, Corranny

Cooneen/ Coonian Ghost House

Irish Traditional Session

3} Interpretation Signage & Art

Great potential exists to establish heritage trails throughout Sliabh Beagh, accompanied by interpretative signage and art works that share its stories with locals and the visitor alike.

Based on a thorough process of research, this interpretation must be carefully planned along clear themes to encourage the movement of visitors throughout the area.

Signage and graphic design must of the highest quality and durable to withstand weather conditions. The location of such infrastructure requires careful consideration, so as not to detract from the qualities of the area in question.

Public Art also has a key role to play in creatively communicating with people about Sliabh Beagh. Both permanent and temporary installations should be considered, created with a specific location in mind from the outset.

4} Schools Programme

It is important that the future generations of Sliabh Beagh are encouraged to learn about its culture and history. An output of historical research should inform the preparation of educational resources for local schools, around which age appropriate programmes can be developed. These should stimulate increased collaboration between schools across the Sliabh Beagh area and there would also be opportunities to link them in with museums' educational programmes across both jurisdictions.

5} Collaborative process to development of 'Sliabh Beagh' identity, brand and marketing material

To effectively promote Sliabh Beagh as a destination, it will be necessary to develop its place identity through branding and marketing materials (eg. websites, literature, logos). This exercise should be grasped as a unique opportunity to engage with the resident population of Sliabh Beagh about their place. Through collaborative techniques, it would enable the attributes of Sliabh Beagh to be discussed and identified, translated into core messages and represented through suitable graphic means. The resultant branding should then be applied consistently across Sliabh Beagh, so as to reinforce its identity, brand awareness and profile.

6} Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Sliabh Beagh area

In 2016 in a unique collaboration between artist Marilyn Lennon and the Knockattalon Rambers group led the creation of an online map of walking routes called the Waymarkers. Not only does the map show routes and points of interest, but is also used to record stories, experiences and thoughts of those who frequent them.

Using this model, the Waymarkers project has great scope to be extended across Sliabh Beagh, providing an invaluable resource for all who visit.

Old photograph of children at school, Sliabh Beagh

Social media app icons

Example of interpretation signage

C

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Sliabh Beagh is home to many key species of bird and animal, including the Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Pine Marten and Red Squirrel. These along with other species of flora and fauna require to be supported through the management and improvement of natural habitats, including blanket bog, lakes, wetlands, woodland and farmland.

Several important environmental designations from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are contained within Sliabgh Beagh: one ASSI (Area of Special Scientific Interest), one SAC (Special Area of Conservation), one NHA (National Heritage Area) and two SPAs (Special Protected Area). These designations are crucial for how this environment is managed.

A Conservation Management Plan was produced in August 2011 and set out a series of priorities, which remain largely valid for the SAC and NHA contained in the area in question.

Another key initiative is the INTERREG Va Collaborative Action on Natura Network project, which is a project to protect endangered species and restore natural habitats in the uplands of Sliabh Beagh. The resultant initiatives from this project will complement the objectives of this masterplan.

1} Biodiversity Action Plan

It is proposed to prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan for the entire Sliabh Beagh area. This will include areas formally designated for protection on both sides of the border. Importantly, it will also be extended to cover remaining areas of Sliabh Beagh, thereby considering a range of habitats beyond protected boglands and lakes, to include farmland and lowland wooded areas, for example.

Biodiversity is a key component of healthy ecosystems, maintaining an interdependent mix of animal and plant species and preserving invaluable genetic material. A global reduction in biodiversity is of ongoing international concern, irreparably affecting ecosystems and affecting our environment and economy.

Biodiversity Action Plans follow a methodical process to set out a strategy for local biodiversity, undertake an audit of existing levels and to develop habitat and species action plans.

The Sliabh Beagh Biodiversity Action Plan must be coordinated across both jurisdictions and relate to national plans and policies.

Care must also be taken to consider the practicalities of actions, working in partnership with landowners and those who continue to make a living from the land.

Red Grouse

Pine Marten

Hen Harrier

Red Squirrel

D

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Digital infrastructure, to include high speed broadband and comprehensive mobile phone coverage, has become an essential component of life in rural areas. They are also critical to the ability of an area to support economic growth, including tourism related businesses.

Like most rural areas, coverages and speeds in Sliabh Beagh area are variable. It is therefore necessary to pursue investment in such infrastructure, as a means of enabling its development.

1} National lobbying for improved infrastructure

Falling outside of the direct remit of local authorities, it will be necessary for councils, communities and the business sector to work together in lobbying government and service providers to improve digital infrastructure across Sliabh Beagh. Depending on locations, this will include fixed line and satellite solutions.

In Northern Ireland, new opportunites may emerge from a recent committment by the UK government to further invest in broadband in rural areas. In the Republic of Ireland, the process would form part of ongoing efforts to increase speeds in the County through a range of measures.

2} Pilot community led initiative

Innovative community led means of bringing improved broadband connectivity to Sliabh Beagh area worthy of exploration, potentially through a pilot scheme.

A range of models may be open for communities, from local fundraising to bring improved services to an area, to the actual construction of infrastructure by local means for operation by a supplier or a new start-up organisation.

Mobile coverage

Broadband Internet

A key priority of the masterplan is to improve accessibility of the area for visitors.

The 'OUTER GATEWAYS' are the towns on the outskirts of Sliabh Beagh which will serve as the first contact points for visitors. These towns are well connected by main roads and are therefore easy to access from bigger cities. The outer gateways will play a key role in orientating visitors and directing them to the inner gateways and attractions of Sliabh Beagh.

The 'INNER GATEWAYS' are the villages closest to the heart of the area. These will be the entrance points to the natural landscape and its paths. Tourist information, interpretation of the site and parking will also be provided at these gateway villages.

1} Regional Signage

The promotion of Sliabh Beagh as a destination must include the provision of appropriate road signage across the wider regional network. In liaison with local authorities and national transport bodies, this should involve a strategic approach to identifying key tourist routes and points of access.

2} Identification of outer gateways for tourism information & orientation

A ring or 'necklace' of potential outer gateway locations are identified on the adjacent map. These are located along the 4 four main roads that encircle Sliabh Beagh, namely the N2 and N54 in the South and A4 and A34 in the North.

Specific locations require to be found in the the towns and villages along this route where information about Sliabh Beagh, its attractions and activities can be provided. Visitor centres, libraries, hotels, shops and petrol stations are all key locations in this regard.

In addition, signage and mapping may be appropriately installed in key locations along these routes, helping to encourage visitors to explore the area, while increasing the recognition of its place identity. Such signage must be visually sensitive to its rural setting and in keeping with the sustainability objectives of this plan.

3} Identification of inner gateway sites for visitor car parking and orientation facilities

Inner Gateways are the villages located within the Sliabh Beagh area, identified on the adjacent map.

An important objective of this masterplan is to encourage the body of visitor activity towards existing settlements in the area, as opposed to remote rural locations. The reason for this is to stimulate and sustain economic activity in these villages, through spending in shops, cafes, pubs or visitor attractions.

In order to facilitate such movement, each inner gateway village will require detailed planning to consider how and where best to welcome visitors. Depending on the approriateness of each location, this may include car and bus parks, laybys, picnic areas, play areas, information points and the creation of new foot and cycle paths to surrounding areas.

4} Tourism training and awareness programme

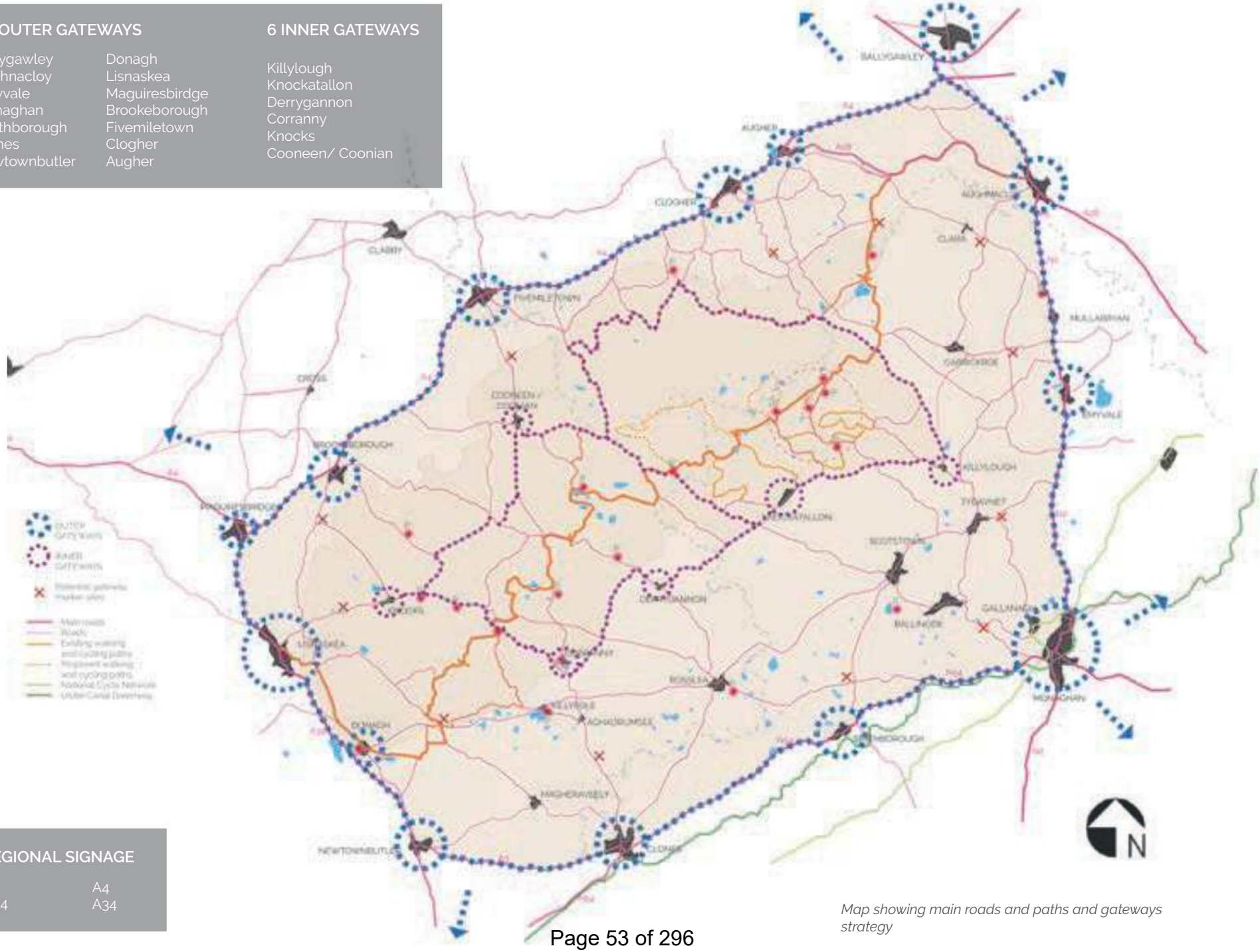
Sliabh Beagh is well known locally for the warmth of its welcome. Yet further training and tourism and hospitality skills would help local service providers, businesses and tour guides to ensure they are providing the best possible reception for visitors to the area.

14 OUTER GATEWAYS

Ballygawley
Aughnacloy
Emyvale
Monaghan
Smithborough
Clones
Newtownbutler
Donagh
Lisnaskea
Maguiresbirdge
Brookeborough
Fivemiletown
Clogher
Augher

6 INNER GATEWAYS

Killylough
Knockatallon
Derrygannon
Corranny
Knocks
Cooneen/ Coonian



REGIONAL SIGNAGE

N2
N54
A4
A34

Map showing main roads and paths and gateways strategy

F

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Site visits and public consultation revealed road conditions as an area of major concern for Sliabh Beagh. Improvement works and a maintenance plan for their future are required as part of existing roads programmes. Having a network of roads in good condition that simultaneously retain their rural character is vital to ensure connections within Sliabh Beagh and with the surrounding areas, as well as making it easily accessible for visitors.

1} Coordination of road improvements as part of ongoing maintenance programme

An assessment of road conditions across Sliabh Beagh should be made as part of wider roads maintenance responsibilities. Particular attention is required to roads that a) form arrival points into the Sliabh Beagh area and b) provide important links between villages within the area. Accessibility for camper vans and coaches on suitable roads will become increasingly important as visitor numbers are raised.

As part of this initiative, it will be necessary to consider the provision of car and coach parking. Visitors should be encouraged where possible to park at gateway towns and villages, where they can join foot and cycle paths. This would help to manage congestion and promote more environmentally forms of transport.

Where car and coach parking is required near attractions outside of gateway towns and villages, this must be extremely sensitively positioned in relation to the surrounding landscape and ecology. Small gravel car parks and short lay-bys interspersed with landscape are preferable over large areas of hard standing.

View of road between Knockatallon and Cooneen (March 2017)

View of access road to the top of the Eshbrack Bog (April 2017)

G

PATHS & SIGNAGE

Walking is a popular reason to visit Sliabh Beagh and has major potential to be supported and grown as a pursuit, along with cycling and horse riding. Importantly the path network needs to be planned and managed strategically. Existing paths require improvements, while potential also exists to create new pathways, increasing the attraction of the area. The network must also be linked up with centres of population,

Along with a strong path network, having good signage to orientate visitors is also essential. This will include direction signage, as well as landmark gateways to help define Sliabh Beagh.

1} Detailed condition survey

A thorough survey of all existing paths should be undertaken. This will allow for a detailed assessment to be made of their physical condition, their ease of access for different users and their suitability of design in relation to context. With professional support, this process could be used as a means of positive engagement with local groups who know the paths well.

2} Design standard specifications for walking trails

A important way of developing Sliabh Beagh as a destination will be to ensure consistency across the area. It is recommended that this applies to its path network, so that over time, walkers can expect similar standards of paths right across the region.

The beginning of this process will be to develop cross border standard specifications. This will set out different types of paths for Sliabh Beagh appropriate to different locations (mountain passes, bog walks, woodland trails). Where possible, a light touch approach will be adopted, not to undermine the sense of wilderness of the area.

These standards will then provide details on the design, specifications and construction of each path type, so that all new paths and improvements are implemented accordingly.

Example of orientation signage

Example of orientation signage

3} Phased Path Improvement Programme

A long term programme of path improvement should be undertaken across Sliabh Beagh. Based on the condition survey, this process requires strategic coordination across the entire area, allowing for a process of prioritisation and delivery when funding becomes available.

Great care is required to ensure that path upgrades and any new paths are appropriate to their setting. In protected areas, this will require formal processes, such as Appropriate Assessments, to be followed.

Construction of paths may be carried out through appointed contractors and the use of voluntary groups.

4} Wayfinding Strategy

In conjunction with the path network, a way finding strategy should be developed to determine the locations of orientation maps and signs across Sliabh Beagh.

This must be based on a detailed understanding of the path network and the locations of points of interest. To help stimulate economic activity, gateway towns and villages in Sliabh Beagh must be fully integrated with the wayfinding strategy.

5} Signage & Public Art (inc Sliabh Beagh waymarkers)

The signage system for Sliabh Beagh will be directly informed by the Wayfinding Strategy. Care is required to ensure adequate signs to help visitors explore the area, without an overprovision that in fact spoils the landscape for which they are intended.

Likewise the design of signs should be carefully considered in this context. A consistent 'family' of Sliabh Beagh signs should be developed, using high quality materials and craftmanship. The inclusion of the Irish language may be required in certain instances.

Not only will signs be used to orientate and direct visitors, but also to interpret the history and culture of Sliabh Beagh. Informed by the Intepretation Strategy, these must also be very well designed, written and positioned. Public Art should also be employed for interpretative purposes.

Finally, gateway markers should be designed and installed along all approach roads to Sliabh Beagh (between the Outer and Inner Gateway Towns). These are to be uniquely designed for Sliabh Beagh by an artist or landscape designer in conjunction with local people and constructed using high quality natural materials. Variations on a theme will enable signs to respond to their chosen location, helping ensure they are appropriate in scale. Branding for Sliabh Beagh should be incorporated.

Example of orientation signage

Example of orientation signage

H

DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES

Developing Sliabh Beagh as a destination will require maintaining and advertising its existing features of interest. These landmarks, many of which have archaeological and ecological significance, will need improvement works. This will be guided in detail through a Conservation Management Plan.

Sliabh Beagh has potential to further develop existing and new activities that would appeal to a wide range of people. These include walking, cycling, birdwatching, angling and horseriding. Such activities will be developed by the private sectors, with support from local councils.

Given the strong interest in astronomy in the area, Sliabh Beagh will seek to be included in the international Dark Skies initiative. This will control light pollution and encourage increased stargazing activities.

1} Conservation Management Plan to identify site specific requirements

Sliabh Beagh has a wealth of fascinating monuments, structures and buildings dotted all around the landscape. A carefully coordinated process is required to identify and map the elements that are not currently included in official records on each side of the border. This would lead to the creation of a Conservation Management plan for their preservation, restoration, interpretation and use, which could be incorporated into an area Heritage Plan. Heritagemaps.ie could also then be used as a baseline for this action.

The designations for the discovered points of interest will vary from location to location, with some archaeological sites requiring protection and limited access. However, other places, including ruined buildings in key locations, may be suitable for full restoration and re-use. Ideas may include cafes and restaurants, visitor centres or museums, bunkhouses or rental accommodation.

2} Development & Coordination of Activities & Experiences

For Sliabh Beagh to attract more visitors, investment is required in the activities and experiences that take place there. These should be led by the private and community sectors, with support from local and central government. Close attention should be paid to the aims and objectives set out in this masterplan to ensure appropriateness with the vision for Sliabh Beagh. A wide range

Coonian Ghost House (March 2017)

Horse riding

Angling

Mountain biking

Hiking

of activities have scope for development from nature watching, educational tours to outdoor pursuits and adventure sports, yet at all times ensuring they avoid disturbance of critically endangered and protected breeding birds.

3} International Dark Skies Certification

Sliabh Beagh has significant potential to be sensitively developed as a location of astronomy and stargazing. The lack of development and remoteness of the location, yet with relatively good regional transport links, makes it well suited for this increasingly popular pastime.

A goal of this process should be to seek certification from the International Dark Skies Association, with a various potential designations shown on the adjacent rectangle.

4} Light pollution control

In line with the certifcation process, steps are required to manage light pollution from existing locations and future projects. New and affordable lighting technologies will help to ensure this process does not prevent development, rather that it informs decisions around lighting.

5} Development of astronomical infrastructure & activities

Working with educational institutes and astronomical organisations, the potential of developing specific infrastructure and activities should be explored. This will include an extension to existing stargazing trips and may in time warrant the construction of an observatory in Sliabh Beagh. This has exciting potential to become a Unique Selling Point of the visitor experience .

Stargazing

Example of observatory

Possible designations by IDA International Dark-Sky Association (www.darksky.org):

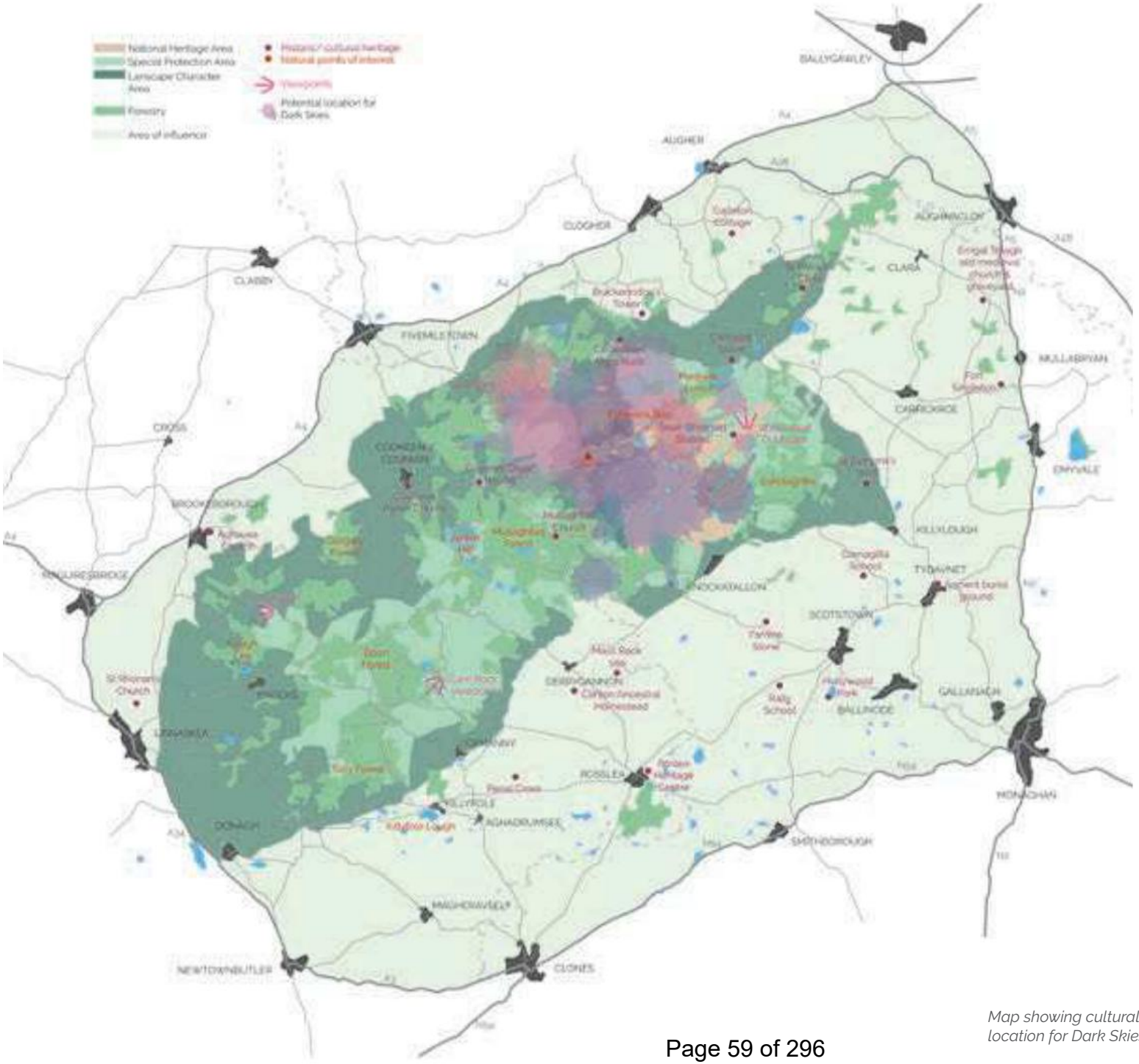
International Dark Sky Communities
Communities are legally organized cities and towns that adopt quality outdoor lighting ordinances and undertake efforts to educate residents about the importance of dark skies.

International Dark Sky Parks
Parks are publicly- or privately-owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors.

International Dark Sky Reserves
Reserves consist of a dark "core" zone surrounded by a populated periphery where policy controls are enacted to protect the darkness of the core.

International Dark Sky Sanctuaries
Sanctuaries are the most remote (and often darkest) places in the world whose conservation state is most fragile.

Dark Sky Developments of Distinction
Developments of Distinction recognize subdivisions, master planned communities, and unincorporated neighborhoods and townships whose planning actively promotes a more natural night sky but does not qualify them for the International Dark Sky Community designation.



Map showing cultural and natural destinations, potential location for Dark Skies and viewpoints.

I

EVENTS & FESTIVALS

There are several excellent cultural and sporting events and festivals that take place in the Sliabh Beagh area. They make an important contribution to local life, providing opportunities for the local community to socialise, join in shared experiences and celebrations. Events in Sliabh Beagh also have great potential to attract more visitors to the area, ideally involving overnight stays in the immediate vicinity.

These events require coordinated development and promotion to increase their impact. Furthermore, potential exists for new events that reinforce Sliabh Beagh's identity and unique visitor offer.

1} Annual Calendar & Promotion

Work is required to coordinate the promotion of existing events across Sliabh Beagh. This would involve online collation of events and the production of an annual calendar. By encouraging organising groups to plan as early as possible, the scope to help promote their events as part of a comprehensive Sliabh Beagh offer is increased.

2} Sliabh Beagh Event Development Initiative

In the context of a review of all existing events, the potential for new events in Sliabh Beagh should be explored.

It is recommended that for consistency, the vision, aims and objectives of this masterplan are used to guide deliberations.

Potential may exist for an annual Sliabh Beagh event that involves all communities and businesses across the entirety of the area.

Phoenix Song (June 2017)

Forgotten Song event, Mullaghfad Church (2016)

3} Cross-border Walking Festival

An increasing interest in walking and rambling in Sliabh Beagh has led to the successful holding of walking events. Great potential exists to further develop a cross-border walking festival which brings together groups and visitors from across the area and much further afield.

Walking in Sliabh Beagh

J

HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION

Along with the offer of new activities and experiences, providing appropriate accommodation across Sliabh Beagh is of vital importance. These must meet the needs of different interests and should include hotels, hostels, B&Bs and camp sites, Innovative accommodation consistent with the aims of Sliabh Beagh should be encouraged (eg. stargazing bubble tents). Accommodation will continue to be both private or community-led initiatives.

1} Community & Private Sector Development Support

Support to help the private and community sectors in developing appropriate visitor accommodation in Sliabh Beagh is required.

This may range from advice and training programmes, to the consideration of more direct assistance through grants and practical support. Working with existing providers will be a key first step, helping them to achieve high standards and to grow their businesses.

New accommodation that underpins the unique visitor offer of Sliabh Beagh should be prioritised. This may include the restoration of heritage buildings, accommodation in support of particular activities (eg. walking or stargazing) and those which involve an emphasis on environmental stewardship.

2} Coordination & Networking

Opportunities for local accommodation and hospitality providers to meet and network should be created. This would present the opportunity to establish a coordinated Sliabh Beagh offer and to introduce the area to tour providers and tourism agencies from across the island and beyond.

Example of rural accommodation house

Stargazing bubble tent

Camping

ACTION PLAN

5

Managing the delivery of improvements to Sliabh Beagh will be made through the use of an Action Plan set out on the following pages.

This 'live' document should be regularly reviewed and updated, so that projects across Sliabh Beagh are prioritised and monitored.

Lead delivery agents and potential stakeholders are listed on the action plan.

New projects and actions will arise in the future. These should be developed in close consultation with this masterplan, so ensuring that they complement other proposals and seek to fulfill the vision, aims and objectives established for Sliabh Beagh.

View from the Eshbrack Bog (Photo by Mary Beagan)

Aurora Borealis at Bragan Penal Cross

Photo Donal Muldoon

PROJECT OUTCOMES

		AIMS			OBJECTIVES			
		1	2	3	I	II	III	IV
	REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS	A Haven for Wildlife Cherish and Enhance our natural environment	A Great Place to Live and Work Support and grow quality of life and economic development	A wonderful place to visit and explore Grow the visitor economy and establish Sliabh Beagh as a uniquely authentic destination	Protect, manage and enhance natural habitats	Strengthen networks and infrastructure	Define and develop place identity	Increase tourism infrastructure and capacity
A	PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	IDENTITY & PROMOTION		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
C	CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT	✓		✓	✓			✓
D	DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE		✓			✓		✓
E	GATEWAYS			✓		✓	✓	✓
F	ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE		✓	✓		✓		✓
G	PATHS & SIGNAGE	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
H	DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
I	EVENTS & FESTIVALS		✓	✓			✓	✓
J	HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION		✓	✓		✓		✓

	REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS		PRIORITY	LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	COST BRACKET
A	PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION	1} Re-establishment and support of a Sliabh Beagh wide forum	I	Comm	All	€
B	IDENTITY & PROMOTION	1} Social History collation, digital archiving and communication	M	Comm & Hist	LG & CG & Edu & CG & Comm	€
		2} Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes	H	Comm & LG	Hist & TA & CG & Edu	€€
		3} Interpretation Signage & Art	VH	LG	Hist & TA & CG & Edu & Arts	€€
		4} Schools Programme	M	Edu	Edu	€
		5} Collaborative process to development 'Sliabh Beagh' Identity, brand and marketing material	VH	LG	All	€
		6} Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Sliabh Beagh area	H	Comm & Sport	LG & TA	€
C	CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT	1} Biodiversity Action Plan	VH	LG	Env & CG	€€
D	DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE	1} National lobbying for improved infrastructure	H	LG	LG & LB	€
		2} Pilot community led initiative	M	Comm	LG & CG & LB	€€
E	GATEWAYS	1} Regional Signage	VH	LG & CG	Comm & TA & CG & Arts	€€
		2} Identification of outer gateways for tourism information & orientation	H	LG	TA & CG	€
		3} Identification of inner gateway sites for visitor car parking and orientation facilities	VH	LG	CG & TA & CG	€€€
		4} Tourism training and awareness programme	H	Comm	LG & Comm & Edu	€€
F	ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE	1} Coordination of road improvements as part of ongoing maintenance programme	H	LG	CG & LG	€€€

KEY

PRIORITY
IMMEDIATE = I
VERY HIGH = VH
HIGH = H
MEDIUM = M

LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS & KEY STAKEHOLDERS
LG = Local Governments
CG = Central Government
TA = Tourism Agencies
LB = Local Businesses
Comm = Community groups
Env = Environmental groups
Hist = Historical groups
Edu = Education providers
Sports = Sport and activity groups
Arts = Arts and cultural groups

COST BRACKET
€ = 0 - 20,000
€€ = 20,000 - 100,000
€€€ = 100,000 - 500,000
€€€€ = 500,000 +

	REGENERATION PLAN PROJECTS		PRIORITY	LEAD DELIVERY AGENTS	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	COST BRACKET
G	PATHS & SIGNAGE	1} Detailed condition survey	I	LG	Env & Sports	€€
		2} Path design guide	I	LG	Env & Sports	€
		3} Phased improvement programme	VH	LG	Env & Sports & Comm	€€€€
		4} Wayfinding Strategy	H	Comm	TA & CG	€
		5} Signage & Public Art (inc Sliabh Beagh waymarkers)	H	LB	Comm & TA & CG	€€
H	DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES	1} Conservation Management Plan to identify site specific requirements	H	LG	Comm & Hist & Env & Arts & Sports & TA	€€
		2} Development & Coordination of Activities & Experiences	H	Comm	All	€
		3} International Dark Skies Certification	H	TA	Comm & TA & CG & Env	€
		4} Light pollution control	H	LG	TA & CG & Edu	€€
		5} Development of astronomical infrastructure & activities	M	LB / Env	LG & CG	€€€
I	EVENTS & FESTIVALS	1} Annual Calendar & Promotion	VH	Comm & LG	Comm & TA	€
		2} Sliabh Beagh Event Development Initiative	H	Comm	Comm & TA	€
		3} Cross-border Walking Festival	VH	Sport	LG & TA & CG	€€
J	HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION	1} Community & Private Sector Development Support	VH	TA	CG & TA & LB	€€
		2} Coordination & Networking	I	TA	LB & Comm	€

KEY

PRIORITY
IMMEDIATE = I
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APPENDICES

6

Snow on the Eshbrack Bog
(Photo by Donal Muldoon)

INITIAL CONSULTATION

1] Sliabh Beagh Hotel [Knockatallon] 08.03.2017

2] Cooneen/ Coonian Community Hall 08.03.2017

3] Online at surveymonkey.co.uk

Central to the development of this masterplan has been the input of local people. A consultation process was conducted in March 2017, based on public drop in events and an online survey.

This section summarises the findings of this process and in doing so, reveals key aspects of the relationship that respondents have with Sliabh Beagh and their aspirations for its future.

It is acknowledged that this consultation process provides a snapshot of local views. It will be important to sustain continued engagement with local residents, community groups and businesses in Sliabh Beagh, so ensuring they have an opportunity to fully contribute to shaping plans for the future of the area.

Advertisement sign in Knockatallon for Sliabh Beagh's first consultation (March 2017)

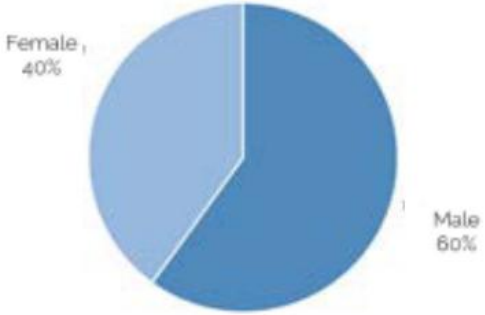
Consultation event at Coonen/ Coonian Community Hall (March 2017)

Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (March 2017)

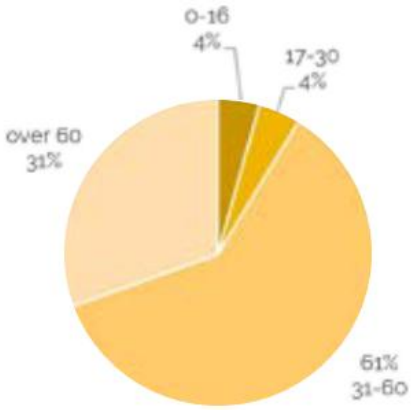
Map of the area with comments from attendees (March 2017)

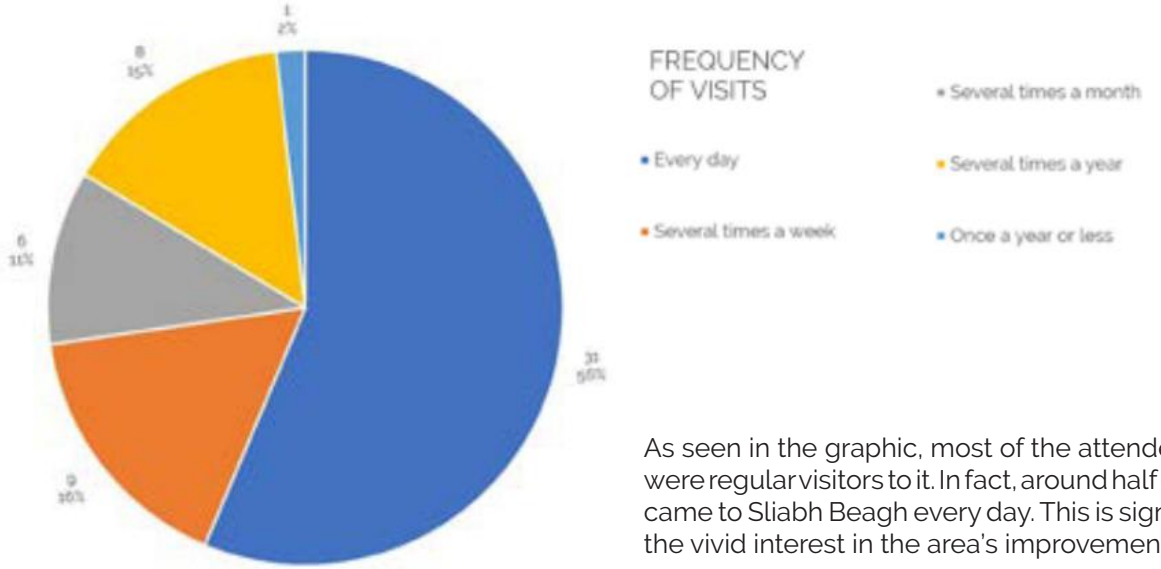
57 RESPONSES

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

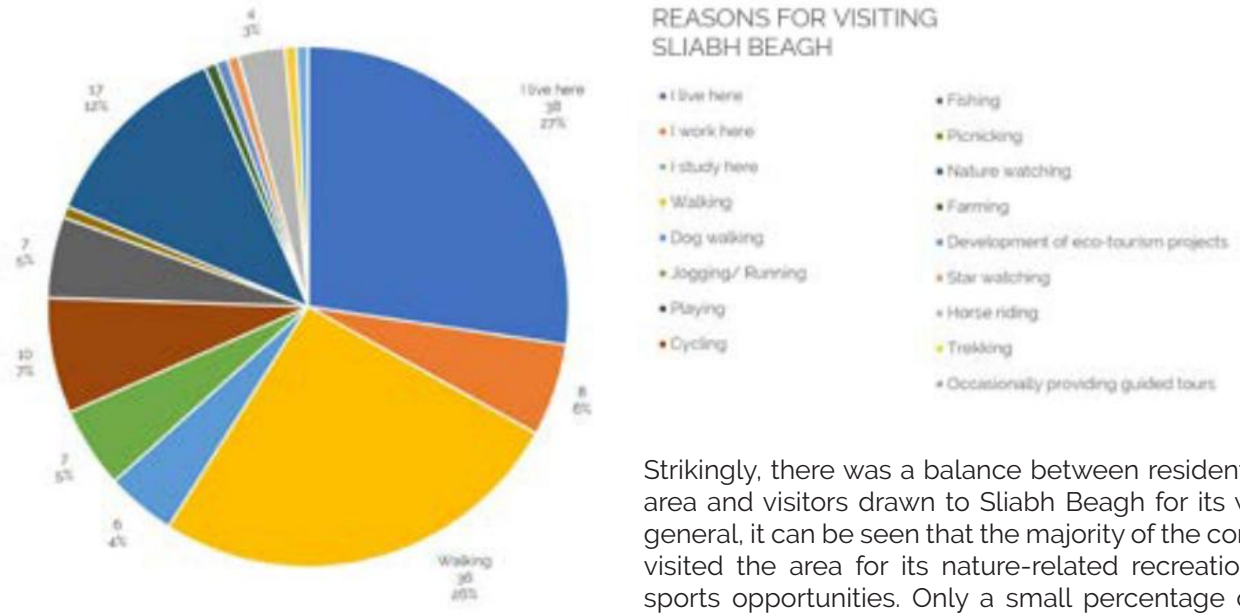


PARTICIPATION BY AGE



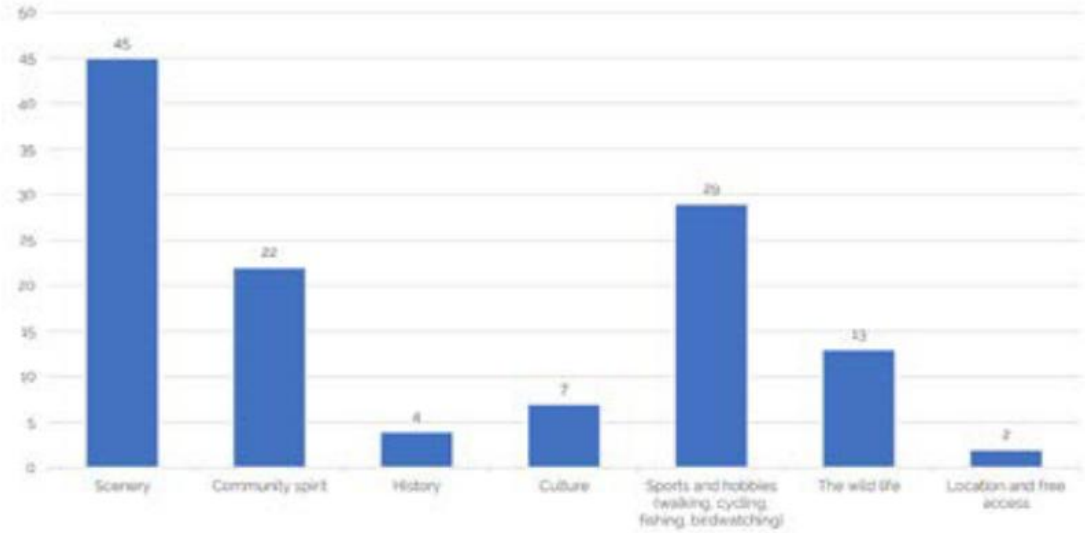


As seen in the graphic, most of the attendees to the area were regular visitors to it. In fact, around half of the enquired came to Sliabh Beagh every day. This is significant to show the vivid interest in the area's improvement for the future.



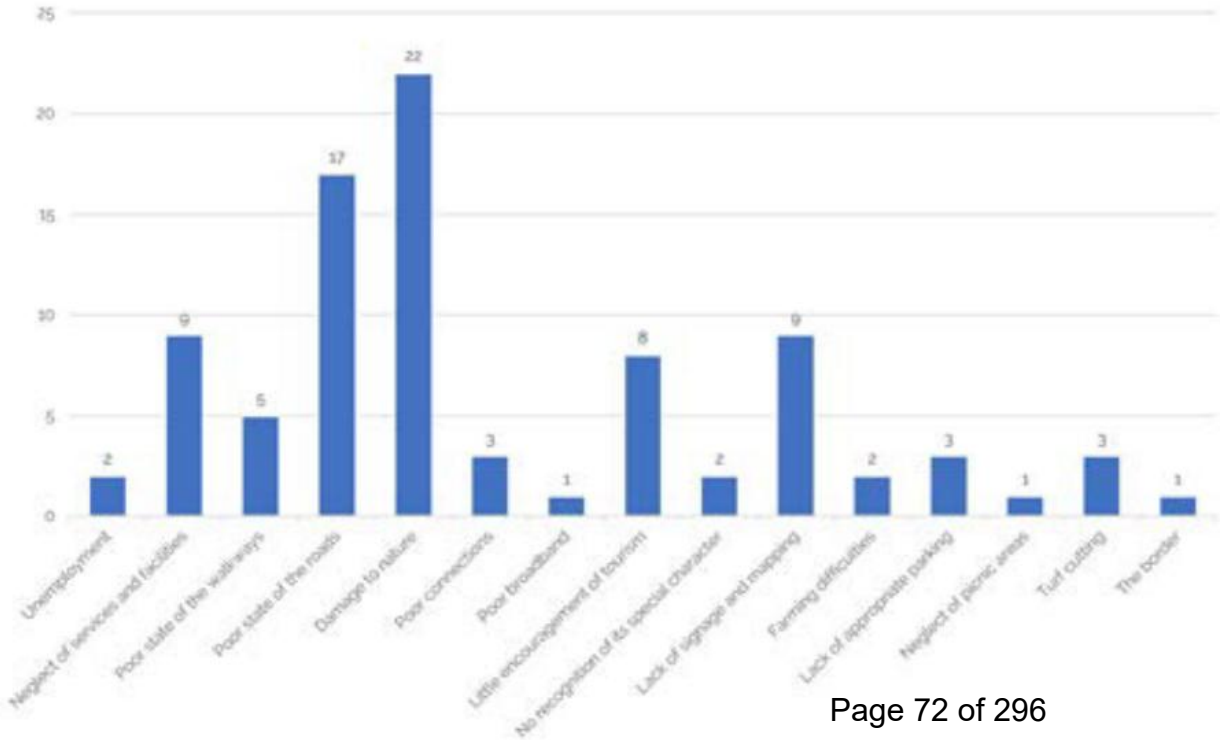
Strikingly, there was a balance between residents of the area and visitors drawn to Sliabh Beagh for its walks. In general, it can be seen that the majority of the consultees visited the area for its nature-related recreational. and sports opportunities. Only a small percentage came to the area for work.

