

Report on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hidden Heritage Tours 2024 2. Digital Signage Service Level Agreement (2024-2025) 3. Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 4. A29 Cookstown Bypass – DfI Consultation 5. Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme – Renewal 6. Town Business Spruce Up Scheme 7. Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/25
Date of Meeting	Thursday 16 May 2024
Reporting Officers	Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2024</p> <p>Hidden Heritage Tours are organised annually across the Mid Ulster District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites and discover the hidden gems of Mid Ulster.</p>
2.2	<p>Digital Signage Service Level Agreement (2024-2025)</p> <p>In 2020, Etolan Ltd, trading as Legato Solutions were appointed to install three digital outdoor screens in Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon town centres with a fourth added in Coalisland in 2023. As part of the original tender a Service Level Agreement was created where Legato Solutions would be responsible for</p>

the service support and maintenance of Insight digital signage platform from April 2020 to March 2024.

2.3 Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024

Mid Ulster's fifth Enterprise Week will take place in November 2024. It is anticipated that it will run from Monday 11 November to Friday 15 November 2024. The format in 2023, incorporated a mix of online and in-person events, which proved a great success, and a similar format will be used this year. It is proposed to procure the services of a Management Partner to coordinate and deliver the extensive range of events as in previous years. A budget circ. of £28,000 has been set aside to implement this programme of events.

2.4 A29 Cookstown Bypass – DfI Consultation

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has published for consultation the draft Statutory Orders for the proposed A29 Cookstown Bypass scheme.

Council agreed at its meeting in April 2024 to submit a consultation response to DfI and to delegate authority to the Development Committee, if required.

The closing date for responses is Friday 29th May 2024 at 5.00pm.

2.5 Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme – Renewal

The Mid Ulster Gift Card Initiative has been in place for three years, with over 200 businesses across the district accepting this card. From inception, this service has been provided by Miconex. Council is now at a stage, where this contract requires renewal.

2.6 Town Business Spruce Up Scheme

Council approval was granted in November 2023, to deliver a Town Business Spruce Up Scheme. Capital funding of £200,000 was secured from Department for Communities, to offer businesses/commercial properties located within the Town Centre boundaries (as per Area Plans), for Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt grant aid of up to 80% per property for eligible works. The grant aid is capped at £4,000 per property, as per scheme guidance.

2.7 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/2025

A fresh Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan has been prepared for 2024/2025 which highlights a variety of key activities to support our businesses, towns, and rural areas. It also includes reference to ongoing work in relation to Mid Ulster's Mid South West Growth Deal projects.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p data-bbox="228 264 655 300">Hidden Heritage Tours 2024</p> <p data-bbox="228 344 1394 456">At the Development Committee on 10 April 2024 Members approved the following three Hidden Heritage tours, but requested adding some additional tours across the district.</p> <ul data-bbox="277 506 1394 763" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="277 506 1366 577">• Saturday 8 June 2024, Who lives in a house like this – Ballyscullion Park, Bellaghy, Magherafelt <li data-bbox="277 602 1394 674">• Friday 21 June 2024, The Three Sisters Tour, Springhill, Lissan House and Killymoon Castle, Cookstown <li data-bbox="277 698 1353 770">• Saturday 21 September, Who lives in a house like this – Blessingbourne Estate, Fivemiletown <p data-bbox="228 824 1378 896">It is proposed that the following heritage experiences are also included as part of the Hidden Heritage Tour series.</p> <ul data-bbox="277 945 1385 1568" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="277 945 1385 1258">• The first new tour will focus on Famine and Folklore which is proposed to take place on 2 October 2024 at Friel’s Bar and Restaurant, Swatragh. With the opening of their brand-new Visitor Centre, Friel’s will tell the story of Dr Mooney who set up a soup kitchen during the Great Famine in the 1840’s with the original famine pot still on display. The visitor can immerse themselves in the history and atmosphere of Friel’s, a fifth-generation pub and listen to local folklore about the poet, traveller and adventurer Mick McAtamney and see his 100-year-old hand carved walking stick. <li data-bbox="277 1305 1378 1413">• During the European Heritage Open Days on 15 and 16 September 2024, it is proposed this year to enhance the visitor experience by providing living history and storytelling at the following venues: <ul data-bbox="325 1453 1086 1568" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="325 1453 794 1489">• The Bridewell (Magherafelt) <li data-bbox="325 1491 1086 1527">• US Grants Ancestral Homestead (Ballygawley) <li data-bbox="325 1529 794 1568">• Emigrants Walk (Swatragh) <p data-bbox="228 1606 1394 1713">Over seventeen Heritage properties across Mid Ulster will open their doors free of charge to promote public interest in heritage and raise awareness of its cultural significance and benefit to the community.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1751 1353 1823">Council will promote these events closer to the time under this year’s theme of; <i>“Routes, Connections and Networks – Links in our Heritage”</i>.</p>
3.2	<p data-bbox="228 1906 1038 1942">Digital Signage Service Level Agreement (2024-2025)</p> <p data-bbox="228 1980 1273 2045">The current Digital Signage Agreement with Etolan Ltd, trading as Legato Solutions ended on 31 March 2024.</p>

Approval is sought from Members for Council to enter into a further Service Level Agreement with Etolan Ltd, trading as Legato Solutions, for one financial year for the period, 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 to provide delivery of ongoing support for the digital signage sited in Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt and Coalisland.

