

Report on	RDP Co-operation projects: International Appalachian Trail and Infrastructure developments on Lough Neagh and its waterways
Reporting Officer	Head of Parks
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Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>To seek members approval for Council to take forward applications for Rural Development Programme funding under the Local Action Groups Co-operation Scheme where Council will act as lead partner with Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership (the LAG) as co-applicant.</p> <p>These applications will relate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The International Appalachian Trail – Ulster Section and, 2. Infrastructure developments on Lough Neagh and its waterways.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership (MURDP) has a budget of £600,000 within its Local Rural Development Strategy to implement co-operation projects in partnership with other LAG's. The implementation of the co-operation projects outlined within this report will therefore contribute to achievement of LAG Strategy targets.</p> <p>For co-operation activities, Council is required to act as lead applicant with the LAG as co-applicant as specified within RDP operating guidance.</p>
2.2	<p>MURDP has been engaging in networking activities with other LAG's and Council officers on a number of potential co-operation initiatives. Two projects are now ready to move to full application stage namely:</p>

1. The International Appalachian Trail (IAT) – Ulster Section

The International Appalachian Trail (IAT) is a long distance walking/hiking route which started in the US and Canada and extended to Europe, with the IAT Ulster Ireland section formally launched in 2013.

In addition to connecting places and people, the IAT aims to promote natural and cultural heritage, health and fitness, environmental stewardship, cross-border cooperation and rural economic development through eco and geo tourism. The IAT continues to expand into areas of the old Appalachian terrains, based on the original premise that the trail will eventually connect all the mountains that were created when the ancient continent Pangaea was formed.

When expansion is complete, the IAT will be the largest trail network and one of the largest outdoor adventure brands in the world - with a presence in 21 'countries' across three continents and with a home market of over 800 million people.

The Ulster Ireland 'chapter' of the International Appalachian Trail runs from West Donegal in the Republic of Ireland, to Larne in Northern Ireland. It traverses six Council areas and four counties – Donegal, Tyrone, Derry and Antrim. The number of miles and percentage of the route for each of the six Council areas is included below.

LAG Area	Section length	% of Route
Derry & Strabane	41 miles	15%
Causeway Coast & Glens	115 miles	41%
Fermanagh Omagh	24 miles	8%
Mid Ulster	9 miles	3%
Mid & East Antrim	23 miles	8%
Donegal	72 miles	25%

The partners within this project include the LAG's in Derry City and Strabane, Donegal, Fermanagh/Omagh, Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid and East Antrim.

Approximately 9 miles passes through the Mid Ulster Council area. (Appendix 1). The concept behind this project is to maximise the use and potential of all existing walks on the International Appalachian Trail that traverse through the Mid Ulster District Council area and potentially add a number of tributary trails which collectively can add value to the trail and entice visitors to stay in the local area for longer. The project activities will include the installation of IAT branded trail head markers, directional way markers and fingerposts as well as a joint marketing initiative between all six partners.

2. Infrastructure developments on Lough Neagh and its waterways

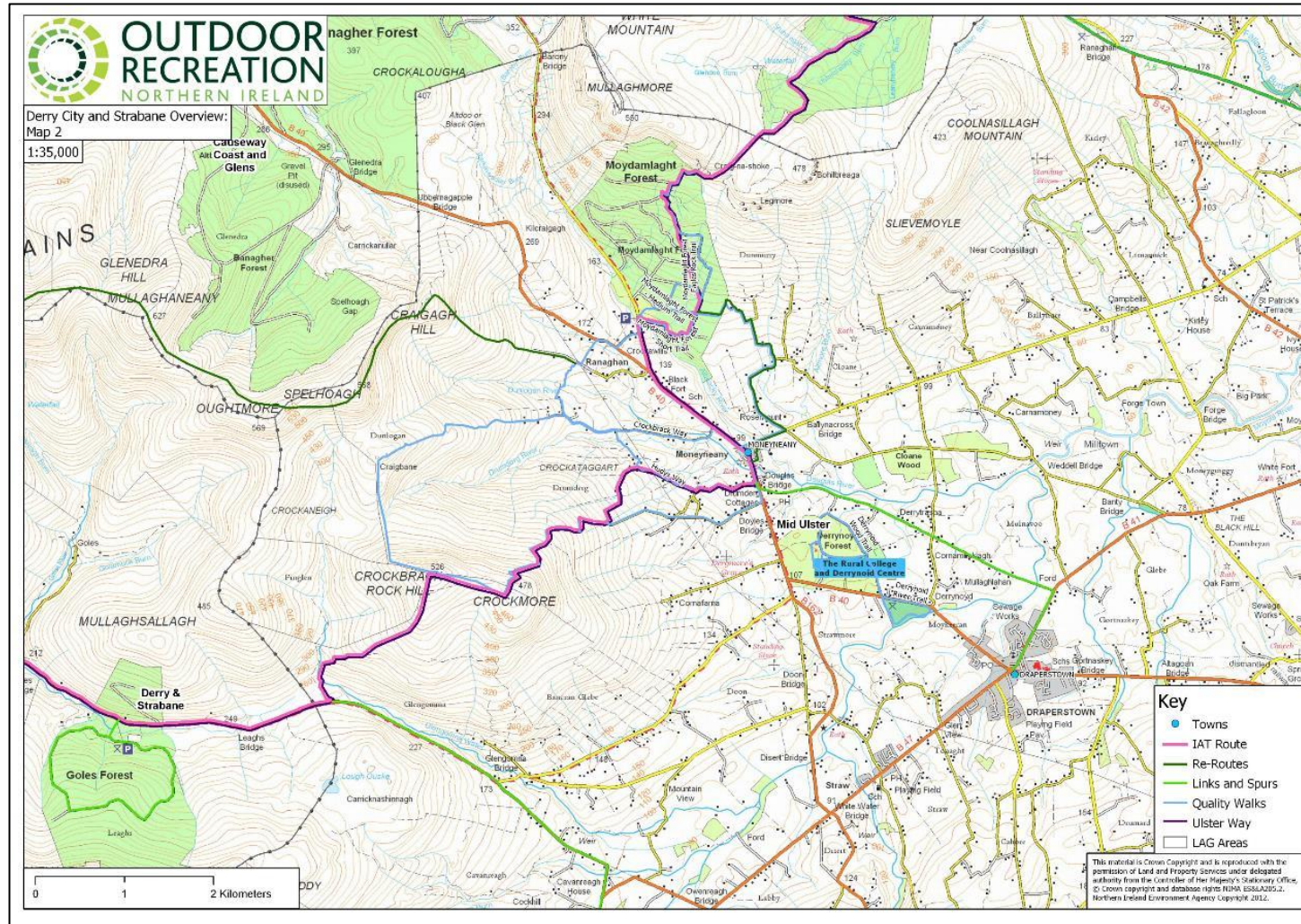
The partners within this project include the LAG's in Armagh/Banbridge/Craigavon and Antrim /Newtownabbey. The co-operation project focuses on infrastructure