THINGS MOST LIKED

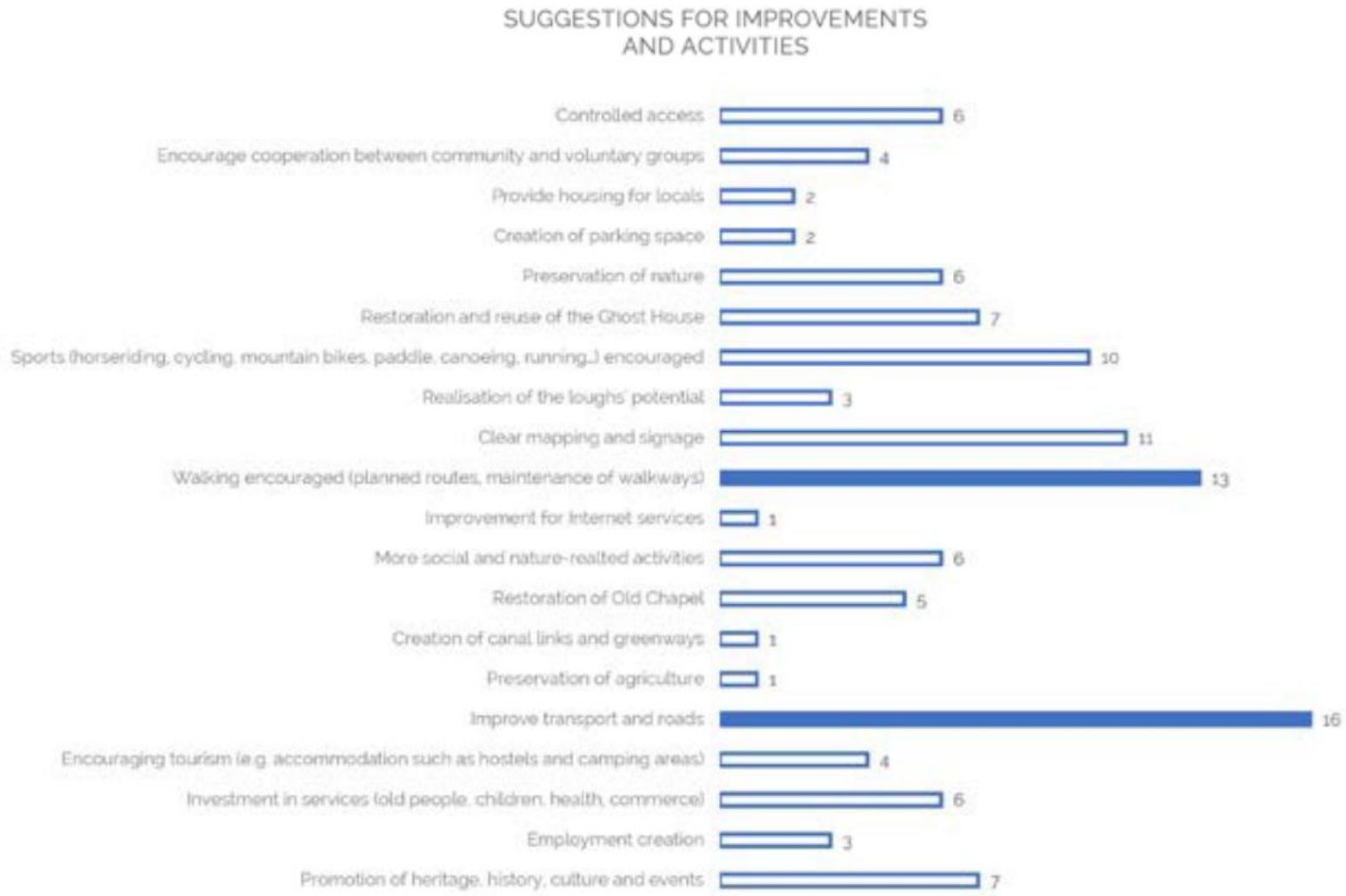


Sliabh Beagh's outstanding scenery was identified as its most attractive feature as a result of the consultation. Sport and hobbies developed in the area were also a great asset along with the close-knit community spirit.

THINGS MOST DISLIKED



Among the drawbacks that were identified by the consultees, damage caused to nature was the most recurring. The current low quality of the road network and the lack of signage and mapping were also considered some of the area's major issues to deal with.



As a result of the poor condition of the roads and paths identified on the previous graphic, their improvement was judged vital as a key priority for the area's future. In addition, As walking proved to be one of the favourite reasons for visiting Sliabh Beagh, consultees suggested further encouragement of it. Some specific suggestions were also made, such as the restoration of the Coneen Ghost House or the Old Chapel at Mullaghfad.

SECOND CONSULTATION

1] Sliabh Beagh Hotel [Knockatallon]
28.09.2017

2] Coonian Ghost House [Cooneen/ Coonian]
05.10.2017

3] Online at surveymonkey.co.uk
14.09 - 06.10.2017

The Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was presented to the local community during two open days and online. This provided local people and organisations with the opportunity to comment upon proposals and recommend ideas for its improvement.

The Councils and consultants wish to extend their gratitude to everyone who contributed to this important process.

Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)

Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)

Consultation event at Coonen/ Coonian Community Hall (October 2017)

Consultation event at the Sliabh Beagh Hotel (September 2017)

FEEDBACK

In this second consultation, characteristics identified in the first consultation continued to be Sliabh Beagh's most special qualities, such as the area's nature, beautiful sceneries and the close-knit community spirit.

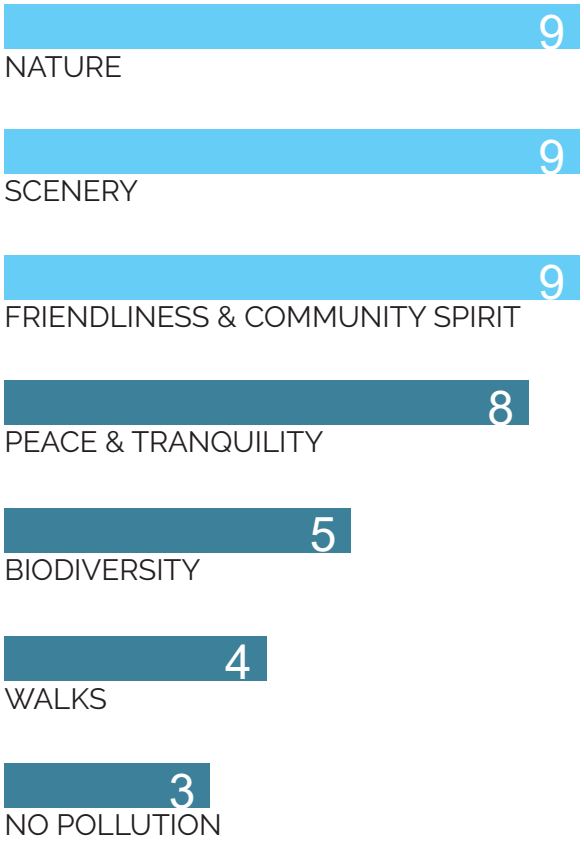
When asked about the priorities for the area, the protection of Sliabh Beagh's flora and fauna was consultee's biggest concern. The development of recreational activities (walking and other sports) and the improvement of the quality of the road network and other infrastructure were also judged very important.

Furthermore, a significant number of responses suggested improving the area's promotion and marketing to play a key role in attracting tourism, along with creating proper signage for orientation of visitors.

Given the importance nature and wildlife has proved to have through both consultation processes, it is not striking that the third theme of this plan, Conservation Management, scored the highest mark in importance for Sliabh Beagh, closely followed by Destinations & Experiences. Overall, response to the proposed themes from the attendees can be considered very positive.

Finally, consultees made valuable suggestions on how to improve Sliabh Beagh in addition to this plan's proposals. Activities such as a kiteflying club, a bogwater-themed spa or a bike hire facility were named, as well as the possibility of developing ecotherapy.

Q1} WHAT MAKES SLIABH BEAGH SPECIAL?



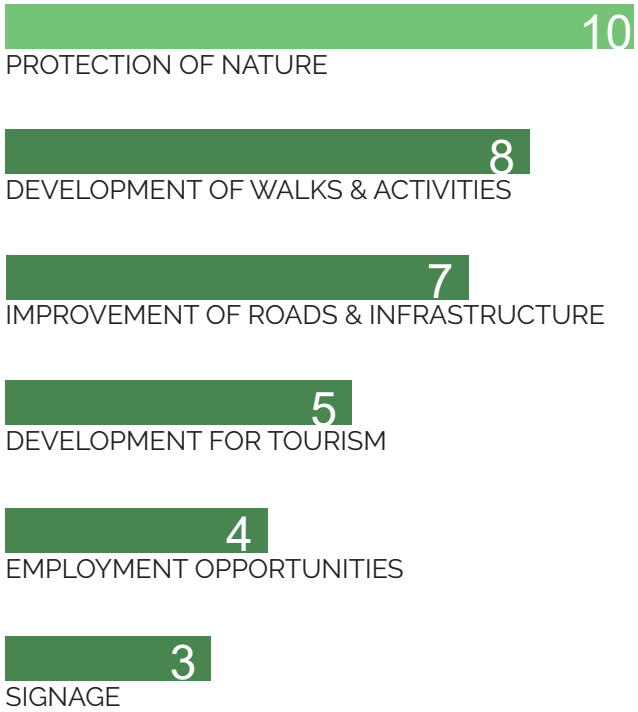
OTHER RESPONSES

SPORTS GROUPS

DANCING & SINGING CLASSES

FISHING

Q2} WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR SLIABH BEAGH?



OTHER RESPONSES

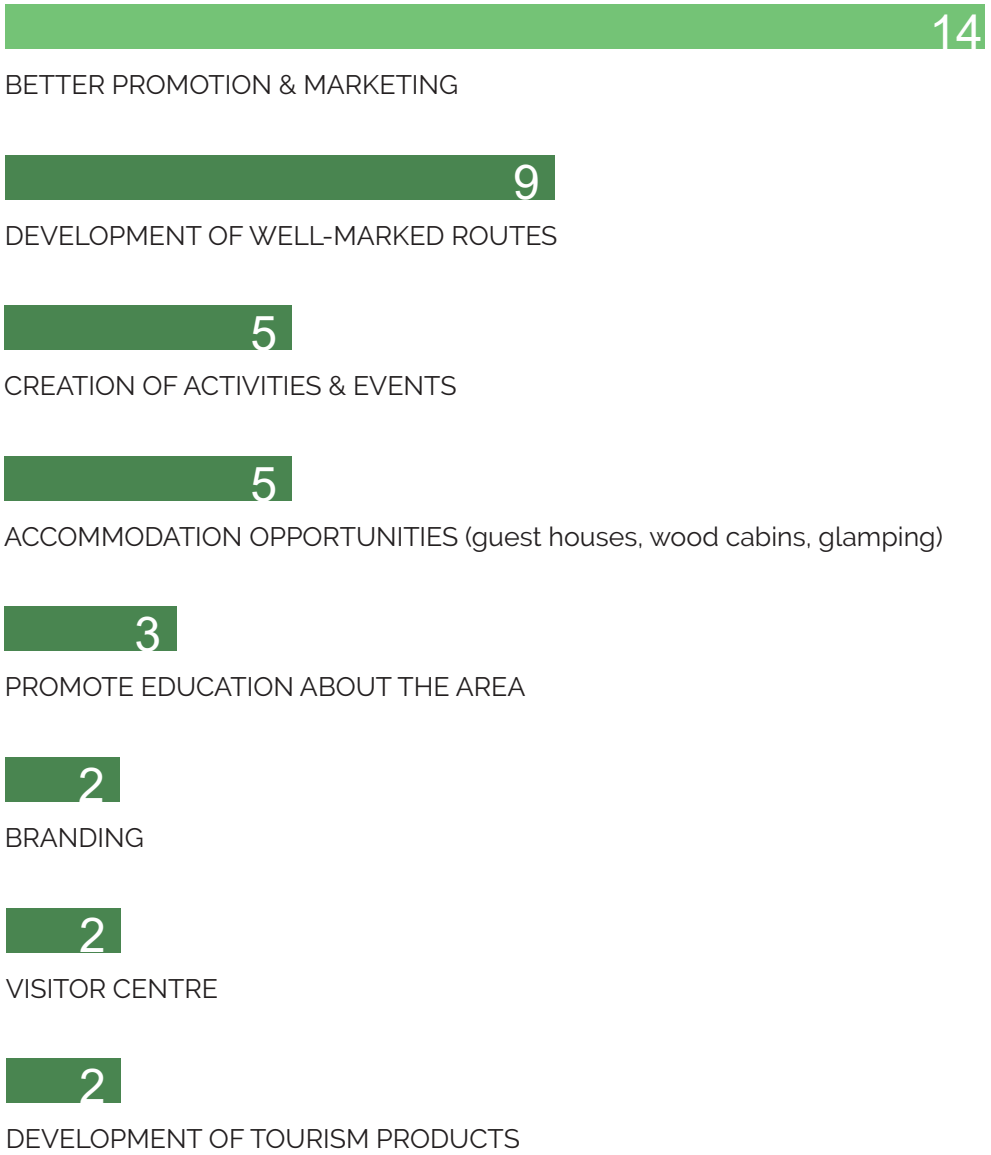
IMPROVE COVERAGE

COOPERATION BETWEEN 3 COUNCILS

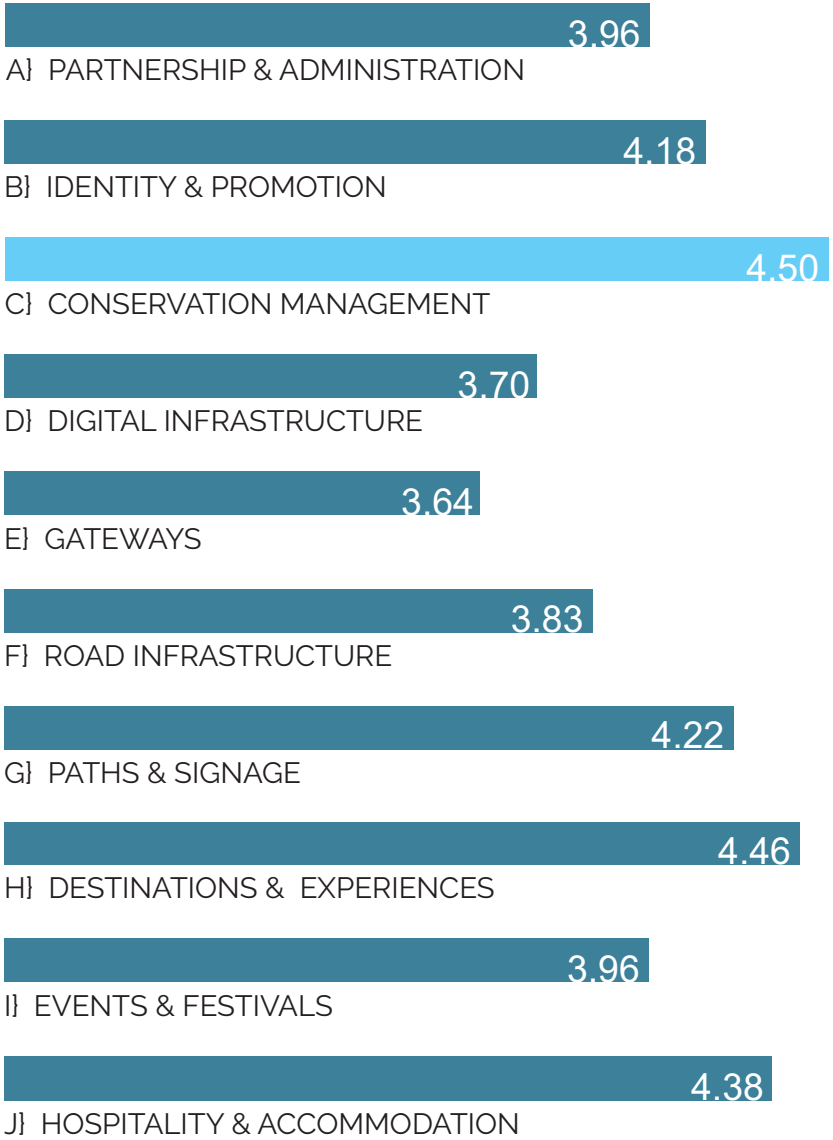
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN ACTIVITIES

CONTROL OVER FORESTRY, TURF CUTTING, HUNTING, SHOOTING & DUMPING

Q3} HOW CAN WE WELCOME VISITORS TO SLIABH BEAGH?



Q4} RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPOSED THEMES [1= not important; 5= very important]



Q5} WHAT OTHER IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR SLIABH BEAGH?

MORE INVOLVEMENT FROM COUNCIL

COUNCIL & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

WOOD CABIN ACCOMMODATION

ROAD & ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

KITEFLYING CLUB

BIKE HIRE FACILITY

MARKETING OF SLIABH BEAGH

PROMOTION & MAINTENANCE OF BIODIVERSITY

RESTORATION OF GHOST HOUSE

CYCLE TRAILS

ADVENTURE SPORTS

WALKING PATHS

MORE INVESTMENT

ECOTHERAPY

INTERPRETATION

DARK SKY PROTECTION

SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM

PROMOTION OF EVENTS (stargazing, mountain biking...)

ORIENTATION TABLES

BOGWATER-THEMED SPA

CONTROL OVER DUMPING (increase bin provision, Leave No Trace policy)

CAR PARKING & TOILET PROVISION

Sliabh Beagh Masterplan
PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENT
TONIGHT
Share with us your thoughts and ideas about Sliabh Beagh
Monaghan County Council
the paulhogarth company

CONSULTATION EVENT
thepaulhogarthcompany
DRAFT
SLIABH BEAGH
MASTERPLAN
HAVE YOUR SAY!

FEEDBACK FORMS

Welcome.
This survey is about the Sliabh Beagh Area across the borders of Counties Monaghan, Fermanagh and Tyrone.
The Paul Hogarth Company has been appointed by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to prepare a tourism masterplan for the future of this area.

Please kindly complete the following survey and leave it with a member of our team.

1. How often do you visit the Sliabh Beagh area?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ Several times a week
- ☐ Several times a month
- ☐ Several times a year
- ☐ Once a year or less

2. What 3 things do you like most about the Sliabh Beagh area?

A .....
B .....
C .....

3. What 3 things do you dislike most about the Sliabh Beagh area?

A .....
B .....
C .....

4. Why do you visit Sliabh Beagh area? (Please tick which apply)

- ☐ I live here
- ☐ I work here
- ☐ I study here
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Dog Walking
- ☐ Jogging/Running
- ☐ Playing
- ☐ Cycling
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Picnicking
- ☐ Nature watching

Other

5. **What improvements and activities would you like to see in the Sliabh Beagh area?**

Suggestions:

Optional questions

6. **Gender**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

7. **Age Range**

- ☐ 0-16
- ☐ 17-30
- ☐ 31-60
- ☐ over 60

8. **Name and Contact details**

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey

Welcome to the public consultation process on the Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan. This project has been jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

Once finalised, the plan will set in place a shared vision for the future of the Sliabh Beagh area and will identify a range of projects for delivery over the short, medium and longer terms.

You are kindly invited to review the information panels and answer the following questions.

FEEDBACK FORM

thepaulhogarthcompany

1

What makes Sliabh Beagh special to you?

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2

What are your priorities for Sliabh Beagh?

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3

How can we welcome more visitors to Sliabh Beagh?

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.....

Please rate how important you think the proposed masterplan themes are.
[1= not important, 5= very important]

4

	1	2	3	4	5
A} CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT	○	○	○	○	○
B} PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION	○	○	○	○	○
C} IDENTITY & PROMOTION	○	○	○	○	○
D} DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE	○	○	○	○	○
E} GATEWAYS	○	○	○	○	○
F} ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE	○	○	○	○	○
G} PATHS & SIGNAGE	○	○	○	○	○
H} DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES	○	○	○	○	○
I} EVENTS & FESTIVALS	○	○	○	○	○
J} HOSPITALITY & ACCOMMODATION	○	○	○	○	○

5

What other ideas and suggestions do you have for Sliabh Beagh?

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THANK YOU!

Please submit this feedback form into the returns box provided or, alternatively, you can complete online at: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/sliabhbeaghmasterplan

If you would like to be kept informed about the Sliabh Beagh Masterplan, please provide your contact details below:

NAME .....
EMAIL .....

CONSULTATION BOARDS

1

DRAFT SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan public consultation process.

The Masterplan has been jointly commissioned by Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council to establish a strategic vision for the future of this important rural area. The plan is being produced by Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, working in close consultation with local people.

These boards summarise the emerging findings, aims, objectives and projects. You are kindly invited to review these draft proposals and to share with us your feedback, so helping improve the plan.

MASTERPLAN PROCESS

- Inception Meeting - Jan. 2017
- Desk Top Studies - Feb. 2017
- Site Appraisal - Feb. 2017
- Initial Stakeholder Engagement - Mar. 2017
- Options Appraisal - Apr./May 2017
- Draft Masterplan - Jun./Jul. 2017
- Second Stakeholder Engagement - Aug. 2017
- Final Masterplan Report - Sept./Oct. 2017
- Masterplan Launch - Nov. 2017

DELIVERY OF THE PLAN

Once finalised, the projects within this plan will be prioritised for funding and delivery by a range of different parties, including council, government bodies and community groups.

In addition, ongoing projects that are compatible with the masterplan are to be supported. These include proposals for pathways at Knockatallon, Knocks and the bog, as well as some other mapping initiatives.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

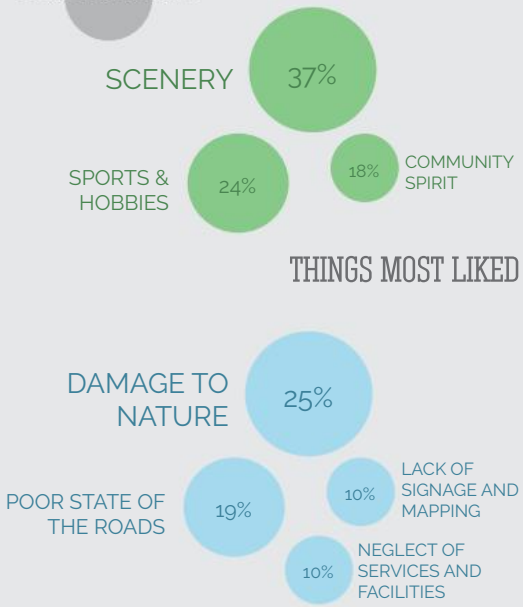
Two well attended public consultation events were held at 8 March 2017 in Knockatallon and Cooneen/ Coonian. The feedback given during these events, plus responses to the questionnaire have been used to inform this Draft Masterplan.

"These sights I see, these sounds I hear on the Mountain of Sliabh Beagh."

–'The Mountain of Sliabh Beagh', by Peter Keenan

"The wild hare hops across the mane, the beagle goes behind, Eishmore towns high above it all, bedecked with spruce and pine, In a moss-clad swamp behind the lake, a moorhen shy is wadin', While a bumblebee dances through the air with heather honey laden."

FEEDBACK SO FAR



HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

It is vital that as many local people, groups and businesses have their say on the Draft Plan.

The consultation period will run from 14th September to 6th October 2017.

FILL OUT A FORM

Complete our short survey online available with these panels.

GIVE US A SHOUT

Keep an eye out on a public consultation in your area, come along and talk to our team.

DROP US A LINE

Send an email with your feedback and ideas to sliabhbeagh@paulhogarth.com

People

Sliabh Beagh has a strong sense of community and it various communities have worked together on a number of projects. This community spirit is an important strength that will be key to taking the area forward.

Natural Beauty

Sliabh Beagh is an attractive landscape, which is unspoilt by over-development. Maintaining this quality will key to the future of the area, especially in attracting increased tourism.

Wildlife

Sliabh Beagh is an important natural habitat and home to several key species of flora and fauna. Coordinated work is required to ensure habitats are protected and enhanced, while increasing awareness.

Tranquility

Sliabh Beagh is a place of calm and tranquality, unaffected by noise and light pollution. This is another integral quality to the area.

Tourism Infrastructure

Sliabh Beagh has signficant potential as a tourism destination. Existing tourism information and facilities are of good quality, but will need to grow considerably across the entire area.

Accessibility

Sliagh Beagh is strategically well located and with investment planned in surrounding transport infrastructure (eg A5 / N2, Ulster Canal) it will become more accessible.

Brexit

Sliabh Beagh is unique as the meeting point of 3 counties. The UK's decision to leave the European Union places uncertainity around the border between North and South and in particular the many crossing points.

ANALYSIS

Before developing ideas for Sliabh Beagh it is essential that we ensure a good understanding of the area. What makes Sliabh Beagh special? This process has been informed by a desktop review of plans and policies, by site visits to the area and by an initial consultation process with residents from the area. This board sets out some of these key findings.

Sliabh Beagh has many qualities. Identifying them and articulating why they are important will help us to protect and sensitively enhance them. Like all places, Sliabh Beagh also has room for improvement. These issues and their impact need fully understood so that viable solutions can be found.

DRAFT SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

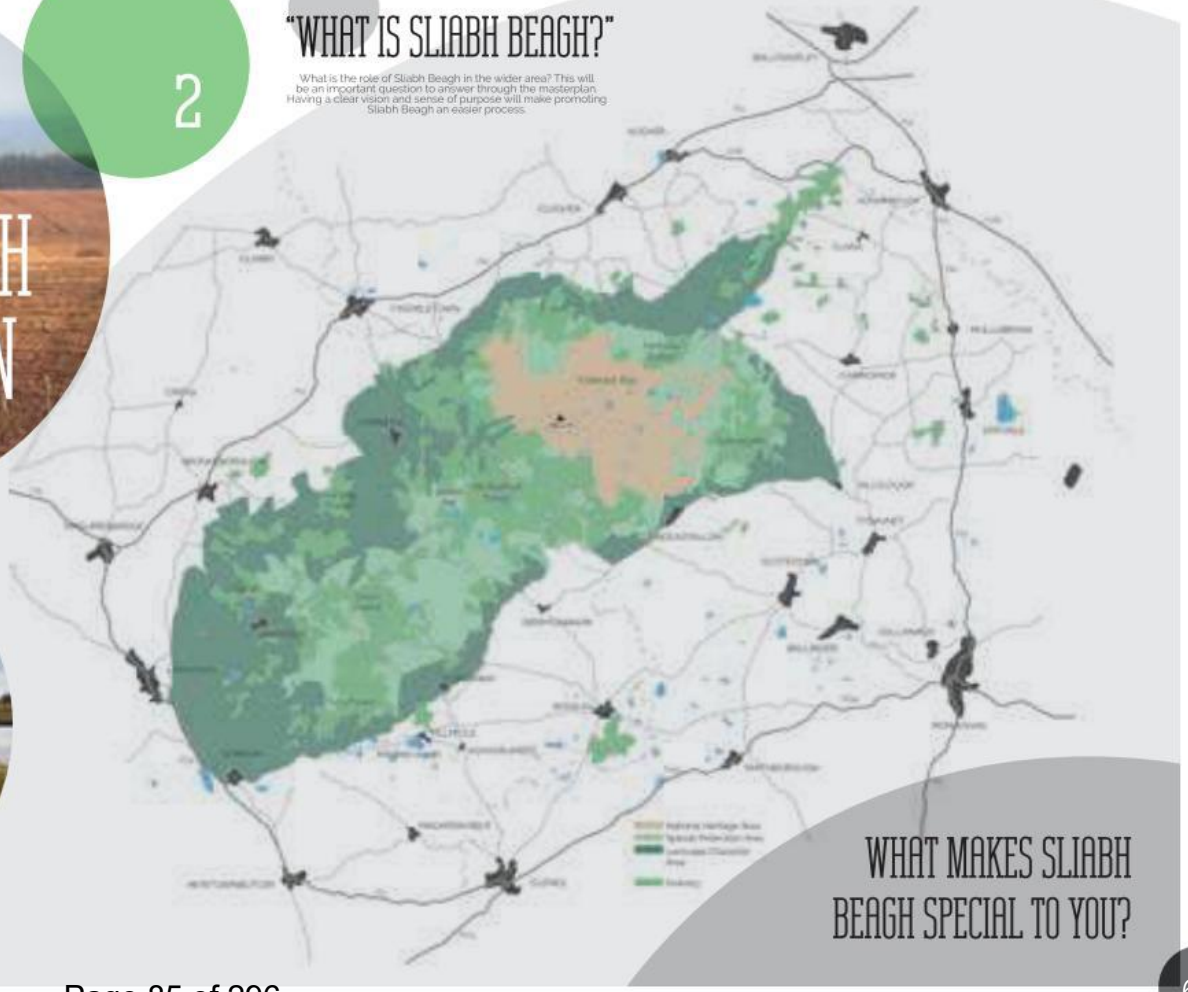
2

"WHERE IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

Not everyone has heard of Sliabh Beagh and there is very little signage advertising the area. This will be a key issue to address should the area be promoted for increased investment and tourism.

"WHAT IS SLIABH BEAGH?"

What is the role of Sliabh Beagh in the wider area? This will be an important question to answer through the masterplan. Having a clear vision and sense of purpose will make promoting Sliabh Beagh an easier process.



WHAT MAKES SLIABH BEAGH SPECIAL TO YOU?

AIMS

Maintain and improve the natural environment

The unspoiled melancholic bog, the breathtaking lakes and the deep forest, all the different landscapes in Sliabh Beagh need to be looked after and their future ensured.

Continue to grow as a great place to live and work

A place with healthy lifestyles and minds, closely related with nature that also offers employment opportunities.

Develop the tourism potential of the area

Helping visitors discover all of Sliabh Beagh's outstanding features would help local economy and connect the area with its surroundings.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Draft Aims and Objectives summarised on this board set out the overarching priorities for Sliabh Beagh. Once finalised, these should be used to guide all future policies and projects for the area.

Sliabh Beagh is a wonderful natural asset on the doorstep of many people. It is therefore important that we protect and enhance this natural landscape as much as possible.

Sliabh Beagh is also home to a rural community. It must therefore provide for its people, maintaining a good quality of life and providing opportunities for employment and business growth.

Key to the future of Sliabh Beagh will be our ability to carefully balance these requirements.

3

SUSTAINABILITY

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR SLIABH BEAGH?

OBJECTIVES

Ensure Sliabh Beagh's future as a natural asset, enhancing biodiversity and preserving the characteristics that make it special.

I Protect, manage and enhance the natural environment

Improve the transport and data network to rebuild connections within the area and its surroundings.

II Strengthen networks and infrastructure

III Define and develop place identity

Establishing and celebrating the local identity and brand appeal of Sliabh Beagh.

IV Extend the welcome and sharing

Welcoming all to Sliabh Beagh while building up healthy social relationships and sharing local history and values.

DRAFT SLIABH BEAGH MASTERPLAN

4

THEMES [A-C]

The Draft Sliabh Beagh Masterplan consists of 10 separate themes, under which a number of actions are proposed.

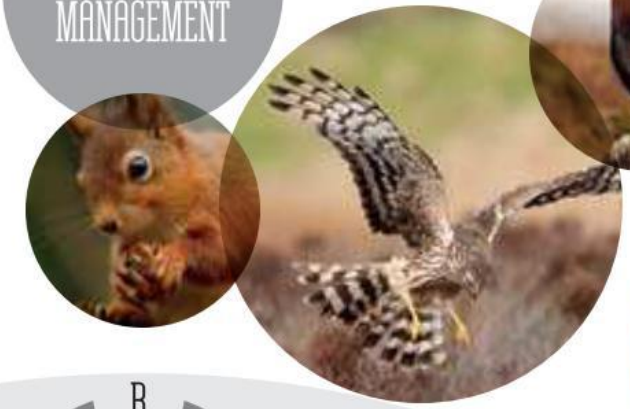
These themes and actions seek to fulfill the Aims and Objectives for Sliabh Beagh as listed on the previous board. They range greatly in scale and complexity. Some will require signficant funding, while others will require coordination of community and voluntary effort.

Once the masterplan is finalised, the projects will be included in an Action Plan. This will allow for actions to be prioritised and delivered by the Councils, agencies and communities, as and when funding becomes available.

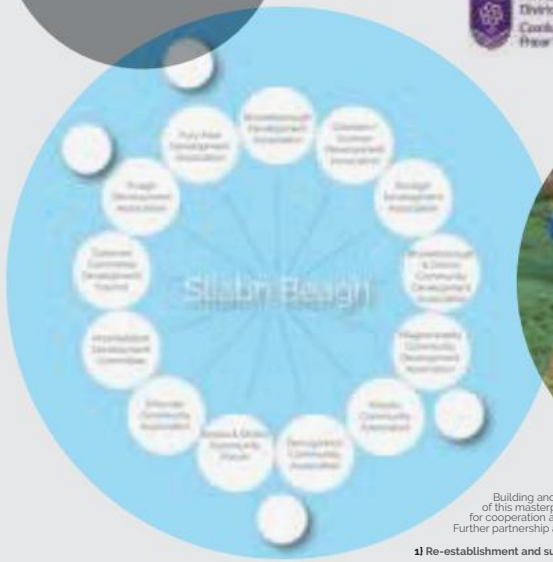
A CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

Sliabh Beagh is home to the beloved Hen Harrier, the Red Grouse, the Pine Marten and the Red Squirrel, along with some special flora. These features are what make Sliabh Beagh distinctive, so the conservation of habitats and key species is a key action for this masterplan. A Conservation Management Plan was produced in August 2011 and set out priorities. It is now proposed to prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan that would identify specific actions to enhance the area's richness of flora and fauna, while balancing the requirements of farmers and other landowners.

1] Biodiversity Action Plan



B PARTNERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION



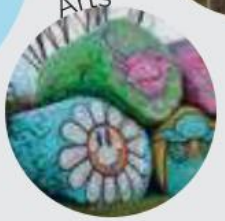
Building and sustaining partnership to look after this natural landscape is a vital part of fulfilling the aims of this masterplan. The Ballybay-Clones Erne East Partnership (BCEEP) provides an important forum for cooperation across council areas. Community groups are also working hard to improve their area. Further partnership and collaboration between communities and councils is proposed.

1] Re-establishment and support of a Sliabh Beagh wide forum

C IDENTITY & PROMOTION

Religion

Arts



History

Music

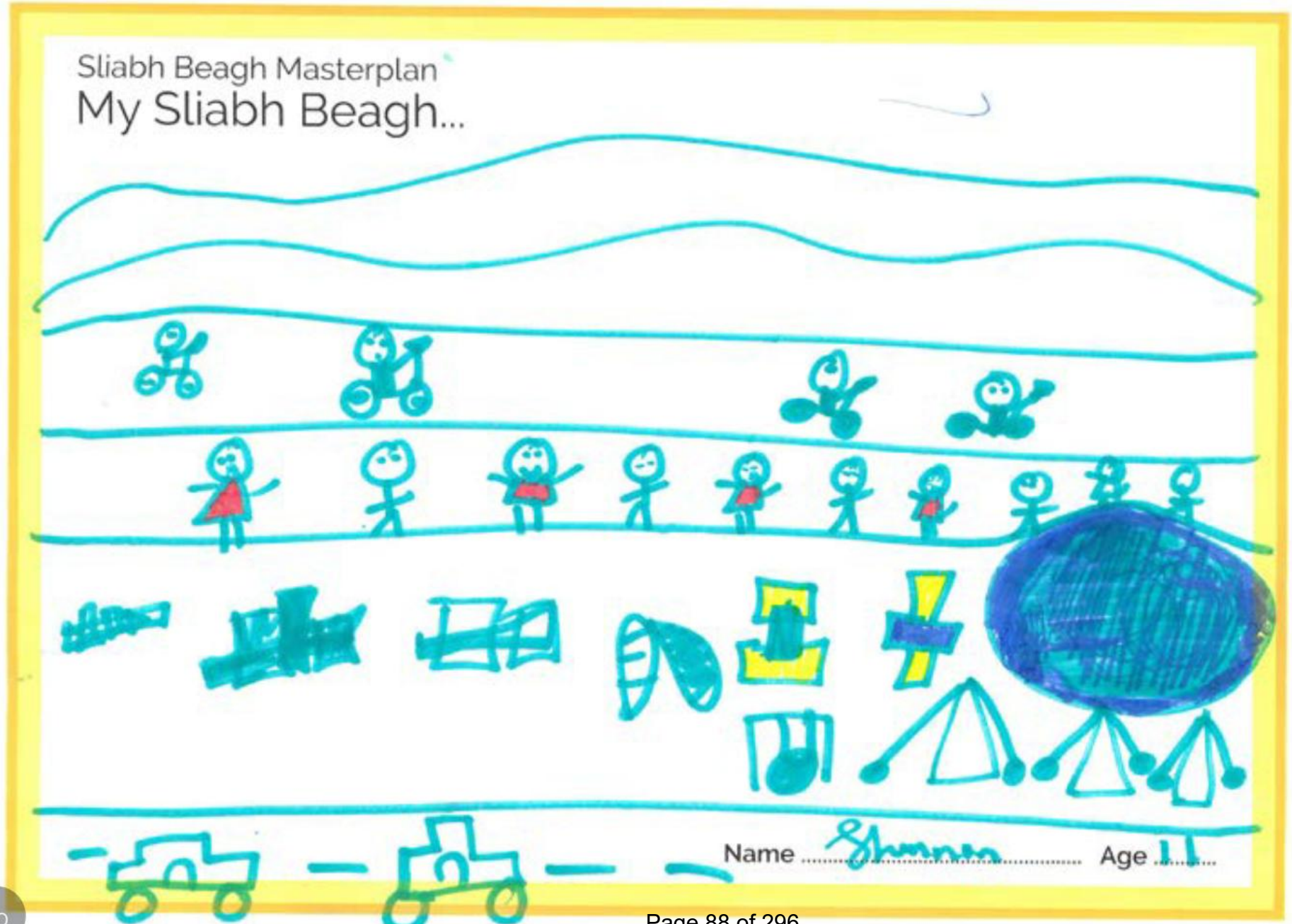
A place is not only defined by its nature and built features, but also by the stories and culture that develops around it. This heritage must be preserved, shared and celebrated in partnership with communities.

To enhance the visitor experience, an interpretation strategy needs to be developed. The natural features as well as historical events will be explained through signage and trails. This would also be an educational resource for schools and colleges.

There is a strong need to translate Sliabh Beagh's identity into an appealing brand that can be easily recognizable for visitors. It is proposed that this identity definition is developed through a collaborative process with the residents and businesses, who know Sliabh Beagh best.

1] Social History collation, digital archiving and communication
2] Interpretation Strategy to research and develop themes
3] Interpretation Signage & Art
4] Schools Programme
5] Collaborative process to development 'Sliabh Beagh' identity, brand and marketing material
6] Expand existing pilot online community mapping project to include all of Sliabh Beagh area

HOW COULD YOU HELP IMPROVE SLIABH BEAGH?


Sliabh Beagh Masterplan
My Sliabh Beagh...
Name
Age 11

Sliabh Beagh Masterplan

My Sliabh Beagh...