The scope of service covers support and maintenance of the Legato Insight digital signage platform installed in Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt in April 2020 and Coalisland in 2023. Cover includes;

- Equipment at four sites
- Media Player hardware support and maintenance
- Media player software updates including Bug Fixes and Minor Amends
- Client updates including Bug Fixes and Minor Amends
- Remote Technical Support
- Three on-site visits per annum
- A yearly training session for new staff (helpful for organisations with high turnover)
- Technical Advice
- Removal and replacement of faulty hardware/parts under warranty

The Service Level Agreement on **Appendix 1** has been reviewed by ICT and found to be satisfactory and in accordance with Council's procurement policy.

Total costs for the annual Service Level Agreement renewal for digital screens at all four sites and Media Player hosting is £2,200+Vat.

3.3 Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024

It is proposed to deliver a comprehensive mix of online and in-person events during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week. Council is keen to build on the success of the previous four Enterprise Week's held in Mid Ulster and deliver an equally impactful high-quality programme suited to the needs of local businesses.

An extensive range of business topics will be offered to ensure all sectors of industry are catered for. To build upon the success of previous years' events, it is proposed to procure the services of a Management Partner who will report to Council throughout the organisation, co-ordination, and delivery of a comprehensive range of actions to support the smooth delivery of a wide and varied week-long programme of events to celebrate Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024.

3.4 A29 Cookstown Bypass – DfI Consultation

Members will be aware that the A29 Cookstown Bypass is one of the key strategic infrastructure projects being delivered under the Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal.

DfI Roads Western Division are progressing the design and development of the A29 Cookstown Bypass, which is a key strategic project under the Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal project. The aim of the project is to provide a new transport link improving the connections between A29 Moneymore Road and the A29 Dungannon Road and also upgrade the link between A29 Dungannon Road and the A505 Drum Road, reducing traffic congestion in Cookstown and improving the reliability of journey times for vehicular travellers.

The A29 Cookstown Bypass scheme reached a key milestone in April 2024 with the publication of Draft Statutory Orders and Environmental Impact Assessment Report. A Public Information Event was held on Tuesday 16th April 2024 in the Burnavon. The closing date for responses is Friday 29th May 2024 at 5.00pm.

DfI has written to Council in relation to the scheme and offering the Council an opportunity to comment on the Vesting Order and associated reports on **Appendix 2**.

A summary of the planning considerations was discussed and agreed by Council's Planning Committee on 7th May 2024 and included in the Council's consultation response in **Appendix 3**.

Documentation related to the scheme is accessible via the following links;

- Consultation documents: [A29 Cookstown Bypass - Consultation | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#)
- 360 virtual consultation room is also available on DfI's website at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/a29-cookstown-bypass-overview> until the consultation closes on Friday 29th May 2024 at 5pm.

3.5 Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme – Renewal

In September 2021, Members agreed for Council to enter into a three-year contract on the delivery of a gift card bespoke for the Mid Ulster District. This initiative has been well received by businesses across the district, with further opportunities to build on this programme and support spend locally. Currently 226 businesses have registered /pending across the district with over £75,000 uploaded on to gift cards to spend in participating businesses within Mid Ulster. As the contract with the existing contractor Miconex comes to its renewal stage, in line with Council's procurement policy, Council has the opportunity to extend the delivery of the scheme for a further two years or withdraw from the contract. The projected cost of extension will be £14,000 excluding VAT per year.

3.6 Town Business Spruce Up Scheme

The Town Business Spruce Up Scheme offers discretionary grants of up to 80% eligible costs, capped at £4,000 per property for external and/or internal improvements.

The Scheme was available to both occupied commercial premises and vacant/derelict units within the town centre boundaries of Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt as defined within the existing Area Plans and which the funder, Department for Communities (DFC), insisted Council must abide by.

The scheme opened for applications on Monday 19 February 2024 and closed again on Friday 8 March 2024 at 4pm.

Four drop-in business clinics were delivered, one in each of the four towns. Knox & Clayton Chartered Architects who were appointed to assist with the delivery of the scheme, attended the drop-in business clinics to provide advice and guidance to potential applicants.