	<p>improvements for Lough Neagh and its waterways to enhance visitor experience. Within Mid Ulster infrastructure works are proposed at two sites: (Appendix 2)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvements to angling infrastructure at Glenone angling amenity, which will complement and add value to an existing Council project at this site by refurbishing in the region of 77 existing angling stands and creation of 26 new stands with associated access road. 2. Access and infrastructure improvements to the lough shore at Washingbay involving campsite provision, walkways to the shoreline and viewing platform. <p>Both projects contribute to key aims of Councils Tourism and draft Outdoor Recreation Strategy through a focus on the development of Outdoor Activities.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Application process</p> <p>The application process for RDP funded projects requires all applicants to complete a procurement process ahead of submitting an application to LAG to demonstrate reasonableness of costs. This requires full technical designs to be finalised and tendered before an application for funding is submitted. The last date for assessment of applications by the LAG is December 2019 therefore procurement is needed beforehand.</p>
3.2	<p>Technical issues:</p> <p>It is proposed that external design consultancy teams be appointed to complete technical design work required for finalising specifications for both projects. Thereafter, specifications are to be tendered to complete the procurement process needed to satisfy RDP application requirements.</p>
3.3	<p>Legal issues:</p> <p>Lough Neagh</p> <p>Washingbay Amenity site is owned by Council. Planning permission requirements are currently being investigated due to ASSI designation. In relation to the Glenone Angling Amenity, RDP funding will be used to upgrade the existing angling stands and provide improved vehicular access to facilitate match angling events on lands leased by Council. Lease agreements lands earmarked for new stands are in negotiation with landowners.</p>
3.4	<p>International Appalachian Trail</p> <p>The International Appalachian Trail project requires physical works with the installation of trail head markers, way-markers and finger post markers along public roads and existing forest trails (held under licence from Forest Service). A scoping survey will be carried out by Council staff to identify potential land ownership, planning or environmental issues that require consultation/ approval.</p>

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p><u>Infrastructure Developments on Lough Neagh and Waterways:</u> Pre development costs associated with the appointment of external technical design teams will be covered by Council at an estimated cost of £10,000. Costs associated with technical design are eligible for RDP funding and will therefore be included within the total project costs being submitted for grant aid at 75% overall.</p> <p>Based on indicative costs, capital works for this project are estimated at £250,000 (inclusive of Washingbay and Portglenone elements). The indicative funding package envisaged is comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP - £187,500 • Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership - £24,000 • Mid Ulster Council - £38,500 <p><u>International Appalachian Trail</u> Quotes will be sought for trail infrastructure which in the main includes replacement way markers posts, directional markers and information boards. Overall costs are estimated at £51,500, including £21,000 for a joint marketing campaign for the IAT Ulster chapter. The indicative funding package envisaged is comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDP - £38,625 • Mid Ulster Council - £12,875 <p>RDP and Council funding amounts shown are subject to change pending procurement.</p> <p>Human: Staff time.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>In accordance with Council policies and procedures.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>In accordance with current Council risk management procedures</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Approval for Council to progress RDP Co-operation Scheme funding applications on the International Appalachian Trail and Infrastructure developments on Lough

5.2	<p>Neagh and its Waterways acting as lead partner with Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership as co-applicant.</p> <p>Approval for Council to provide match funding for the projects as detailed in the report.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	<p>Appendix 1 International Appalachian Trail – Mid Ulster section</p> <p>Appendix 2 Washingbay Wetlands Park site layout</p> <p>Appendix 3 Funding Breakdown RDP Co-operation Scheme</p>

Appendix 1 - International Appalachian Trail – Mid Ulster section



Appendix 2 – Washingbay Wetlands Park