Name senan Age 9

Monaghan
County Council

Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

thepaulhogarthcompany

Report on	Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan – Council Action Plan
Date of Meeting	7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Head of Community Development
Contact Officer	Celene O'Neill, Martina Totten, Community Planning

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To agree a Mid Ulster District Council Anti-Poverty Action Plan.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan was recently presented to Council. Members agreed the Plan, but accepted that the Plan is the responsibility of a number of community planning partners. As a partner members asked that an Action Plan for Council led activity be developed across all departments.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Engagement has taken place with all departments (directors and heads of service) to update them on the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan, and to identify actions for Council delivery, alongside areas for lobbying under community planning. Please see attached at Appendix 1. Council Service leads will report on progress in implementing the actions on a quarterly basis. All Council actions align to the overall themes contained in the main Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan. Engagement is also continuing with Community Planning partners regarding delivery of the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan. Progress on delivery of these actions will also be updated to Council.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u>** Departmental Budgets and Service Plans
4.2	**<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u>** None

4.3	**<u>Risk Management Implications</u>** None
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	To agree a Mid Ulster District Council Anti-Poverty Action Plan.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix 1 Mid Ulster District Council Anti-Poverty Action Plan

ANTI POVERTY PLAN – MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL ACTIONS

Community Development

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2020/2021
Theme 1 Economic Growth	Business and Communities Community Development Claire Linney, Head of Community Development	Income/Benefits: Promote and provide benefit advice and debt support to maximise income and reduce debt.	Continue promotion and provision of local advice service and targeted debt support to vulnerable people.	
Theme 2 Education and Skills		Education Affordability: Free at point of delivery. Promote uniform grants and recycling initiatives. Promote Free School Meals and lobby for increased threshold. Promote breakfast clubs in schools and look at potential to link to social economy cafes, youth programmes etc. Early years: Encourage and promote recycling schemes for high cost family items e.g. baby items, IT equipment .	Promote uniform grants. Develop uniform recycling initiatives across Mid Ulster. Promote Free School Meal uptake. Develop and promote Fareshare schemes in schools in areas of high deprivation. Develop and promote social café models. Map and promote local charities and schemes which provide high cost items.	
Theme 3 Health and Wellbeing		Leisure and Wellbeing: Support local community mental health organisations in the district, including low cost/no cost counselling, which contributes to people awaiting statutory provision.	Support and network the existing community counselling services in the district.	

		Provide free leisure during set times in the summer for children/young people on FSM/ low income. Food Poverty: Coordinate support for front line poverty charities including financial support and development of Anti-poverty networks. Encourage Social Supermarkets and Community Food Cupboards in the district.	Deliver a Pilot Summer Play Scheme including food support, targeting children aged 7 – 11 years in disadvantaged estates in partnership with EA Youth and DFC. Co-ordinate and support an anti-poverty and food poverty network. Develop social supermarkets and community food cupboards in partnership with DfC.	

Economic Development

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 1: Economic Growth Skills and Educational Development	Business and Communities Economic Development Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development	Lobby for the review of the school funding formula to ensure all young people can avail of the most appropriate educational pathway for their needs.	Encourage the apprenticeship model as a potential career path for pupils through school engagement & Community Planning Careers Forum. Facilitate the Community Planning Careers Forum.	
		To work in partnership with Mid Ulster Skills Forum to develop apprenticeship programmes across the district, targeted at areas of disadvantage.	Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering).	
		Link the Steps to Success training and support programme to the Mid Ulster Skills Forum, for a local industry led approach.	Establish and facilitate a multi-agency Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and action plan of skills development.	

Arts and Culture

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2020/2021
Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing	Business and Communities Culture and Arts Tony McCance, Head of Culture and Arts	Leisure and Wellbeing: Review reduced rates for leisure activities, with support to engage people in poverty.	Align Carers' policy across Departments ie free entry for accompanying carers to performances. Increase availability of virtual productions for schools (schools/parents do not incur additional transport/food costs). Source theatrical productions that are relevant to the School Curriculum and apply child rate ticket pricing.	
		Vulnerable groups: Target programmes to vulnerable groups at higher risk of poverty. Partner organisations to ensure facilities and services are accessible to the most vulnerable eg Age Friendly, Dementia Friendly, Autism Friendly and Financially Accessible.	Deliver Outreach Street Art and Community Theatre in disadvantaged areas, targeting young people. Facilitate and deliver disability showcase performances and targeted programmes.	

Leisure and Outdoor Recreation

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 2: Education and Skills	Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Leisure Section Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure	Young People's Mental Health and Resilience: Develop 'Education for Life' courses for young people to include money management, driving, positive relationships, mental health and wellbeing etc	Develop coaching, life guard, first aid courses, etc. for young people to increase youth leisure skills and employment opportunities.	
Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing		Leisure and Wellbeing: Review reduced rates for leisure activities, with support to engage, people in poverty. Provide free leisure during set times in the summer for children/young people on FSM/ low income. Food Poverty: Partners to ensure coordinated approach on food poverty programme delivery. Leisure and Wellbeing: Work towards the development of Health Hub in each area of disadvantage (Gortgonis Health Hub model).	Increase use of and access to leisure facilities for disadvantaged young people, partner EA Youth. Deliver a pilot voucher scheme for older children aged 12 – 18 years on FSMs, providing free sessions at Council leisure facilities at specific times in partnership with Good Relations, post primary schools, DfC. Provide access to leisure services facilities for young people, at key times, for £1.00 per session. Develop Health Hubs in areas of disadvantage – (Dungannon West, Coalisland, Pomeroy, Maghera, Ardboe).	

Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing	Leisure & Outdoor Recreation Parks Section Nigel Hill, Head of Parks	Leisure and Wellbeing: Encourage /support play development in disadvantaged communities to support wellbeing of children.	Include disadvantaged areas in the Play Near Me scheme for annual play activity (potential Peace Plus).	

Organisational Development

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 1: Economic Growth	Organisational Development HR Section Marissa Canavan, Director of Organisational Development	Income/benefits: Partners to review use of zero-hours contracts, casual contracts and living wage implementation.	Discuss development of a set of principles regarding standards for zero hour contracts and share with partner organisations.	
Theme 2: Education and Skills		Skills and Educational Development: To work in partnership with Mid Ulster Skills Forum to develop apprenticeship programmes across the district, targeted at areas of disadvantage.	Develop a Council apprenticeship programme.	
Cross Cutting All Themes	Organisational Development Marketing and Communications Ursula Mezza, Head of Marketing & Communications	All actions.	Raise awareness and promote the Council's Anti Poverty Actions and promote the message that 'Poverty is not inevitable'	

Finance

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 1: Economic Growth	Finance Procurement Linda Ferguson: Principal Procurement and Insurance Officer	Employment and Skills: Lobby Public Procurement to consider social clause for public monies linked to working conditions and zero hours contract. Review initiatives and investments to take account of social clause conditions.	Implement and monitor the Buy Social clauses in MUDC contracts and procurement procedures. Engage Buy Social NI and partners for Public Procurement to consider social clause linked to working conditions / zero hours contract.	
Theme 2: Education and Skills Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing	Finance ICT Section Barry O'Hagan, Head of ICT	Education Affordability: Promote uniform grants and recycling initiatives. Early Years: Encourage and promote recycling schemes for high cost family items e.g. baby items, IT equipment.	Develop and deliver a recycling scheme for used IT equipment (older laptops/desktops) for schools in partnership with Community Development re links to schools.	

Public Health and Infrastructure

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 1: Economic Growth	Public Health and Infrastructure Environmental Health Fiona McClements, Head of Environmental Health	Housing and Housing Welfare: Extend the criteria for the affordable warmth scheme making it accessible to all on low income.	Extend the affordable warmth scheme in partnership with DFC making it accessible to all on low income.	
Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing		Leisure and Wellbeing: Council to consider developing Household checks in partnership with statutory agencies (targeted at those in poverty and most vulnerable).	Health and Wellbeing House Checks - agree with partners a whole house check and key contact point for all health and wellbeing.	
		Vulnerable Groups: Address Health Inequalities in Deprived Areas in line with DoH Health Inequalities Annual Report 2021 Priorities.	Develop programmes with partners to address Health Inequality gaps in Mid Ulster for • Men's Health • Year 8 Obesity • Respiratory Health in targeted areas of disadvantage	
		Vulnerable groups: Target programmes to vulnerable groups at higher risk of poverty.	Seek to continue fuel support to families living in poverty. Review the existing Health Improvement Programme Model (eg Make a Change, Energy Efficiency) in partnership with PHA to ensure that programmes target poverty in Mid Ulster.	

Community Planning

Community Planning Theme	Council Directorate, Section and Lead	Poverty Action	Council Section Action to Progress Implementation of the Poverty Plan	Progress Reporting 2021/2022
Theme 1: Economic Growth	Business and Communities Community Planning Claire Linney, Head of Community Development	Income and Benefits	Lobby and seek partner support for implementation of a living wage, to include those in training/reskilling programmes. Lobby for continued mitigation and increased support by the Northern Ireland Executive to universal credit claimants (partner DFC for implementation). Engage the local credit union network on the provision of low or no interest loans for those on low income/ benefits.	
		Employment and Skills	Lobby for • the development of affordable and flexible childcare models • the provision of 30 hours per week free childcare for 3 years plus, in line with other UK regions • an employer tax incentive to support onsite childcare provision.	
		Housing & Housing Welfare	Lobby and seek partner support for an independent body, (under NIHE), to set local rent values (social/private), in line with area affordability.	
			Lobby for greater enforcement for Environmental Health to ensure quality housing conditions. Lobby for home improvement and energy grant schemes.	

		Housing and Housing Welfare: Review the statutory asset and land base for affordable and social housing provision	Develop a Council model for the provision of surplus Council land for social housing development, in partnership with key agencies. Support the delivery through partnership of social housing for people experiencing domestic violence.	
Theme 2: Education and Skills		Education Affordability	Lobby for increased threshold for Free School Meals.	
		Skills and Educational Development. Extend the Area Learning Support model and intervention programmes targeting low attainment. Develop a Primary School Homework Club model in areas of disadvantage.	Lobby for the review of the school funding formula to ensure all young people can avail of the most appropriate educational pathway for their needs. Improve educational attainment in schools with disadvantaged young people through best use of targeted resources, EA partnership. Develop pilot after-schools, home-work clubs and exam support initiatives. Lobby for afterschool's programmes.	
		Young People's Mental Health & Resilience	Support and develop with partners 'Education for Life' courses for young people to include money management, driving, positive relationships, mental health & wellbeing.	
			Lobby for the co-ordination and quality checking of mental health programmes available to primary and post primary schools to ensure the right provision.	
			Promote the first thousand days research & actions re impact on mental health.	

Theme 3: Health and wellbeing		Early years	Lobby to extend Sure Start and early years' intervention models and programmes (parental support, oral health initiatives etc.) to those most vulnerable and on low income.	
		Leisure and Wellbeing	Develop Healthy Places Plans for our towns and large villages.	
			Lobby and seek partner support for the continued review of the regulatory laws on the gambling industry particularly access by young people.	
			Lobby and seek partner support for the delivery and promotion of a pathway model (for different levels of intervention) for addressing mental health (Mental Health Strategy 2021-31).	
			Co-ordinate a holistic approach to mental health through partnership with the key agencies.	
		Vulnerable Groups	Support partners to target programmes to vulnerable groups at higher risk of poverty.	
			Lobby partner organisations to ensure facilities and services are affordable to the most vulnerable eg Age Friendly, Dementia Friendly, Autism Friendly.	

Report on	Community Development
Date of Meeting	7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Head of Community Development
Contact Officers	Philip Clarke - Community Services Manager, Oliver Morgan – Good Relations Manager, Michael McCrory - PCSP Manager, Martina Totten Community Planning Coordinator

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To agree the rolling grant awards - Local Community Festivals, Good Relations and Decade of Anniversaries.
1.2	To consider and approve the Community Planning consultation responses.
1.3	To update on Community Development.
2.0	Background
2.1	Community Grants – Council annually delivers a number of rolling community grants programmes; Good Relations and Local Community Festivals. Council also annually delivers the Decade of Anniversaries Grant.
2.2	Community Planning – The following consultations have been agreed for Council to respond to; the Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy 2021 and the Department for Education's Review of Pre-School Admissions Criterion.
2.3	Community Development includes the following areas: Community Support, Good Relations, PCSP, Connecting Pomeroy and facilitation of Community Planning.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Community Festivals grant opened in June and is a rolling programme – 11 applications recommended for awards total £8010. Good Relations – the good relations grant is a rolling programme - 1 application is recommended for award totalling £840. The Decade of Anniversaries grant opened in June and is a rolling programme – 4 applications recommended for awards totalling £4,128 –3 applications did not meet the minimum score threshold. Officer engagement is taking place regarding other funding sources. See grant award recommendations in Appendix 1 for approval.

3.2	Community Planning – Please see attached proposed responses to the consultation on the Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy 2021 and the Department for Education's Review of Pre-School Admissions Criterion. Please refer to Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.
3.3	Community Development Community Support The Community Support team continues to work with groups regarding the delivery of grants to respond to their communities. Good Relations Good Relations is currently delivering the new Plan for 2021 – 2022. Peace IV Local Action Plan – Delivery of the grants and programmes are completing, an extension has been provided to allow completion for a number of the grants to November 2021, as required. The towns shared space project is at design stage. Connecting Pomeroy – the projects are all at stage 4 design and planning. Planning has been agreed for the Church of Ireland hall. The others are still in progress. PCSP – ongoing, no minutes this period.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u>** Community Festival awards £8010 Good Relations awards £840 Decade of Anniversaries awards £4,128 **<u>Professional Support</u>** None
4.2	**<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u>** None
4.3	**<u>Risk Management Implications</u>** None
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Rolling Grants – to agree the rolling grant awards.
5.2	Community Planning – To approve the proposed responses
5.3	Community Development - To note the Community Development update.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix 1 Good Relations, Local Community Festivals and Decade of Anniversaries grants. Appendix 2 Response to the consultation; Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy 2021. Appendix 3 Response to the consultation: Department for Education's Review of Pre-School Admissions Criterion.

Appendix 1
Community Festivals July 2021 (Maximum £1200)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Request	Award
1	St John's Church Moneymore	Church	Celebration of farming past, present, future	4	£2490	£840
2	Co. Tyrone Comhaltas	Culture	Co Tyrone Fleadh Fest (virtual Fleadh)	3	£8300	£960
3	Coalisland Faith Defenders Group	Culture	12th July Festival	6	£1250	£600
4	Pomeroy District Sports & Cultural Ass	Culture	Summer fun day	5	£1150	£690
5	Orritor Cultural Dev Group	Culture	Reaching Out	6	£1200	£600
6	Killymuck Clay Pigeon Club	Sport	Killymuck Clay Pigeon Shoot	5	£1500	£720
7	Moyola Clay Target Club	Sport	Moyola Cup Challenge	5	£1500	£720
8	Sporting Hearts	Sport	Dungannon Truck Run	5	£3310	£720
9	Drumnacross	Community	Drumnacross community festival	6	£1200	£600
10	Killyman St Marys GFC	Sport	Fun & Engagement Day	5	£1200	£720
11	Niamh Brid Camogie	Sport	Fun Day & intergenerational	4	£1400	£840
			Total			£8010

Good Relations July 2021 (Maximum £1,200)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Request	Award
1	Draperstown After School Club	After schools	Cross Community Environmental Project	4	£1305	£840
					Total	**£840.00**

Bands	Score	%
7	30-39	40%
6	40-49	50%
5	50-59	60%
4	60-69	70%
3	70-79	80%
2	80-89	90%
1	90+	100%

Decade of Anniversaries Grant (Maximum £2,000)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Request	Award
1	Friends of The Somme Dungannon	Community	Telling the WW1 story Together	4	£2,000.00	£1,600
2	Newmills Cultural group	Community	WW 2 – research & Story Telling	2	£2,000.00	£1,800
3	Derganagh Training and Dev Assoc.	Community	DOA lectures, book	3	£910	£728
					Total	**£4,128**

Unsuccessful

MUVE	Did not meet minimum score criteria
St George's Parish church	Did not meet minimum score
St James's Church of Ireland	Did not meet minimum score

Bands	Score	%
7	30-39	40%
6	40-49	50%
5	50-59	60%
4	60-69	70%
3	70-79	80%
2	80-89	90%
1	90+	100%

Department for Communities
Housing Supply Strategy - Call for Evidence
16th July 2021
Mid Ulster District Council Response

Papers for Development Committee 25th June

Introduction

The Mid Ulster Housing market has experienced a great deal of change over the last 20 years with a significant increase in population and growth. Mid Ulster population growth has outpaced the NI average between 2001 and 2013 as population grew by 19% (compared to a NI growth of 8%). The number of households increased by 18% between 2001 and 2010. There is a projected Housing Growth Indicator new dwelling requirement of 10,300 for the period 2016 to 2030 for the district, which is well above the NI average of 7,709. The levels of growth, particularly in Dungannon, has had an impact on housing demand and rental values. This and the limited increase in social housing stock has led to issues of poverty in the area.

Mid Ulster has one of the highest levels of social housing need and this is reflected in the level of housing stress. At March 2020, there were 1,899 applicants on the waiting list for Mid Ulster with 1,169 in housing stress and only 306 allocations over the year. Housing stress in rural areas is also increasing on an annual basis since March 2016. At March 2020, there were 501 applicants on the rural housing waiting list for Mid Ulster with 279 in housing stress and only 131 allocations over the year. Over 1/3 of the housing stress stems from the affordability of other rented options; both private and some housing association provision. Mid Ulster has the second lowest number of NIHE and Social Housing properties across all districts. Up to March 2020, NIHE and Housing Associations have sold 7,654 units under the house sales scheme, leaving 3,875 of NIHE housing stock in the district. NIHE has identified a social housing need of 685 units required for the 2019/2024 period. There were 42 units completed and 76 units onsite at March 2020; and 202 units programmed for the 2020/2023 period, falling well short of what is required by 2024. Almost 50% of all units required are in the Dungannon 1 area followed by Coalisland and Magherafelt.

Affordable and social housing provision is a key strategic issue identified for Mid Ulster as part of its Community Plan. As the allocation of housing is a central element in achieving many of the objectives detailed in the Community Plan, it is difficult to consider it in isolation of the other key areas, including poverty, regeneration, health and wellbeing and prosperity. Mid Ulster Community Planning has identified a number of actions to address the housing crisis in the District

Sustainable Communities and Homes

Place Shaping

Mid Ulster Community Planning wants a greater balance achieved between town centre regeneration and the provision of social and affordable housing. It is unarguable that Mid Ulster has a high level of social housing need but addressing that need cannot come at the expense of other areas of society, like our town centre viability and growth.

Recently, a number of Housing Associations have been granted permission and provided with grants to build social housing (mainly apartments) in streets primarily dominated by retail and leisure. The provision of social housing in such locations is not viable, nor is it addressing real need. Not only does it have an impact on the retail and leisure economy of our hub towns, but the properties are often occupied by young families living in 1st or 2nd floor apartments, with no garden or space to play and near bars, restaurants or gambling establishments. NIHE recently advised that 90% of the proposed social housing development list was utilizing town centre retail units across the main towns. This is a cheaper option based on easy provision and does not take account of families in real need on the social housing list.

Mid Ulster Community Planning has initiated a pilot Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan in Dungannon, in partnership with NIHE. This plan will identify 'Place Shaping Principles' that we will seek to have adopted and implemented by Council when assessing social housing planning applications, based on complementing the priorities for regeneration for Dungannon town. Mid Ulster Community Planning would seek Executive support to replicate this partnership and process across all hub towns.

The set of draft principles include:

1. Good quality design with adequate density to suit the streetscape, for example if streetscape is 2-storey to continue this frontage, if 3-storey then this is to be accommodated
2. Preference for town house schemes in line with, town conservation, housing for families with 2-3 bed provision
3. Parking provision to be provided
4. Good quality green space provision and play areas for children in all housing areas
5. The 1970s model of flats with a minimum of 2 bedrooms in a town house setting – 2 apartments per house setting
6. Locations must be suitable for family housing, not beside leisure/nighttime economy establishments
7. Housing design and quality to be in character with the area and not of a lower standard
8. Housing that regenerates an area (economy and regeneration)
9. Living over the shops to be promoted for apartments

10. Future social and affordable housing should be within mixed tenure developments only (private and social/affordable mix)

Supported Housing

The 2020 annual update of the Housing Investment Plan for Mid Ulster states that the gross, three year (2019/20) SHDP contains no supported housing schemes for Mid Ulster as there is currently no identified or known requirement for supported housing in the district. However, Mid Ulster Community Plan has identified a need for supported housing across the District. Supported housing need has been identified for people with disabilities, older people and vulnerable women who are victims of domestic violence. A need was also identified in Dungannon for people with learning disabilities. This has been brought to the attention of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust who recognised the need but stated that there is no current funding.

There has been no supported housing provision in the last number of years, which would call into question the suggestion that there is a lack of need whilst other plans and engagements with the sectors have identified a real need. There is confusion around whether need or lack of resource is driving the agenda. Mid Ulster Community Planning would seek a review of supported housing needs for people.

Council also considers that there needs to be a Government focus on the housing needs of older people. In the context of an ageing population, it is important that provision is made for affordable, specialist accommodation which caters for the elderly in our society who are in need of care due to a reduced ability to perform some tasks. A Government focus on housing provision for this section of society would help reduce pressure on the demand for general social rented housing. Such specialist housing would also be likely to provide health and well-being benefits and reduce feelings of isolation for residents.

It is important that the definition and target groups encompass provision for supported purpose built housing (supported living) to provide for a range of vulnerable people including people with disabilities and older people. Supported living can be by way of homes in a cluster environment with supported care, or more residential shared living with onsite care.

Council is currently working with Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid on the delivery of much needed Move On accommodation for their clients in Cookstown as the next step back to normal housing situations. During 2018/19, 82 women and 54 children and young people at considerable risk were unable to get into the Mid Ulster Women's Aid Refuge because of lack of capacity. The proposed Move On accommodation is expected to reduce Mid Ulster's waiting list by around half. The need for such services is increasing and is reflected in police crime statistics. Such developments address the specific needs of those affected by violence and release other properties to address the wider social housing need in the area.

Mixed Tenure

There is strong evidence that highlights the benefits of mixed developments in promoting quality housing, social cohesion, reducing social exclusion and creating stronger communities. This requires a two tier approach; one through the delivery of the social and affordable housing provision and through private developer schemes via planning. Quality management of delivery of such provision is essential by the NIHE as an independent oversight body to ensure that adequate provision of social and affordable housing remains a priority. The development of Earls Court in Dungannon is an excellent example of a successful mixed tenure development by Radius Housing Association and includes 38 general needs social housing properties and 11 private affordable properties.

Affordability

Local affordable housing needs are determined on financial affordability ie the ability of a person or household to access financial support whether it is through co-ownership, shared ownership or right to buy, or other alternative financial supporting mechanism. Affordable Housing cannot be measured in *'residential units'*, it must be measured on the individual householder(s) need to access a decent home.

Within Mid Ulster, the Council has acknowledged that there is a major issue regarding the affordability of rent whether it is social rented homes or private rented homes. This is causing a distinct rise in homelessness, including hidden homelessness. Extortionate rent prices and exponential increases are being imposed on tenants renting within the sector, resulting in immense suffering by residents who are enduring such rises on restricted or decreasing income levels.

A basic analysis of private sector rents in Dungannon at March 2021 indicated average costs of between £625 - £650 per month for a three bedroom semi detached/terraced house. These are often ex-NIHE dwellings. The Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance is set at £102.00 per week for a three bedroom property. This leaves tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit, who have rental costs of £650/month, having to find a shortfall of £208 per month. This is in comparison to an average rent of £550 per month for similar privately rented properties in Enniskillen, Lurgan, Portadown and Omagh. Many people simply cannot afford £650 per month or cannot enjoy a decent quality of life if most of their wages are spent on housing costs. Some newer private rented houses in Mid Ulster can cost between £700-£900 per month, way beyond the reach of most tenants, and most definitely those in receipt of benefits.

Dungannon sits within the Broad Rental Market Area of Lough Neagh Lower. The Broad Rental Market Area boundaries are not reflective of the market rents being charged and as a result, tenants in the private rented sector face significant day to day hardship trying to meet their housing costs. Almost nine in 10 private rented sector claimants experience a shortfall between their weekly rent and the amount of Housing Benefit they receive (NI Broad Rental Market Areas Scoping Study and Impact Assessment January 2019). This is particularly challenging in the current climate, with

people navigating their way through Covid19, job losses and the rising cost of everyday living. Delays in processing Universal Credit can contribute to rent arrears building up and result in a reluctance by private landlords to accept tenants in receipt of benefit. The Bedroom Tax mitigation measures have been helpful but will be an expensive hurdle for many when this ends.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) must be reviewed to take account of variations in rent charges within Broad Rental Market Areas. Council recommend that rental market areas be re-defined to reflect actual rental charges across all areas. Recognition is also given on the impact of LHA on the number of new social homes being built.

Housing Associations need to ensure they are charging rents based on the Local Housing Allowance levels. While there is a need for Housing Associations to secure private finance investment to build homes, this is funded by charging higher rents contributing to housing pressure and in some cases homelessness. The average Housing Association rent in 2021 is £98.34 (£106.28 for a three bed property) in Mid Ulster. These figures do not include service charges or rates and are significantly more than the average rent charged by NIHE at £68.27 excluding rates.

Co-ownership is a welcome, but limited initiative given the cap of £165,000 on the value of the property that can be bought as a co-owner. Many private developers can achieve much more than this on the open market for their properties, and it is therefore not a cost effective solution for them to sell to a Co-ownership scheme especially in a buoyant market. Schemes which provide an incentive to developers to participate in shared ownership developments are required as is more flexibility for Housing Associations to increase purchase offers beyond the current cap. Restrictions should be placed on a Shared Ownership property to prevent it being sold on to a private landlord, with a requirement to offer it back to the Housing Association for first refusal.

Housing Supply in Rural Areas

Latent Demand Testing

It is positive to see a willingness to increase the Latent Demand Testing particularly in rural areas. However, many people are still completing housing applications by stating their preference of location based on where they know the housing is going to be and not where their family are located or where they would choose to live. This not only puts further demand and burden on social housing developments in our towns where the necessary infrastructure required for development is already at capacity. It also creates further social issues relating to childcare and family support and isolation.

Mid Ulster Council have been working with NIHE to carry out Latent Demand Tests in rural areas of Mid Ulster. We have been looking at how the process is communicated to the local communities and using Council's Community Development contacts to engage with local community groups and elected members to help with this

communication and messaging. The aim of this work is to ensure that best response to the Latent Demand Testing and evidence clearly the true demand for both Social and Affordable Housing in the area.

Mixed Tenure

There is a definite need for mixed tenure developments in rural areas that provide choice for those who do not wish to leave their own rural communities and families but have to move to urban areas where housing is available. Sustaining rural communities and ensuring they continue to thrive is a necessity and should be included in the Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the Housing Supply Strategy.

Housing and Poverty

Poverty

Mid Ulster Community Planning is fully committed to reducing poverty and the impact of poverty on individuals and communities within Mid Ulster. In 2019, in the absence of a Regional Anti Poverty Strategy, Mid Ulster Community Planning partners came together from statutory agencies, business and community to look at a range of priorities impacting on poverty; with the aim of creating an Anti-Poverty Plan that seeks to identify strategic actions for partner delivery.

A number of poverty issues were identified through the development of the Plan for Mid Ulster including, *"People living in deprived areas are more likely to be in a house that is of a lower standard of quality living e.g. house standard and heat etc"***.** One of the key objectives of the Anti-Poverty Plan is to "*Provide everyone with a quality home for life, through affordable rents via rent interventions of increased rent support, adequate social and affordable house provision in mixed tenure developments and quality environments using the following model that is currently being applied by various local authorities in Scotland:*

The Mid Ulster Poverty Plan does not seek to provide solutions or programmes for all agencies with a remit for addressing poverty but to identify priority issues which agencies can work together on to develop localised initiatives and solutions. Mid Ulster Community Planning is fully committed to working with all Government departments to fulfil the actions of the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan and the Regional Poverty Plan.

More low-income families tend to live in the private rented sector, which tends to be more expensive with poorer living conditions. The gap between housing benefit and local housing allowance which has grown since housing benefit cuts were introduced in 2011 has resulted in worsening levels of poverty and pressure on the family budget. Investment in social housing and the removal of the gap between rents and benefits is a necessity to help those caught in the poverty trap caused by housing.

Intimidation Criteria

Council has recently lobbied to the DfC Permanent Secretary to ensure that Women and their children experiencing Domestic Violence are eligible to gain Intimidation Points, in the same way that they are applied to victims of sectarian, racial or disability abuse. Whist Women's Aid works tirelessly to source these families suitable accommodation, this can be extremely difficult with housing demand significantly high in the district. Often, they can only source accommodation for the families outside the area they currently reside in. However, because many mothers are reluctant to uproot their children from their schools, families and friends, as this would have an even greater negative impact on the children, they often return to the abusive relationship.

The NIHE guidance states that organisations can confirm if there is a danger to life. However, in order to ensure that the most vulnerable families are protected from further abuse and violence and provided with the best opportunity to access accommodation in an area where they feel safe and is positive for their wellbeing, Council advocates that these families be afforded the maximum points available.

Homelessness

Even though Mid Ulster may seem to have a low level of rough sleeping, it has the third highest number of chronic homeless people across all districts (this is evidenced by figures provided by NIHE District Offices). Whilst many homeless people are not presenting on the streets they are 'sofa surfing', relying on friends and families to provide accommodation in houses that are already at full capacity, causing further stress to other family units.

For the year 2019/2020, NIHE had 669 homeless presentations in Mid Ulster, with 388 acceptances. NIHE research estimates that 5-10% of the homeless population suffer

chronic homelessness. These levels of homelessness/chronic homelessness are unacceptable, and as the Housing Executive and Department for Communities has referenced, there is a need for robust action.

There is a body of information that indicates chronic homelessness is associated with people who suffer a range of complex support needs. However, there are further associated issues, including in Mid Ulster the inability of tenants to pay rents that are beyond reasonable levels. Homelessness caused by affordability of rental properties is becoming a major issue, particularly in the Dungannon town area and as a result many tenants are experiencing recurring homelessness.

For people experiencing prolonged and serial homelessness, housing affordability barriers are often compounded by issues of poor mental health, addictions, social exclusion and financial stability. Against this background many individuals/families are leading unstable and chaotic lifestyles by living in unsuitable B&B, hostel, emergency and temporary accommodation in areas which are unfamiliar and away from family support. There are instances where families and children are being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Furthermore, social housing providers are making housing allocations without consideration of support needs for the individual/families. This often worsens their situation and exacerbates their dependencies resulting in recurring temporary placements and serial housing failure. Council are of the opinion that changes must be made to the Housing Selection Scheme to enable mixed housing allocations that take account of family togetherness, community cohesion, and access to transport services, education and employment with the view of providing an integrated holistic approach to long-term housing sustainability.

It is fundamental that Homelessness is addressed through a multifaceted approach involving statutory, voluntary and community sectors to ensure that people experiencing chronic homelessness are provided with appropriate permanent housing in their areas of choice along with tailored support to meet their individual needs. It is imperative that the NIHE, Housing Associations and partner agencies are committed to eradicating the homeless problem by investing the necessary resources so that the causes of the repeat homelessness becomes known, and appropriate action taken to ensure individuals/households have access to settled, affordable and suitable housing in their areas of choice. Models include buying up single properties in areas where there is stock coming to the market rather than relying on large developments. Council recommends legislative changes be made to place a Statutory Duty on relevant agencies to co-operate in an interdepartmental approach in providing the required resources, housing and support mix for people who are threatened or already experiencing homelessness.

<u>Intervention in the Private Rented Market</u>

The private rented sector across the district has seen an unprecedented increase in its tenure share between 2001 and 2019. The impact of COVID19 on rising levels of unemployment, lending restrictions and growing social housing waiting lists will ensure that demand for the private rented sector will continue grow.

Rental values in Dungannon and to a lesser extent Cookstown are very high and there is significant difference between actual rental charges and Local Housing Allowance amounts. In addition, the largest number of housing benefit claimants are living in properties belonging to the private sector. There is a real need for intervention. If a solution is not found, the social housing crisis will continue to escalate and the social issues heighten. It will also cause further problems with regard to housing allocation in terms of meeting need, vulnerable people, family unity, strong communities, etc.

Mid Ulster Community Planning advocates for Executive intervention in the rental market to monitor rental values in our main hub towns and cities (which are where the populations are concentrated) and to intervene where the market is creating real issues of poverty and social deprivation. Good practice models have been developed in the South of Ireland in the form of Rent Pressure Zones and in other EU countries such as Germany, whereby rules introduced in 2015 prevent landlords in certain towns and cities from setting rents for new tenants any higher than 10% above the local average from the previous four years.

Quality Housing

The central principle of Community Planning is the wider integrated impact of one policy on another and on resources. It is important that housing provision takes account of the long term sustainability of areas and lifetime homes. Housing is one of the basic hierarchy of needs for people. The provision of suitable homes for people is critical to all elements of wellbeing. Families should have adequate space for children to grow and develop in all areas of life. This is similar in the allocation of housing to people who are separated and have children for part of a week. Maintaining the family unit and bond with parents is invaluable to the wellbeing of the child.

Council also seeks to ensure the Planning gain of adequate green space provision in housing; that green space are not edge strips of green around an estate but a central space that is accessible to all. Evidence would show that where our social housing provision has been well planned with good space and green space provision there are less social issues in the longer term. Green space needs to be integral to the design for social and affordable housing and to the allocation of the housing grant to build developments with good open space. NIHE needs to have a greater say in the final design that allows for good practice.

As previously stated, to address these issues of quality social housing provision, Council is developing a set of corporate Planning principles that we will seek to have

adopted and implemented by Council when assessing social housing planning applications.

House quality does not just relate to new housing, but to existing provision. There are quite a number of people renting in poor accommodation. The repair grant is still available in NI but it is very hard to access. To be eligible you must have a statutory notice from Environmental Health to apply.

There is need for a greater legislative remit and provision of associated resourcing for the inspection of housing conditions to ensure they are fit for purpose for health and wellbeing. Many lung related conditions and asthma that have a long lasting impact on health and wellbeing, life expectancy and the resource burden on the health service can be linked to people living in houses of poor quality.

Housing Standards and Fitness

The Department of Communities' urgent measures under the Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) (Northern Ireland) Act 2020 to provide additional protections for private rented tenants from eviction during the COVID-19 outbreak are welcome. However, evictions by the 'back door' are still common. Unscrupulous landlords are essentially evicting tenants by increasing rents to extortionate levels. Tenants who cannot afford to pay find it impossible to remain in the property.

This is particularly evident when tenants have asked landlords to make basic improvements or repairs to the property. Some houses are still being rented with single glazed windows and outdated heating systems, causing dampness, extra fuel costs and health related problems. While tenants have the right to carry out work themselves and deduct the cost from their rent, some have faced the consequences of this, quickly receiving notice of a substantial rental increase soon after.

A single independent body responsible for assessing and enforcing housing quality standards would be beneficial, as would more awareness of tenants' rights and encouragement to report underhand practice and poor quality housing in the private rented sector. Rent regulation measures would help to eradicate unfitness and ensure that tenants live in a healthy and safe environment. This particularly applies to the regulations covering Houses in Multiple Occupation across the private rented sector. There are a considerable number of, mostly unregistered, HMOs in Mid Ulster. The current regulation of HMOs is based on the Belfast model, mainly occupied by the student population. This is not the case in Mid Ulster, where the majority are occupied by the migrant worker population, many of whom have been wrongly told they will be deported if they report concerns about overcrowding and housing unfitness.

The majority of responsible landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector would welcome more definitive standards and stricter regulations. Additionally, a

wider range of grants available through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive would provide significant encouragement for landlords to keep properties up to standard.

The regulations covering Houses in Multiple Occupation should be strengthened across the private rented sector with rent regulation used as a lever to bring substandard properties up to standard, including energy efficient standards.

Land

Public Sector Asset Mapping

Mid Ulster District Council is committed to the release of public sector land for the provision of social housing where possible and are working with NIHE to identify appropriate land for same. Council has already made land available to Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid for the development of over 20 units of Move On accommodation for their clients to help them move forward in their lives. We also continue to encourage other statutory partners to identify unused land assets for social and affordable housing. Council understands that SIB are currently undertaking Asset Management Plans for the entire public sector and believes this will be hugely beneficial for the supply of social and affordable housing across the region. We would urge NIHE to ensure this work is not delayed and is completed a quickly as possible.

Planning

Land Banking

Land banking is an issue in Mid Ulster with a number of developments having gone through the Planning process but not materialised in buildings on the ground. This has an impact on the analysis of Waste Water and Sewerage capacity by skewing the figures, which in turn impacts on the approval of future housing schemes. This issue is mainly experienced in Dungannon, adding further stress to housing demand.

Greater use of vesting land by NIHE would not only ensure the release of necessary lands for the development of social and affordable housing but may also discourage other landowners from banking land and holding up the supply of housing.

Affordable Housing in New Build Developments - Social Housing Development Ratios

New Planning Regulations should be put in place setting a standard and regionally consistent ratio for the number of social housing units provided in every new development. There is a great deal of inconsistency in the requirements across NI Council areas, some with ratios of 1:50, some with no ratio requirement at all. Often it is only with the agreement of the developer that properties are made available to a housing association for social renting. This approach is to the developers benefit as they are guaranteed the sale of their buildings and cash flow to further invest or borrow. As previously stated, the cap on the amount that shared housing schemes can purchase properties for (£165,000) should be removed entirely.

Adequate Green Space Requirement in Planning

As previously referred to, we are seeking to ensure the Planning gain of adequate green space provision in housing; a central green space that is accessible to all. Evidence shows that well planned social housing with good green space provision has less social issues in the longer term. Green space needs to be integral to the design for social and affordable housing and to the allocation of the housing grant to build. NIHE needs to have a greater say in the final design that allows for good practice.

Infrastructure

WasteWater & Sewage Infrastructure

The issue of water and wastewater management in Mid Ulster will have detrimental impact on the district achieving a number of key PfG outcomes. Many people living in the Mid Ulster District Council area are facing significant housing stress because of house building not keeping up with housing demand. New housing developments particularly in our urban towns and key settlements are being refused by NI Water, due to lack of upgrading to WasteWater Treatment works and new water mains not being delivered. Significant WasteWater network capacity issues are emerging in our five main hub towns including Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Maghera and Coalisland. These towns have been identified within the Area Plan for Mid Ulster for growth status. Mid Ulster is currently completing on the development of the Area Plan and has estimated a need for approximately 10,950 new houses by 2030. In addition to the WasteWater Treatment Works, WasteWater network capacity issues are emerging in 20 areas across the district. Because of this, new connections are being declined in parts of the catchment.

Mid Ulster boasts Northern Ireland's fastest growing manufacturing business base, and the largest outside Belfast. Our district produces 7.3% of Northern Ireland's economic output. As part of our evidence gathering in the process of preparing the Local Development Plan, we plan to meet the needs of our growing population by providing an adequate supply of economic development land to facilitate the creation of at least 8,500 new jobs up to 2030. 10,950 houses are required to support the delivery of this economic growth across the District. Given this significant increase, it is essential that significant investment be prioritised to upgrade and provide new sewerage infrastructure across the District.

NI Water have confirmed to Mid Ulster Community Planning that pump away solutions to provide easement on problematic areas of the sewer network were not an expensive option. More sustainable solutions such as SUDs need to be explored, to offset rainwater capture to alleviate pressure on the sewerage system re capacity. Council would therefore support greater consideration of SUD systems through development.

Skills

Local Market Partnerships & Mid Ulster Skills Forum

Mid Ulster Community Planning welcomes proposals from DfC to create Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) in each council area, allowing for tailored interventions to address the district's particular issues. Key areas for delivery would be the retraining of sectors no longer providing sustainable employment, an issue that has been further exacerbated by the Pandemic. Complimentary to this is the Mid Ulster Skills Forum, an industry-led body that works closely with the education sector to ensure that future talent aligns with the needs of business. The Mid Ulster Skills Forum is a ground-breaking initiative uniquely led by the private sector in collaboration with Community Planning partners and other statutory organisations and is the first of its kind to be developed in Northern Ireland. The Forum is currently overseeing the delivery of the Skills Strategy for Mid Ulster. Council underlines the necessity for DfC to engage with these bodies in developing and delivering any skills programmes in this district.

Conclusion

Northern Ireland is experiencing a significant shortage in the provision of Social and Affordable Housing. NIHE has identified that the unmet need in Mid Ulster for 2020-2025 is 718 properties - Dungannon 293, Magherafelt 92, Cookstown 71 and Coalisland 132. There are pressures in Coalisland for bespoke wheelchair and ground floor accommodation. Housing Associations have found it challenging to find land to develop a housing mix on. The Social Housing Development Programme has 93 units on site and 227 units programmed for 21/22 and 23/24. It is clear from the Social Housing Programme that housebuilding is not keeping up with housing demand resulting in rising housing stress, homelessness and chronic homelessness figures. New ways for increasing the supply of social housing must be prioritised. Council recommend the following action:

- purchase of land and development of mixed housing types and tenures in both urban and rural areas by the Housing Executive;
- widening the offering of 'Affordable Housing' by Housing Associations, enabling people the opportunity to avoid rental market pressures and accessing low cost home ownership;
- Flexible models to include the purchasing of new and existing housing from the open market by social housing providers, particularly in rural areas
- enforcement of policy on new build private developments to ensure delivery of social and affordable housing at appropriate rate based on housing need;
- clearance schemes to see demolition and rebuild of older social housing schemes to prevent high levels of housing unfitness.
- Further consideration must be given to future sales of social housing stock. The current 'Right to Buy Scheme' amended to 'Buy Back Scheme' where purchasers are obliged to sell the property back to social housing landlords in the event of disposing.

Other key priorities for Mid Ulster District Council are affordability and quality housing. Housing costs must not push our residents into poverty. Government bodies have a responsibly to the citizens of Northern Ireland to intervene in both failing social policies and commercial markets when this happens. People should live in homes that are of a good quality and standard to ensure good physical and mental health, social wellbeing, cohesion and the prosperity of society as a whole.

CONSULTATION

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Review of the Statutory Admissions Criteria

April 2021

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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FOREWORD

Pre-school education is an important, non-compulsory stage of education that helps contribute to a child's overall development. The Department of Education is committed to providing a funded pre-school education place for all children in their immediate pre-school year whose parents want it.