Knox & Clayton Chartered Architects appointment also included the independent assessment of applications, management, and monitoring of successful projects up to the value £200,000.

Stage one of the independent assessment required the Chartered Architects to conduct eligibility checks on all applications. For all applications that met the requirements of the eligibility check they proceeded to stage 2 which involved a scored assessment process.

All applications that achieved a minimum threshold score of 40% or above are eligible for grant aid, subject to available budgets.

229 Applications were received by the closing date/time of Friday 8 March 2024 at 4pm. The 229 applications were independently assessed by Knox & Clayton Chartered Architects.

Following eligibility checks: -

- 41 applications were deemed invalid at the initial Eligibility Check
- 185 applications progressed to scored assessment stage.
- 3 applications withdrawn by applicants.

From the **185 applications** that progressed to scored assessment stage;

- **117** applications achieved 40% or above (meeting the pre-established minimum score threshold). The overall value of all schemes totalled £373,722.45, which exceeded the total budget available from DFC of £200,000.

- The scores awarded to each application, determined their funding rank. Applicants with the highest scores were recommended for funding until the full amount of available DFC monies was expended ie, £200,000. As a result, projects ranked **Nos. 1 to 67**, were classified as **Phase 1** Schemes and these **67** successful applicants were issued with letters of offer by 31 March 2024 (see **Appendix 4**).
- A further **50** applications, ranked Nos. **68 – 117** (inclusive), also met the funding threshold and were deemed eligible to receive funding, however, as all the remaining DFC funds were allocated, these applicants were classified as **Phase 2** schemes and notified accordingly, that they were placed on a Reserve List, until such times as Council may be able to attain further funding from DFC (see **Appendix 5**).
- **68** applications failed to achieve the 40% threshold score.

At this juncture, all applicants have been formally notified by letter regarding the outcome of their Town Spruce Up Scheme application.

Officers have been in liaison with DFC and are currently preparing a further funding bid to seek an additional £200,000 to finance the remaining 50 schemes currently held on a Reserve List. The funding bid will also request that any residual funding from DFC be directed towards offsetting the Independent Chartered Architect's costs..

If Council is awarded the additional funding from DFC, and is provided with a letter of offer to finance the gap funding (ie, Phase 2 Reserve List), then it is likely Council will be required to undertake a new procurement process to appoint an Independent Chartered Architect to undertake site visits, verify spend in line with the DFC terms and conditions etc..

3.7 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/2025

The Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes Action Plan on **Appendix 6** aims to prioritise the development of a comprehensive range of activities, projects, programmes, and support across Mid Ulster during the 2024/2025 financial year.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial:

4.1.1 Hidden Heritage Tours 2024

Provision of £4,000 has been made in the 2024/25 tourism budget.