Pre-school children access funded pre-school education places through an admissions process which is set out in legislation. This consultation is seeking views on reviewing one element of the current admissions process; that pre-school education settings must prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' in their admissions criteria. The legislation regarding this criterion was first introduced in 1998 in order to ensure that the children considered to be most in need could access a pre-school education place at a time when there were a limited number of pre-school education places available. In 1998, there were approximately 11,100 funded pre-school education places available, which meant that only 45% of children in their immediate pre-school year could access a funded place.

Over twenty years later, much has changed and I am reviewing the continued need for a legislative requirement that pre-school education settings prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' in their admissions criteria, and considering, if the criterion is to remain, which children should be prioritised. I am keen to ensure that, regardless of which admissions criteria are used, that all children in their immediate pre-school year continue to have access to a funded pre-school education place if their parents want it.

Over 23,000 children participate in the pre-school admissions process each year. Legislative requirements relating to admissions criteria affect all the children who apply for a funded pre-school education place, not just those who are prioritised. The roll out of Universal Credit necessitates a change to the current criterion, but plans to standardise the length of pre-school

education sessions also present an opportunity to review the criterion in the modern policy context.

I am keen to receive as many views as possible on potential options for revising the statutory criterion. Responses are particularly welcome from parents and carers, early years sectoral bodies and providers of pre-school education, including nursery schools, primary schools with nursery units and voluntary and private pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme.

Peter Weir
Minister for Education

April 2021

BACKGROUND

A child's success in school and life is significantly influenced by their life experiences at a very young age, including before they start school. High quality early learning opportunities can equip children to develop improved cognitive, social and emotional skills and lay important foundations for future learning and development. It is for this reason that the Department of Education (the Department), through the Pre-school Education Programme, aims to provide a year of funded pre-school education for every child in their immediate pre-school year whose parents want it.

Children access pre-school education places funded by the Department through an admissions process. All pre-school settings are required to draw up and publish admissions criteria. Where the number of applications for a pre-school education setting exceed the number of places available, the setting is required to apply admissions criteria.

This consultation is seeking views on reviewing the current requirement established in law that all pre-school education settings must prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' in their admissions criteria.

Pre-school Education Programme

The Pre-school Education Programme is a universally available non-compulsory early education service targeted at children in their immediate pre-school year. All parents or guardians (hereafter referred to as 'parents') who wish their child to avail of a funded pre-school education place apply through an admissions process administered by the Education Authority (EA), except those parents whose child is in receipt of a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

Children with a statement of Special Educational Needs

Children who have a statement do not need to submit an application as their early years education placement will be managed by the Special Education section of the Education Authority. The priority admissions criteria for children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' does not apply to children with a statement of Special Educational Needs.

Pre-school Education Programme - Admissions

The Pre-school Education Programme has a two-stage admissions process. At Stage 1, parents are asked to express preferences for pre-school education settings. If a child is not offered a place at Stage 1 of the process, the EA invites parents to make further preferences at Stage 2. In each of the last seven years, at least 99.8% of children whose parents stayed with the admissions process to the end received the offer of a funded pre-school education place in a setting of their parents' preference.

A significant proportion of children are offered places in a preferred setting at Stage 1 of the process. For example, in 2020/21, 97% of parents secured a place for their child at Stage 1 of the process, and 88% of parents secured a place in their first preference setting.

Admissions Criteria

Pre-school education settings are required to admit all children who apply for a pre-school education place, as long as the number admitted does not exceed their approved admission number[1]. Where the number of applications is more than the admission number, the setting is required to apply its published admission criteria. This ensures that settings can distinguish between applicants and allocate places in a fair and transparent way, to the last available place.

Since 1998, the Department has required, by law,[2] that pre-school education settings give priority in their admission criteria to children from socially disadvantaged circumstances (SDC).

1 Or, in the case of non-statutory pre-school providers, the number of funded places available
2 Pre-School Education in Schools (Admissions Criteria) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, and as a requirement of funding for non-statutory pre-school education providers

The reason for establishing the priority criterion was the availability of places at that time. In 1998, there were approximately 11,100 funded pre-school education places available, which meant that only 45% of children in their immediate pre-school year could access a funded place. The Department sought at that time to prioritise access to these limited number of places for those children considered to be most likely to benefit from a pre-school experience.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

In the twenty plus years since the priority criterion was first introduced, much has changed and there are now a number of reasons for reviewing the SDC priority criterion, including:

- Changes in welfare benefits
- Changes in pre-school education provision
- Reviews of pre-school education and admissions arrangements
- Policy and practice in primary and post-primary admissions
- Feedback from stakeholders

Changes in Welfare Provision

The Regulations currently define a child from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' as *'a child whose parent is in receipt of income support or income-based jobseeker's allowance'.* Changes to welfare benefits have or will result in the current definition of SDC becoming outdated.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) was introduced as the benefit for new customers with a health condition or disability from October 2008, and some parents who were previously in receipt of income support had their claim converted, and instead receive ESA. As a result, the pre-school admissions process includes children with a parent who is in receipt of *'Employment*

and Support Allowance where an award of income support has been converted and the amount of the award remains unchanged' within the definition of SDC.

Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland for new claims, on a phased geographical basis, in the period from September 2017 to December 2018, replacing six current benefits and credits, including Income Support (IS) and Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance (IBJSA). As a temporary measure, the pre-school admissions process therefore includes children with a parent who is in receipt of *"Universal Credit"* within the definition of SDC.

In practice, this means that pre-school education settings currently prioritise children whose parents are in receipt of any one four benefits - Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance[3] or Universal Credit. The remaining admissions criteria for pre-school education settings are determined by each setting's Board of Governors or Management Committee as appropriate, taking into account guidance provided by the Department.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that approximately 3,751 (16%) of pre-school children in their immediate pre-school year met the 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' criterion.

Pre-school education settings cannot opt out of the requirement to prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' and this requirement cannot be removed or amended without a change to the relevant legislation[4]. The legislative requirement therefore affects all the children who apply for a funded pre-school education place, not just those who are prioritised.

'Move to Universal Credit' is the process that will be used to support claimants currently receiving one or more of the relevant benefits or payments to make a new Universal Credit claim. The Department for Communities (DfC) will move existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit over a period of time. In terms of the pre-school admissions process, this means that

3 Employment and Support Allowance where an award of income support has been converted and the amount of the award remains unchanged
4 Pre-School Education in Schools (Admissions Criteria) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999

within a few years, none of the benefits currently listed in the SDC Regulations may remain in place, and the legislation must be updated to take account of this change if children from SDC are to continue to receive priority in the pre-school admissions process.

Universal Credit encompasses a wider range of legacy benefits than those covered by the current definition of SDC, which means that the current arrangements include children within the priority criterion who were not within the scope of the original legislation, including children from lower paid working families. Children whose parents remain on Universal Credit legacy benefits however are not currently prioritised and cannot be included without a change to the legislation.

Changes in Pre-school Education Provision

The Department's pre-school education programme was targeted initially on the most socially disadvantaged children, who are more likely to experience difficulty at school and who are known to benefit to a greater degree from pre-school education, as well as the oldest children in the pre-school cohort.

The policy intention of prescribing priority admission criteria in 1998 was to ensure that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances had priority access to a limited number of pre-school education places, as provision had stood at approximately 45%.

The Pre-school Education Expansion Programme, launched in April 1998, was initially intended to create over 9,000 new high quality funded pre-school places by 2002. In the longer term, the aim was to provide a full year of pre-school education for every child whose parents wish it. By 2008-09 provision of funded pre-school places covered 97 per cent of children in their immediate pre-school year. Since 2012/13, the Department has been committed to ensuring that 'all children whose parents want it can access a year of funded pre-school education in their immediate pre-school year'. This commitment has been met in each of the last eight years for at least 99.8% of children whose parents stayed with the admissions process to the end.

In 2020/21 more than 99.9% of those children whose parents stayed with the admissions process to the end were offered a funded pre-school education place, indicating that there are now sufficient places for every target age child whose parents want it.

Reviews of Pre-school Education and Admissions

Pre-school education provision, including the admissions process, has been subject to review several times. 95.5% of respondents who answered the relevant question in the 2004 'Review of Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland', stated that the definition of SDC was not suitable.

A Review[5] of the Pre-school Admissions Arrangements published in 2012 considered that any definition of 'disadvantage' should be consistent with those used elsewhere within the education system. The review recommended at that time that the definition prescribed in legislation 'is examined with a view to mirroring the relevant economic elements of the definition of Free School Meal Entitlement.'

This recommendation was not implemented, pending changes to the Free School Meals (FSM) criteria as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). To ensure that those pupils most in need would continue to qualify for free school meals when UC was introduced, the Department revised the FSM criteria in September 2017 to include where a pupil or parent is in receipt of UC and has net earnings not exceeding £14,000 per annum'.

A change to the pre-school legislation would be required if the definition of SDC were to be amended to reflect the FSM criteria.

Policy and Practice - Primary and Post-Primary Admissions

The Department does not prescribe any legislative requirement to prioritise particular groups of children in admissions criteria for either primary or post-primary schools. This is because the original policy rationale for prescribing the priority criterion for pre-school admissions was the limited availability of pre-school education places at the time, whereas primary and

5 Department of education Review of the Pre-school Admissions Arrangements 2012

post-primary provision is universal, so prescribed prioritisation by the Department is not considered necessary.

In primary and post-primary admissions, individual schools choose which criteria to prioritise, taking into consideration guidance provided by the Department, local need and the provision available at the school.

In pre-school education settings, the Department prescribes the priority criterion for SDC and settings determine the remaining admissions criteria, taking into account guidance provided by the Department, local need and the provision available at the setting in the same way as primary and post-primary schools.

A change to the legislation would be required if pre-school admissions were to be aligned with other stages of education i.e. by removing the prescribed criterion.

Learning to Learn

The pattern of provision for pre-school education and the duration of session time can range from 2.5 hours to below 4.5 hours (part-time, with no meal) and 4.5 hours or over (full-time, with a meal) per day[6].

The Department's framework for early years, Learning to Learn[7], included an action that DE will 'over time standardise patterns of attendance as part of the Pre School Education Programme'. Available evidence from the Effective Pre-School Provision in NI (EPPNI) found no discernible difference in children's cognitive development at the start of primary school between those who attended full-time and those with part-time attendance. However, it is also recognised that a longer pre-school education session may have other benefits in terms of opportunities for socialisation, child development and increased engagement with parents.

6 Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 22(4)
7 Learning to Learn, A framework for early years education and learning – DE, October 2013

In 2020/21, it is estimated that approximately 16% of all pre-school children in their immediate pre-school year met the 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' criterion. Of the estimated children prioritised under this criterion, 68% accessed a full-time pre-school education place, 28% of all the full-time places available. Although proportionately more children from SDC do access full-time pre-school provision, because the majority of full-time provision is located in disadvantaged areas, a higher proportion of children from SDC could be expected to attend this provision, regardless of the operation of any priority criterion.

Feedback from Stakeholders

The current priority criterion is aimed at ensuring children who are disadvantaged have access to a pre-school education place, not necessarily a specific pre-school education provider or session.

The Department has received significant correspondence over the years highlighting concerns about the continued application of a priority admission criterion for children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' when the children of working parents or those entitled to other welfare benefits are not prioritised. There has also been feedback from stakeholders asking why it is necessary to continue to have a priority admission criterion in the context of universal availability of pre-school education places.

The current arrangements are considered inequitable by some parents and practitioners who consider that the continued application of the priority criterion (when there are sufficient places available to accommodate every child whose parents want one) results in a higher proportion of children from SDC being offered their first preference pre-school place, often in a full-time session. Overall, stakeholders appear to mainly suggest that the current priority criterion should either be removed or widened to include the children of parents in receipt of other benefits, including lower paid working parents.

OPTIONS FOR REVIEWING THE PRIORITY CRITERION

The Department has considered the contextual changes since 1998, as well as the views expressed by parents and other key stakeholders in recent years to develop three potential options for reviewing the current priority criterion.

The Department is keen to gather views on each of the options presented, as well as the Department's consideration of the implications of standardising pre-school education sessions. Any alternative options or issues that stakeholders think should be considered are also welcome.

The options identified as set out below:

Option 1 Retain the statutory criterion and amend the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to mirror the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals entitlement.

Option 2 Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' prescribed in legislation.

Option 3 Extend the statutory criterion and amend the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include all children with parents in receipt of Universal Credit or one if its legacy benefits.

The following section sets out some of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed options for reviewing the priority criterion. These are not intended to be exhaustive and stakeholders are invited to comment on these in their response.

OPTION 1

Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to mirror the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals entitlement

There is a strong correlation between children entitled to free school meals and children at risk of underachievement. Under this option, priority would be given to a group of children who may be at risk of underachievement and would provide a consistent definition of social disadvantage as used elsewhere within the education system.

The current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' relates to parents in receipt of Income Support and Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance. The economic elements of the free school meals criteria, in addition to these two benefits, also includes: Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance; Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less; Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit; Universal Credit and have net earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year.

It is estimated that amending the Socially Disadvantaged Circumstances (SDC) criterion to mirror the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals (FSME) would potentially increase the overall proportion of pre-school children to be prioritised in the pre-school admission process from 16% to 30%.

By illustration, if this option had been in place in 2020/21, it is estimated that the number of children prioritised could have increased by 14% from 3,751 to 6,880 children. In disadvantaged areas, the proportion of children prioritised could be higher.

Currently, no income threshold can be applied to the admissions criteria, unlike FSME. This means that, in terms of children whose parents are in receipt of UC, some children who are currently prioritised under the SDC criterion would no longer be eligible for priority if this option was implemented.

Advantages

a. Children who may be at risk of underachievement and who would benefit from a pre-school education experience would be prioritised for a funded pre-school education place and more likely to be offered a place in a preferred setting including, where available, a full time session and where a school meal is provided.

b. As the expanded criterion would include additional welfare benefits, it is likely that a greater number of children, including those from low income working families would be given priority in the admission process.

c. It could help to support the DE corporate goal of 'Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality' by prioritising those children most likely to benefit from a pre-school experience (i.e. those children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)), although there are sufficient pre-school education places for all children.

d. It would align the definition of SDC with FSM eligibility, making the process easier for parents and providers to understand.

Disadvantages

a. Some children who are currently prioritised under the SDC criterion would no longer be eligible for priority.

b. Retaining the statutory criterion and expanding the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' would increase the number of children to be prioritised and reduce the impact of other admissions criteria set by individual settings. This could impact children living in disadvantaged areas more than others, as more children in these areas may be entitled to free school meals.

c. Expanding the definition of the statutory criterion and increasing the number of children to be prioritised would increase administration in terms of a greater number

of parents having to provide additional documentation in support of their claim for priority.

d. Parents would be required, in addition to providing proof of benefits, to provide proof of income in some cases.

e. With a greater proportion of children prioritised, some settings which are oversubscribed with children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' may have to apply other criteria to determine which 'socially disadvantaged' children should be admitted.

f. The definition would not include other children who do not meet the free school meals criteria (for example, care experienced children) but who may be considered socially disadvantaged for non-economic reasons.

g. Changing the criterion to mirror the economic elements of the free school meals criteria could suggest to some parents that their child would receive a free school meal, which is not the case in all settings, as only children in full-time provision can currently access a meal.

h. The Department would continue to determine a group of children who should be prioritised for a pre-school education place, despite there being sufficient provision to provide a place for every child whose parents want it.

i. The Department does not define a statutory admissions criterion in the primary and post-primary admissions process, therefore, retaining the criterion for pre-school admission arrangements is inconsistent with the admission arrangements in primary and post-primary education.

j. The Department would continue to determine a group of children who should be prioritised for a pre-school education place, instead of individual pre-school education settings determining their own priority admissions criteria in line with guidance.

k. It could limit the benefits to SDC of attending pre-school provision. Research[8] suggests that where *'disadvantaged children attended centres that included children from mixed social backgrounds they showed further benefit than if they attended centres containing predominantly disadvantaged children'*. This option could result in some settings enrolling a higher proportion of children from SDC, particularly in more disadvantaged areas.

l. Some of the data used to inform the 2012 Review has changed and/or improved which could suggest that the implementation of the 2012 actions, as proposed, may no longer be appropriate and should be reconsidered. Parents are more likely to avail of a pre-school education place now than they were in 2012. Expanding the criterion is unlikely to significantly impact on the overall take-up of places as the majority of children access a pre-school education place whether or not they are prioritised.

OPTION 2

Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' as prescribed in legislation

With universal availability of pre-school education places for children in their immediate pre-school year and the Department's commitment to ensure that a pre-school education place is available for every target age child whose parents want one, the context for the original policy has changed.

This option would remove the requirement for pre-school education settings to prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances'. Individual settings would determine their own criteria in line with the Department's admission arrangements guidance.

8 EPPNI 2006

Advantages

a. Pre-school education admissions would be brought into line with primary and post-primary admission arrangements.

b. Individual settings would be free to choose which children to prioritise in their admissions criteria, taking into consideration DE guidance, local need and the provision available at the setting.

c. It would update the policy to reflect the change in level of provision (i.e. that priority is no longer required to access a limited number of pre-school education places, as provision is now universal).

d. Statistical evidence suggests that the proximity of full-time places to disadvantaged areas has a more significant impact on the high proportion of children from SDC accessing these places than the priority criterion. Therefore, removal of the priority criterion is unlikely to negatively impact on children who may have been prioritised.[9]

e. Parents are more likely to avail of a pre-school education place now than they were in 2012. Therefore expanding the criterion is unlikely to significantly impact on the overall take-up of places as the majority of children access a pre-school education place whether or not they are prioritised.

f. Administration and information requirements for parents and settings would be reduced as parents currently are required to submit documentary evidence to demonstrate benefit entitlement to support their claim for priority.

9 Research suggests that there is no discernible difference in children's cognitive development at the start of primary school between those who attended full-time and those with part-time attendance and Inspection findings have highlighted that the majority of settings, whether statutory or voluntary, provide a good or better quality pre-school experience.

Disadvantages

a. Removing the statutory admissions criterion may be perceived by some as the Department no longer supporting children who may be at risk of underachievement.

b. Some parents may perceive any removal of the priority criterion as a barrier to accessing a pre-school education place, despite there being sufficient pre-school education places overall to provide a place for every child whose parents want one.

c. Children who meet the criteria for free school meals cannot avail of a free meal in part-time pre-school provision. Prioritising some or all of these children may increase the proportion who are able to access full-time provision, where a free school meal is available for them.

d. Home to school transport assistance is not available for mainstream pre-school education. Prioritising children from lower income backgrounds may assist children in accessing provision close to home, thus removing a potential barrier to their participation.

OPTION 3

Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include universal credit and all its legacy benefits

There is a correlation between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children at risk of underachievement. Under this option, priority would be given to a group of children who may be at risk of underachievement and would provide a wide definition of social disadvantage.

The current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' is now interpreted as including children of parents in receipt of Universal Credit. This has led to criticism from parents in receipt of UC legacy benefits such as tax credits, who consider that they should be similarly prioritised.

Currently, no income threshold can be applied to the admissions criteria, unlike FSME. This means that, in terms of UC, there are more children currently prioritised than would be the case under a FSME criterion.

It is estimated that amending the Socially Disadvantaged Circumstances (SDC) criterion to include UC and its legacy benefits would potentially increase the overall proportion of pre-school children to be prioritised in the pre-school admission process from 16% to greater than 33%.

By illustration, if this option had been in place in 2020/21, it is estimated that the number of children prioritised would have increased by at least 3,816 to at least 7,567 children. In disadvantaged areas, the proportion of children prioritised could be higher.

Advantages

a. All children who were eligible to be prioritised under the current arrangements would continue to be prioritised.

b. Children who may be at risk of underachievement and who would benefit most from a pre-school education experience would be prioritised for a funded pre-school education place and more likely to be offered a place in a preferred setting including, where available, a full time session and where a school meal is provided.

c. As the expanded criterion would include additional welfare benefits, it is likely that a greater number of children, including those from working families, would be given priority in the admission process.

d. The process of claiming priority would not require parents to provide proof of income.

e. It could help to support the DE corporate goal of 'Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality' by prioritising those children most likely to benefit

from a pre-school experience (i.e. those children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)), although there are sufficient pre-school education places for all children.

Disadvantages

a. Retaining the statutory criterion and expanding the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' would increase the number of children to be prioritised and reduce the impact of other admissions criteria set by individual settings. This could impact children living in disadvantaged areas more than others, as more children in these areas may be entitled to free school meals.

b. Expanding the definition of the statutory criterion and increasing the number of children to be prioritised would increase administration in terms of a greater number of parents having to provide additional documentation in support of their claim for priority, although potentially this option would involve less administration than mirroring the economic elements of Free School Meals, which includes verification of income in some cases.

c. With a greater proportion of children prioritised, some settings which are oversubscribed with children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' may have to apply other criteria to determine which 'socially disadvantaged' children should be admitted.

d. Working parents not in receipt of benefits would not welcome the change, as it would decrease their chances of securing their first preference setting for their children, and would decrease their chances of securing a full time place, which could factor in their childcare arrangements.

e. The definition would not include other children (for example, care experienced children) but who may be considered socially disadvantaged for non-economic reasons.

f. The Department would continue to determine a group of children who should be prioritised for a pre-school education place, despite there being sufficient provision to provide a place for every child whose parents want it.

g. The Department does not define a statutory admissions criterion in the primary and post-primary admissions process, therefore, retaining the criterion for pre-school admission arrangements is inconsistent with the admission arrangements in primary and post-primary education.

h. The Department would continue to determine a group of children who should be prioritised for a pre-school education place, instead of individual pre-school education settings determining their own priority admissions criteria in line with guidance.

i. It could limit the benefits to SDC of attending pre-school provision. Research[10] suggests that where *'disadvantaged children attended centres that included children from mixed social backgrounds they showed further benefit than if they attended centres containing predominantly disadvantaged children'*. This option could result in some settings enrolling a higher proportion of children from SDC, particularly in more disadvantaged areas.

j. Some of the data used to inform the 2012 Review has changed and/or improved which could suggest that the implementation of the 2012 actions, as proposed, may no longer be appropriate and should be reconsidered. Parents are more likely to avail of a pre-school education place now than they were in 2012. Expanding the criterion is unlikely to significantly impact on the overall take-up of places as the majority of children access a pre-school education place whether or not they are prioritised.

Emerging preferred option

Taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options presented, the current context for pre-school education, the wider policy remit for the Department (which

10 EPPNI 2006

now includes policy responsibility for leading on the Executive's Childcare Strategy), the level of uptake of pre-school education places, the progress made in recent years in improving the admissions process, and plans to standardise pre-school sessions lengths, the Department considers that the revision of the statutory criterion should be a two-stage process.

In the short term, the Department suggests that ***Option 3: Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include universal credit and all its legacy benefits*** is most suitable. Once pre-school education session times are standardised, the Department considers that there would no longer be sufficient reason to retain a statutory priority criterion, and thus would suggest that ***Option 2: Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' as prescribed in legislation*** is implemented at that point.

Rationale for implementation of Option 3 as an interim measure prior to the implementation of Option 2 following the standardisation of pre-school session lengths:

i. Although no intended to prioritise access to a particular setting or session length, the priority criteria may mean that children facing potential barriers to learning have greater access to their first preference setting and the social benefits of a longer pre-school session (and meal) where it is available.

ii. All children whose parents are currently entitled to priority under the existing SDC arrangements would continue to be eligible for priority in the admissions process.

iii. It would not require parents to provide proof of income, ensuring that the pre-school application process is easy for parents and providers to understand.

iv. It would not create an expectation by linking free school meals eligibility to the prioritisation of pupils applying for part-time pre-school education provision where no meal is available.

RESPONDING TO THIS CONSULTATION

You can respond electronically to this consultation on Citizen Space

Alternatively, comments using the response form below can be sent by email or posted to the address below. Responses should be submitted to arrive **no later than 11.59pm on Friday 16 July 2021**.

Email to: de.earlyyears@education-ni.gov.uk

By post to: Pre-School Education Team
Department of Education
4th Floor
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor BT19 7PR

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS

The information you provide in response to this consultation may be passed to colleagues within the Department of Education. The Department may also publish a synopsis of responses to the consultation.

Information provided, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 and, in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

The Department of Education cannot automatically consider information supplied to it in response to a consultation to be confidential. However, under the FOIA, there is a statutory code of practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, among other things, with obligations of confidence. We have a duty to decide whether any information provided by you, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential.

In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. Should we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, however we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

EQUALITY SCREENING AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, public authorities must also, in carrying out their functions, relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Rural Needs Act places a duty on public authorities, including government departments, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services.

Questions have been included in the consultation questionnaire to inform the Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

What happens next?

The purpose of this consultation is to assess stakeholder opinion on the proposed options for reviewing the statutory criteria for pre-school education admissions. We are interested in the views of parents, carers, teachers and practitioners on these important aspects of pre-school education.

After the close of the consultation period, all responses received will be analysed and a report prepared, summarising the findings.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

REVIEW OF THE STATUTORY CRITERIA FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

This consultation invites views on the current legislative requirement that all pre-school education settings must prioritise children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' in their admission criteria. It also invites views on the implications of standardising pre-school education session times.

Legislative requirements relating to admissions criteria affect all the children who apply for a funded pre-school education place, regardless of whether the priority criterion applies to them or not.

The Department of Education has identified the following options for reviewing the statutory criteria for pre-school education admissions:

Option 1 Retain the statutory criterion and amend the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to mirror the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals entitlement.

Option 2 Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' prescribed in legislation.

Option 3 Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include Universal Credit and all its legacy benefits.

Preferred approach:

In the short term, the Department suggests that ***Option 3: Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include universal credit and all its legacy benefits*** is the most suitable.

The Department however intends to standardise pre-school education session times, and considers that, when this is done, there would no longer be sufficient reason to retain a statutory priority criterion, and thus would suggest that ***Option 2: Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' as prescribed in legislation*** should be implemented at that point.

QUESTIONS

1. In the short term, the Department suggest that ***Option 3: Retain the statutory criterion and amend the current definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include universal credit and all its legacy benefits*** should be implemented, and when pre-school education session times have been standardised, ***Option 2: Remove the statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' as prescribed in legislation*** should be implemented.

   Do you agree with the approach set out above?

	Tick one option only
Yes	☐
No	☐

2. Do you consider it currently necessary to retain a **statutory** priority criterion for pre-school admissions?

	Tick one option only
Yes	☐
No	☐

If Yes – please set out the rationale for maintaining a **statutory** priority admission criterion.

3. Which **one** (if any) of the following options should the Department adopt when reviewing the statutory criterion for pre-school admissions for children in their immediate pre-school year (if you think the Department should amend the criteria again when pre-school sessions are standardised, please indicate what option you think should be in places **until this happens**):

		Tick one option only
Option 1	Statutory criteria that prioritise children eligible for **free school meals** Retain the statutory criterion and amend the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to mirror the relevant economic elements of the definition of free school meals entitlement.	
Option 2	**Remove the statutory criterion** Remove the existing statutory criterion for 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' prescribed in legislation.	
Option 3	Statutory criteria that prioritise children whose parents receive **Universal Credit or a legacy benefit** Retain the statutory criterion and amend the definition of 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' to include children with a parent in receipt of Universal Credit and all its legacy benefits.	
None of the the above	Please select this option if there is **another option** you think should be considered. There is space provided below to explain the alternative option you would prefer.	

Please give the reason/s for your response

4. The pattern of provision for pre-school and the duration of session time currently ranges from 2.5 hours to below 4.5 hours (part-time, with no meal) and 4.5 hours or over (full-time, with a meal) per day.

The Department's framework for early years, Learning to Learn (2013), included an action that DE will 'over time standardise patterns of attendance as part of the Pre-School Education Programme'.

The Department of Education is currently developing a new Childcare Strategy and it is considered that as part of the implementation of this strategy that pre-school entitlement provision should be standardised for all pupils. That is, that all pre-school education sessions would be the same length.

Please provide any comments that you have in relation to this action, including any opportunities or risks that you think the Department should consider when assessing the implications of, and options for, standardising pre-school education session times.

5. If the all pre-school education sessions were the same length, would your opinion on the SDC criterion change?

Choose one option only

My answers at questions 2 and 3 would be the same	☐
My answer to question 2 and/or 3 may change	☐

Please give the reason/s for your response

Please provide any other comments you have in relation to the statutory admissions criterion for pre-school, including any alternative options the Department could consider.

INFORMATION TO INFORM AN EQUALITY SCREENING AND RURAL NEEDS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Have you any comments on the needs, experiences and priorities of the following equality categories in relation to any (or all) of the potential options for review of the priority admissions criterion and/or the implications of standardising pre-school session time?

Religious belief	
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

2. Will any (or all) of the potential options, or the standardisation of pre-school session times be likely to impact on equality of opportunity for any (or all) of the following equality categories?

If so, please describe any such impact.

Religious belief	
Political opinion	
Racial group	
Age	
Marital status	
Sexual orientation	
Men and women generally	
Disability	
Dependants	

3. Will any (or all) of the potential options **or** the standardisation of pre-school session times afford opportunity/opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations? If so, how?

4. Will any (or all) of the potential options **or** the standardisation of pre-school session times be likely to impact on people in rural areas, if so what would be the likely impact(s) and would this/these be different from the impact(s) in urban areas?

Name (capitals): _____ Date: _____

☐ Completed as an individual

☐ Completed on behalf of an organisation

Name of organisation: _____

RETURN COMPLETED FORM

Email to: de.earlyyears@education-ni.gov.uk

By post to: Pre-School Education Team, Department of Education, 4th Floor, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Rathgill, Bangor, BT19 7PR

PRE-SCHOOL ENROLMENTS 2020/21

Key Statistics

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Enrolments	9,056 (39%)	13,876 (61%)	22,932
Pupils given priority in admission process	2,541 (28%)	1,210 (9%)	3,751 (16%)
Pupils entitled to FSM	3,911 (43%)	1,242 (9%)	5,153 (22%)
Enrolment in 20% most deprived areas (SOAs)	4,493	1,994	6,487
Pupils given priority in admission process in 20% most deprived areas (SOAs)	1,493 (33%)	323 (16%)	1,816 (28%)
Pupils entitled to FSM located in 20% most deprived areas	2,328	328	2,656

Source: DE Statistics, DE School Census

CONSULTATION

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
Review of the Statutory Admissions Criteria

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Consultation on Department of Education's Pre-School Education: Review of the Statutory Admissions Criteria
Mid Ulster District Council's Draft Response
June 2021

Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Departments for Education's Pre-School Education: Review of the Statutory Admissions Criteria. Mid Ulster Council.

Focus on early years development is fundamental to improving the outcomes of young people. Mid Ulster Community Planning supports the huge benefits of early years education provides to a child's development, educational attainment and overall outcomes.
"Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens." **(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)**

Given this importance, Mid Ulster District Council takes the position that Pre-School Education should be available to all children in their immediate school year, regardless to socio-economic background. Council is a strong advocate for the provision of enhanced services and support to those in poverty and disadvantage, which can be evidenced through the development of its Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan. However, the link between pre-school education and the long-term outcomes of the child is so great that it must be universally available to every child. There should be no barriers to a pre-school place for any child. The concept of prioritisation for those most disadvantaged is good in theory but in reality, it has taken away from providing for every child. The use of criteria based provision allows for a system that is content for all need not being met. Criteria based on socio economic background also runs the risk of economic segregation within the pre-school sector. The target should be on

places for all children, while still ensuring those from more financially challenged backgrounds don't miss out.

Council strongly supports the Departments efforts to standardise the pre-school session lengths and move to full time provision. This is again evidenced within our Anti-Poverty Plan, which includes the action to lobby for full time pre-school provision, in line with other UK regions. Council fully agrees with the Department's framework for early years 'Learning to Learn' that,
"*longer pre-school education session may have other benefits in terms of opportunities for socialisation, child development and increased engagement with parents"*.
It will also support our work to reduce poverty and social disadvantage by giving parents, and more importantly women, greater ability to seek employment. This will have many positive outcomes to the family's economic security and ultimately moving children out of poverty.

However, this work on the standardisation of pre-school sessions is not as progressed as is needed in Mid Ulster, where full time places still do not meet need. Council would advocate that, priority for full time places is required in areas of disadvantage. The provision of the longer day for children in poverty to assist with provision of lunch, which is an essential to a child's development.

Whilst the provision of pre-school should be provided to all children for at least one year before school admission, where pre-school settings have the capacity to offer sessions for 2 year old, this should be encouraged. Mid Ulster District Council is aware of recent examples where due to low numbers of 3 year old children for the 2021/22 pre-school intake, there has been a number of pre-school settings that have had to suspend for a year due to not having enough numbers. This means they are no longer able to offer sessions to 2 year old children. Whilst Council recognises this is not a statutory requirement, it is of the opinion that this provision does provide positive outcomes to children, especially those from disadvantage backgrounds. Council would ask the Department to provide greater flexibility to the funding model used for pre-school places and for the provision of sessions for 2 years, to be taken into consideration.

One final point, is with regard to the accessibility of pre-school places. The Mid Ulster Community Plan includes the action “Ensure accessible preschool places for every child”. Council takes the position that an appropriate pre-school place should be made available in the pre-school setting closest to the child’s home. This is particularly necessary in areas of higher social deprivation where families are less likely to have access to a car and will be walking to the pre-school. In Dungannon town, where some pre-school places are offered to children on the other side of town, families have instead taken their children to rural pre-schools as it can be quicker and more accessible than travelling across town, especially in morning traffic. This can put additional and unnecessary pressure on rural pre-schools.

Mid Ulster District Council looks forward to the completion of the review and the implementation of a Pre-School Admissions Criterion that benefits all children in our district.

Report on	1) Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme 2) Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme 3) DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre 4) Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Consultation 5) 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event 6) Request for Ministerial Meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework
Date of Meeting	7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Economic Development

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	**Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Council agreed in May 2021 to fund a new Business Marketing Grant Scheme to support Mid Ulster businesses as they recover from the pandemic.
2.2	**Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Council agreed in April 2021, as part of Mid Ulster's Town Recovery Plan, to fund the development and rollout of a new Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme. Officers are commencing a procurement process which will hopefully result in being able to select a suitable organisation to manage and deliver the district wide scheme.
2.3	**DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** Department for Communities (DfC) has scheduled a Revitalisation scheme for Coalisland Town Centre, following the completion of the Public Realm Scheme, up to the value of £250,000. Based on a successful application, DfC will provide 100% funding for eligible activities and projects must be completed by 31st March 2022.
2.4	**Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation**

2.5	The Department for the Economy (DfE) has launched a consultation paper for a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: 'Skills for a 10x Economy'. 'Skills for a 10X Economy' is DfE's strategy to support more people to improve their job prospects and fulfil their economic potential. **4C Ur Future Live Careers Event** 4C Ur Future is a not-for-profit community interest company who exists to inspire, inform and help young people become the best version of themselves. Building on very successful 2019 'proof of concept' pilot events for 1,200 Year 9 pupils, 4C Ur Future intend to build a Career Portal and Digital Engagement Platform that is free to schools and registered users, and which every Year 9 pupil and Careers Teacher in NI can benefit from. The organisation aims to roll out a series of pilot 4C Ur Future Live regional careers events across Council areas during June 2022 to enable as many 13 year old children as possible to gain insights into their future career opportunities before making GCSE choices. A proposal for Council to host a 4C Ur Future Live event in the Mid Ulster area in June 2022 was discussed at the Development Committee meeting in June 2021 and it was agreed to bring back a further report in July 2021 to advise whether all 13 year old pupils in Mid Ulster's post primary schools could participate in the event.
2.6	**Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework** A request was issued on 2nd June 2021 to the Agriculture Minister Edwin Poots from the former Council Chair to meet with a delegation from Council to discuss progress with the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework. This was in response to concerns raised by members of the Development Committee regarding progress with the new Policy Framework.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Council agreed in May 2021 at the Development Committee and subsequent Council Meeting to allocate a total budget of £250,000 towards the development and rollout of a Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme to local businesses in the area. Eligible businesses in Mid Ulster will have the opportunity to apply for a discretionary grant at 100% funding, capped at £300 per business, towards eligible marketing revenue activities. Extensive promotion of the scheme will happen towards the end of July 2021, through the local press, Council website and social channels, Business Directory E-Zine and Department Databases etc. The Scheme is anticipated to open to applications from businesses at the start of August 2021.
3.2	**Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Tender submissions will go live for this scheme very shortly via the E-TendersNI web portal. It is requested that once the procurement process is completed and

	tenders evaluated, that delegated authority is granted to Council's Chief Executive to award the contract to the successful tenderer to allow work to commence on the Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme over the summer months. A tender report will be brought to Committee in September 2021 to update Members.
3.3	**DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** It is proposed that the following activities are included in an application to DfC to help revitalise Coalisland town centre following the completion of the public realm scheme; **a) Festive Lighting (Approx £80,000)** To maximize the visitor experience during the Christmas period and to complement the works done through the Public Realm Scheme, it is proposed that a reusable artificial Christmas tree and associated festive light motifs, including one for each of the 47 newly erected lampposts throughout the town, be included in the bid to DfC. **b) Developing a Town Brand and Purchase of Branded Merchandise (Approx £25,000)** Further to the completion of Coalisland Public Realm Scheme in Summer 2021, consultation with key town stakeholders has revealed a strong desire to create a new brand proposition for the town to strengthen its identity. It is proposed that the development of a new brand for Coalisland be included in the bid to DfC together with the purchase of a range of branded merchandise to distribute to businesses and shoppers. **c) Lineside Environmental Improvement Scheme (Approx £145,000)** With the new public realm scheme in Coalisland almost complete, and with other associated active travel scheme works taking place in the town, there remains further works to be carried out along the Coalisland Canal towpath and its environs to fully utilize this area's potential. The proposed project would link up the town centre with the soon to be redeveloped Gortgonis Recreation Centre. Along the towpath, it would seek to create a new entrance area and welcoming feature signage to Gortgonis Recreation Centre, carry out environmental works and create pedestrian rest areas with street furniture etc. The target area is located from the start of the towpath to Gortgonis entrance and as this area caters for much pedestrian footfall, these works would improve the overall public realm and encourage more people to use the route leading through to the town centre. Broad cost estimates are included above for each scheme, but these are subject to procurement exercises being carried out, and costs may vary accordingly, however, the overall funding envelope of £250,000 will not be exceeded. An update on progress will be reported at a future Committee meeting.
3.4	**Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation** The Department for the Economy (DfE) has launched a consultation paper for a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: 'Skills for a 10x Economy'. 'Skills for a 10X Economy' is DfE's strategy to support more people to improve their job prospects and fulfil their economic potential. The skills strategy outlines plans to focus on innovation by increasing further education qualifications in technical and

	professional skills and rebalancing higher education towards Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM). The consultation document can be found at: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/skills-strategy-northern-ireland-skills-10x-economy and the closing date for responses is 19th August 2021. As there will be no Committee meeting in August 2021, it is recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to approve the response and submit to DfE before the deadline of 19th August 2021.
3.5	**4C Ur Future Live Careers Event** 4C UR Future aims to run a series of regional "live" events in June 2022 across the eleven Council areas to enable approx. 7,500 13-year-olds gain insights into their future career opportunities before they make their GCSE choices, and to provide career inspiration based on each young person's natural attributes and interests. Interactive games and work-based simulations will draw out and identify key strengths with a view to helping make better informed subject choices. Each pupil will receive a profile highlighting their strengths identified on the day and will be connected to suitable coaching and development activities following the event. As reported at the Development Committee meeting in June 2021, 4C UR Future have identified the Mid Ulster Sports Arena, Cookstown as the most suitable venue in Mid Ulster. The event capacity is up to 750 pupils and caters for up to 7 schools in Mid Ulster. Based on an analysis of post primary school free school meals (*Source: Dept. for Education*) officers proposed to engage with the undernoted schools to determine their interest in participating in this pilot initiative. *Please note that Cookstown High School was added to ensure an even representation of post primary schools across the district:- 1. St. Joseph's College, Coalisland 2. St. Patrick's College, Dungannon 3. Integrated College, Dungannon 4. Sperrin Integrated College, Magherafelt 5. Magherafelt High School 6. Holy Trinity College, Cookstown 7. Cookstown High School* Following consideration by Committee Members in June 2021, it was resolved that officers go back to 4C Ur Future to renegotiate the best package that can be offered for this year and next year to include all post primary schools in Mid Ulster, with an update being brought back to the July 2021 Committee meeting. Officers have since held several meetings with the 4C Ur Future oganisers to consider all possible options to increase participation to all post primary schools in Mid Ulster. This included exploring the provision of additional funding to allow 4C Ur Future to deliver more events in Mid Ulster. However, 4C UR Future have advised that the proposed 11 pilot events in June **2022** (1 in each Council area) are already "at-scale", targeting 7,500 young people and there is no scope at this juncture to add additional events in 2022.

It is however, their ambition to scale the 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event into an annual event capable of reaching every Year 9 pupil in NI in **2023.** However, this will be subject to successfully delivering the pilot events in June 2022, widening their volunteer base and securing additional investment. It is important to note that 200 volunteers are required to deliver each of the Live events.

Officers also requested that the organisers allow flexibility in pupil numbers, and instead of insisting that the 750 pupils participate only from 7 schools, that this be widened to allow 750 pupils to attend from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster, by offering each of them 30-40 pupil places. 4C Ur Future advised that this was not possible either as they want to ensure that multiple quality experiences can be delivered successfully to entire year groups of pupils in each of 7 schools during this "pilot phase".

In these recent discussions with 4C UR Future staff, it also emerged that additional financial support from Council would be required, should Council choose to host a Live event in June 2022. A budget of £6,500 is required (instead of £3,500) to cover the costs of hosting the event, including venue hire for 2 days, supplying lunch for the 200 volunteers and the provision of a PA System, tables, chairs and partitions.

Our lengthy discussions have now concluded with the event organisers. They have advised officers they are unable to renegotiate the original pilot proposal issued to Council to hold a 4C Ur Future Live Careers Event in June 2022. As highlighted above, they still want to recruit 7 post primary schools to attract 750 year 9 pupils in Mid Ulster in June 2022, in order to remain consistent with the approach they are taking in all the other 10 district council areas in the pilot year. As noted earlier, in June 2023, they are willing to extend the project to include all year 9 pupils in post primary schools in Mid Ulster (and indeed NI), subject to funding.

Based on this most recent update, Members are asked to consider choosing one of the following options;

Option 1 –

(a) To fund the 4C Ur Future Pilot Event in Mid Ulster in June 2022 at a cost of £6,500 (excl Vat), allowing up to 750 pupils to participate from 7 post primary schools in Mid Ulster and ask the Organisers to select the schools.

(b) In so doing, then formally accept and sign the Partnership Agreement on Appendix 1 for the June 2022 event, subject to legal team's review.

(c) Then in future, in June 2023, Council could consider funding a larger 4C Ur Future Careers Event to include year 9 pupils from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster.

Option 2 –

3.6	(a) Not to fund the 4C Ur Future Event in Mid Ulster in June 2022, but reconsider funding the event in June 2023, when year 9 pupils from all post primary schools in Mid Ulster be invited to participate. **Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework** Further to the letter issued from the former Council Chair seeking a meeting with Minister Poots (Appendix 2) to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework, a reply has been received from the Minister (Appendix 3). The Minister has signposted Council to meet with one of his officials, Mr Gareth Evans, referring in the letter to an earlier meeting which took place on 2nd June 2021 between DAERA officials and Council officers during which a discussion on the Rural Affairs Policy Framework took place. Notwithstanding the discussions between DAERA officials and Council officers, in light of the concerns raised by Members of the Development Committee in May 2021 on this matter, it may be considered prudent to pursue a strategic level meeting at Ministerial level given the importance of the Rural Policy Framework to the continued growth of Mid Ulster's rural economy.
	Other Considerations
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: **Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Total Budget : £250,000 *£150,000 - Economic Development budget (agreed Dev. Committee – May 2021)* *Further £100,000 from Council (agreed at Council Meeting – May 2021)* **Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** £57,000 has been allocated from Economic Development budget. **DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** Based on a successful application to DfC, 100% funding is likely to be provided from DfC, totalling £250,000. No Council match funding is needed. **4C Ur Future Live Careers Event** A budget of up to £6,500 would be needed from Economic Development towards the June 2022 event.
	Human: **Mid Ulster Marketing Grant Scheme** Officers time **Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Officers time

	DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre Officers time
	Risk Management: **Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Urgency of delivery to meet business needs following reopening from Covid 19. **Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Urgency for delivery to support businesses across the District following reopening from Covid 19. **DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** Urgency of delivery to meet funding deadlines.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: **Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Equality Screening has been completed. **Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Equality Screening has been completed. **DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** Equality Screening to be completed.
	Rural Needs Implications: **Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** Rural Needs has been completed. **Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** Rural Needs has been completed **DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** Rural Needs to be completed.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	It is recommended that Members; **Mid Ulster Business Marketing Grant Scheme** **Approve** that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to sign and issue letters of offer to businesses, up to a maximum of £300 per company, following the completion of eligibility checks on business applications received. This will allow funds to be disseminated to businesses at the earliest opportunity. A

	list of approved projects will be brought to Committee for noting in September 2021.
5.2	**Mid Ulster Gift Card Programme** **Approve** that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to appoint the successful tenderer following the procurement exercise which will allow work to commence over the summer months. A full report on the tender process will be brought to Committee in September 2021 to update Members.
5.3	**DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre** **(i)** **Approve** an application be submitted to DfC for Revitalisation Funding in 2021/2022 for the following schemes; - Festive Lighting - Developing a Town Brand and Purchase of Branded Merchandise - Lineside Environmental Improvement Scheme **(ii)** **Approve** that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to accept a Letter of Offer from Department of Communities (DfC) for the Revitalisation Project, subject to Council's application being approved. **(iii)** **Approve** that the appropriate tender/quotation exercises be commenced, upon receipt of a letter of offer from DfC, to enable works to commence as early as possible as the schemes need to be completed by March 2022. A full report on the tender process will be brought to a future Committee Meeting to update Members.
5.4	**Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation** Approve delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive to approve Council's Skills Strategy consultation response and submit the response to DfE by 19th August 2021. The draft consultation response will be furnished to Members information at the September 2021 Committee Meeting.
5.5	**4C Ur Future Live Careers Event** Note update and progress by choosing Option 1 or Option 2 in the report.
5.6	**Request for Ministerial meeting to discuss the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework** That a further request be issued to the DAERA Minister, Mr Poots, acknowledging the update meeting held between DAERA officials and Council staff, but seeking a further strategic level meeting with the Minister and a member delegation from Council to discuss the Rural Affairs Policy Framework, given its importance to Mid Ulster's rural economy.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix 1 - Partnership Agreement 4C Ur Future Appendix 2 – MUDC Request to Meet Minister Poots, DAERA – 2.6.21 Appendix 3 – Response from Minister Poots, DAERA – 18.6.21

APPENDIX 1

MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Partnership Agreement

1	**Parties**	(1) **4C UR Future** is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company, whose registered address is Catalyst Innovation Centre, Queens Road, Belfast, BT3 9AD. Company No: NI659959. and (2) **Mid Ulster District Council**
2	**Campaign Commencement Date**	TBC – June 2021
3	**Event Dates**	TBC – June 2022
4	**Event Details**	**4C UR Future *LIVE*** is a series of regional events to be held in June 2022 across Northern Ireland to enable approx. 7,500 13-year-olds gain insights into their future career opportunities before they make their GCSE choices, and to provide career inspiration based on each young person's natural attributes and interests. The 2021/22 campaign commences with PR in June 2021, with registrations going live in Sep/Oct 2021, and a digital engagement campaign commencing in Nov 2021, before the ***LIVE*** events take place in June 2022. This Agreement covers the 2021/2022 campaign. Following detailed investigation, the [LOCATION] would be a suitable venue to run this event and is available on the dates shown above.
5	**Council Commitments**	Council will be responsible for the following: • Liaising with [LOCATION] to agree contractual arrangements and payment for use of the venue for the dates stated above. • Provide support for the set-up of tables, chairs, and other resources (as detailed in the floorplan, a final version of which will be provided in March 2022). 4C UR Future are currently negotiating a regional contract for set-up provision, for which Council would be required to contribute an equal proportion relative to their event. • Ensure a PA system is available that has the scope to cover the entire event space for making announcements during the event. • Provide catering for up to 200 volunteers and teachers on the event day/s; and unlimited tea and coffee. • Provision of portable toilets, if required – facilities TBC. • Provision of safety/access ramps for use on the day, if required – facilities TBC. • Ensure there is adequate WiFi for use at the event. • Cover any additional venue/resource costs required to run this event Optional: 4C UR Future's activities are currently financially supported by Member Companies. Some of the hosting Councils have offered to provide financial assistance to support the costs of running the event for approx. 750 young people, which is also pivotal in supporting the on-going objectives of 4C UR Future such as the development of an industry-led Careers Portal, at approx. £20 per head, a total of £15,000.
6	**Partnership Package**	**Mid Ulster District Council's** logo will be included on all promotional materials sent to schools, parents, and businesses (either printed or electronic) for the event taking place within the borough. Council's logo will also be included on the new 4C UR Future website, and there will be opportunities for Council to engage with 4C UR Future and their local schools and business community in the creation and

		distribution of content. There will be an opportunity for the Council to invite local Councillors and local press to attend on the event day/s.
7	**Payment Dates**	Invoices relating to the event will come directly to the Council and should be paid within 14 days prior to the event taking place.
8	**School Engagement**	4C UR Future and its Event Sub-Team members will make contact with all schools in the Mid Ulster District Council area within a max. 20-minute travel radius of the venue to make logistical arrangements. Council is of course welcome to support school outreach. Communications should be pre-approved by 4C UR Future. Should schools be located further than a 20-minute travel time from the venue but be able/willing to accommodate travel arrangements to be at the venue on-time, this will be considered. For the smooth running of the event and to maximise the participation of young people, prompt arrival for registration is crucial. We hope to inspire up to 750 young people through this event, subject to venue capacity. Follow-up communications with the school and young people will be via email and the 4C UR Future Careers Portal, including the provision of a Personal Positive Profile for each young person who participates in the event.
9	**Other notes**	It may be possible to include schools from other Council areas that fit within the travel distance to this venue. Mid Ulster District Council will be informed of schools from other Council areas that may be able to attend.
10	**Notices**	Any notices in respect of this agreement should be sent to Rachel Doherty, Managing Director, 4C UR Future, by email at rachel@4curfuture.com. [INSERT POINT OF CONTACT FOR COUNCIL REGARDING NOTICES].

Other Terms, specific to this Agreement are as follows:

This Partnership Agreement has been entered into on the date stated below. By signing this Partnership Agreement, you are confirming the accuracy and agreeing to be bound by the general Terms and Conditions attached to this Partnership Agreement, which together form the terms of this agreement ('**Agreement**').

4C UR Future	**Council**
Signed: ……..	**Signed:** ……..
Date: ……...	**Date:** ……

If this Partnership Agreement is not signed, this Agreement will be entered into on the date the Council Partner confirms by email that the Terms are acceptable; or if no such confirmation is received by 4C UR Future within five (5) business days of the Council Partner receiving this Agreement (whether by email in the form of an attachment or a hyperlink) these Terms shall automatically be deemed to be accepted by the Council Partner from the Campaign Commencement Date.

EVENT CHECKLIST

Task/Activity	Completed
Venue Risk Assessment.	
Venue floorplan provided.	
Confirmation of venue secured by Council.	
Confirmation of catering provision for up to 30 people for set-up day.	
Confirmation of catering provision for up to 200 people for event day.	
Confirmation of continuous tea and coffee for event day.	
Confirmation of tables and chairs.	
Confirmation of suitable PA system.	
Confirmation of suitable number of toilets.	
Confirmation of suitable safety/access points.	
Fire Evacuation Plan provided by venue.	
Confirmation of parking and access arrangements.	
Confirmation of venue point of contact.	
Description of number of venue staff available on the event day and an outline of their remit for events held on the premises.	
Confirmation that ancillary rooms, other than toilets, can be locked on the day of the event.	

4C UR Future general Terms and Conditions relating to the Partnership Agreement ("General Terms")

1. Interpretation

1.1 The following definitions and rules of interpretation apply in this Agreement:

Definitions

"**Business Day**" means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, or public holiday in Northern Ireland.

"**Confidential Information**" means all confidential information (however recorded or preserved) disclosed by a Party to this Agreement or its Associates (as defined below in clause 4.1(h)) to the other Party and/or that Party's Associates in connection with the supply of Services and the Deliverables by 4C UR Future, and any other information that would be regarded as confidential by a reasonable business person in relation to the business, affairs, customers, clients, suppliers, plans, intentions, opportunities of the disclosing Party, and/or the provision of the same Services.

"Partnership Pack" means the pack containing information for the Partner to use in relation to the Event and the fulfilment of the Partnership Package, to be sent by 4C UR Future to the Partner following the date of this Agreement.

"**Intellectual Property Rights**" means all patents, rights to inventions, utility models, copyright and related rights, trademarks, service marks, trade, business, and domain names, rights in trade dress or get-up, rights in goodwill or to sue for passing off, unfair competition rights, rights in designs, rights in computer software, database rights, semi-conductor topography rights, moral rights, rights in confidential information (including know-how and trade secrets) and any other intellectual property rights, in each case whether registered or unregistered, and including all applications for and renewals or extensions of such rights, and all similar or equivalent rights or forms of protection in any part of the world.

"Notices" has the meaning attributed to it in the Partnership Agreement.

"Partner Materials" means any material that the Partner provides to 4C UR Future during the Term, which promotes the Partner's participation in the Event.

All terms referred to in the Partnership Agreement shall have the meanings given to them in the Partnership Agreement.

1.2 The General Terms set out the general Terms and Conditions applicable to this Agreement and are supplementary to the Partnership Agreement, which sets out the specific details of the Partnership Package applicable to this Agreement.

1.3 Where any provision contained in the Partnership Agreement conflicts with any provision of these General Terms, the General Terms shall prevail.

1.4 The headings in this Agreement are for ease of reference only and shall be disregarded in construing or interpreting the Agreement.

1.5 A reference to "writing" or "written" includes email.

1.6 Any words following the terms "including", "include", "in particular" or any similar expression shall be construed as illustrative and shall not limit the sense of the words, description, definition, phrase or term preceding those terms.

2. Term

The Partnership Package shall commence on the Commencement Date and continue until expiry of the Campaign End Date (when it shall terminate automatically without notice), unless terminated earlier in accordance with clause 10 ('**Term'**).

3. 4C UR Future's Obligations

3.1 4C UR Future warrants that, during the Term, any Event that 4C UR Future hosts will be hosted with reasonable care and skill.

3.2 Subject to the payment of the Charges and Expenses and any Other Costs (as applicable), 4C UR Future shall provide the Partnership Package to the Partner.

3.3 4C UR Future shall have the right to make any changes to the Event that are necessary to comply with any applicable law or safety requirement, or which do not materially affect the nature or quality of the Partnership Package, and 4C UR Future shall notify the Partner in any such event.

3.4 4C UR Future shall have the absolute right, at any time, to refuse to publish or use any Partner Material where 4C UR Future has indicated that it will not permit such content to be used and/or 4C UR Future reasonably believes that such Partner Material is unsuitable and/or of an inappropriate quality or nature. To the extent reasonably practicable, 4C UR Future will suggest amendments to the Partner Material to comply with 4C UR Future's requirements.

4. Council Partner Obligations

4.1 The Council Partner warrants that:

(a) The Terms set out in the Partnership Agreement are accurate and complete;

(b) If the performance of any element of the Partnership Package requires the use of any Partner Materials then the Partner shall provide 4C UR Future promptly (and in any event no later than any date agreed by the Parties) with the Partner Materials at no charge;

(c) The Partner Materials will not, when used in accordance with this Agreement, infringe any Intellectual Property Rights of any third party and suitable waivers of moral rights have been obtained, where relevant;

(d) The Partner Materials are not in any way obscene, defamatory, or blasphemous, and not contrary to provisions of any applicable law, regulation, or code of practice;

(e) All Partner Materials submitted to 4C UR Future for publication online, or as part of downloaded licensed software applications, will be free of any viruses;

(f) The Partner shall ensure it has obtained any necessary authorisations, including consents, permissions, rights, or releases, that might be required to use such materials in accordance with the terms of this Agreement;

(g) All Partner Materials shall apply any legal notices as may be reasonably required from time to time by 4C UR Future;

(h) Where the Partnership Package and/or any Partner Materials include any images of, and/or interviews, and/or statements, and/or any other type of communications that are from or are purported to be from the Partner's directors, employees, agents, sub-contractors, and/or authorised representatives ("**Associates**"), or any information or documentation of a

similar nature, the Partner shall procure the appropriate consents, permissions, and releases required to enable 4C UR Future to publish same;

(i) The Partner has full authority to enter into this Agreement and is not bound by any agreement with any third party that adversely affects, conflicts, or competes with this Agreement;

(j) The Partner has, and will maintain throughout the Term, all necessary powers, authority, and consents to enter into and fully perform its obligations under this Agreement; and

(k) It owns or is solely entitled to use the Partner Materials and any other material supplied to 4C UR Future in relation to this Agreement;

(l) The Partner will, at all times, maintain an appropriate level of insurance cover (to a reasonable extent as is standard in the Partner's industry) in relation to any participation by or on behalf of the Partner in relation to the Event/s, and will provide 4C UR Future with reasonable evidence of such insurance in force from time to time at the request of 4C UR Future.

(m) In the event that the Partner materially breaches any Term of this Agreement, at any time, it agrees that 4C UR Future may, in its absolute discretion, appoint an alternative Partner for the Event in question and/or obtain an alternative Partnership Package, which is not provided by the Partner, and the Partner shall indemnify and keep indemnified 4C UR Future against all costs, liabilities, and other expenses 4C UR Future incurs as a result (including but not limited to the cost to 4C UR Future obtaining an alternative Partner and/or Partnership Package).

(n) The Partner agrees that it will provide 4C UR Future, upon reasonable request, with any evidence of its compliance with any of the obligations in this clause 4.

(o) For the avoidance of doubt, the Partner acknowledges and agrees that, unless it is given specific rights in writing by 4C UR Future as part of the Partnership Package (in which case any rights shall be limited to the extent that is expressly provided for in the Partnership Pack), it has no right whatsoever to contact or market to, in any way, any of 4C UR Future's school or business contacts in relation to the Event(s) and/or any Partnership Package and/or any other service or product that may be offered by the Partner at any time.

(p) The Partner acknowledges and agrees that it has no right to use any Confidential Information or Intellectual Property owned by 4C UR Future.

5. Payment Terms

5.1 The Partner shall pay the Charges, Expenses, and any Other Costs in accordance with the Terms of the Partnership Agreement (including on the Payment Dates set out in the Partnership Agreement).

5.2 4C UR Future shall invoice the Partner the Charges, Expenses, and any Other Costs agreed between the Parties, where reasonably practicable, in advance of the Event to which the Charges, Expenses, and any Other Costs apply, unless otherwise agreed in the Partnership Agreement.

5.3 The Partner shall pay all invoices within thirty (30) days of the date of the relevant invoice unless otherwise stated on the Partnership Agreement. For the avoidance of doubt, all Charges, Expenses, and Other Costs due and payable to 4C UR Future will be paid at least 14 working days prior to any Event to which the Charges, Expenses, and Other Costs relate, unless otherwise agreed in writing by 4C UR Future.

5.4 All payments to be made by the Partner under this Agreement shall be paid free and clear of any deduction, withholding, bank charges, fees, duties, other transactional costs, set-off, or counterclaim (other than any deduction or withholding of tax as required by law).

5.5 If the Partner fails to make any payment due to 4C UR Future under this Agreement by the due date for payment, then, the Partner shall pay interest on the overdue amount at the rate of 8% per annum above Barclays Bank base rate from time to time. Such interest shall accrue on a daily basis from the due date until actual payment of the overdue amount, whether before or after judgment. The Partner shall pay the interest together with the overdue amount. Such amount shall be immediately recoverable by 4C UR Future as a debt.

5.6 If the Partner fails to pay 4C UR Future any amount by the Payment Due Date, then without prejudice to 4C UR Future's other rights or remedies, 4C UR Future shall have the right to immediately suspend the Partner's performance in relation to any Event (including, without limitation, in relation to the Partnership Package) until 4C UR Future has received payment of the overdue amount together with any accrued interest.

6. Termination

6.1 Subject to the provisions of this Agreement, either Party may terminate this Agreement immediately upon written notice to the other:

a) If the other Party commits a material breach of any material term of this Agreement and (if such breach is remediable) fails to remedy that breach within a period of thirty (30) days after being notified in writing to do so; or

b) If the other Party ceases carrying on business in the normal course, or shall call a meeting of its creditors or make a proposal for a voluntary arrangement within Part I of the Insolvency Act 1986, or for any other composition or scheme of arrangement with (or assignment for the benefit of) its creditors, or shall be unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 123 of the Insolvency Act 1986, or if a trustee, receiver, administrative receiver, or other similar officer is appointed in respect of all or any part of its business or assets, or if a petition is presented or a meeting is convened for the purpose of considering a resolution for its winding up (otherwise than for the purpose of a bona fide scheme of solvent amalgamation or reconstruction), or it is the subject of an administration order; or

c) The other Party repeatedly breaches any Terms of the Agreement in such a manner as to reasonably justify the opinion that its conduct is inconsistent with it having the intention or ability to give effect to the Terms of this Agreement; or

d) The other Party fails to pay any amount due under this Agreement on the due date for payment and remains in default not less than 14 days after being notified in writing to make such a payment.

6.2 Upon termination of this Agreement for whatever reason:

a) The Partner shall pay to 4C UR Future all Charges, Expenses, and Other Costs due to 4C UR Future in respect of the Event(s)/Partnership Package up to and including the effective date of termination, together with all third-party costs to which 4C UR Future has committed in respect of the same at the effective date of termination;

b) Each Party shall immediately deliver to, or dispose of, as directed by the other Party, any and all materials and property belonging or relating to the other Party, including all Confidential Information. 4C UR Future will retain the ability to use such materials for marketing purposes in accordance with clause 6.

c) Any provisions of this Agreement that either are expressed to survive its termination, or from their nature or context it is contemplated that they are to survive such termination, shall remain in full force and effect notwithstanding such termination.

7. Force Majeure

7.1 Neither Party shall be liable for any expense, loss, or damage resulting from delay or prevention of performance of the Agreement that is caused by fires, floods, acts of God, strikes, riots, thefts, accidents, or any other cause whatsoever beyond their reasonable control that may delay or prevent the performance of their respective duties hereunder ("**Force Majeure Event**").

7.2 In the event of a Force Majeure Event, the affected Party shall notify the other Party as soon as reasonably practicable of the Force Majeure Event and likely consequences, and use all reasonable endeavours to mitigate the effect of the Force Majeure Event on the performance of its obligations under this Agreement.

8. Miscellaneous

8.1 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties and supersedes and extinguishes all previous drafts, agreements, arrangements, and understandings between them, whether written or oral, relating to its subject matter. Any reference to the Partner's Terms or Conditions in any correspondence between the Parties is incidental, and any such Terms and Conditions are hereby expressly excluded for the purposes of this Agreement.

8.2 No term of this Agreement is enforceable by any person not a party to it, whether pursuant to the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 or otherwise.

8.3 Neither Party may assign, novate, or otherwise transfer to any third party any of its rights or obligations under this Agreement, whether in whole or in part, without the other Party's prior written consent.

8.4 Any Notice(s) given in connection with this Agreement shall be in writing and sent by hand, recorded delivery post, or email to the addressee and address or email address set out in the Partnership Agreement, or such other addressee, address and/or email address as may be notified by the relevant Party from time to time in accordance with this clause.

8.5 Notices for 4C UR Future should be sent to the individual stated in the Partnership Agreement.

8.6 Notices shall be deemed to have been received by the addressee within three (3) Business Days of posting in the case of notices sent by post and within one complete Business Day if sent by email, subject to read receipt notification or confirmation that the email has been received.

8.7 All sums payable under this Agreement are exclusive of any Value Added Tax that may be payable.

8.8 No variation of this Agreement shall be effective unless it is in writing and signed by the Parties (or their authorised representatives).

8.9 No failure or delay by a Party to exercise any right or remedy provided under this Agreement or by law, shall constitute a waiver of that, or any other right or remedy or prevent or restrict the further exercise of that or any other right or remedy.

8.10 If any invalid, unenforceable, or illegal provision of this Agreement would be valid, enforceable, and legal if some part of it were deleted, the provision shall apply with the minimum modification necessary to make it legal, valid, and enforceable.

8.11 This Agreement, and any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it, shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Northern Ireland, and the Parties agree that any disputes or claims shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Northern Irish courts.

Appendix 2

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

02 June 2021

Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Room A428
Dundonald House
Stormont Estate
BT4 3SB

By Email: private.office@daera-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister Poots

Rural Affairs Policy Framework

At a recent meeting of Mid Ulster Council's Development Committee, our Members raised concerns as regards progress with the new Rural Affairs Policy Framework and with the current uncertainty on what a new rural support programme for Northern Ireland may look like, in terms of content, delivery mechanisms and funding. I therefore, gratefully request that you meet with a small delegation from Mid Ulster District Council to discuss these important issues.

Mid Ulster District Council is a predominantly rural area. 70% of our residents live in rural areas and over 80% of our businesses are located rurally. Successive LEADER Rural Development Programmes over the past twenty years have been vital in sustaining and growing the rural economy of Mid Ulster and as a Council we stand fully committed to build on what has been achieved through LEADER and indeed all EU Structural funds which have helped to improve the fabric of our rural areas.

There is no doubt that the loss of EU Structural funds has the potential to unwind the benefits of previous programmes however it also presents the opportunity to shape new initiatives which build on the strengths and address the weaknesses of local circumstances across all local authority areas.

Within Mid Ulster the concentration of rural based businesses within our District coupled with the reputation of Mid Ulster's advanced manufacturing sector as a world leader places a focus on building our business base through continued support for business investment in innovation, capacity building and skills development.

To realise the full potential of the District as a tourist destination we need further investment in our environment and heritage assets and on infrastructure within our towns and villages to meet visitor expectations.

Cookstown Office
Burn Road
Cookstown
BT80 8DT

Dungannon Office
Circular Road
Dungannon
BT71 6DT

Magherafelt Office
Ballyronan Road
Magherafelt
BT45 6EN

Telephone 03000 132 132

info@midulstercouncil.org
www.midulstercouncil.org

Vibrant communities underpin a healthy rural economy so there is a need to continue with investment in community infrastructure and capacity building to tackle issues relating to health and wellbeing which continues to blight our District.

This Council considers these themes to be fundamental components of any future rural support initiatives under the new rural affairs policy.

Turning to delivery mechanisms for the implementation of future support initiatives, this Council is firmly of the view that local delivery using a bottom up approach must continue. This approach has been embraced by Council and previous legacy Councils in Mid Ulster who worked closely with LAG structures in the past to deliver highly successful programmes underpinned by local animation and support for the businesses and community sector groups who applied. We believe local delivery remains essential.

I look forward to meeting with you for further discussion on these issues.

Yours Sincerely

Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Chairman

From the Office of the
Minister of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs

Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Councillor Paul McLean
Chairman
Mid Ulster District Council
chair@midulstercouncil.org

DAERA Private Office
Room 438
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3SB
Telephone: 028 9052 4140
Email: private.office@daera-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: INV-0330-2021
Date: 18 June 2021

Dear Paul

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2021 requesting a meeting to discuss the new rural policy framework and future delivery issues.

Senior officials in DAERA Rural Affairs Division met with the Mid-Ulster Council (MUC) Chief Executives office, following a request from MUC CEO, on 2 June and provided a detailed update on the draft Rural Policy Framework and the issues you have raised.

As you know DAERA have been developing the draft Rural Policy Framework over the last 2 years, with input from local government, and I am hopeful that the Framework will shortly go out for public consultation. Gareth Evans is leading this work and would be best placed to discuss progress on the Framework as part of the consultation process. Gareth can be contacted on: gareth.evans@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

EDWIN POOTS MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

100 YEARS 1921-2021

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Appendix 3

From the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Councillor Paul McLean
Chairman
Mid Ulster District Council
chair@midulstercouncil.org

DAERA Private Office
Room 438
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3SB
Telephone: 028 9052 4140
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Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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100 YEARS 1921-2021

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Report on	ESF Call 3 Match Funding Requests (2022-23)
Date of Meeting	7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Economic Development

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To consider financially supporting a number of match funding requests under ESF Call 3 (2022-23).
2.0	**Background**
2.1	In May 2021, the Economy Minister launched a third and final call for projects to apply for funding under the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (NI ESF) programme. The extended funding period is from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 and a competition for funding will open to applications on 14 June 2021 for a period of four weeks.
2.2	The ESF is designed to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion. It supports participants to progress into further education, training and ultimately employment through funding organisations to deliver programmes for the unemployed and the economically inactive as well as people with disabilities and young people not in education, employment or training.
2.3	The lead organisations require match funding support as part of a wider cocktail of funding to allow the employability schemes to commence.
2.4	The funding requested from Council will potentially leverage substantial amounts of ESF funding into Mid Ulster and contribute to the achievement of objectives set out in the Council's Economic Development Plan.
2.5	**The maximum budget available from Council to match fund external projects is £50,000 during the 2022/23 financial year. However, beyond this point Council's economic development income is set to contract up to 80% from April 2023 onwards, due to a significant loss of EU funding. Members should note that beyond April 2023, this budget is likely to be required by Council's economic development function to deliver upon our own economic initiatives and commitments, to offset the shortfall in funding Council will soon experience.** **It is recommended however, that in 2022/23 financial year, the final year of ESF funding, Council support the following 4 projects which have requested match funding from Council. The full amount of match funding each**

organisation has requested from Council, has been reduced to fit within Council's £50,000 available budget.

1. **Step Up to Sustainable Employment Programme (SUSE+).**
2. **Up for Work Programme (UFWP)**
3. **Job Match Programme (JMP)**
4. **Women Towards Education and Employment Programme (WTEEP)**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The strategic aim of the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020 in Northern Ireland is to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and to increase the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce. The Programme funds activities which enhance and extend employment opportunities, in particular, for those groups at a disadvantage in the labour market who are unemployed, including long term unemployed, or economically inactive.

As part of the delivery of ESF support for employability development, the Council is currently committed to supporting four programmes under Phase 2 up to March 2022:-

1. Step Up to Sustainable Employment Programme (SUSE+ Programme)
2. Up for Work Programme (UFWP)
3. Job Match Programme (JMP)
4. Exploring Enterprise 4 Programme (EE4P)

The lead organisations for the SUSE+, Up for Work and Job Match Programmes plan to submit proposals for ESF funding under the third call for the period 2022-23.

In addition, the Council has received a match funding request from the First Steps Women's Centre for an additional Programme.

3.2 **Step Up to Sustainable Employment Programme (SUSE +)**
(Lead organisation: South West College)

SUSE+ delivers skills development and employability support to help participants into further development, training, education and employment. The SUSE+ programme is a mentor led initiative with six mentors employed to support participants across the district. Whilst the initiative supports citizens in the urban areas of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon, assistance for rural dwellers is a key focus of the programme and is reflected in the spread of mentoring resources across the district.

<u>Current Programme Performance 2018-21</u>

District Sector		Outputs

	Participants Recruited	Qualifications	Specialist Training	Sustained Employment
Carntogher Moyola Magherafelt	177	232	168	46
Cookstown Torrent	183	255	186	52
Dungannon Clogher Valley	240	347	243	72
Total	600	834	597	170

Programme Proposal (2022-23)
South West College intends to apply for a 1 year extension to the current SUSE+ Programme in response to the ESF Call 3 which will run from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The programme will continue to be delivered in its current format and will again be collaborative in its approach and it is envisaged that the partnership which was developed to deliver SUSE+ will be retained to deliver any new programme. It is intended that all current partners including the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will continue to support the programme for a further year in response to Call 3 of the ESF programme.

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

- 200 Participants (unemployed and economically inactive people)
- 425 Qualifications Achieved at Level 1
- 35 Essential Skills Level 1 Qualifications to be Achieved (Literacy , Numeracy and a strong focus on ICT)
- 44 participants or 22% of participants to Enter Employment on Leaving the Programme
- 44 Participants or 22% of Participants in Employment Six Months After Leaving Programme
- 16 Leavers From the Programme Join Education or Training Programmes
- 294 Specialist qualifications attained

Programme Funding (2022-23)

Source	Percentage	Amount
DfE/ESF	65%	£543,710.15
DAERA	10.16%	£100,000
MUDC	4.26%	£40,000
FODC	4.26%	£40,000
Radius Housing	2.99%	£25,000
SWC	13.33%	£62,767.01
Total	**100%**	**£836,477.16**

Recommendation : SUSE+
Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £25,000 to South West College for the period 2022-23.

3.3 **Up for Work Programme (UFWP) (Lead organisation: Network Personnel)**
UFWP seeks to engage and support participants who are not in employment, education or training (NEET's) to enter or return to the labour market.

Current Programme Performance 2018-21
As can be seen from the table below, outcomes from the programme have been exceedingly positive; job outcomes to date are 144% over target.

April 2018 – May 2021		
Outcomes	**Target**	**Actual**
Participants	293	300
Qualifications	641	674
Employment	45	143
Further Ed/H. Education	102	96

Programme Proposal (2022-23)
The new programme is based on the learning from the current initiative and will seek to engage and support those perceived to be at most distance from the labour market. Based on feedback from employers, Network Personnel plan to offer a bespoke programme which will incorporate personal development with employability support. They envisage this being the 'go to' provision for young people who fall out of college/work or are just unsure of their path in life.
The Programme will provide tailored job search support which will involve interview skills, CV preparation and talks from local employers to develop skills and to provide guidance on what is expected from employees in the workforce. Participants will benefit from Network Personnel's wrap around support including benefit advice; information on subsidised childcare; peer mentoring and wellbeing support via our counselling service. Participants will also be given the opportunity to work with Network Personnel's Employer Engagement Officers matching them to local vacancies and progression opportunities for further training/education.

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

Outcomes	PROGRAMME TOTAL
Participants	**75**
Qualifications	**75**
Employment	**15**
Further Training/Education	**17**

Programme Funding (2022-23)

PROPOSED FUNDING PACKAGE 2022-23	£
ESF (65%)	**176,150**
DfE (28.5%)	**£77,235**
MUDC (3.5%)	**£9,485**
Workspace (3%)	**£8,130**
TOTAL PROGRAMME COST:-	**£271,000**

Recommendation : Up for Work Programme
Based on current budget constraints, programme scope, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £6,250 to Network Personnel for the period 2022-23.

3.4 **Job Match Programme (JMP) (Lead organisation: Network Personnel)**
The JMP provides vocational training and employability support for those aged over 18 years old. It has a particular focus on supporting participants with specific barriers e.g. long-term unemployed, economically inactive, caring responsibilities, ex-offenders, addictions and NEETS. The programme covers Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Omagh, Fermanagh, Ballymena, Antrim, Larne, Carrickfergus, Ballymoney, Coleraine and Newtownabbey. At present participants are supported by a team of Career Mentors, Facilitators, Employer Engagement Officers and a Wellbeing Advisor.

Current Programme Performance 2018-21
As can be seen from the statistics below (for the period April 2018 – May 2021), the programme has operated exceedingly successfully irrespective of COVID19, particularly with respect to job outcomes which are well ahead of target.

	ANNUAL TARGET	TARGET TO DATE April – May 2021	ACTUAL April – May 2021	PROGRAMME TO DATE TARGET	PROGRAMME TO DATE ACTUAL
REGISTRATIONS	418	70	96	1220	1297
Employment	63	11	32	184	562
Education and training	12	2	0	35	44
QUALIFICATIONS	**706**	118	**162**	2060	1951

Programme Proposal (2022-23)
The next phase of the programme will continue to reach out to those who are in receipt of Universal Credits and given the high numbers of those who are deemed to be economically inactive, will target those on sickness benefits, lone parents, carers and non-claimants. The Programme will focus on those who have recently been made redundant due to the pandemic and continue to take an 'employer led approach' with training and job search activities having direct relevance to the current job opportunities in the various geographical areas in which they deliver the programme. Network Personnel's Employer Engagement Officers will engage with companies on a daily basis to ascertain their staffing requirements and will match them to the participants who are work ready. Career Connection days will be offered whereby employers will meet groups of participants on our premises or remotely, explain about their skills requirements and carry out interviews on the day if required. In order to make the participants 'work ready', the Programme will continue to offer tailored job search support on a one to one basis using our skilled Career Mentors. This may involve interview skills; CV preparation and confidence building. A Wellbeing Advisor will also be on hand to provide support and guidance to those who need it in both a group and 1:2:1 setting. For those

who aren't work ready on programme completion, the programme will support a transition to Further Education or Apprenticeship Programmes.

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

Outcomes	PROGRAMME TOTAL FOR 1 YEAR	TOTAL MUDC FOR 1 YEAR
Participants	**418**	**98**
Qualifications	**706**	**137**
Employment	**67**	**25**
Further Training/Education	**12**	**10**

Programme Funding (2022-23)

PROPOSED FUNDING PACKAGE	£
Programme Total	**£795,340**
Funding breakdown	
ESF (65%)	**£516,971**
DFE (28.87%)	**£229,615**
MUDC (1.3%)	**£10,332**
OTHER COUNCILS M/F CONTRIBUTION (1.3%*2)	**£20,664**
WORKSPACE (2.23%)	**£17,758**
TOTAL	**£795,340**

Recommendation : Job Match Programme
Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £6,250 to Network Personnel for the period 2022-23.

3.5 **Women Towards Education and Employment Programme (WTEEP)**
(Lead organisation: First Steps Women's Centre)
A further request has been received from First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC) to provide match funding for their Women Towards Education and Employment Programme (WTEEP). The Programme will provide a range of training including interview skills, ESOL, literacy and numeracy, health & wellbeing, progression and mentoring as well as a Job fair. FSWC will employ a Progression Worker to guide participants into further education and employment. The Progression Worker will also assist women in setting training and employment targets and working towards them.

Since 2015 FSWC has drawn down £2.5million into the Mid Ulster Council area, the majority from the European Social Fund programme, however, £479k was for a capital refurbishment programme (2017-18). This capital investment has doubled the size of the Centre and totally transformed the building into a modern Centre with facilities including 4 training rooms and an onsite crèche. Furthermore, 219 women gained employment since 2015 as a result of attending FSWC. The additional development of Wellbeing programmes has created a positive environment for many women to consider employment who had previously been labelled "Economically Inactive".

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

- **Interview & CV Skills** – FSWC has liaised with Terex to provide Interview Technique training;
  5 X ESOL Courses for 110 Migrant Women. These courses will operate twice per week from September to March 2022. The aim is to improve the level of English in order for women to be able to gain employment and/or attend further education;
- **1 X Literacy & Numeracy** – up to Level 1 for 25 women
- **12 X IT Courses for 120 women**. These courses will range from Level 1 Sage Accounts & Sage Payroll, Microsoft Office, Excel and Beginners IT. There will also be introductory programmes including: iPad & Tablet, Digital Photography;
- **20 X Health & Wellbeing Programmes for 175 women** – These are aimed at building up the soft skills such as Confidence, Resilience, Assertiveness and Communication;
- **Progression & Mentoring work** – FSWC will employ a Progression Worker whose role is to guide women into further education and employment. The Progression Worker will assist women in setting training and employment targets and working towards them;
- **1 X Job Fair** – 25 organisations and 200-300 people attending.

Programme Targets (2022-2023)

Targets	2022-23
Job Creation	42
Qualifications	145
Number of Courses	39
Participants - places	264
Job Fair	1 event with 200-300 in attendance
Improvement in Soft Skills	225
Funding / Investment	£480k

Programme Funding (2022-23)

Source of Funding	Amount	Definite (Y/N)
ESF (65%)	£312k	TBC
FSWC (5.2%)	£25k	Y
Dept for Communities (15%)	£70k	Y
MUDC (5.2%)	£25k	TBC
Match Funding to be identified	£48k	TBC
TOTAL:	**£480k**	

	Recommendation: Women Towards Education and Employment Programme Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £12,500 to First Steps Women's Group for the period 2022-23.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: **SUSE+** SWC total financial commitment sought is £25,000 for the period 2022-23. **Up for Work Programme** Network Personnel's total financial commitment sought is £6,250 for the period 2022-23. **Job Match Programme** Network Personnel's total financial commitment sought is £6,250 for the period 2022-23. **Women Towards Education and Employment Programme** First steps Women's Centre's total financial commitment sought is £12,500 for the period 2022-23.
	Human: Officer Time
	Risk Management: Risk level is mitigated as Council contributions will be subject to confirmation of funding from other sources.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	To be considered by Project Promoters.
	Rural Needs Implications: To be considered by Project Promoters.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	It is recommended that Members:- **Approve** the undernoted match funding requests under ESF Call 3 (2022-23) for Mid Ulster District, subject to the organisations being successful in their funding bids:-

	5.1.1 **SUSE+** A financial contribution of up to £25,000 to South West College for the period 2022-23 to deliver the SUSE+ Programme. 5.1.2 **Up for Work Programme** A financial contribution of £6,250 to Network Personnel for the period 2022-23 to deliver the Up for Work Programme. 5.1.3 **Job Match Programme** A financial contribution of £6,250 to Network Personnel for the period 2022-23 to deliver the Job Match Programme. 5.1.4 **Women Towards Education and Employment Programme** A financial contribution of £12,500 to First Steps Women's Centre for the period 2022-23 to deliver the Women Towards Education and Employment Programme.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix 1 – South West College – ESF Match Funding Request **Appendix 2** – Network Personnel – ESF Match Funding Requests **Appendix 3 –** First Steps Women's Centre – ESF Match Funding Request

APPENDIX 1

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE

SUSE+ Proposal to Mid Ulster District Council

1.0 Introduction

Based on the success to date of the Step Up to Sustainable Employment + (SUSE+) programme to date, South West College intends to submit an application in response to the ESF Call 3 for a 1 year extension to the existing SUSE+ funded under Call 2 of the ESF Programme. It is anticipated that this Call will be live from 1st April 2022 and will end on 31st March 2023. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the success of the SUSE+ programme in Mid Ulster area and set out the broad outlines of the proposed new programme.

The SUSE+ Programme is a collaborative employability programme, which support participants entering or moving towards employment across the Mid Ulster and Fermanagh/Omagh District Council Areas. The Programme is led by South West College (SWC) with the support of a range of partners:

- Northern Regional College
- Mid Ulster District Council
- Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
- Education and Library Boards
- Northern, Southern and Western Trusts Health and Social Care Trusts
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

2.0 SUSE+ Outputs and Outcomes 2018 to 2021

As we approach the end of quarter 1 of year four in the delivery of the current SUSE+ Programme, the impacts to date have been significant with 170 or 28% of participants entering sustained employment. Even at the minimum wage this yields wages of over £2 million per annum to the local economy.