	<p>4.1.2 Digital Signage Service Level Agreement (2024-2025) Provision of £2,200+Vat has been made in the 2024/25 Tourism budget.</p> <p>4.1.3 Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 A budget circ. £28,000 has been set aside for Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 in the 2024/25 Economic Development budget. A proportion of these costs will be used to procure the services of a Management Partner to co-ordinate, manage and organise all events and promotion during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024.</p> <p>4.1.4 Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme Renewal If Council wish to renew the contact with current gift card provider, £14,000 per year will be earmarked from the existing Economic Development budget in 2024/2025, along with marketing and promotion activities for the year again.</p> <p>4.1.5 Town Business Spruce Up Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Applicants Ranked No's 1 – 67 – issued with Letters of Offer. Value of funding committed £200,000 (funding secured from Department for Communities 2023/2024) • Phase 2: Applicants Ranked No's 68-117, value of funding recommended totals £173,722.45. These schemes are held on a Reserve List (and are subject to Council receiving additional funding from DFC). <p>4.1.6 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/2025 Funding provision has been made for projects within the 2024/2025 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programme Budget. Some projects, however, are dependent on securing external funding.</p> <p>Human: Officer time</p>
4.2	<p>Equality and Good Relations Implications</p> <p>A29 Cookstown Bypass – DFI Consultation Dfl completed Equality Screening in January 2024.</p> <p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/25 Council policies and procedures will be adhered to in the roll out of this plan.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
4.3	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>A29 Cookstown Bypass – DFI Consultation Dfl completed Rural Screening in January 2024.</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p data-bbox="229 259 708 293">It is recommended that Members;</p> <p data-bbox="229 333 655 367">5.1 Hidden Heritage Tours 2024</p> <p data-bbox="229 407 1342 479">In addition to the three Hidden Heritage Tours previously agreed in April 2024, approval is sought to;</p> <p data-bbox="229 519 1342 591">5.1.1 Provide an additional Hidden Heritage Tour on 2 October 2024, entitled <i>'Famine and Folklore'</i> at Friel's Bar and Restaurant, Swatragh and;</p> <p data-bbox="229 609 1398 748">5.1.2 Enhance the visitor experience by providing living history and storytelling at The Bridewell (Magherafelt), US Grants Ancestral Homestead (Ballygawley) and the Emigrants Walk (Swatragh) during European Heritage Open Days on 15 & 16 September 2024.</p>
5.2	<p data-bbox="229 801 1038 835">5.2 Digital Signage Service Level Agreement (2024-2025)</p> <p data-bbox="229 875 1390 1059">Approve Digital Signage Service Level Agreement between Council and Etolan Ltd, trading as Legato Solutions, for financial year commencing 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, at a cost of £2,200+Vat for provision of ongoing digital signage support at four sites across Mid Ulster, located in Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt and Coalisland.</p>
5.3	<p data-bbox="229 1135 727 1169">5.3 Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024</p> <p data-bbox="229 1209 1385 1281">5.3.1 Approve a budget of circ. £28,000 for the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 from Council's Economic Development budget 2024/2025.</p> <p data-bbox="229 1321 1382 1505">5.3.2 Approve Officers proceed to seek competitive quotes to appoint a professional Management Partner to co-ordinate, manage, deliver and promote Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 from Monday 11th to Friday 15th November 2024. The costs of a Management Partner will be subsumed within the budget detailed at 5.3.1.</p> <p data-bbox="229 1545 1278 1648">5.3.3 Approve Council's Chief Executive be granted authority to appoint the successful Management Partner, following the procurement exercise to allow work to progress over the summer months.</p>
5.4	<p data-bbox="229 1720 887 1753">5.4 A29 Cookstown Bypass – DFI Consultation</p> <p data-bbox="229 1794 1353 1944">Approve Council's draft Consultation Response to the A29 Cookstown Bypass Scheme and by the powers granted by Full Council to the Development Committee, submit response to Department for Infrastructure (DfI), prior to the closing date of Friday 29th May 2024 at 5pm.</p>

5.5 Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme – Renewal

Approval to enter negotiations with Miconex to extend the Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme for a further 2 years commencing in September 2024.

Approval of projected budget of £14,000 per year (for 2 years) from Council's Economic Development Budget, as part of the original contract. A management fee will be implemented, if Council decides to terminate the contract as previously agreed under the original contract to honour gift cards purchased up to September 2024.

5.6 Town Business Spruce Up Scheme

5.6.1 Phase 1 – Current Letter of Offer from DFC (March 2024)

Note that following assessment of applications by the Independent Chartered Architect, applicants ranked Nos. 1 – 67 were issued with Letters of Offer (by 31 March 2024), as previously agreed, up to the value of funding received from Department of Communities (DFC), totalling £200,000.

5.6.2 Phase 2 – Subject to Additional funding being secured from DFC

Note the number of scheme applicants exceeded the funding available from DFC. Therefore, whilst applicants ranked Nos. 68 – 117 were successful, scoring 40 or above, with combined funding sought totalling £173,722.45, these applicants were informed in writing they had been placed on a Reserve List until such times as Council may be able to attain additional funding from DFC and therefore, in the interim period, they must not commence any works.

5.6.3 Approve that Council make a further funding bid to DFC to seek financial assistance of up to £200,000 to fund the successful applicants ranked Nos. 68 – 117, which are currently held on a Reserve List. The application would also request that any residual funding from DFC be directed towards offsetting the Independent Chartered Architect's costs.

5.6.4 In the event Council's funding bid to DFC is successful and the additional funding is provided to Council to deliver Phase 2 schemes, then **approval** is requested for Council's Chief Executive to be granted authority to;

(a) Sign and return the Letter of Offer to DFC;

(b) Issue Letters of Offer to applicants ranked Nos. 68 – 117, on the Reserve List.

(c) Procure the services of an Independent Chartered Architect to undertake site visits, verify works, etc, for Phase 2 (Reserve List) Schemes.

5.7

	<p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/2025</p> <p>Approve the projects and associated budgets as detailed in the Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2024/2025.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 - Digital Signage Service Level Agreement between MUDC & Etolan Ltd, trading as Legato Solutions - April 2024 – March 2025</p> <p>Appendix 2 - DFI Correspondence re A29 Cookstown Bypass Consultation</p> <p>Appendix 3 - MUDC response to DFI re A29 Cookstown Bypass Consultation</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Town Business Spruce Up Scheme - Phase 1 Letters of Offer issued to Successful Applicants (March 2024)</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Town Business Spruce Up Scheme - Phase 2 Applications held on Reserve List (Subject to Additional Funding from DFC)</p> <p>Appendix 6 - Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes Action Plan (2024/2025)</p>