The SUSE+ programme is a mentor led initiative with six mentors employed to support participants across the district. Whilst the initiative supports citizens in the urban areas of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon, assistance for rural dwellers is a key focus of the programme and is reflected in the spread of mentoring resources across the district. To ensure an equal distribution of mentors the College has divided the district into three discrete sectors and allocated two mentors to each sector.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the programme outputs to date by geographic sector:

Table 1: Cumulative programme outputs by area 2018-2021, Mid Ulster Council.

District Sector	Participants Recruited	Outputs		
		Qualifications	Specialist Training	Sustained Employment
Carntogher Moyola Magherafelt	177	232	168	46
Cookstown Torrent	183	255	186	52
Dungannon Clogher Valley	240	347	243	72
Total	600	834	597	170

3.0 Self-Evaluation

At the conclusion of year 2 of the current programme (June, 2020) the SUSE+ Programme team undertook a detailed self-evaluation process, which identified strengths and areas for improvement. A synopsis of the findings is contained in Table 2.

Table 2: SUSE+ Strengths and Areas for Improvement (June 2020)

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
Six dedicated mentors based in MUC area supporting citizens to reach full potential.	Further increase the provision of engineering training to match local employer needs
246 participants recruited in MUDC area in year 2 of the current programme against a target of 200.	Further develop a comprehensive range of Blended provision for Year 3 of the programme which fully meets the care, welfare, personal development and learning needs of participants
Focus on rural outreach with 139 participants recruited from these rural areas in year 2 against a target of 96.	Develop a comprehensive Recruitment and Marketing Strategy for Year 3 of the Programme to take into account remote working model for staff, a remote delivery model for staff and a remote learning model for participants.

76 citizens in the district securing sustainable employment against a target of 44 for year 2.	
The ability of the programme to provide participants with travel, childcare and subsistence allowances to address barriers to participation.	
54 participants progressing to Education and Training against a target of 16 I year 2 of the programme.	

4.0 Programme Proposal 2022-2023

South West College intends to apply for a 1 year extension to the current SUSE+ programme in response to the imminent ESF Call 3 which will run from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. The programme will continue to be delivered in its current format and will again be collaborative in its approach and it is envisaged that the partnership which was developed to deliver SUSE+ will be retained to deliver any new programme. It is intended that all current partners including The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will continue to support the programme for a further year in response to Call 3 of the ESF programme.

4.1 Programme Aim and Rationale

To provide a mentor led initiative which supports citizens in the Mid Ulster District Council area move into or towards sustained employment through the provision of a mentor led education, training and development programme.

Table 3: Programme Rationale

Who	Engage 200 unemployed and economically inactive people exhibiting barriers to employment.
Where	Delivery will be provided in the College campuses and via outreaching mentoring support in a range of locations across the region. Partner organisation premises will be utilised for mentoring, work placement and delivery of Step into Employment Programmes.
When	200 participants in the 2022/23 financial year.
What	Mentor led initiative will identify and address barriers to progression into Education, Training & Sustained Employment through mentoring, support, guidance, Essential Skills and qualifications at level one and below along with specialist training. Participants will have access to Specialist Support Services, work placement and Step Into Employment Programmes. Mentors will signpost participants to the provision and support which best meet their needs.

	All participants will avail of post programme mentoring after they leave provision to ensure the progression to education, training and employment is sustained.
Why	To increase economic performance across the region thus combating poverty; securing sustained employment for 36% of the target group and significantly enhancing the employability of the remainder through a structured, partnership based approach which complements existing provision and places employers at the centre of delivery.

5.0 Opportunities for Mid Ulster Council

South West College intends to make an application to The European Social Fund Managing Authority Call 3 for approximately £634,614 for a further year's funding for the SUSE+ employability programme representing 75% of the total budget required to fund the programme. It is envisaged that the remaining 25% match funding requirement will be realised from the statutory partners that supported the SUSE+ programme. Based on the breakdown of annual funding realised for SUSE+ it is anticipated that the commitment profile for any new programme would be as outlined in Table 4.

Table 3: Annual Funding Profile

Source	Percentage	Amount
DfE/ESF	65%	£543,710.15
DAERA	10.16%	£100,000
MUDC	4.26%	£40,000
FODC	4.26%	£40,000
Radius Housing	2.99%	£25,000
SWC	13.33%	£62,767.01
Total	**100%**	**£836,477.16**

In a Mid Ulster specific context the provision of £40,000 per annum in match funding would leverage an additional £464,768 of funding to support citizens in the district. As we enter the development stage of this proposal an opportunity exists for council officials to participate in a range of partner workshops where that application will be developed and aligned with the community plan.

Indicative objectives for the delivery of proposed employability programme in the Mid Ulster Council area

1. 425 Qualifications Achieved at Level 1
2. 35 Essential Skills Level 1 Qualifications to be Achieved (Literacy , Numeracy and a strong focus on ICT)
3. 44 participants or 22% of participants to Enter Employment on Leaving the Programme
4. 44 Participants or 22% of Participants in Employment Six Months After Leaving Programme
5. 16 Leavers From the Programme Join Education or Training Programmes
6. 294 Specialist qualifications attained

APPENDIX 2

Proposal to Mid Ulster District Council for Match Funding for ESF Programmes 2018-22

Company Background

Network Personnel was established in 1987 to address the skills and employment needs of these seeking to return to work in the Magherafelt area. We have grown substantially over the subsequent 34 years and at present, have a staff of 110no. with 12 offices throughout Northern Ireland and 3 in the Republic. We currently deliver a diverse portfolio of employability programmes which are as follows: -

- Jobpath: - This is the key employment support initiative in the Republic (equivalent to Steps to Success) which we deliver in Cavan, Monaghan and Carrickmacross. It is funded by the Department of Social Protection.
- Up for Work, Community Family Support Programme and Jobmatch (all of which are ESF funded).

Network Personnel is wholly owned by the Workspace Group, a registered charity with its headquarters in Draperstown. Workspace currently provides property and support services for businesses and is involved, through subsidiary companies, in recruitment; training and employment; insulation; heat recovery; childcare and recreation/leisure. The organisation's strong business approach and customer focus is reflected in the achievement of ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 18001 and the Investors in People Bronze Award.

Workspace was named Northern Ireland Social Enterprise of the Year in 2015 and was also runner up in the UK Social Enterprise of the Year.

We are requesting match funding for the continuation of the following ESF programmes. The funding period is from April 2022 – March 2023.

- **Jobmatch: -** currently operating in Mid Ulster area with a proportion of match funding provided by the Council

- **Up for Work:** - currently operating in Mid Ulster with a proportion of match funding provided by the Council

PROGRAMME 1: - 'UP FOR WORK'

Current delivery (2018 -2022)

This programme is available to all 16 -24 year olds in the Mid Ulster Area who are not in education, training or employment or who work less than 16 hours per week. A number of our participants are early school leavers and may also have issues which are marginalising them in the job market e.g. poor mental health, convictions, drug and alcohol issues or rurality.

The programme shares resources and expertise with the other 2 ESF programmes and offers a range of vocational training courses as well as mentoring and job search support. Recognising that young people are difficult to engage, we focus on sectors that may appeal to them. To date this has included creative media and beauty therapy. We anticipate this offering will continue to diversify in this final year of the programme depending on feedback from clients.

As can be seen from our statistics (see below), outcomes from the programme have been exceedingly positive. For example, our job outcomes to date are 144% over target.

April 2018 – May 2021		
Outcomes	**Target**	**Actual**
Participants	293	300
Qualifications	641	674
Employment	45	143
Further Ed/H. Education	102	96

Future delivery (2022 - 2023)

The new programme is based on the learning from the current initiative and will seek to engage and support those perceived to be at most distance from the labour market.

Our current experience, from speaking to employers who are recruiting for entry level jobs, is that their primary requirement is to find staff who are motivated to work and who have good overall life skills. Based on this, we plan a offer a bespoke programme which will incorporate personal development with employability support. We envisage this being the 'go to' provision for young people who fall out of college/work or are just unsure of their path in life.

Phase 1 – (up to 4 weeks) : - The focus of the initial stages will be on life skills, team building, short qualifications and helping participants to identify a realistic career path. The programme will be very much tailored to the individual group. A structured approach will be adopted over 3/4 days per week. This phase will include a community project. Where necessary, transport will be provided by Network Personnel (eg use of the Network Personnel bus or reimbursement of public transport costs).

Phase 2 – (up to 6 weeks): - This aspect of the programme would be industry specific, focusing on a particular sector where there are job opportunities that would be suitable for the young people. Participants would have the opportunity to undertake the relevant qualifications and a work placement/ work sampling.

Throughout the programme (and in particular during Phase 2) we will provide tailored job search support. This will involve interview skills, CV preparation and talks from local employers to develop skills and to provide guidance on what is expected from employees in the workforce. We will also support participants with our Network Personnel wrap around support including benefit advice; information on subsidised childcare; peer mentoring and wellbeing support via our counselling service.

Participants will also be given the opportunity to work with Network Personnel's Employer Engagement Officers matching them to local vacancies and progression opportunities for further training/education.

Projected Outcomes (2022 – 2023)

Outcomes	PROGRAMME TOTAL
Participants	75
Qualifications	75
Employment	15
Further Training/Education	17

Match funding request (2018-2022)

ESTIMATED FINANCES	PROGRAMME TOTAL
Programme Total	£271,000
Funding breakdown	
ESF (65%)	176,150
DfE (28.5%)	£77,235
MUDC (3.5%)	£9,485
Workspace (3%)	£8,130
TOTAL	

PROGRAMME 2: - JOBMATCH

Current delivery (2018 - 2022)

The Jobmatch programme provides vocational training and employability support for those aged over 18 years old. It has a particular focus on supporting participants with specific barriers e.g. long-term unemployed, economically inactive, caring responsibilities, ex-offenders, addictions and NEETS. The programme covers Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Omagh, Fermanagh, Ballymena, Antrim, Larne, Carrickfergus, Ballymoney, Coleraine and Newtownabbey. At present participants are supported by a team of Career Mentors, Facilitators, Employer Engagement Officers and an Wellbeing Advisor.

As can be seen from the statistics below (April 2018 – May 2021), the programme has operated exceedingly successfully irrespective of COVID19, particularly with respect to job outcomes which are well ahead of target.

	ANNUAL TARGET	TARGET TO DATE April – May 2021	ACTUAL April – May 2021	PROGRAMME TO DATE TARGET	PROGRAMME TO DATE ACTUAL
REGISTRATIONS	418	70	96	1220	1297
Employment	63	11	32	184	562
Education and training	12	2	0	35	44
QUALIFICATIONS	**706**	118	**162**	2060	1951

Jobmatch (2022 - 2023)

Our plan for the next iteration of this ESF programme is to build on what we know has worked best in terms of helping participants progress to employment or further training and to step back from the measures that have been less fruitful.

We will continue to reach out to those who are in receipt of Universal Credits and given the high numbers of those who are deemed to be economically inactive, will target those on sickness benefits, lone parents, carers and non-claimants. We will also be focusing our attentions on those who have recently been made redundant due to the recent pandemic. We will operate across 5 council areas where Network Personnel already has a footprint.

We will continue to take an ‘employer led approach’ with training and job search activities having direct relevance to the current job opportunities in the various geographical areas in which we deliver the programme. Our Employer Engagement Officers will engage with companies on a daily basis to ascertain their staffing requirements and will match them to the participants who are work ready. We will offer our Career Connection days whereby employers will meet groups of participants on our premises or remotely, explain about their skills requirements and carry out interviews on the day if required.

In order to make the participants 'work ready', we will continue to offer our tailored job search support on a one to one basis using our skilled Career Mentors. This may involve interview skills; CV preparation and confidence building.

As an accredited training centre, we will offer a wide range of courses aimed at upskilling participants in line with local jobs. Our menu of qualifications will vary depending on current local employment opportunities and may include training in construction skills; customer service, first aid; office skills; health awareness and hospitality.

We will enhance our partnership working arrangement and ensure that we are meeting the needs of those who are at a distance from the labour market (e.g. due to drug and alcohol issues; a history of offending or mental ill health) by working closely with support organisations in the relevant geographical areas. Our Wellbeing Advisor will also be on hand to provide support and guidance to those who need it in both a group and 1:2:1 setting.

For those who aren't work ready on programme completion, we will support a transition to Further Education or apprenticeship programmes.

Projected Outcomes (2022 - 2023)

Outcomes	PROGRAMME TOTAL FOR 1 YEAR	MUDC YEAR 1	GRAND TOTAL MUC AREA
Participants	418	98	98
Qualifications	706	137	137
Employment	67	25	25
Further Training/Education	12	10	10

Match funding request (2022 - 2023)

ESTIMATED FINANCES	PROGRAMME TOTAL	YEAR 1	GRAND TOTAL
Programme Total	£795,340	£795,340	£795,340
Funding breakdown			
ESF (65%)	£516,971	£516,971	£516,971
DFE (28.87%)	£229,615	£229,615	£229,615
MUC(1.3%)	£10,332	£10,332	£10,332
OTHER COUNCILS M/F CONTRIBUTION (1.3%*2)	£20,664	£20,664	£20,664
WORKSPACE (2.23%)	£17,758	£17,758	£17,758
TOTAL	£795,340	£795,340	£795,340

Grand total of match funding requested for Jobmatch and Up for Work April 2021 – March 2022

£ 19,817

APPENDIX 3

First Steps Women's Centre Application for ESF Call 3 Match Funding to Mid Ulster Council

14th June 2021

Author: Michael McGoldrick, CEO

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Executive Summary

First Steps Women's Centre (FSWC) is a registered charity and Company Limited by Guarantee, based in Dungannon. It was formed in 1998 to provide education, training and support to women. These support services include free onsite creche, minibus transport service to and from the Centre and a Benefit Checker service aimed at assisting women and their families through the complex benefit system. This support alongside the training is vital for the retention and success of the programmes.

Since 2008 FSWC has been a recipient of the European Social Fund (ESF). The remit of applications was to provide training, education that would lead into employment and further education and training.

The main training and education areas are

- **IT** – Ranging from Sage Accounts, Sage Payroll to Microsoft Office and Excel
- **Wellbeing and Lifeskills** – These courses are often the first steps for many women seeking to reengage positively in society. They include programmes such as Assertiveness, Creative Writing, Managing Stress in Lockdown, Building Resilience, Pilates, Yoga Hormone Harmony
- **Lifeskills** - Consists of accredited Numeracy, Literacy and ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes.

At present the Centre employs 2 full time and 16 part time staff. The Centre also hires up to 20 part time tutors every year.

Economic Impact and Track Record

Financial Impact - Since 2015 First Steps Women's Centre has brought in a staggering **£2.5million** into the Mid Ulster Council area. Most of this funding was through our European Social Fund programme, however £479k was for a capital refurbishment programme (2017-18). This capital investment has doubled the size of the Centre and totally transformed the building into a modern Centre with facilities including 4 training rooms and an onsite creche. The Centre is a fully equipped and modern building with WIFI throughout. It has been recently endorsed by CEO of South West College, Michael McAllister and also Adrian McCreesh, CEO of Mid Ulster Council.

Employment - 219 women gained employment since 2015 as a result of attending FSWC. FSWC believes that his has been a very positive boost for the local economy. The additional

development of Wellbeing programmes has created a positive environment for many women to consider employment who had previously been labelled "Economically Inactive".

ESF Outputs and Outcomes 2015-2021

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Job Creation	63	45	48	35	22	6	219*
Qualifications	108	94	129	138	151	183	803
Number of Courses	41	49	61	51	61	38	301
Participants - places	356	489	763	623	776	259	3,266
Income	£420k	£405k	£394k	£436k	£424k	£424k	£2.5m

***Employment Trends –** The above table indicates a downward trend in employment. There are two main reasons for this. There has been a downward trend in local vacancies and also a number of women who have attended the Centre have other family/caring responsibilities that make it difficult to travel outside the Borough.

Job Fair – FSWC has held two successful Job Fairs with more than 30 employers and over 400 participants attending. These were open to the whole community including schools. FSWC had to cancel a planned Job Fair in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. It is a key aim of ESF Call 3 application is to host a Job Fair in the autumn of 2022.

Local Migrant Population – FSWC has a 15-year successful track record of providing accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training and qualification. Approximately 45% of all participants attending FSWC have been from the migrant community. They come to learn English so that they can gain employment, further their learning and to help integrate within the Mid Ulster community. Testimonials show that it is the manner and way in which FSWC provides the learning that ensures 80% and above retention levels. These include the following:

- **Family Friendly Times** – Courses start at 9.45am or 1.00pm for 2-3 hours,
- **Bi-Lingual Staff** – FSWC has 4 bi-lingual staff operating within its creche,
- **Transport** – This is a big plus for many women who do not have access to transport,
- **Benefit Checker** – Assistance with the numerous forms including Universal Credit has helped bring some financial stability to women and their families.

New ESF Programme

Title of Project: Women Towards Education and Employment

Annual Cost of programme £480k

Match Funding required £168k

Request to MUC £25k

Additional Match Funders identified – see page 5

Wrap Around Project

This proposal will be based at FSWC's own premises. This is a fully equipped, self -contained space with an onsite creche. It is the intention of FSWC to provide the following programmes on an annual basis. Each area of work has its own co-ordinator who will recruit and mentor the women throughout their journey. They will be assisted by a Progression Worker who will help and encourage those attending to apply for higher levels of education and/or seek employment.

Proposed Outputs and Outcomes 2022-23

Interview & CV Skills – FSWC has liaised with Terex to provide Interview Technique training. **5 X ESOL Courses for 110 Migrant Women**. These courses will operate twice per week from September to March 2022. The aim is to improve the level of English in order for women to be able to gain employment and/or attend further education;

1 X Literacy & Numeracy – up to Level 1 for 25 women

12 X IT Courses for 120 women. These courses will range from Level 1 Sage Accounts & Sage Payroll, Microsoft Office, Excel and Beginners IT. There will also be introductory programmes including: iPad & Tablet, Digital Photography.

20 X Health & Wellbeing Programmes for 175 women – These are aimed at building up the soft skills such as Confidence, Resilience, Assertiveness and Communication.

Progression & Mentoring work – FSWC will employ a Progression Worker whose role is to guide women into further education and employment. The Progression Worker will assist women in setting training and employment targets and working towards them

1 X Job Fair – 25 organisations and 200-300 people attending

Outcomes for Women Towards Education & Employment 2022-23

Outcomes	2022-23	Outcomes	2022-23
Job Creation	42	Participants - places	264
Qualifications	145	Job Fair	1 with 200-300 in attendance
Number of Courses	39	Improvement in Soft Skills	225
Income	£480k		

Partnership

FSWC has been a vital cog within the community and voluntary sector of Mid Ulster. Our ESF programme stretches far and wide throughout the Borough and beyond. The Centre has developed many partnerships especially for referrals and for progression beyond FSWC. These include the following:

- **South West College** – regular contact with senior and programme staff. This included College providing a progression route for Literacy class up to a Level 2 qualification. FSWC recently met with CEO and Ciaran McManus to plan a Level 3 programme at FSWC. This partnership will include FSWC providing transport, childcare and a room while the College will provide a tutor. This will be a progression route for 15 of FSWC's ESF participants.
- **University of Ulster** – This has been through the Community Engagement Office at UU. A new Level 3 course Unlocking Potential will commence in the autumn hosted by FSWC, and run by UU.
- **Terex** – provision of Interview Skills training for participants at FSWC.
- **Surestart Dungannon & Coalisland** – Referrals from Surestart for local and migrant women as well as sharing of best practice by childcare staff.
- **Women's Aid** – WA has an outreach office with FSWC. They use this to meet with a clients. Some of these clients will be signposted to attend a course at FSWC. FSWC will also provide Benefit Checker assistance and help complete Universal Credit applications as well as providing reception support.
- **Mid Ulster Council** – Through receipt of Strategic Development Grant. MUC has provided funded over the past5-6 years under the SDG. This has enabled FSWC

provide much needed services for the Centre. Over the past 8-9 months CEO of FSWC has been liaising with MUC regarding future ESF programmes and match funding. MUC has also been supportive of the Community Relations work with local migrant community through guidance and funding.

- **PSNI, Education Authority NI, De Paul Ireland, St Vincent de Paul, Vineyard Church, Probation Board NI, et al** – FSWC works with many statutory, community and voluntary organisations including the those listed.

Funding

Leveraging Additional Funding through Match Funding

The ESF programme makes a 65% contribution to the overall cost of the project. FSWC needs to raise £155k-£170k per annum in order to maximise the outputs and outcomes. The income on page 2 shows the fluctuation on funding. This is down to the difficulty in raising and identifying match funding. If MUC were to provide £35k in Match Funding then this would draw down an additional £65k for the project.

Funding Sources – FSWC has had to apply for Match Funding from multiple sources. It is estimated that this project will cost £480 with a £168k match fund required from FSWC. With £168k FSWC will be able to draw down an additional £312k per annum into the Mid Ulster Council area.

Source of Funding	Amount	Definite (Y/N)
FSWC	£25k	Y
Dept f Communities	£70k	Y
MUC	£25k	TBC
Match Funding to be identified	£48k	

Funding Request to Mid Ulster Council

FSWC understands the current economic situation and the financial situation of Mid Ulster Council. FSWC also recognises that the Council has awarded financial support in the past to other organisations from its Economic Department. However, FSWC had not been offered such support. FSWC believes that an award of £25k is a reasonable request given the proven benefits that it brings to the Council area.

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 17 June 2021 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Molloy, Chair Councillors Ashton, Black, Burton, Clarke*, Corry*, Cuddy, Doris*, Elattar*, Hughes*, Kerr, McNamee, Milne*, Monteith, Quinn, Wilson*
Officers in Attendance	Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive Ms Campbell, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Mr Browne**, Head of Tourism Mr Gordon**, Head of Leisure Mr Hill**, Head of Parks Ms Linney**, Head of Community Development Mr McCance**, Head of Culture and Arts Ms McKeown**, Head of Economic Development Mr Kennedy**, ICT Support Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer
Others in Attendance	Councillor S McGuigan* Ms Mezza - Head of Marketing and Communications** Mr Glen Stewart – McCadden***

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance
** Denotes Officers present by remote means
*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Cllr Molloy in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

D102/21 Apologies

None.

D103/21 Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Molloy reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest.

Councillor Clarke declared an interest in Broughderg Area Development Association.

Councillor Corry declared Greenfingers @ An Ráth Dubh and Moneyneena & District Development Initiative.

Councillor Monteith declared an interest in Ballysaggart Area Community Association, Dungannon Gaelic Forum and Thomas Clarke's GFC.

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in Pipe Bands and the Ambassador's Youth Community Group and Club and Cookstown District Lodge No. 3.

Councillor McNamee declared an interest in Cookstown Fr Rocks, Cookstown AOH and Cookstown Community Allotments.

Councillor Kerr declared an interest in Coalisland Community Food Bank and Coalisland Na Fianna GFC.

Councillor Ashton declared an interest in Crilly Cultural & Youth Group.

Councillor Cuddy declared an interest in Urban Regeneration.

Councillor Burton declared an interest as a Council representative on the board of COSTA, Caledon Regeneration Partnership, family link to Bawn Development Association, Volunteer in Caledon in Bloom and Community Transport.

Councillor Molloy declared an interest in Square Wheels Cycling Club.

Councillor Quinn declared an interest in Derrytresk Youth & Community Group and Muintir Na Mointeach.

Councillor Hughes declared an interest in Cookstown Multiple Sclerosis Group.

D104/21 Chair's Business

The Chair thanked his party for nominating him to Chair this committee and asked that anyone wishing to raise any issues under Chair's Business do so at least 48 hours before the meeting was due to take place. He said that he understood that some issues could arise at the last minute and he would try and accommodate those requests where possible.

The Head of Economic Development stated that a request had been received today from the MEGA Group which was funded by the Council and InvestNI to advise they are making a skills related funding bid to the Community Renewal Fund to assist businesses in Mid Ulster's manufacturing and engineering sector. The Group sought a letter of support from the Council Chair which was requested by tomorrow as this was the deadline in which the application had to be submitted

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve that a letter of support from Council Chair be issued to the MEGA Group to allow them the opportunity to submit an application to the Community Renewal Fund by tomorrow's deadline.

Councillor Wilson stated that he wished to raise a matter which was only brought to his attention this afternoon. He wished to congratulate two Cookstown Hockey players on being selected to play for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Hockey team, namely Ian Sloan and David Ames, both were double Olympians and felt it would warrant a letter of congratulations going from the Chair of the Council. He advised that both men were great ambassadors for Cookstown and carry out a lot of training with the youth and were a credit to Cookstown and their families.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to issue a letter of congratulations to Ian Sloan and David Ames, Cookstown Hockey players on being selected to play for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Hockey Team.

Matters for Decision

D105/21 Ballygawley Playing Fields – Lease of GAA Pitch

The Head of Leisure presented previously circulated report to provide information on correspondence from Errigal Ciaran GAC and to seek approval from Officers to enter into a new lease agreement.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to:

a) Ascertain conditions and agreements associated with change of title from the Ballygawley Sport and Leisure Trust (BSLT) to Errigal Ciaran GAC and if permissible and agreeable to all parties, draft terms for a new lease of 25 years for 1 x GAA pitch with possibility of extension.
b) Engage with Land and Property Services to ascertain current market value for rental/leasing options for 1 x GAA pitch and incorporate into a new lease with agreed rent review conditions.
c) Subject to mutual agreement on above, that Council proceed to finalise the lease extension.

Councillor Burton advised that she previously had raised the matter of toilets in the surrounding area as the playing fields were very well used by people attending the playpark, football grounds, changing facility and Riverside Walkway. She enquired if there was any way of working with the person responsible for opening the Augher toilets as there were parents with children having picnics in the park and using the facilities at the location. She advised that there were two toilets in this area which were very rarely opened and would be beneficial to have them open, even if it was just during the day as this would be a step forward.

D106/21 Mountain Bike NI Consortium Proposal 2021-22

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report and sought approval to commit to Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2021-22.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve the request to participate as a Consortium Partner with the Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium and contribute £14,000 to 2021-22 campaign.

D107/21 Walk NI Consortium Proposal 2021-22

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report and sought approval to commit to Walking NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2021-22.

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve the request to participate as a Regional Partner with the Walking NI Marketing Consortium and contribute £3,445.00 to 2021-22 campaign. The expenditure is budgeted from within current Parks Service allocations.

Councillor Kerr referred to Washingbay Walkway and the new pier which was recently added to the walkway to the shoreline path and stated that many locals and representatives from the community group weren't happy with the current layout and believed that it was very industrial looking and not in sync with natural surroundings and one comment indicated that it looked like a 'sheep pen'. He said that children and wheelchair users could not look over the fence and see into the lough as this was obstructing the views.

He proposed that a conversation take place on the design of the pier going forward and to re-engage with the community group. He said that he was aware of the Lough Neagh Partnership being interested in helping the Council to financially assist them with the design as the group had indicated they would like something similar to what was

implemented at Oxford Island with the nautical rope, nautical threaded bar or stainless colour the same as the lough.

The Head of Parks stated that the works were all near completion with regards to the viewing platform. He advised that the design features were consulted with the community group and signed off that everybody was happy which was now not the case. He said that this issue would now need to be taken up with the Capital Project team with regard to where the Council was contract wise in relation to any anticipated amendments or adjustments as this piece of work could possibly be concluded at this late stage.

The Chair concurred with the Head of Parks and stated that if the project was very advanced at this stage it may be difficult to make any changes, but suggested that it would be worthwhile if engagement took place to see what the issues were.

The Head of Parks said that officers would be happy to engage with the local community but may be too late to do anything under this current contract.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve that a discussion take place on concerns of local residents and community groups regarding Washingbay Walkway and the design of the pier going forward.

D108/21 Halloween and Christmas Corporate Events 2021

The Head of Tourism presented previously circulated report to provide an update on Halloween and Christmas Corporate Events and seek approval for recommendations.

Councillor Ashton said that she would be happy to propose the recommendation, but it would be important to have consultation with town centre businesses in the instance of big events not being able to run for Halloween and Christmas this year. She stated that this Council would definitely need to show a presence to try and help those businesses out as these would be big factors regarding the footfall.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve:

a) Not to organise any Corporate Events inviting large numbers of people to gather in unmanaged sites or town centres where safe capacity numbers cannot be managed and maintained, as this could potentially encourage non-compliance to the current Government Legislation and guidance.
b) That Council owned sites in each town to be identified where safe events could take place to celebrate Halloween and Christmas within the Mid Ulster District.

c) That Town Centre activities to also be investigated which will not include large gathering of people but will enhance the atmosphere.
d) The Events Team to compile an update report in September which would include proposals of events to celebrate Halloween and Christmas within the Mid Ulster District.

D109/21 Community Development Report

The Head of Community Development presented previously circulated report to provide an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

The Chair commended the Head of Community Development and her team on the fantastic work which was done especially during the pandemic and also all the work which was done behind the scene to get these delivered and hoped any events which were planned for this year can go ahead.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

Councillor Cuddy enquired if a member declared an interest in an item, could they then be then permitted to propose and second it.

The Chair stated that in terms of community grants and different bodies, felt that few members would be able to propose anything if that was the case. He advised that as there was no pecuniary interest or a personal gain then there was no issue regarding this.

(i) Community Grants – Community Development Grant Awards

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve the Community Grant Awards as outlined in appendix 1.

(ii) Community Emergency Support Funding – **Final allocations of Emergency Support Funding**

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve Emergency Support Funding totaling £42,000.

(iii) Peace Update – note update

Noted.

(iv) Community Development – note update

Noted.

Councillor Ashton referred to grants and said that it was good to see some community groups starting to plan NI Centenary Events and she was always on the lookout for external funding. She said that there may be an opportunity for this Council to liaise with Northern Ireland Office (NIO) to avail of any grant aid to support activity being delivered as part of the Decade of Anniversaries Commemorations Action Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor Black and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to liaise with NIAO regarding grant aid for groups in relation to NI Centenary Events to support activity being delivered as part of the Decade of Anniversaries Commemorations Action Plan.

D110/21 Economic Development - OBFD

The Head of Economic Development presented previously circulated report to provide an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

(i) Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2021/22

Proposed by Councillor Black
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve:

i) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive to accept the contract from DAERA for the 2021/22 TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme.
ii) Delegated authority to the Chief Executive to issue individual letters of offer under the Scheme, with maximum grant awards up to £4,999, in order to have funding issued to successful businesses as soon as possible after assessment.

(ii) Labour Market Partnership (LMP)

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve:

(i) That Mid Ulster Skills Forum act as the delivery vehicle to operate the local Interim Labour Market Partnership (LMP).
(ii) Proposed revised membership as detailed in the report which includes 5 Councillors drawn from Council's Development

Committee using the D'Hondt calculation which provides the following political member breakdown;
2 Sinn Fein, 1 DUP, 1 UUP, 1 SDLP.

(iii) A budget of £15,000 towards the preparation of an Interim LMP Action Plan for Mid Ulster for the period 2021-23. Proceed to seek competitive quotations from suitably qualified organisations to undertake this work and delegate authority to the Council's Chief Executive to appoint the successful organisation to allow work to be progressed over the summer months.

(iv) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to accept the letter(s) of offer upon receipt, from Department for Communities / Department for the Economy for funding towards Mid Ulster's Interim Labour Market Partnership 2021-2023.

(iii) 4C Future Live Careers Event

Councillor Ashton said that she appreciated the reasons behind the identified schools because of the higher numbers, but it disadvantaged the smaller rural schools and felt that those children should also be entitled to the same and was unfair because they were living outside the big catchment areas. She suggested that something be looked at to widen out the scope, which may be a separate project down the line if this one was maximised.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Ashton and said that he would be of the same opinion as he could see quite a number of schools geographically missing out.

Councillor Kerr said that he would be happy to propose the recommendation but also agreed with Councillor Ashton's comments about widening out the scope and wished that there was something like this available when he was leaving secondary school as it was a very exciting initiative.

Councillor Monteith echoed Councillor Ashton's sentiments and agreed with her suggestion of taking on a second or third event to include all secondary schools as he was not happy in any shape or fashion about going forward with an event which excludes particular schools as all schools do a great job. He felt that excluding some schools was discriminatory, especially our Irish language community in the Dungannon area because of any parent wanting their child to be educated in secondary education would be in St Joseph's Convent, Donaghmore, therefore by virtue of parental choice these children were being discriminated against in relation to this. He agreed there was a need to relook at this and have the adequate number of events to include all secondary schools whether they wish to take part or not, especially if this was seen as a possible way forward. There was a need to make it clear to the organisers that it wasn't the role of the Council to pick one school over another in our local community and if the organisers wish to do it, then this was their imperative, but felt that this was a dangerous path for this Council to be going down to pick one school over another even with the methodology which was in place unless there was a guarantee from the organisers that they come back to organise future events to include all schools.

Councillor Burton concurred with previous speakers and said that perception was everything, with the perception being that everything ends at the 30 mph speed limit in

Dungannon and that was the general feeling of those living outside of Dungannon. She said that some of these schools were in very close proximity which ruled out St. Ciaran's Ballygawley, Aughnacloy College and Fivemiletown College and rural children should avail of the same opportunities and was unfair as it was harder for them to get involved in schemes like this due to their geographical area and lack of adequate transport facilities. She agreed with previous speakers that there was need to relook at this again to include all schools as £3,500 was coming from this Council and each school does great work under really strong constraints at the moment and was difficult for teachers to encourage children to stay at school. She felt there was a need for inclusivity for all schools.

The Chair said that spend of £3,500 being allocated from this Council should include all schools and this needed to be taken away and relooked at again.

The Head of Economic Development enquired if members would be happy to move with the aforementioned schools this year and advise the organisers of members' aspirations to have wider representation of schools, especially those in rural areas included future years. She stated that this event was not taking place until June 2022, however the organisers were seeking the Council to accept the partnership agreement at this stage to show our willingness to participate. . She advised members that 4C Ur Future is delivering a NI wide programme of events to schools in June 2022 and as the proposal sets out, there is just one event to be delivered in Mid Ulster. She said that officers shared members' sentiments about inclusivity and had already raised the same views with the organisers. Their feedback outlined that only 7 post primary schools could be accommodated in the Mid Ulster event, as they want to target all 13 year old pupils (year 9) in the respective school year groups, to assist these young people make important GCSE subject choices. They also indicated it is important to have one large venue in close proximity to the participating schools so that pupils have a short distance to travel. In summary, she sought members views on whether it was possible to proceed in year 1 (June 2022) with the 7 schools listed and ensure the organisers focus on rural schools in year 2 (June 2023).

The Chief Executive said that taking into consideration the sentiments of members' tonight that officers go back and renegotiate the best package the Council can acquire for this year and next year for a mix of urban and rural schools and if need be this can be done over two years. He advised that an update would be brought back to this committee in July.

Councillor Clarke agreed that this needed to be widened out as there were a lot of schools excluded including St. Colm's High School, Draperstown, Clady High School and St. Pius X College in Magherafelt which were all missing out.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Ashton

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve that officers go back to 4C Ur Future to renegotiate to see what the best package can be offered for this year and next year with a mix of urban and rural schools be included, with an update being brought back to July committee.

(iv) Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2021

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve:

(i) A budget of £28,000 for the entire delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2021 from within the existing Economic Development budget 2021/22.
(ii) That Council proceed to seek competitive quotes to appoint a professional Management / Delivery Partner to manage and co-ordinate the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2021. The costs for such to be apportioned from within the budget detailed above at point (i).
(iii) That the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to appoint the successful Management/Delivery Partner following the procurement exercise to allow work to commence over the summer months.

Councillor Burton referred to Mid Ulster Enterprise Week and enquired whether these events would be facilitated virtually or in a venue.

The Head of Economic Development advised that there was an aspiration to deliver the events in person but as we need to start to plan these events now we could not do so, if the events were held in physical venues, as Government guidance on indoor gatherings would be subject to change by the time November 2021 comes around. The proposal is to proceed with virtual events this year and perhaps next year, we could look at reverting to a mix of both physical and virtual events. She noted that feedback from businesses however, suggests they like the ability to attend the events virtually as it is less time consuming for them and they are able to attend more events during Enterprise Week.

(v) NOW Group – Community Renewal Collaboration Request

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers to approve that Council provide a letter of support to the NOW Group to accompany their bid to the Community Renewal Fund, and to release the letter on 18 June 2021, as this is the closing date for all submissions to the Community Renewal Fund. (Note, no financial support is requested from Council).

Matters for Information

D111/21 Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 May 2021

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 May 2021.

Councillor McNamee enquired if there was any update on the Parks Strategy, where it was currently at and when it was anticipated to see the first start on the Parks.
The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation advised that there were two bits to this. There was four bigger play parks which were going to be implemented and then there were a whole range of improvement works at smaller parks, with a framework having been identified where the Council could purchase the play equipment amongst other things and get the work completed. She advised that the specification has been prepared which was now with Procurement and was due to be issued within the next two weeks with anticipation of being onsite in August with work taking a few months and completion by early to mid-Autumn.

Councillor Kerr referred to D081/21 Chair's Business and asked that Killeeshil and Galbally First Responders be invited to a future meeting to make a presentation. He said that this was especially fitting due to the recent event of Christian Eriksen suffering a cardiac arrest during the Euros. He advised that it would be useful to get this group in as they carry out similar methods to resuscitation of what was carried out on the Denmark footballer to save his life.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that Killeeshil and Galbally First Responders be invited to make a presentation to a future committee meeting.

Councillor Kerr referred to D084/21 – Community Development – Peace funding. He mentioned youth mental health and wellbeing and asked that Council formally invite Mid Ulster Area Youth Service to make a presentation to a future committee meeting. Recently he had attended an event with the organisation at the Culloden Hotel where it was indicated that they would be keen to engage with Mid Ulster District Councillors to develop a relationship.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that Mid Ulster Area Youth Service be invited to make a presentation to a future committee meeting.

Councillor Monteith referred to matter raised earlier by Councillor Kerr regarding defibs and stated that although the information was out there, it was very haphazard and asked if the Council could be a convening body for centralising the information for the exact locations for all defibs. He said that there were lists out in the public domain which were

incomplete for different areas but it would be useful for the local community if the Council held the list and every so often done some publicity on it as he was aware of people trying to get up to date lists for different areas which were not easily found. He suggested that this be a role the Council take on through Leisure Services as it would be good to set a target to advise the community that people were so many miles from the nearest defibrillator.

Councillor Monteith referred to D089/21 and discussions which had taken place last week at the DEA meeting. He advised that the meeting was in relation to town parks in Dungannon and as a result of that a walkabout took place with some Dungannon Councillors and Officers and their intention of completing a walk around different pathways in the next few months. He said that one of the issues which came up was Drumcoo Playing Fields and although we have Dungannon Park which was an excellent facility with a clear plan and a clear sight to the role it plays and coming towards a similar issue for Railway Park where we are coming towards a clear vision where we see it in the near future, Ballysaggart Lough a little bit further down the line and how it was to be fitted in the urban area with Drumcoo being the next bit in the jigsaw. He said that it was now the time to look at Drumcoo's potential as there was a fantastic opportunity to transform the site to enhance the existing facilities and transform it into another excellent urban park as there was a large wave of land and public ownership both with ourselves and the Trust which was crying out to be developed for urban walks and connections.

He proposed that a vision on the future of Drumcoo be brought to the next committee meeting on Officers feelings at this stage and where we were currently regarding land ownership etc.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that options be brought to a future committee meeting if possible on the vision for Drumcoo and where the Council were currently at with land ownership.

Councillor Cuddy agreed that it was a good walkabout and a lovely day and was pleased to see that there was no litter lying about anywhere with the place looking extremely well the whole way around. As an independent member of the Enterprise Centre, work has been ongoing with the Council for some time on land and hoped that things would progress but stated that there were a few other ideas also in the pipeline but it was important that things are brought to the table to keep things up to speed. He stated that he wasn't against the initiative as there was huge potential in and around the area and no problem playing his part going forward.

Councillor Quinn referred to points raised by Councillors Kerr and Monteith regarding the defibrillators and stated that he had collated a list on the day after Christian Eriksen collapsed on defibrillators in the Coalisland/Clonoe area which was quite extensive, resulting in 23 altogether. He agreed that it was important to know where each defibrillator was but more important to know that it was connected to the circuit and was

confident that the majority were but there were some that weren't. He said that in the event of someone trying to memorise a list of defibrillators, all they have to do was call 999 with the emergency services being able to direct them to the next one. He felt that having all the defibrillators connected to the circuit would be very beneficial whether this be accommodated by the Council or a call going out to local groups.

Councillor Quinn advised that Councillors Hughes, McFlynn and himself had met with representatives from Mid Ulster Pride last night and stated that the group had a large event planned for September, Covid permitting. He said that the group would like to make a presentation to a future committee meeting and was alright for this Council to bring in LGBT groups outside Mid Ulster, but there was also a need to hear local people's views and what they were going through and face in the rural community and Mid Ulster.

Proposed by Councillor Quinn
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that Mid Ulster Pride be invited to make a presentation to a future committee meeting.

The Chair said that it was his understanding that the Ambulance Service hold the network for all the defibs and some issues may be around community groups and personnel and contact changes which need to be renewed all the time and if Council could play any role in this he would be supportive of it.

Councillor Burton referred to D080/21 Chair's Business where she raised the issue of bridge at Caledon from ABC side and asked if there was any update as it was going on for a long time as the bridge was completely rusted and dilapidated. She said that it was one of our gateways coming into Mid Ulster and people in that area were absolutely ashamed, but was also aware that it would take some money to upgrade it. She said that it has been established that this Council does own it and up to us to try and maintain it. `

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation advised that a conditioning report had been carried out recently which efficiently outlined what needed to be done and stated that the Head of Parks was working with the Council's Property teams to try and get this work done.

The Head of Parks advised that the most recent conditioning report was currently with Property Services in relation to seeking some accurate costings on work which was required and this was the exercise which was currently being undertaken at the moment.

Councillor Burton asked that costings be brought to the next committee as this was going on for quite a while and there was a need to see where we currently stand with it

The Chief Executive advised that costings would be brought to the Environment Committee for this type of work.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that costings on upgrade at Caledon Bridge be brought to the relevant committee meeting.

Councillor McNamee referred to the defibs where it had been mentioned at several Environment committees, where it was advised that a map situation was being looked at to make sure there was no duplication in different areas and also filling the voids i.e. where different areas were pinpointed where there were no defibs like Lough Fea and other places as there was no Council power source. He stated that a full map would be brought on where they were at in Mid Ulster in the next few months.

Councillor Corry said that she was happy to second Councillor Quinn's proposal regarding Mid Ulster Pride and stated at the Council meeting on the back of Sinn Féin's motion which was carried, the group would be joining the Rainbow Project to do training as well. She welcomed the forthcoming presentation especially on the forthcoming Mid Ulster Pride Parade in September.

Councillor Burton referred to lifebuoy rings on stands and said that they were an important piece of life saving equipment at our loughs. She stated that in recent weeks there had been some anti-social behavior going on in quite a few places, in Aughnacloy Eco Park someone had removed the lifebuoy from its stand and tied it up onto a branch of a tree and using it like a swing. She said that any life saving device should be monitored on a regular basis and stated that another ring had been thrown into the Brantry Lough also. She said that there were some people fooling about and jump into the loughs and may get into trouble and it was vitally important to try and keep people safe.

The Head of Parks agreed that this was a very important issue and vital. He advised that all Council owned sites were inspected on a weekly basis which included an audit on all the lifesaving equipment. He concurred with member regarding them being tampered with on a regular basis this time of year and stated that the equipment was replaced immediately if possible or within days if they needed to be replenished and stock kept for that sole purpose. He advised that some of the locations were not within our remit or inspection role but we do have a service in place.

Councillor Clarke enquired if defibs placed in Council premises were checked for life of batteries.

The Chief Executive advised that battery life on defibs were checked as a regular occurrence.

D112/21 Update – Cahore Playing Fields, Draperstown

Members noted updated on progress of potential works to Cahore Playing Fields and the leasing request from a local club.

Councillor Cuddy referred to the procedure regarding leasing and said that it would make more sense for Draperstown Celtic Football Club (DCFC) to lease it from the landowner directly instead of leasing from the Council who was leasing it from the landowner.

The Head of Leisure referred to the previous paper brought to committee in February in relation to where there were two soccer pitches, GAA pitch, a changing pavilion and a carpark on site at that complex which may not be appropriate. He said if the soccer club wished to engage in a leasing conversation, then there was still a need to make available the facilities for community use.

Councillor Cuddy said that he was all for investment in any area but felt that this seemed complicated and a more simplified method would be better for everyone.

D113/21 Community Development Service Improvement Plan 2021-22

Members noted Community Development Service Plan 2021-22.

D114/21 Tourism Service Improvement Plan 2021-22

Members noted Tourism Service Improvement Plan 2021-22.

D115/21 Economic Development Service Improvement Plan 2021-22

Members noted Economic Development Service Improvement Plan 2021-22.

D116/21 Culture and Arts Service Improvement Plan 2021-22

Members noted Culture and Arts Service Improvement Plan 2021-22.

D117/21 Economic Development – OBFI

Members noted update on key activities as detailed below:

- Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 22.03.21
- Economic Development Achievements 2020/2021
- Mid Ulster Broadband Working Group
- Tughans Manufacturing NI Survey Report (May 2021)

Councillor Doris referred to Coalisland Town Centre Forum and commended all the Officers involved in Public Realm Scheme with a great response being received from businesses and the community and were delighted to have Sinn Féin Minister, Deirdre Hargey visiting on Tuesday. Unfortunately there was a less favourable meeting with Roads Service on Monday where a meeting was held with Coalisland Town Centre Forum in relation to Phase 2 of the Public Realm Scheme and felt that this may be an opportunity for funding coming through. Inequality issues have been looked at in relation to Sandy Row and Newtownkelly which had been caused by the government and now this needs resolved. She asked if the relevant Council Officers could explore funding as this could resolve some of the infrastructure issues within Sandy Row and Newtownkelly.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that the relevant Council Officers explore the option of seeking funding from the Department for Communities for upgrading of infrastructure at Sandy Row and Newtownkelly, with a proposal and update being brought back through the relevant committee and Coalisland Town Centre Forum.

Councillor Kerr said that he would be happy to second Councillor Doris' proposal as she made some good points regarding Newtownkelly, Knockmoy and Sandy Row where people had been left abandoned and let down, with some of the roads like something you would see in the 1950's and 1960's with the state of the infrastructure. He stated that if there was any additional funding being made available for infrastructure then it definitely should be pursued.

Councillor Corry referred to item 5.3 – Mid Ulster Broadband Working Group and advised that the answers were there for the written questions by Councillors but no answers to oral questions with the meeting which was held with the Department. She wished to thank ICBAN and Council members who were involved in today's ruling regarding BT Openreach investing £14m into rural areas. She referred to Fibrus and Project Stratum where the Council were trying to encourage people to register their interest in that project, but sometimes members felt that they were letting people down if they cannot be reached and wondered how members can elevate any fears the public may have. She asked if there was any indication of when answers would be coming back on oral questions asked.

Councillor Quinn concurred with Councillor Corry regarding Project Stratum where the Council were supposed to be encouraging people to sign up to the service and felt guilty asking people to sign up from some of the reviews he had received back from some who already signed up. He said that he also received worrying reports that Project Stratum were bringing fibre up to a door and finishing it off with a copper wire from the road to a person's house which completely negated the whole point and exercise. He said that he was very open with the Council on the major concerns he had around Project Stratum and Fibrus delivering it and would look forward to the day he was proven wrong, but felt that there was an onus on the Council to continue asking the questions as it started in Torrent with the rest of Mid Ulster due to receive it over the next few years and there was a need to fix the problems which were evident now before it was rolled out for the rest of the district. He said that it was his understanding that money was granted by the Department for Communities over this last few weeks to include houses which had possibly been missed out *(he declared an interest as his house was one of them)* and felt that pressure should be kept on the providers from every possible angle including this Council.

Councillor Kerr said that he reflected on previous comments and dealing with Fibrus was like dealing with a two year old child as their approach was very amateurish. He stated when a member contacts the provider they put you through to the same customer care team as the public, but when you deal with BT, Water Service or Electricity Board they have a dedicated line for elected representatives and felt it may be worthwhile asking Fibrus to have a dedicated line for members as they were constantly letting people down

on their mispromises. He would like all comments and concerns referred back to the appropriate official or working group.

Councillor Doris advised that there was no secret that there was plenty of issues regarding Fibrus, but would like to commend the Council Officers which have been working on this project as they had kept on top of this at the get-go and good work carried out in terms of the surveys and relaying information back to Fibrus. She said that it wasn't on any want on behalf the Council as it has worked very well with Fibrus, but was less than content with the service rolled out by Fibrus so far. She stated that there was one thing she would like and that was that the Council liaise with Fibrus on the issue of Coalisland Men's Shed. She said that Francie Molloy MP, Minister Hargey, Linda Dillon MLA and herself had visited the Men's Shed on Tuesday and which was a credit to the men for the way it had turned out, but they had indicated that Fibrus had approached them and said that they would be interested in helping them to get wifi to their location and asked if the Council could follow this up to see when it was anticipated to install the wifi.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority under section 3.3 of the Scheme for Delegation for Senior Officers that the various issues raised by Members relating to the rollout of Project Stratum in Mid Ulster be recorded and forwarded to the DfE and Fibrus for investigation with a request they respond to Council on each of the issues raised.

Councillor Ashton said she was Chair of Broadband Working Group for Mid Ulster and advised that a very constructive meeting had taken place with the DfE and Fibrus along with MP's and MLA's for Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & South Tyrone and said that it was important for members which have issues to feed it back to our officers due to the fact of that members left the meeting on a positive note and a very much open line of communication. She felt that it was important that members keep the line of communication going due to the fact of it halting very quickly otherwise.

The Chair agreed and advised members that the Broadband Working Group was there to channel any issues through the group.

The Head of Economic Development advised that officers had supplied the information for members' attention this evening on the most up to date response which had been received from DfE. She also advised that the issues Members raised tonight will also be forwarded to DfE and Fibrus for their investigation and feedback to Council. In conclusion, she added that after feedback is received from DfE & Fibrus, it may be an opportune time to convene a further meeting of Council's Broadband Working Group.

Councillor Milne also referred to broadband and stated that the one of the bigger problems people were having in his area were poles which were placed in the ground. He said that there had been no consultation with the local residents on the placing of these poles as they were erected over peoples heads, driveways and placed where they impair people's vision emerging onto the main road and felt if this was the case for Planning Department for visibility splays for a new dwelling, it would be refused by Roads Service. He felt there was a need to have a discussion around overhead poles and underground ducting, and although he was aware of it being agreed to erect overhead

poles, but to install 400,000 poles in the North of Ireland to do this operation was a lot of material. He said that there was a need to take into consideration people's quality of life and this was why underground ducting was there for a good reason and areas where trees with birds nesting and felt that all these things had to be taken into consideration.

The Chief Executive advised that all the points raised would be collated as stated by the Chair of the Broadband Working Group, where these will be captured and relayed back to Council's Economic Strategies Manager and the Broadband Working Group. He asked that any concerns be forwarded on to officers where it would be fed back and suitably addressed.

D118/21 The Queen's Green Canopy – Platinum Jubilee 2022

Members noted update in relation to the Queen's Green Canopy Project – Platinum Jubilee 2022.

Councillor Ashton asked that the Community Development team circulate this out to our community database on how people can actually take part in the Platinum Jubilee.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Chief Executive that he operate his Delegated Authority Resolve under Section 3.3 of the Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers that Community Development team circulate the information out to the community database of how people can take part in the Platinum Jubilee 2022.

Live broadcast ended at 8.12 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor Black and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst members consider items D119/21 to D125/21.

Matters for Decision

D119/21	Tender for Supply, Installation and Servicing of a range of fitness equipment at Greenvale Leisure Centre
D120/21	Mobile Catering Concessions
D121/21	Update on Catering Provision at Seamus Heaney HomePlace
D122/21	Tourism Destination Branding

Matters for Information

D123/21	Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 May 2021
D124/21	Economic Development – CBFI
D125/21	Miscellaneous Matters

D126/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 9.20 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/ Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking

- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off

- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself

- Should we need to take a vote this evening I will ask each member to confirm whether they are for or against the proposal or abstaining

- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting

- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item

- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to

- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda - apologies and then roll call of all other Members in attendance.

Report on	Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme 2021/22
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Tony McCance, Head of Culture & Arts
Contact Officer(s)	Tony McCance, Head of Culture & Arts Nigel Hill, Head of Parks Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure Michael Browne, Head of Tourism

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To inform members of the 2021/22 Department for Communities Access and Inclusion funding Programme.
1.2	To inform members of the range of projects being submitted to the 2021/22 Access and Inclusion Programme by Mid Ulster District Council
2.0	**Background**
2.1	In 2017/18 the Department for Communities (DfC) worked in collaboration with Derry City and Strabane District Council and the Public Health Agency on the delivery of a pilot programme aimed at improving access to, and participation in, Arts and Cultural activities by people with disabilities across the Derry City and Strabane District Council area.
2.2	Following the success of the pilot programme, DfC secured budget in 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and now 2021/22 to develop an Access and Inclusion Programme for roll out across the 11 Council areas in Northern Ireland.
2.3	The previous 2020/21 programme resulted in letters of offer totalling in excess of £270,000.00 being allocated to 12 Mid Ulster District Council projects. This funding has resulted in interventions that have greatly enhanced public access across the Council's Leisure, Tourism, Parks, walkways, recreational and Culture and Arts estate.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The aim of the Department for Communities (DfC) Access and Inclusion Capital Programme for 2021/22 is to improve access to and participation in arts and cultural activity and leisure and outdoor recreational activity by people with specific access needs across Northern Ireland.

3.2 The Department for Communities has invited Local Councils to apply for the funding and to prioritise project submissions prior to submission to the Department for Communities for further consideration.

3.3 Potential projects have been identified from internal Council services (Arts & Culture, Parks and Leisure and Tourism Services). These are summarised in section 3.11 below.

3.4 The maximum funding available for each project applied for is £27,000.

3.5 For the 2021/22 Access and Inclusion Programme, the Department for Communities has stipulated that applicant Council's must be in a position to meet 10% of project costs. (In previous year's the Access and Inclusion Programme was 100% funded, up to £30,000. Moving forward, and to ensure greater maximisation of funding and greater spread of projects across all Council areas, the Department's funding will be awarded at a maximum of 90%, with 10% match funding met from within applicant budget resources).

3.6 In addition, for the 2021/22 Access and Inclusion Programme, the Department for Communities has stipulated that all project submissions must be accompanied by an Accessibility Audit report identifying need of project(s) proposed.

3.7 The Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion funding is only eligible for capital expenditure incurred from date of letter of offer until 31st March 2022

3.8 All applications submitted to the Access and Inclusion Programme 2021/22 are required to be assessed, scored and ranked by Mid Ulster District Council prior to all approved applications being submitted to the Department for Communities for further assessment. This role is completed annually by an assessment panel from within Mid Ulster District Council's Culture & Arts Service.

3.9 The current 2021/22 Access and Inclusion Programme opened on 24th May 2021 and the Closing date for receipt of all applications was 5.00pm on Wednesday 23rd June 2021.

3.10 Should the applications submitted by successful, all eligible projects are required to be completed by 31st March 2022.

3.11 A summary of the applications submitted to the Access and Inclusion Programme 2021/22 for consideration by Department for Communities are as follows:

1. Burnavon Access and Inclusion Project

Total Project Costs	£13,000.10

The funding will be used for:
1: upgrading existing support hearing system throughout the facility.
2: To purchase equipment, including adjustable lighting and AV cameras, which will enhance areas used for workshops, events, and activities. This will particularly

be of benefit to persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as those with sight problems and restricted movement.

2. **Greenvale Leisure Centre Pool Pod Pool Access System**

Total Project Costs	£30,000.00

The project seeks to install a Pool Pod pool hoist at the main pool area of Greenvale Leisure Centre.
The addition of the Pool pod pool hoist will provide equal access for users with a disability, allowing unrestricted access to both the main and learner pool, without the requirement for users to pre-book and/ or face lengthy waiting times at poolside/ reception.

3. **Bridewell Automated/Power Assisted Accessible Doors & Loop Systems**

Total Project Costs	£10,500.00

To ensure that the building is accessible to all, this project proposes to improve access by replacing the existing heavy wooden doors with automated accessible doors, and installing an updated Loop system in the main hall/event space and a portable loop system in the main reception area.

4. **Surface Upgrade Beach Walk Dungannon Park**

Total Project Costs	£29,350

This project focuses on improving the accessibility to Dungannon Park. Unfortunately, some of the path infrastructure within the Park is now in poor condition. The existing surfacing has become worn over the years and uneven throughout posing a significant challenge for people with disabilities. The aim of this project is to resurface 355 l/m of pathways in order to facilitate greater utilisation by people with disabilities and wheelchair users.

5. **Provision of 1 no. Ability / Wheelchair swing**

Total Project Costs	£14,982

This project focuses on improving inclusive play provision at Fairhill Play Area enabling all children, regardless of ability, to play together. This will be achieved through the provision of an Ability / wheelchair swing.

6. **Provision of 13 no. Independent "Hearing loop systems" at MUDC Leisure sites:-**

Dungannon Leisure Centre (2), Cookstown Leisure Centre (1), MidUlster Sports Arena (2), Moneymore Rec. Centre (2), Greenvale Leisure Centre(2), Meadowbank Sports Arena (2), Maghera Rec. Centre(2).

Total Project Costs	£5,000

This equipment will assist patrons with their hearing restrictions to communicate with Customer Service areas and assist in their participation of meetings:-
1no. Permanently located at Main Reception Area
1no. Mobile, to assist with meetings/ conferences/ workshops etc.

7. **Installation of - automated / power assist doors at Mid Ulster Sports Arena**

Total Project Costs	£16,000

Installation of automated doors throughout Pavilion 2 the leisure facility detailed below –

- Entrance
- Internal door
- Changing room

Installing automated doors in this venue will ensure it is more accessible for members of the public who wouldn't ordinarily have had confidence or ability to access leisure facilities.

8. **Installation of - automated / power assist doors at Maghera Leisure Centre**

Total Project Costs	£24,000

Installation of automated doors at the leisure facility detailed below –

- Front entrance

Installing automated doors in this venue will ensure it is more accessible for members of the public who wouldn't ordinarily have had confidence or ability to access leisure facilities.

9. **Installation of - automated / power assist doors at Cookstown Leisure Centre.**

Total Project Costs	£26,000

Installation of automated doors throughout the leisure facility detailed below –

- wet changing area
- viewing gallery
- main gym
- main hall
- meeting room

Installing automated doors in this venue will ensure it is more accessible for members of the public who wouldn't ordinarily have had confidence or ability to access leisure facilities.

10. **Installation of - automated / power assist doors at Greenvale Leisure Centre.**

Total Project Costs	£30,000

Installation of automated doors throughout the leisure facility detailed below –

- sports hall
- main dryside corridor x 2
- swimming changing
- gym
- wet changing area

Installing automated doors in this venue will ensure it is more accessible for members of the public who wouldn't ordinarily have had confidence or ability to access leisure facilities.

11. **Installation of - automated / power assist doors at Tobermore Golf Centre.**

Total Project Costs	£23,000

Installation of automated doors at the leisure facility detailed below –

- Front entrance
- Rear exit
- Internal doors to bays

Installing automated doors in this venue will ensure it is more accessible for members of the public who wouldn't ordinarily have had confidence or ability to access leisure facilities.

12. **Purchase of Accessible picnic tables.**

Total Project Costs	£4,700

This project focuses on the purchase of 10 accessible picnic tables. These accessible picnic tables will be placed at various locations within the Parks Departments remit within the Mid-Ulster District Council area. These locations include picnic areas, parks and open spaces.

Application to Access and Inclusion Programme	**£203,878.89**
MUDC Match funding requirement (10%)	**£22,653.21**
Total Costs of Projects	**£226,532.10**

4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: DfC may not be able to fund all successful applicants, or support the maximum available grant award requested. The maximum funding provided by DfC is 90% of costs up to a maximum of total project costs of £30,000. The project applicant will be required to meet 10% of project costs from within existing budget resources (up to a maximum of £3,000).
	Human: Staff time and staff resource processing applications and assessment and scoring of applications prior to submission to DfC. Can be met from within staffing existing resources.
	Risk Management: It is envisaged that there will be significant interest in the programme across Northern Ireland. As such the funds available, may not cover all the costs of submissions received by DfC. Projects may be rejected on basis of the limitations of funding available. All projects submitted for consideration, will be required to be completed by 31st March 2022.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: The Purpose of DfC funding programme is to provide capital funding to ensure that access to arts, culture, leisure and recreational activities is equitable.
	Rural Needs Implications: Rural needs are considered as part of the planned activity undertaken by Council Services including Arts & Culture, Leisure and Parks and Tourism. Rural needs are also considered as part of the delivery of the DfC 2021/22 Access and Inclusion Programme.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Members are asked to note the information relating to the 2021/22 Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme
5.2	Members are asked to note the projects being submitted by Mid Ulster District Council to the 2021/22 DfC Access and Inclusion Programme, as summarised in section 3.11 of report.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A

Report on	Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre Refurbishment Works
Date of Meeting	7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Tony McCance
Contact Officer	Tony McCance

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To update Council on development works / refurbishment works undertaken at the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre during the period of closure.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre was unfortunately closed to the public for the majority of the period March 2020 – June 2021 due to the Covid pandemic and restrictions put in place by the NI Executive.
2.2	During this period, the opportunity was taken to refurbish and upgrade areas throughout the facility.
2.3	The Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre is now operational 21 years (officially opening in February 2000).
2.4	Throughout the last two decades there has been minimal refurbishment activity undertaken and there has been no additional investment outside of annual operating budgets, undertaken by Mid Ulster District Council since 2015.
2.5	The Burnavon is recognised as the regional theatre for Mid Ulster. It delivers a range of arts & cultural activities throughout the year including music, drama, dance performances as well as numerous workshops, hosting of art exhibitions, conferences and delivering meeting functions.
2.6	Investment was sought from Mid Ulster District Council for essential improvements and works to ensure the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre remained as a key Council facility and Regional Theatre venue, meeting a high level of service delivery and accessibility for all customers and users.
2.7	<u>Refurbishment of Box Office / Foyer</u> Mid Ulster Disability Forum undertook an assessment exercise in 2017 for Mid Ulster District Council to assess disability access and service functions within Council facilities.

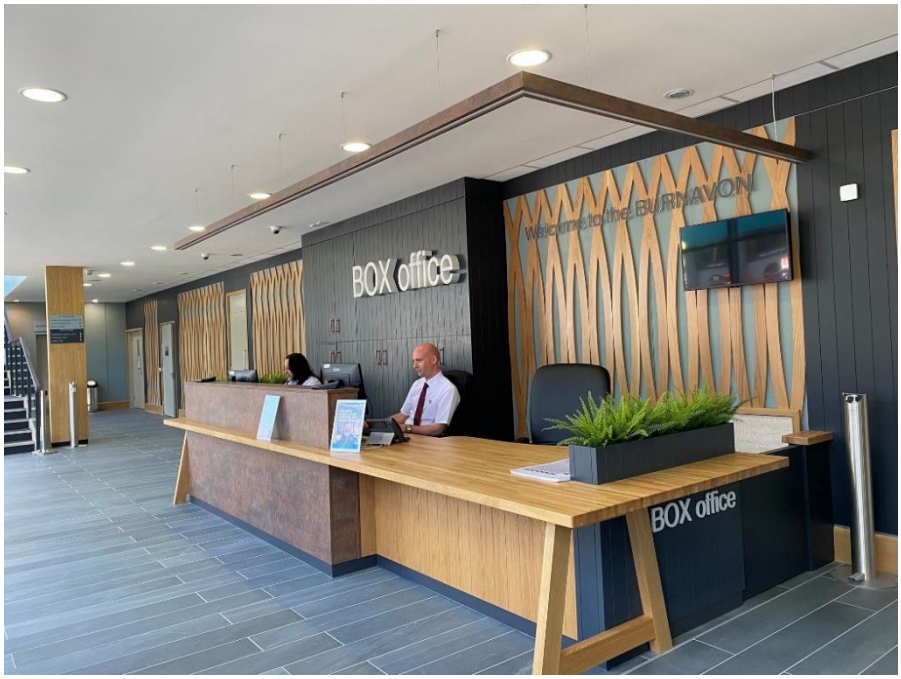
	The report advised that the "*Customer service desk in the Burnavon with a drop down counter is not utilised as designed by staff and service users*". Following discussion with Mid Ulster Disability Forum it was recommended that the counter at which the staff are located is too high for disabled wheelchair users and as the lower counter is not staffed this is an inadequate standard of service delivery.
2.8	Other concerns raised by Management relating to the location of the existing box office counter highlighted that the box office reception area was extremely close to the front door, which operates as the main access to and from the building. During events and performances, this area becomes extremely congested as a through way to exit the building, gain access to toilets, or gain access to backstage area. At the end of events, up to 350 persons are leaving the building through a congested area. Concerns were raised about the restrictive space, particularly given the practicalities of an emergency evacuation, should the need arise.
2.9	Considering both the issue of the height of counter/design and the concerns regarding safe exit routes, Management evaluated the options and proposed that the best course of action would be to relocate the box office to the centre of the foyer and redesign the full layout of the foyer to improve customer engagement, customer service for wheelchair users, create additional space in the foyer for patrons attending events and improve exit/entrance route space to address health & safety concerns. The redesign would accommodate a new box office/reception area, new digital display screens and new information panels for advertising of events and performances, a new designed craft shop and continued provision of visitor information services.
2.10	The estimated costs for these works was estimated at £100,000.
2.11	A request was submitted to Mid Ulster District Council for consideration under the Capital Work Programme.
2.12	<u>Dressing Rooms and Backstage Accessible Toilets</u> In addition to the above, no development work / refurbishment work had been undertaken to the dressing room and backstage areas in the 21 years of operation. Through changes in accessibility policies and guidance for disabled users, managerment identified the need to upgrade these facilities to accommodate our customers/clients with disability needs.
2.13	An assessment of backstage and dressing room provision recommended that there was a requirement to: • Widen doors to dressing rooms to facilitate wheelchair access • Colour contrast of dressing rooms counters against walls and floor. • Dimmable lighting / LED lighting / lowering of switches. • Lowering of sinks to required height for disabled / wheelchair users • Creation of an additional "changing area" to support privacy of persons with additional needs / support workers. • Upgrade of accessible toilet/shower to include turning area, sink replacement, support rails etc.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Box Office / Foyer Mid Ulster District Council agreed to support the refurbishment works required and allocated a budget of £100,000 under the Capital Works Programme.
3.2	Property Services were appointed to complete works identified. Works commenced in January 2021 and completed in March 2021 at a cost of £88,314.30.
3.3	The high quality of the work undertaken has totally revamped the area creating much needed space and ensuring that the facility is now fully accessible. A site visit has been carried out by a Mid Ulster Disability Forum member who is extremely satisfied with the standard of works and adjustments made to become a more inclusive and accessible space for all users.
3.4	Dressing Rooms and Backstage Accessible Toilets The Burnavon submitted an application to the Department for Communities Access & Inclusion Programme 2020/21 for grant support to complete required works for modification of 2 dressing rooms and 1 accessible toilet area backstage.
3.5	Following a quotation exercise, the cost to complete the works was detailed at £27,840. An application was made to the DfC Access and Inclusion Programme for the full amount and the Burnavon was successful in receiving 100% funding of the monies required to complete the works.
3.6	Work commenced in January 2021 and was completed Mach 2021.
3.7	Management consulted with local user groups with accessibility and inclusion needs in advance of agreeing required works undertaken.
3.8	Following completion of works, a site visit has been carried out by a Mid Ulster Disability Forum representative who was extremely satisfied with the works and adjustments made enabling the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre becoming a more inclusive and accessible venue.
3.9	In addition to these capital works, the Burnavon during closure has also installed new external signage, replaced and upgraded facility boiler, burners and oil tank to required standard, and installed bilingual internal signage (images of all works undertaken are included as Appendix 1).
4.0	
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: The Burnavon Box Office / Foyer refurbishment was funded under Mid Ulster District Councils Capital Works Programme.

	The Burnavon Dressing Rooms and Backstage Accessibility Toilet refurbishment were 100% funded through grant accessed from DfC Access & Inclusion Programme 2020/21.
	Human: Staff time and commitment to the delivery of the project are being met from within existing budgets and staffing resources.
	Risk Management: Reputational damage to Council and Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre as a result of any inconsistency in equitable and accessible service delivery has now been addressed.
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: The refurbishment works at Box Office and backstage area have significantly improved access for all patrons and users, particularly those with specific accessibility requirements. Engagement undertaken with Disability Forum representatives and MUDC Equality Officer from outset and throughout delivery of refurbishment project actioned. Culture & Arts Service provision is delivered by the officer team to be fully inclusive, and is designed to encourage wide participation from all sections of the community and in the promotion and support of good relations between all sections of the community within Mid Ulster
	Rural Needs Implications: Rural Needs implications are considered as part of the product offering and delivery of services of the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre as part of Culture and Arts Services within the Business and Communities directorate of Mid Ulster District Council.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	Members are asked to note the development works / refurbishment works undertaken at the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre during the period of closure.

6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
6.1	Appendix 1 – Images of refurbishment works undertaken

Appendix 1 – Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre Refurbishments



New Box Office Refurbishment

Entrance from front doors into foyer / new craft and gift shop / open space

Refitted dressing rooms with colour contrasting work bench, walls, floor, dimmable lights, new seating.

Widened door for wheelchair access and lowered light / control switches

Accessible toilet / shower rooms fully refitted

Newly installed bi-lingual Signage

Installation of new external signage and information boxes

Report on	Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group
Date of Meeting	Thursday 7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Allison O'Keefe

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To present the minutes of the Tourism Development Group meeting held on 24 February, approved at the Tourism Development meeting held on 28 April.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Tourism Development Group (TDG) was established to create a working forum between Council and private sector businesses. The TDG will assist with policy development and support the implementation of Council's Tourism Strategy and associated work in order to create economic growth, increase visitor numbers and create employment. The group meet on a bi-monthly basis and as per the agreed Terms of Reference all business will be reported to Council through the Development Committee.
3.0	**Main Report** Presentation of the Tourism Development Group minutes dated 24 February. (Appendix A).
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial & Human Resources Implications** N/A
4.2	**Equality and Good Relations Implications** Mid Ulster Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster.
4.3	**Risk Management Implications** N/A
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**

5.1	N/A
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix A – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 24 February 2021 and Officers Cluster Reports

MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP
Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 10.00am via Teams

Present

Cllr Francis Burton (Chair)	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Walter Cuddy	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Martin Kearney	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Sean Clarke	Mid Ulster District Council
Tanya Purvis	Education & Skills SWC
S Wiggins	Education & Skills SWC
Shauna McElhone	Coach Operator
Dermot Friel	Vintners
Hugh McCloy	Tourism Services
Martin Graham	TNI Destination Manager
Michael Browne	Mid Ulster District Council
Mary McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Mary McGee	Mid Ulster District Council
Charmain Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Genevieve Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Sharon Arbuthnot	Mid Ulster District Council
Martha Beattie	Mid Ulster District Council
Allison O'Keefe	Mid Ulster District Council
Anne Reid	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION	ACTIONS
1.	**Apologies** Terry McCrory — Craft Sector Colleen McGrath — Education & Skills NRC Sarah Cox — Education & Skills Tony McCance — MUDC Brian McCormick — Seamus Heaney HomePlace Chair welcomed everyone. She applauded staff who have been at the forefront of assisting and supporting businesses during the pandemic. The Chair informed that Captain Lowry, father-in-law of Colleen Lowry, Blessingbourne Estate, passed away at the weekend. Chair asked that sympathies are extended to the family on behalf of the group.	
2.	**Minutes of Meeting held on 9 December 2020** C Bell asked that the minutes at Item 6 be changed to reflect the following: *C Bell responded explaining that the number of landowners can effect the classification and that OM Dark Sky Park was as high a classification as a Reserve.*	

	Proposed: H McCloy *Seconded:* D Friel	
3.	**Matters Arising - None**	
4.	**Cluster Reports** In addition to Officers report circulated in advance of the meeting.	
4.1	Seamus Heaney Cluster M McGee informed that the Cluster submitted an application for Phase 2 of Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme totalling £170,000 over two and a half years. This application is going forward for panel review on 22 April. She thanked D Friel for taking the lead in the application. It was reported that Mid Ulster had the highest number of businesses attend the Irish Tour Operators Association workshop and many will attend the Britain and Ireland Marketplace (BIM) event where they will have the opportunity to sell to Ireland and UK based tour operators. She added that operators report 2022 will see a bumper year of bookings and many businesses are working on product development to promote domestically and internationally.	
4.2 **4.2.1**	Archaeology, History and Heritage Cluster *DAERA Collaborative Experiential Programme* G Bell reported that a quotation exercise has begun to appoint a facilitator for delivery of the programme and to collaborate with participants with a heritage background. TNI has provided £33,000 funding for this programme. Tourism Manager added that currently 19 businesses with very strong experiential products are working with TNI's Embrace a Giant Spirit brand to get them market ready.	
4.2.2	*US Grants Homestead* Ulster Scots Phase 2 Visitor Experiences is nearing completion with an exhibition and new play park. Chair informed that she attended a meeting with DEA to discuss future projects and queried if a Phase 3 would follow. Head of Tourism responded that the site has undertaken a great deal of work and is ready for market. He added that officers are working in collaboration with TNI, Ulster Scots and Eastern Seaboard, USA, to grow opportunities.	
4.2.3	D Friel stated that he is keen to develop a Ring Fort, located in his field in Swatragh, as either a private or a community project and has contacted agencies to look at an explorative dig. He is seeking Council involvement to market the project once developed.	
4.2.4	Cllr Cuddy raised concerns that Clogher Valley, as a main arterial route, was unsightly at the Ballygawley Roundabout	**M Browne to meet Roads Service to discuss issues and**

	expressing disgust at amount of littering. He requested if it were possible to put in place something similar to the entrance of Cookstown Roundabout. Cllr Burton responded that she was in regular contact with Roads Service regarding such issues. Head of Tourism added that tourism is currently going through a new branding exercise and could possibly look at opportunities through it.	**challenges at Ballygawley Roundabout. To feedback to Property Services department.**
4.2.5	*Carleton Cottage* G Bell reported that officers are following up with the owner of the cottage to address the issue of the cottage's dilapidation. She informed that whilst the property is in private ownership as a listed building, the owner has a duty of care to not let the building fall into disrepair. Head of Tourism replied that a conversation needs to take place with NIEA to enforce the upkeep of the property. H McCloy added that there should be a cross departmental/agency approach to work with landowners in the responsibility of protecting historic monuments/sites. Tourism Manager raised that in the past it has been raised with HED to address Ardboe Cross and a 9th century abbey located nearby. Cllr Cuddy added that due to lack of resources and financial capital should concentrate on priority sites on main routes spread across the district and seek to maintain annually. Head of Tourism added that archaeology is one of the main strands for tourism and a great asset to tourism within the district. He went on to say that with Growth Deal there may be an opportunity to work collaboratively with departments and agencies to preserve heritage sites in the right way.	**M Browne to raise concerns with NIEA over the state of Carlton Cottage and seek clarity on ownership. Also to include other monumental sites across mid ulster.** **List of monumental sites to be brought to next meeting.**
4.3	Outdoor and Events Cluster S Arbuthnot reported short videos are being developed to showcase and market Mid Ulster's rural, open spaces as safe to visit. Cllr Doris requested a list of walking trails and added that it was important to consult with local people on local trails. Head of Tourism informed that this was currently underway and cross referencing with Walk NI is taking place. Tourism Manager informed that a list of walks are currently promoted on the Council website and welcomed more promotion to stay local. In response to H McCloy's issue of car parking at Iniscarn. A Reid responded that she has spoken to local landowner and Roads Service to apply TRPSI funding for additional car parking. In the interim, signage has been added for existing carpark and work continues with the landowner for a short-term solution.	**M Browne to present audit of Mid Ulster walking routes.**
4.4	*Hotelier Cluster* C Bell reported that the cluster are currently working on a recovery plan in preparation for when restrictions will be eased.	
5.	**Business Engagement Programme** M McGee reported that there are over 130 businesses receiving support, advice and assistance within the Mid Ulster Tourism What's App group and added that Hospitality Ulster, TNI and NI Hotel's Federation provide a big contribution. She added that in	

	addition, businesses have benefited from mental health webinars, industry workshops and accountants sharing a wide range of financial support available. She thanked M Graham, Destination Manager TNI, for the continued support received. She added that businesses have begun a Get Recovery Ready programme that will provide mentors to develop a new suite of experiences for market and with the possible opportunity to move onto the Embrace A Giant Spirit Ambassador programme. M McGee added that a number of businesses have also availed of current Economic Development programmes and industry shows.	
6.	**District Wide Monitoring** M McKeown presented the District Wide Monitoring Results, circulated in advance of the meeting, up to end of December 2020. She reminded members that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some facilities had to close and therefore figures reduced. She informed that new monitors would be installed at Seamus Heaney Openground, Roundlake, Fivemiletown and Pomeroy Forest. In response to Cllr Kearney, A Reid informed that figures are collated at Molloys Fjord and fishing points at Glenone and will be shared at the next meeting.	**A Reid to present monitoring figures at next meeting.** **M McKeown to enquire about a monitor at Washinbay Walkway.** **M McKeown to contact D Friel with regards to a monitor at Carntogher.**
7.	**Industry Updates** Sector representatives gave an update on their business developments and sectors. Head of Tourism welcomed M Graham, Destination Manager TNI, to the meeting and invited him to give an update. M Graham began with thanking members for their positive comments and continued co-operation. He informed that Mid Ulster has taken up TNI's Website Development programme provided £40,000 funding for destinations to update their websites. He briefly discussed other programmes on offer to tourism businesses as part of TNI's Recovery Programme: • Covid Recovery & Financial Programme – up to £8,000 • 4 Step Recovery Plan – draft at present, hoping to roll out April/May • £2 million Voucher Scheme – hoping to relaunch early Spring • Co-operative Marketing Fund • Visitor Charter to set guidelines and good practice for businesses to operate responsibly and sustainably • Growth Programme • Contact Centre remains open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday • Push on Good to Go campaign to help consumers feel safe and secure	

	Head of Tourism thanked TNI for their continued work, support and the opportunities made available through collaboration projects, such as, updating destination websites and branding exercises.	
8.	**Any Other Business** *Funding Opportunities* M Browne briefly informed members of the secured funding for development within Mid Ulster: • DAERA Rural Tourism Programme offered up to £10 million financial assistance across 10 council areas and that Mid Ulster secured £3 million of this. • Ulster Scots Agency • TNI Marketing Fund, £29,000 to produce experiential videos • TNI NI Day Planner £10,000 – rollout of touchscreens at VIC's	

Meeting ended at 11.38am.
Date of next meeting Wednesday 28 April at 10am.

1. SEAMUS HEANEY CLUSTER – M MCGEE/C BELL

The group met on 15 April and attendance in this cluster continues to be very strong.

1.1 Elections

Richard Mulholland, Ballyscullion Park, was re-elected Chairman and Dermot Friel, Friels Bar & Restaurant, Treasurer. The group welcomed Ruth Flynn as the new representative for River Bann Boat Tours. Cathy Chauhan is continuing in her new position but will mentor Ruth in her new role.

1.2 Updates

The group have recognised collaboration and cross selling as a key strength. Seamus Heaney HomePlace noted that they will include cluster businesses in their new website and requested that other businesses reciprocate.
A member has been asked to participate in a series of films by NITGA and will feature other cluster businesses in this also.

1.3 Invest NI Phase 2 Application

Confirmation was received that the group's Phase 2 application to Invest NI was successful. Funding of £165,500 was awarded to cover facilitator support over $2^{1/2}$ years plus marketing support. Mid Ulster Council will also match the support for marketing activity with a £12,500 contribution over the duration of the programme.

This work will cover five distinct areas for the group:

1. **Recruitment of Facilitator, Governance & Initial Project Planning**
2. **Branding & Marketing**
3. **Commercialisation & Business Development**
4. **Internationalisation**
5. **Upskilling**

Dermot Friel, Friels Bar & Restaurant, will take the lead on this Phase 2 application. The group thanked him for taking on this role on their behalf.

Eight of the fifteen member businesses were represented at TNI Meet the Buyer last week, with feedback from the group very positive and members reporting a positive outlook for hopefully late Autumn 21 and a very positive 2022. One member reported generating strong leads for their business and leads for seven fellow cluster businesses. Two of the cluster businesses have been asked to join with Dalriada Kingdom Tours in their newly launched luxury brand So Sirecht. These businesses are been invited to sell in partnership with Custom Crafted Ireland a luxury DMC based in Dublin.

2. OUTDOOR & EVENTS CLUSTER – S ARBUTHNOT / A O'KEEFE

The Outdoor Cluster met on Tuesday 09 March. Due to the uncertainly around relaxations at this time, Marketing was talked at extensively. Funding has been secured to acquire videos highlighting what Mid Ulster has to offer concerning outdoor activities, including walking, golf, fishing, cycling, canoeing and outdoor activity providers. Once completed, the videos will be used on various channels targeting the different market segments to showcase the variety our district has to offer.
Officers have also met with a Digital Partnerships and Influencer Marketing Officer with Tourism NI. All the industry is encouraged and recommended to ensure they are "Good to Go" accredited. Building the confidence and safety aspects for our residents and

visitors alike to the district is paramount. Over the next number of months, engaging/interactive posts have been suggested which will also encourage visitors to visit multiple sites, for example: Where is your top five places to Golf or Fish; Top five viewing locations or Top five places to enjoy a coffee?

Relaxation dates were published to enable the industry to prepare for the summer months and staycations will be strong on marketing messages. These dates also mean the popular Hill Walking events can resume shortly, showcasing the beauty of the area in a safe manner.

3. ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & HERITAGE CLUSTER – G BELL/M MCKEOWN

The cluster group met on Thursday 22nd April 2021.

3.1 DEARA Collaborative Experiential Programme – Rural Tourism

The group were updated on the DAERA Experiential Programme. Applications received from tourism/hospitality businesses are now being assessed and those successful in getting through to the next phase will be notified by mid-May.

3.2 Road to Recovery

The cluster were informed World Host training will be available through TNI. Training is suitable for frontline staff, in a 60 min session focusing on the current working environment, people's behavioural changes, health, safety and hygiene.

3.3 European Heritage Open Days

The group were reminded to submit their registration forms before 5 May if they wish to participate in European Heritage Open Days. This year marks the 24th year of European Heritage Open Days (EHOD) in Northern Ireland and is an annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. The physical events are on 11-12 September 2021 whilst digital offerings run from 6-12 September 2021.

3.4 Update on Branding/Website

The cluster were informed that work is continuing on a new tourism brand and website. It is anticipated that this should be completed by June 2021.

3.5 TNI Marketing Collateral – Mid Ulster Videos

An update was given in relation to filming of the first suite of videos by Corish Studio Productions. Three videos will be produced in the first phase which includes Stars and Stones, Fed and Watered and The Three Sisters.

3.6 Tourism Recovery Skills Support Programme

The cluster group were encouraged to participate in the Hospitality and Tourism Recovery Training Programme delivered through HATS in conjunction with the F.E. Colleges. This is a free programme which has been designed to provide a skills-led approach to support managers as they move through the pandemic restrictions into recovery in the year ahead.

3.7 US Grant Homestead

New DDA compliant play equipment has been installed at U.S. Grant Ancestral Homestead, which includes an accessible inclusive pod swing, a wheelchair accessible inclusive ground level roundabout, a wheelchair accessible in ground trampoline and four sensory panels. The work completed at the end of March 2021. Work on the new exhibition panels etc. is ongoing with a view for completion by mid May 2021.

4 HOTELIERS CLUSTER – CBELL/M MCGEE

The cluster met on Tuesday 13 April.

Margaret Finnis from J&K Coaches was invited to update the cluster on the developments of Mid Ulster Tours. She also provided feedback received from attending recent Tour Operator events and the changes in the market place. NI is now seen as a destination of choice, providing hotels the opportunity to pivot their business from the business/corporate sector to tour bookings. With the development of fantastic tourism experiences within the district, accommodation is required at the forefront. Business tourism may not return immediately and there is an opportunity to pivot business to get visitors to stay in Mid Ulster. Hotels will be encouraged to support tours with accommodation.

The group were updated on the fully funded Tourism Recovery Skills Support programme announced by HATS, working in collaboration with Tourism Northern Ireland and encouraged members to attend the webinars and book staff onto the training workshops.

As an action from the previous meeting officers are working up a series of clinics/workshop/webinar proposals in preparation to showcase packages to key Tour Operators, covering:

1. Post COVID Pivot Your Business – clinic on the market post COVID.
2. Digital/Virtual Tours – storyboard and filming.
3. Workshops- selling/upselling skills, negotiation skills, creating packages working in collaboration with mid ulster key tourism experiences.
4. Tourism Ireland Industry Opportunity training. This will offered to other cluster groups to attend.
5. Signature Experience Familiarisation – This will offered to other cluster groups to attend.

Report on	External Investment Leverage 2020/21
Date of Meeting	7th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Chief Executive

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To advise members of the external investment leveraged by the Business and Communities Department to support Council priorities in 2020-21.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The Council attracts external funding in order to advance the quality of life for residents and increase investment into the District.
2.2	The Council has agreed to capitalise on external funding opportunities to meet Corporate objectives within the Corporate Plan 2020-24.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	With pressures upon Council income both direct and indirect, it is essential that Council seeks to optimise the amount of external resources which support the delivery of key actions and priorities. However, external funding is a finite funding stream and competition will become greater due to the mounting financial pressures being faced by local councils and the level of uncertainty around the full financial impact of Covid-19.
3.2	The Business & Communities Department is responsible for community services, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership, rural development, economic development, regeneration, investment, tourism and events, arts and culture. The Department has sought to supplement its budget with external funding and investment from a wide range of sources to assist the delivery of programmes and projects for the District.
3.3	The Department has secured the funding either directly following an application or supported other departments and partners in attracting funding from a number of sources.

3.4 The total external funding leveraged in 2020/21 by the Business and Communities Division was **£11.7million**, a breakdown of which is shown in Table 1 below, with a more detailed analysis contained in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Business & Communities - Summary of External Leverage Funding 2020/21

	Total Project Cost 2020-21	MUDC Funding 2020/21	Ext leverage Funding 2020/21
Economic Development	£7,446,522.80	£1,842,431.18	£5,596,891.62
Community Development	£3,714,919.62	£177,541.00	£2,637,378.62
Culture and Arts	£2,540,311.00	£679,832.77	£1,810,478.23
Tourism	£2,271,825.50	£531,051.69	£1,740,773.81
TOTALS:	£15,973,578.92	£3,230,856.64	£11,785,522.28

3.5 In summary for every £1 invested, the Council has levered an additional £3.65 of external monies.

3.6 To maximise funding opportunities for the District, collaboration with partner organisations and stakeholders will play an increasingly important role in securing financial support for projects in the future.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the report sets out the level of external funding that has been levered, which totals £11,785,522.28

Human: Officer time.

Risk Management: None for the purposes of the report.

4.2 Screening & Impact Assessments

Equality & Good Relations Implications:
None for the purposes of the report.

Rural Needs Implications:
A number of programmes and projects have delivered direct support and investment in rural areas.

5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	It is recommended that Members; **Note** the content of the Report on Business and Communities External Investment Leverage 2020/21.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix 1 - Business and Communities External Investment Leverage 2020/21.

APPENDIX 1

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT - EXTERNAL INVESTMENT LEVERAGE 2020-2021

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Funder/Source	Name of Programme/Project	Description of Programme/Project	Partners	Duration	Total Cost (£)	MUDC (£)	Ext leverage Funding (£)	Outputs (e.g. no. of jobs created, groups supported)
Mid Ulster District Council/Private Sector	Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme - Phase 2	Grants of up to £5,000 available to property owners within the designated boundaries of the 5 town of Mid Ulster and the development limits of the 46 villages across Mid Ulster at a rate of 75% to conduct internal / external improvements to their properties.	Private Sector	June 2020 - March 2021	£318,513.04	£195,159.02	£123,354.02	57 properties across the 5 towns and 46 villages grant aided for internal/external improvements. A further 16 schemes from Phase 2 will be completed by June 2021 (MUDC £59,058.23; Private Sector £30,333,63)
Department for the Economy,European Social Fund (DfE/ESF) and South West College (SWC)	(SUSE+) Step Up to Sustainable Employment Programme	Seeks to target a total of 900 clients (200 in this year due to Covid). The project operates across 2 Council areas Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council. The Programme aims to engage disadvantaged young people from rural areas to support them to obtain employability skills, qualifications and progress into further education training apprenticeships and employment.	DfE/ESF, South West College, Northern Regional College, DAERA, Radius Housing, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council	2018-2022 (Year 2020-21 costs and targets noted here)	£716,231.95	£30,511.48	£685,720.47	Year 3 Targets were reduced by 25% due to Covid 19: 151 participants recruited from MUDC area, of which 87 were from rural areas. 571 qualifications achieved, 49 entered into employment and 26 undertook further training/education.
Department for the Economy, European Social Fund (DfE/ESF) and Enterprise Northern Ireland (ENI)	(EE4P) Exploring Enterprise 4 Programme	Seeks to target a total of 178 participants (40 x 2 years and 49 x 2 years) The project operates across 25 regional areas including Mid Ulster District Council. This is a pre-start enterprise programme targetting disadvantaged groups who are unemployed / economically inactive to help them address barriers to progression into education training and employment, attain empolyability skills/qualifications and explore self employment or return to the labour market.	DfE/ESF, Enterprise NI, Mid Ulster Enterprise Partnership, and Mid Ulster District Council	2018-2022 (Year 2020-21 costs and targets noted here)	£21,209.97	£3,886.95	£17,323.02	Year 3 Targets were reduced by 25% due to Covid 19: 2 courses delivered by Dungannon & Workspace. 21 participants recruited from MUDC area, 10 individuals achieved Level 1 Understanding Business Enterprise qualification, 9 entered into employment and 2 entered further training/ education.
Department for the Economy, European Social Fund (DfE/ESF) and Network Personnel	(UFWP) Up for Work Programme	Seeks to target a total of 300 clients (75 clients in each year). The programme adopts a youth based methodology targetting those aged 16-24 years who are NEETS to develop personal, social and employability skills qualifications and progress into employment or further training.	DfE/ESF, Mid Ulster District Council and Network Personnel	2018-2022 (Year 2020-21 costs and targets noted here)	£250,481.98	£8,756.79	£241,725.19	Year 3 Targets were reduced by 25% due to Covid 19: 53 participants recruited from MUDC area, 118 qualifications achieved, 28 into employment and 33 undertook further training/education.
Department for the Economy, European Social Fund (DfE/ESF) and Network Personnel	(JMP) Job Match Programme	Seeks to target a total of 392 clients (98 in each year) from marginalised groups (i.e. those with mental health problems, debt problems, caring responsibilities, etc. to help them develop personal and social employability skills and qualifications to enable them to progress into further education, training and employment opportunities	DfE / ESF, Mid Ulster District Council and Network Personnel	2018-2022 (Year 2020-21 costs and targets noted here)	£737,303.36	£9,584.94	£727,718.42	Year 3 Targets were reduced by 25% due to Covid 19: 79 participants recruited from MUDC area, 69 qualifications achieved, 48 into employment and 3 undertook further training/education.
ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme	NI Business Start Up Programme (NIBSUP)	NIBSUP - Funding leverage of 80% provided to resource i) the Programme of delivery of Business Plans, ii) the Regional Marketing Campaign and iii) the Enquiry Handling facility.	11 NI Councils and Invest NI	NIBSUP Sept 2017 - Mar 2021 (Yr 4 costs only noted here)	£153,805.00	£55,370.00	£98,435.00	NIBSUP (from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021) saw 205 Business Plans delivered in Mid Ulster, promoting 126 jobs.
ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme Northern Ireland (2014-20), Invest NI and Mid Ulster District Council	Tender Ready Programme	By 31 Dec 2022 targets are to: recruit 130 micro and small businesses and build their capacity to win new work, create 195 jobs, make 20 Quality Invest NI referrals and win £5m in new work. Total value £258,600	ERDF IGJ Fund (60%), Invest NI (20%) and Mid Ulster District Council (20%)	2019 - 2022 (2020/21 costs noted here)	£60,150.00	£12,030.00	£48,120.00	88 businesses recruited 11 jobs created 11 businesses won 16 tenders of a total value £3,343,400
ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme Northern Ireland (2014-20), Invest NI and Mid Ulster District Council	Digital First Programme	By 31 Dec 2022 targets are to: recruit 150 micro and small businesses and build their digital capacity, create 225 jobs, make 20 Quality Invest NI referrals and win £1m in new sales/turnover. Total value £221,750.	ERDF IGJ Fund (60%), Invest NI (20%) and Mid Ulster District Council (20%)	2019 - 2022 (2020/21 costs noted here)	£99,875.00	£19,975.00	£79,900.00	99 businesses recruited 28 jobs created

ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme Northern Ireland (2014-20), Invest NI and Mid Ulster District Council	Transform Programme	By 31 Dec 2022 targets are to: recruit 160 micro and small businesses to help them recruit and retain staff, create 260 jobs, and make 15 Quality Invest NI referrals. Total value £263,000	ERDF IGJ Fund (60%), Invest NI (20%) and Mid Ulster District Council (20%)	2019 - 2022 (2020/21 costs noted here)	£28,400.00	£5,680.00	£22,720.00	30 businesses recruited
ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme Northern Ireland (2014-20), Invest NI and Mid Ulster District Council	Gearing for Growth Programme	By 31 Dec 2022 targets are to: recruit 160 micro and small businesses to help them recruit and retain staff, create 260 jobs, and make 15 Quality Invest NI referrals. Total value £263,000	ERDF IGJ Fund (60%), Invest NI (20%) and Mid Ulster District Council (20%)	Started Sept 2020 - 2022 (2020/21 costs noted here)	£20,300.00	£4,060.00	£16,240.00	60 businesses recruited
DfC & DAERA	Covid 19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme - Business Support Grants Tranche 1 & 2	100% grants from £500 up to a max £3000 to assist business recovery across Mid Ulster.	DfC & DAERA	Ends 30 September 2021	£1,334,000.00	£381,000.00	£953,000.00	587 businesses received Letters of Offer
DfI	Blue/ Green Infrastructure Projects (Active Travel schemes)	100% grant funding to develop active travel projects	DfI	Ends 30 September 2021	£499,000.00	£0.00	£499,000.00	Support the development of 6 active travel ptojects across Mid Ulster
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2021	Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership - Local Rural Development Strategy (LAG Co-operation Scheme)	Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership	2014-2022	£348,181.00	£96,672.00	£251,509.00	3 cross border co-operation projects supported.
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2022	Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership - Local Rural Development Strategy (Village Renewal Scheme)	Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership	2014-2022	£1,174,071.50	£638,745.00	£535,326.50	1 strategic scale village renewal project initiated
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation DAERA	Rural Business Investment Pilot Scheme	DAERA	2020/21	£1,008,000.00	£0.00	£1,000,800.00	External grant By DEARRA aided programme administered by Council with 150 micro businesses supported.
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	COVID Rural Business Support	Mid Ulster District Council COVID Support Scheme	DAERA	2020/22	£677,000.00	£381,000.00	£296,000.00	290 rural businesses support for covid business recovery actions
			ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOTAL 1:		**£7,446,522.80**	**£1,842,431.18**	**£5,596,891.62**	
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT								
Funder/Source	**Name of Programme/Project**	**Description of Programme/Project**	**Partners**	**Duration**	**Total Cost (£)**	**MUDC (£)**	**Ext leverage Funding (£)**	**Outputs (e.g. no. of jobs created, groups supported)**
Department of Communities	Community Support Programme:	Community Support General, Advice Grant, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Face to Face Award Advice, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension - Tribunal Representations, Covid-19 Community Support Fund (1st Tranche), Covid-19 Community Support Fund (2nd Tranche), Covid-19 Financial Inclusion Fund, Covid-19 Food Partnership Fund, Food & Essential Supplies Fund, Volunteering Support Fund, Warm Well and Connected Fund, Covid-19 Community Support Fund (3rd Tranche) & Covid-19 Food & Essential Supplies Transition Fund	Department of Communities	April 2021 - March 2022	£912,409.26	£18,817.00	£893,592.26	Foodbanks/food parcels £362,000; Counselling £80,000; PPE £30,000; Advice £100,000; Fuel Support £170,000; Summer Hunger £93,500
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Dungannon Pilot Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan	The development of a vision and principles for social and affordable housing provision in Dungannon, providing a strong evidence base to identify strengths, assets and areas for action taking account of economic retail, leisure and housing requirements and ensuring the identification of key opportunity sites to provide for mixed use development.	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	April 2021 - March 2022	£15,750.00	£5,750.00	£10,000.00	The production of a Pilot Housing and Regeneration PlaceShaping Plan which provides a vision for the future development of social and affordable housing in Dungannon and how this aligns with town centre regeneration.
Dept of Justice/NI Policing Board	Policing and Community Safety Partnership	Community Safety / Policing	Statutory (Designated) & Independent members	April 2021 - March 2022	£331,102.00	£46,904.00	£284,198.00	To empower communities, to help develop solutions that will help tackle crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. 55 Strategic Projects/Interventions.
Department for Communities (DfC)	Coalisland and Dungannon Neighbourhood Renewal Programme.	Addressing under investment in disadvantaged areas.	Multi-agency/stakeholder Partnership.	April 2021 - March 2022	£41,658.36	£2,070.00	£39,588.36	Tackling Deprivation & Disadvantage in top 10% of MDM wards. 8 Posts supported. 11 Strategic Programmes supported (Social, Economic, Community & Environmental).

SEUPB	PEACE IV	Council Peace 4 Action Plan	Council	April 2021 - March 2022	£1,000,000.00	£0.00	£1,000,000.00	Delivery of Peace IV Action Plan
SEUPB	PEACE IV	Connecting Pomeroy	Internal / External Stakeholders	April 2021 - March 2022	£1,000,000.00	£0.00	£100,000.00	Connecting Pomeroy Project
Office of First & Deputy First Minister	Community Relations Programme	TBUC - Together Building a United Community.	Internal / External Stakeholders	April 2021 - March 2022	£414,000.00	£104,000.00	£310,000.00	T:BUC Objectives promoting a shared & inclusive society. 8 posts part supported. 65 Groups support with small grants. 32 Strategic Projects. 33 Decade of Anniversary Projects.
			COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TOTAL 2:		**£3,714,919.62**	**£177,541.00**	**£2,637,378.62**	
ARTS & CULTURE								
Funder/Source	**Name of Programme/Project**	**Description of Programme/Project**	**Partners**	**Duration**	**Total Cost (£)**	**MUDC (£)**	**Ext leverage Funding (£)**	**Outputs (e.g. no. of jobs created, groups supported)**
ACNI	Small Capital Equipment	Max of 50% funding for purchase of capital equip	ACNI	1 month	£2,776.00	£1,388.00	£1,388.00	Purchase of additional desk mics/sound system
Department For Communities	Access and Inclusion Programme	100% funding to deliver 12 Access and Inclusion projects across the mid Ulster Estate	DfC	4 months	£270,826.00	£0.00	£270,826.00	Increased access for visitors to council facilities and visitor attractions
Northern Trust	Outdoor Learning Project		Park Dept.	Nov 20 - March 21	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	Purchase of planting/gardening equipment for primary schools which had wished to participate in Northern Ireland Forest Schools at HOTON in 2019/20.
Tourism NI	Website Development Programme	Funding made available to MUDC by Tourism NI to update and refresh Website for Ranfurly and Hill of The O Neill	TNI	Nov 20 - March 21	£24,325.00	£4,865.00	£19,460.00	Development of new website to increase footfall to visitor attraction.
The Ireland Funds	Refurbishment of library space at Seamus Heaney HomePlace	Funding Made available through Ireland Funds America, matched with internal budget to refurbish the library at Seamus Heaney HomePlace		Completion May 2021	£69,537.00	£31,085.60	£38,451.40	Refresh the visitor offering at SHHP, provide encouragement to repeat visitors, and add to the current strands of operation.
The Ireland Funds	Books for the refurbished Library Space	Provide publications which have a connection to the work and influences of and on Seamus Heaney- enhancing the recently refurbished Library Space at SHHP, and in turn extending the overall visitor experience.		Completion May 2021	£7,500.00	£2,137.17	£5,362.83	Books for the public to browse and read, this space will enhance the visitor experience at Seamus Heaney HomePlace by placing Heaney's work in context, giving background to his work and providing visitors with information that will lead to further exploration.
Tourism NI	Upgrade of existing SHHP website	Research & Structure / Front End Development/ Build/ Test, Train & Launch		Completion May 2021	£3,850.00	£710.00	£3,140.00	Improved use ability, traffic and interaction with website, and sleek modern design reflective of SHHP
Tourism NI	Copywriting for upgraded website	20 pages of content, key phrases and research, alterations, CRO/SEO friendly and GDPR compliant.		Completion May 2021	£2,997.00	£1,147.00	£1,850.00	Upgraded content and improved traffic to SHHP website
DAERA Environment Fund Environmental Challenge Fund Competition 2020/21	Seamus Heaney HomePlace Open Ground Project	Develop a series of six sites offering visitors the opportunity to access new journeys enhanced by both traditional and innovative interpretation, which intuitively tell the story of Seamus Heaney's main connections to the landscapes.	RSPB	June 2019 - June 2021	£300,000.00	£200,000.00	£50,000.00	Delivery of Seamus Heaney Open Ground project.
DfC/ DAERA	Covid Recovery	Council received funding from Department for Communities (DfC) and Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to deliver a Business Grant Scheme to support urban and rural businesses to reopen and make adjustments to their premises and welcome customers back to a safe trading environment.	N/A	June 2020 - March 2021	£1,339,000.00	£386,000.00	£953,000.00	587 businesses across the district received support
DFI	Covid Recovery	Active Travel Capital Projects	DfI	June 2020 - Septeber 2021	£517,500.00	£52,500.00	£465,000.00	Support for 6 Active Travel projects to be developed
			ARTS AND CULTURE TOTAL 3:		**£2,540,311.00**	**£679,832.77**	**£1,810,478.23**	
TOURISM								

Funder/Source	Name of Programme/Project	Description of Programme/Project	Partners	Duration	Total Cost (£)	MUDC (£)	Ext leverage Funding (£)	Outputs (e.g. no. of jobs created, groups supported)
DfC	Access & Inclusion	US Grant Ancestral Home Accessible play equipment		Mar-21	£29,726.34	£0.00	£29,726.34	Fully accessible and DDA compliant equipment, accessibilitiy, inclusive and increases participation for people with disabilities
DfC	Access & Inclusion	Newferry (west) and Ballyronan Marina - Installation of accessible canoe steps and accessible hoists		Jan - Mar 21	£26,330.00	£0.00	£26,330.00	Fully accessible and DDA compliant equipment, accessibilitiy, inclusive and increases participation in outdoor water activities for people with disabilities
DfC	Access & Inclusion	The Bridewell - Changing Places Facilities		Feb-21	£38,000.00	£8,000.00	£30,000.00	Makes Arts and Culture more accessible, inclusive and increases participation in activities for people with disabilities
DfC	Access & Inclusion	The Bridewell - Washroom refurbishment		Jun-20	£28,172.84	£0.00	£28,172.84	Update facilities and increase capacity to users of the site.
Ulster Scots	Interpretative Signage Project at U S Grant Homestead	Phase 1 Audio hardware and Visual Hardware equipment. Phase 2 enhance the welcome signage at the entrances and exits to the site; directional signage to help visitors to navigate the site and suitable interpretive displays within and around the buildings		Oct 2020 -Mar 2021	£60,000.00	£0.00	£60,000.00	Enhance the visitor experience and increase visitor numbers to site
Tourism NI	Tech Refresh	1 Touchscreen at Bridewell, 4 Ipads at Hill of the O'Neill, Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Burnavon, OM Dark Sky Park		Mar-21	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	Update digital euipment to keep in line with visitor needs
Tourism NI	Co-operative Partneship Marketing Fund	Develop a bank of video materials that will be used in marketing campaigns during the recovery phase but will offer flexibility to ensure they can be used in the longer-term and offer real value for money and a clear return on investment. This proposed TNI funded project will showcase 3 key tourism products / experiences that currently do not have video content: • Stars and Stones; • Three Sisters; and		Mar-21	£29,000.00	£7,250.00	£21,750.00	Assist tourism and hospitality businesses in tourism recovery by targeting the domestic, national and international visitor
LAG Co-operation	Davagh Archaeological Trail Walk	To create an archaelogical walk	SW Mayo	Oct 20 - Sept 21	£138,720.00	£37,832.62	£100,887.38	Building a viable visitor destination
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Rural Tourism Scheme	Davagh Solar Walk		Oct 20 - Sept 21	£527,250.00	£131,812.50	£395,437.50	Building a viable visitor destination
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Rural Tourism Scheme	Ballyronan Tourism Infrastructure		Oct 20 - Sept 21	£651,293.00	£162,823.25	£488,469.75	Building a viable visitor destination
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Rural Tourism Collaborative Experiences Programme	The basis of this proposal is to develop two main clusters around the key segments of built, natural and cultural heritage. One heritage tourism cluster will be spread throughout the whole of the the District Council area, whilst the other tourism cluster will focus along the shores of Lough Neagh.		Mar-22	£66,666.66	£16,666.66	£50,000.00	2 Cluster of private sector tourism businesses across mid ulster and Lough Neagh shoreline
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Rural Tourism Scheme	Sperrins Sculpture Trail	Derry & Strabane District Council / Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	Dec-21	£666,666.66	£166,666.66	£500,000.00	Creat a visitor experience within Sperrins
			TOURISM TOTAL 4:		**£2,271,825.50**	**£531,051.69**	**£1,740,773.81**	
				OVERALL TOTAL:	**£15,973,578.92**	**£3,230,856.64**	**£11,785,522.28**	

Report on	1) TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22 2) Parkanaur College Update 3) Mid Ulster MEGA - NI Apprenticeship Week 2021 (NIAW21) 4) Rebel On Demand – Pilot Proposal
Date of Meeting	7 July 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Economic Development

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

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	**TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** The Rural Micro Business Development Scheme funded through DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI) will run again in 2021/22 subject to approval of a business case and budget within the Department. July 21 has been targeted as a potential opening date for this year's scheme. Approval to participate in the 2021 Scheme was granted by Council in May 2021.
2.2	**Parkanaur College Update** A deputation from Parkanaur College gave a presentation to the Development Committee in February 2021 requesting assistance from Council. The Council agreed that officers would liaise with representatives from Parkanaur College to provide information on potential funding streams and programmes to support their plans for the future.
2.3	**Mid Ulster MEGA - NI Apprenticeship Week 2021 (NIAW21)** The Department for the Economy facilitated the second annual Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week from 26th to 30th April 2021. The week offered an opportunity through a dedicated programme of virtual events and online promotional activity to demonstrate how apprenticeships work for individuals, businesses, communities and the wider economy.

2.4	**Rebel On Demand – Pilot Proposal** The Business Start Joint Management Team (JMT), which comprises officers representing the 11 Councils, has been approached by the 'Rebel Business School' (formally the 'Popup Business School') https://therebelschool.com/ondemand/ with a proposal to be involved in a free NI pilot scheme for 6 months (to December 2021). This takes a different approach to start up from the traditional support structures to stimulate entrepreneurial activity. The pilot 'Rebel On Demand' is a 24/7 business support platform, made up of specially created video, written and audio content aiming to target a range of clients from anyone thinking about how to start a business, to those who aren't even aware it's an option they should be considering or and those who do not tend to come forward to seek structured support. It proposes an alternative approach to engaging with potential clients, promoting mini-experiments, preparing and allowing pre-starts to test their ideas and make decisions about next steps. The benefits are: • An alternative approach and perspective to business start • No eligibility criteria – open to all. • Referral route to *'Go For It'* and other relevant local supports. Most business support is only available between 9am and 5pm. While this captures many start-ups, 9am-5pm doesn't work for everyone, e.g. carers, lone-parents, under 25s, the employed seeking to develop another enterprise or anyone who works best in the evening / early morning. The video provides a brief introduction on what Rebel On Demand offers: https://vimeo.com/547872185.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** This Scheme is targeted at the rural micro business sector and will provide capital grant aid of up to £4,999 funded at 50% of eligible costs. Meetings between DAERA and all participating Councils have been ongoing in preparation for this year's Scheme as reported to Council in May and June 2021. In terms of Scheme opening dates and applicant eligibility criteria members are asked to note the following: • DAERA has indicated a preference to open this year's Scheme as soon as practicably possible in order to allow sufficient time for funded projects to complete and claim their funding before 31st March 2022. Mid Ulster received very large intakes of applications in the previous two years meaning that, the assessment process alone took three months to complete. As such, the Scheme will open for applications across all Council areas from 1st July and close 31st July 2021 with a view to getting letters of offer issued by the end of October 2021. • DAERA has also indicated that this year's Scheme will only be open to micro business who did not receive funding in any of the two previous years

	of this Scheme – 2019 and 2020. As such, this determination will need to be built into the Scheme Guidance Notes. There will be an option of running a second call, which would be open to all micro businesses, if initial funding allocations are not full committed from the assessment of new applicants to the Scheme. The Head of Economic Development wrote to Mr Gerard Treacy, Rural Affairs Division, DAERA on 9 June 2021 to relay her concerns regarding both the opening timescales and eligibility criteria. Highlighted were: (i) to open a call for applications during the month of July 2021 when many businesses are closed for 2 weeks would not be appropriate, especially as businesses need to request supplier quotes to submit with their applications, and (ii) limiting the Scheme to only new applicant businesses that haven't previously received funding from TRPSI, is likely to hold back the growth plans of many companies that desire to develop new business opportunities. The following response was received from Gerard Treacy on 15 June 2021 which in summary advises that the TRPSI Scheme will continue, as planned, and open in July. *"For the 2021 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, we are focusing on businesses who have not benefitted to date from the Pilot or the 2020 Scheme. We had a good debate about this focus at our recent Sub Group meeting at which I explained the Departments rational for this way forward. As you will be aware funding for the Scheme comes from the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme budget therefore it is incumbent on us to work with partners to seek out and support those most in need and indeed those with possibly the least capacity to avail of funding opportunities. With a £1m budget for this year's scheme, recently approved by our Minister we are hoping that is sufficient to support those that have not availed of grant aid to date. At some stage next year it will be important to undertake a detailed evaluation of the 3 funded Schemes so that DAERA can consider successes and failures and indeed the future needs for the Scheme / rural businesses.* *The application opening date of 1 – 30 July was considered and agreed by the Sub Group so that support could be provided to rural businesses as early as possible following their full opening up subsequent to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. It was also believed by the Sub Group that the July holidays would not have a detrimental effect on the number of applications received as there is still over a 4-week opportunity for businesses to apply. Like all other aspect of the Scheme the opening dates can be reviewed as part of the evaluation. An earlier opening period of mid-June was considered but due to Council approval for some areas not being in place until the end of June, this could not be accommodated.* *In a Scheme like this with many delivery partners it will not always be possible to satisfy the wishes of everyone but I believe the Sub Group understand that and are pleased to avail of this sustained opportunity to support rural businesses".* **Parkanaur College Update**
3.2	A virtual meeting took place on 7th May 2021 between Council officers and

	Parkanaur representatives to provide information on potential funding streams and programmes to support their plans for the future. Minutes of the meeting on 7th May 2021 is attached on **Appendix 1** for Members information.
3.3	**Mid Ulster MEGA - NI Apprenticeship Week 2021 (NIAW21)** The Department for the Economy facilitated the second annual Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week from 26th to 30th April 2021. The theme of NIAW2021 was *"Strengthen and Grow Your Team with an Apprentice".* One of the main priorities of the industry-led MEGA Network is to increase the number of apprenticeships within the manufacturing and engineering sector in Mid Ulster. This year Council agreed to financially supported MEGA with up to £950 to implement a five day social media campaign to promote the benefits of apprenticeships and the existing opportunities within local industry. MEGA also plan to develop a creative animation to promote the MEGA Degree Apprenticeship in Manufacturing Engineering with specialism in Industrial Digitalisation, Robotics and Automation, in partnership with Ulster University. This will be the first ever Manufacturing & Engineering Degree Apprenticeship and supports DfE's OECD Skills Strategy NI Report 2020. An Evaluation Report on MEGA's promotional activity to support NIAW21 is attached on **Appendix 2**.
3.4	**Rebel On Demand – Pilot Proposal** Following the Transfer of Functions in 2015, Councils became responsible for promoting and supporting entrepreneurship. With the current Business Start Programme due to end in March 2023, Councils are now considering the structure of future business start-up activity to inform the future delivery and mechanisms to drive entrepreneurship. This proposal has the potential to raise the profile of entrepreneurship and, in so doing, to increase enquiries and act as a feeder to the 'GoForIt' Programme for those clients who then require more structured support provision and help with a Business Plan. Council's role would be to assist in promoting the initiative. The Rebel On Demand proposal offers Councils access to a 6-month free pilot (commencing July 2021). During this period data and analytics on the level of engagement and participation across each Council area would be collected to enable Councils to evaluate its performance, at which stage each Council could decide upon whether they wish to continue (and resource) the initiative, post-January 2022.
	Other Considerations
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial:

	TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22 Grant aid to be provided by DAERA subject to approval of business case. An administration budget of 10% of the funding allocation will be available to Council. **Rebel On Demand – Pilot Proposal** No cost to Council - Free six month pilot (July – December 2021)
	Human: **TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** Officers time
	Risk Management: **TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** Council policies and procedures will be adhered to in the roll out of this plan
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: **TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** Equality and Good Relations screening will be carried out prior of commencement of the Scheme.
	Rural Needs Implications: **TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** Screening will be carried out prior of commencement of the Scheme.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
	It is recommended that Members;
5.1	**TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021/22** **Note** the timescale and new eligibility requirements for DAERA's TRPSI Rural Business Development Scheme 2021.
5.2	**Parkanaur College Update** **Note** enclosed Minutes of meeting held with Parkanaur College representatives on 7th May 2021 on Appendix 1.
5.3	**Mid Ulster MEGA - NI Apprenticeship Week 2021 (NIAW21)** **Note** Evaluation Report on MEGA's promotional activity to support NIAW21 on Appendix 2.

5.4	**Rebel On Demand – Pilot Proposal** **Note** Council's participation on the Rebel On Demand's 6-month free regional pilot programme, with a view to assessing the data to be provided on the level of engagement achieved during July-December 2021.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix 1 - Minutes of meeting with Parkanaur College on 7.5.21 **Appendix 2** – Evaluation Report – Mid Ulster MEGA PR re NIAW 2021

APPENDIX 1

Minutes of Meeting with Parkanaur College Representatives and Officers from Mid Ulster District Council

MS Teams

7th May 2021 at 2pm

In attendance:

MUDC officers:

Fiona McKeown (FMcK) - Economic Development, (*Meeting Chair*)
Paul McCreedy (PM) - Economic Development
Mary McKeown (MM) - Tourism
Nigel Hill (NH) - Parks
Paul Bailie (PB) - Parks
Christine McGowan (CMcG) - Arts, Culture & Heritage
Joanne Millar (JM) - (Economic Development - Minutes)

Parkanaur College (PC) reps:
Maureen Crawford (MC)
Bernard Cullen (BC)
Patrick Graham (PG)
Waldek Mietlicki (WM)

Agenda Item	***Discussion***	***Actions***
1. Welcome and introductions	**FMcK** welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were given by those present.	
2. Update on current engagement with Council	**PG**- Parkanaur College has been working with Community Development Section and has also received assistance from the Council's Economic Development Team under the Gearing for Growth Programme in terms of support and mentoring. Parkanaur have 2 main funding streams; Health and Social Care Trust and DfC. However, DfC has questioned the ability of Parkanaur to meet the aims of their funding criteria with regards preparing students for work. Following a plea to the department with the assistance of SIB, a further 12 months funding has been granted up to March	

	2022, however there is a need to fill this funding gap going forward. Parkanaur requires additional sources of funding to continue education and training and have made a renewed approach to DfE. There is potential to develop outlying buildings in and around the facility which may be opportunistic as social enterprises for students **BC**- Broadband is a very poor at Parkanaur College. **FMcK-** explained that DfE has responsibility for broadband in NI and is currently rolling out Project Stratum which will help a number of locations across Mid Ulster. It was agreed that a member of the Economic Development Team would follow this up with **BC**.	Colin McKenna, to contact **BC** re College's poor Broadband connectivity and advise if College will receive support under Project Stratum being rolled out by Fibrus.
3. Assistance Offered from Council Departments:		
3.1 Arts, Culture & Heritage Christine McGowan	Arts and disability programme has been providing funding support to Parkanaur including 6 week zoom programme for Air Drying Pottery in 2020. PC has been consulted with the programming for 2021 zoom classes Small art and heritage grants currently open - funding for projects like Christmas / arts fair training course/talks up to £1200.	**CMcG** to keep Parkanaur abreast of any potential funding opportunities.
3.2 Parks Nigel Hill & Paul Bailie	**NH** - Parkanaur is identified as part of the Council's 5 year Outdoor Recreation Strategy. Council would be keen to develop a strategy and masterplan comprising the forest, infrastructure (buildings) and community/visitor based activities. The timetable is 2022-23 for a Masterplan and there would be community input to develop a vision and ensure ownership and acceptance.	**NH-** to contact and discuss the Master Plan in more detail with **PC.**

3.3 Tourism Mary McKeown	**MM-** discussed the success of Davagh and suggested applying for funding to help the development of building and history tours to create a Parkanaur experience by using the mentoring programme.	**MM**- to contact PC to discuss the development of a Parkanaur Experience Ailson O'Keefe to send out information of training course particularly social media.
3.4 Economic Development Fiona McKeown & Paul McCreedy	**FMcK**- provided information on a number of business programmes available through Economic Development section. Those most relevant are the; • New Social Enterprise Programme. • Gearing for Growth Programme. • Digital Frist Programme • Transform Programme She also advised the College reps of Council's free business directory and e-zine service. **PM** – explained that Council uses Grant finder to identify potential sources of funding for public, private and community setors. He gave the example of the former Caledon woolstore, where the local regeneration group has successfully drawn down funding from AHF, NLHF, Historic Environment Division and other sources. In this case, Council provided gap funding under its Capital Discretionary Fund as a last resort funder. Council has committed to establishing a Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP), however, the outworkings of the partnership and Action Plans are yet to be determined.	**PM**- To provide information on relevant grants using Grant Finder and forward to **MC / PC** Shirley McIntyre-Economic Development, to link with **PC** and forward info on business support programmes and how to register on Council's business directory which supplies a weekly e-zine outlining new business funding opportunities, business events and updates of relevant business content.
4. AOB	**BC** - Parkanaur incurs high energy costs and would be interested in any potential grant schemes to support energy efficiencies.	**PM** to keep a watching brief for energy grants. Refer also to

	Also note that Parkanaur can provide accommodation and catering for meetings.	Council's Head of Environmental Health (F. McClements) who can alert **PC** of any new energy efficiency grants they are aware of.

Appendix 2

Comhairle Ceantair Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster District Council

MEGA
Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement

NIAW 2021 EVALUATION REPORT

SUMMARY

Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Week 26th - 30th April 2021, as with most events in the last 12 months, morphed into a virtual experience.

Mid Ulster Council invested £1k in two events in conjunction with MEGA.

MEGA in its unique independent position representing the Manufacturing & Engineering Industry in Mid Ulster, produced two innovative events providing a direct platform for companies to 'show case' a full range of Apprenticeship opportunities from Level 1 - Level 6.

ENGAGING WITH OUR TARGET MARKET...

Covid-19 has restricted our lives in many ways however, it has also presented opportunities for innovation. MEGA embraced this opportunity to reach our target audience through two virtual events:

Detailed on Pages 3 - 7

Detailed on Page 8 & 9

The Social Media Take Over

The theory behind MEGAs' Social Media Take Over was to hand over promotion of Apprenticeships to those young people who are on their Apprenticeship journey.

The regular promotion of Apprenticeships is formal and on the whole can be ridgid in its engagement. This provided a platform to **enagage** with the target audience on thier level in a **fun innovative way** harnassing online trends that this demographic seek out for entertainment.

The instruction to all companies was to story board their promotion **with** the Apprentices - **empowering** these **young people** to lead their company and present a different view point to Apprenticeships that wouldnt be appropriate on any other medium.

9 Mid Ulster companies participated in this event.

NUGENT

Mallaghan

EDGE INNOVATION AT WORK

TEREX CORPORATION

McCloskey INTERNATIONAL

SPECTRUM CONVEYOR PULLEYS

greiner PACKAGING

MAINE GROUP

bmi

Impact?

FACEBOOK
26 APRIL - 3 MAY

+105 followers	
Post Reach 18,000	+401%
Post Engagement 6,963	+650%
Video Views 12,897	+528%

INSTAGRAM
26 APRIL - 3 MAY

+25 Followers	+9%
3,131 Reach	+1,398
267 Content Interactions	+298.5%
16,060 Impressions	+844%
246 Post Interactions	+412%
309 Profile Visits	+713%

TWITTER
MARCH 2021 - APRIL 2021

+23 followers	
54 Tweets	+36
33.3k Impressions	+7.9k
2,123 Profile Visits	+1,389
13 Mentions	-11

LINKEDIN
26 APRIL - 3 MAY

+109 followers

660 Page Views

42.9k Impressions

1k Engagements

9.75k Video Views

TIKTOK
ALL TIME

+10 followers

24 Posts

80 Likes

Feedback...

‘Congratulations on your social media campaign last week. It was so quirky and portrayed the sector as an enjoyable place to work. We didn't participate but we certainly will next time! (Bloc Blinds)

‘Great work on the apprentice takeover – account was super! (Sandvik)

‘And a big “well done” and Congratulations on your MEGA takeover , it was FAB!’ (BMI Trailers)

‘A fun engaging event to take part in. Specdrum apprentices enjoyed creating the content.’ (Specdrum)

Announcing the Degree Apprenticeship

MEGA in conjunction with **Ulster University** are set to launch Northern Irelands **first** **Engineering & Manufacturing Degree Apprenticeship** commencing in September 2021.

This is a very exciting time for the sector in **Mid Ulster** having been at the **core** of developing this **landmark industry led qualification**. Its impact will be felt across the province and these skills will enable our local companies to embrace the shift to Industry 4.0 / the **4th Industrial Revolution**. The Councils support with this is reflective of the importance of the sector in Mid Ulster regarding current and future economic development.

DfE approved for MEGA to launch an animation on Apprenticeship Week 2021 - the first communication of this exciting new qualification.

(Still shot of animation)

Impact?

1.3k Likes

59 people attended the Virtual Open Evening

(Screen Shot of Virtual Event invite)

Conclusions & Recommendations

This event demonstrated the power of **peer-to-peer** sales and i**nfluence** for this age group.

It also reiterated the importance of Social Media in all its forms for **communication,** especially with our target audience for Apprenticeships.

MEGA has identified the **lack of specialism** for social media content development within many of our companies in Mid Ulster. This is a problem that MEGA has the potential to resolve with further funding. To maximise the opportunities these mediums present to recruitment of Apprentices, and general PR for the sector, the industry needs specialised support.

The measurement of impact for the **Degree Apprenticehsip animation** was unfortunately limited by Mid Ulster MEGAs website **www.midulstermega.com**. It was an oversight 18 months ago in its development to have Google Analytics built-in. MEGA are now working to rectify this situation and this may require a complete rebuild of the site to enable it to become more interactive and attractive. Its an expensive learning experience but the success of both NIAW 2021 events make compelling evidence it will have an impressive return on the investment and empower MEGA with quantitative KPI ability for funders and potential funders.

Feedback from those who participated, and even those who didn't this time round, would suggest an annual Take Over could be an annual calendar event.