

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Wednesday 10 April 2024 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown**

**Members Present**

Councillor McNamee, Chair

Councillors Bell, Black, W Buchanan, F Burton, Clarke, Corry, Forde, Gildernew, McLernon, McQuade (7.02 pm), Milne, Molloy, Monteith, Quinn (7.02 pm), Wilson

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P)  
Mr Clarke, Neighbourhood Development Manager (NDM)  
Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure & Wellbeing (AD: HL&W)  
Ms F McKeown, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes (AD: EDT&SP)  
Ms M McKeown, Tourism Service Manager (TSM)  
Ms Smith, Diversity & Integration Manager (D&IM)  
Mr Curran, ICT Support  
Mrs Grogan, Committee and Member Services Officer

**Others in Attendance**

**Agenda Item 5 – Deputation – Brown Signage**  
Department for Infrastructure (DfI):  
Mr Johnny Graham and Mr Brendan Elliott  
Tourism NI (TNI):  
Mr David Roberts & Ms Esther Dobbin  
  
Councillor Mallaghan

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

*The Chair, Councillor McNamee welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor McNamee in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee by referring to Annex A to this minute.*

**D062/24 Notice of Recording**

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

**D063/24 Apologies**

Ms Linney, Assistant Director of Development (AD: Dev).

## **D064/24 Declaration of Interests**

The Chair, Councillor McNamee reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest.

*Councillor Black declared an interest in Item 7, Community Grants – Drumnaglough Flute Band.*

*Councillor Gildernew declared an interest in Item 8 – Brantry Bard Group Service Level Agreement*

*Councillor Clarke declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Broughderg Area Development Association Ltd.*

*Councillor Forde declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Maghera Parish Caring Association and Magherafelt Women’s Group.*

*Councillor Wilson declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Friends of Killymoon Castle.*

*Councillor Milne declared an interest in Item 13 – SHHP Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residency Project.*

*Councillor Corry declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Moneyneena & District Development Initiative and Ballinascreen GAC*

*Councillor Bell declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Ballinderry Shamrocks GAC.*

*Councillor Gildernew declared an interest in Item 7 – Community Grants – Derrylatinee Parent Support Group.*

*Councillor Molloy declared an interest in Item 7 - Community Grants – Square Wheels Cycling Club.*

*Councillor Monteith declared an interest in Item – Ballysaggart Area Community Association and Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club, Dungannon.*

*Councillor Quinn entered the meeting at 7.02 pm*

*Councillor McQuade entered the meeting at 7.02 pm.*

## **D065/24 Chair’s Business**

The Chair welcomed Ms Denise Smith, Diversity and Integration Manager to the her first Development Committee meeting and wished her well in her new role.

Councillor Molloy referred to Charlie Donnelly Winter School which had been ongoing for a number of years since the old legacy Dungannon Council. The member advised that as Mayor of Council this year he had met with a delegation from Spain,

with ongoing discussions taking place around the development of the Winter School going forward and how to develop and get it back up and running again as it had fallen away since Covid in terms of Council engagement and what we are doing. The member stated that there have been a number of contacts with Rivas de Vaciamadrid Council and discussions with their Mayor who was keen to develop the Winter School and to broaden it out and investigate what programmes that can be developed going forward. This would be in terms of the Winter School and possibly involving young people in cultural exchange in learning and development between the two Councils. The member said that it would be beneficial if Officers would work on something as a meeting was taking place with the Mayor of Rivas de Vaciamadrid virtually within the next fortnight and would be important that some sort of a programme can be developed from that.

Councillor Corry said that she would be happy to second Councillor Molloy's proposal.

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council that Officers investigate possible options for development of programme for Charlie Donnelly Winter School between Council and Rivas de Vaciamadrid Council.

#### **D066/24 Deputation – Brown Signage**

The Chair welcomed Ms Mary McKeown, Tourism Service Manager (TSM) to make an overhead presentation on the recently completed Brown Signage Audit commissioned by Council. Mr Johnny Graham and Mr Brendan Elliott from Dfl and Mr David Roberts & Ms Esther Dobbin from Tourism NI, were also in attendance to answer any queries Members had on brown signage (appendix).

Ms McKeown provided an overview to members on Brown Signage Audit as outlined:

- **Brown Signage Policy Background**
  - Tourism brown signage policy in Northern Ireland is implemented by the Department for Infrastructure (Dfl) in partnership with Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI).
  - Brown signs are used as a traffic management tool to guide visitors to tourist destinations in a safe and sustainable manner.
  - The Brown Signage policy in Northern Ireland is based on a set of guidelines including the quality and accessibility of the attraction or destination, the potential number of visitors, and the impact of the sign on the local environment. The policy is also based on the principle that brown signs should only be used for tourism purposes and should not be used for commercial or advertising purposes.
  - Dfl and TNI work closely with local councils and tourism stakeholders to identify locations where brown signs are required, and to ensure that they are designed and installed in accordance with the guidelines. The process involved in implementing and applying for brown signs is as follows:
    - The Council co-ordinates all applications.
    - Tourism NI confirms eligibility of the application as a tourist destination.
    - Dfl will determine the extent of the signage to be provided and will design and erect all signs. As part of its duty to manage the road network, Dfl

Roads will be ultimately responsible for whether signage is provided or not.

- The policy has not been reviewed or updated since 2014 to ensure that it remains effective and sustainable, and to reflect changes in the tourism industry and visitor behaviours.
  - Overall, the Brown Signage Policy in Northern Ireland is a key element of the region's Tourism Strategy and plays an important role in directing the visitor to the visitor experiences in the Council area.
- **Tourism Trade Feedback of the Current Process**
    - The process in general seems to be lengthy, expensive and involves too many partners and stakeholders.
    - Existence of illegal signs has resulted in feedback that DfI do not seem to police or remove them.
    - It was noted that the eligibility criteria for a Tourism Body to be permanently open or have a certain accreditation can be too onerous and excludes a lot of smaller tourism businesses.
    - Meeting to be held with TNI and DfI prior to applications being submitted.
- **Context and Purpose of the Audit**
    - Tourism NI and DfI currently do not hold information on locations of brown signage in MUDC area.
    - MUDC commissioned a Brown Signage Audit in December 2022 and this was completed in March 2023.
    - All brown tourism signs were surveyed, photographed, geo-located and placed on a google map link
    - A schedule of possible new and replacement signage was identified and will be submitted to DfI for approval.
- **Audit Requirements**

The main elements of the work carried out:

    - All signs checked and repositioned if required
    - Report any missing signage
    - Improve the visibility and cleaning of signs
    - Prepare a document displaying a photograph of each sign and its location noting what remedial action was taken or is required.
    - Prepare and submit a report detailing what replacement or new signage is required.
- **Brown Signage Locations**
    - All brown tourism signs were surveyed, photographed, geo-located and placed on a google map link, allowing all photos of the signs to be identified at their actual geographic location.
- **Recommendations Going Forward**
    - Damaged signs
    - Tourist sites no longer operating
    - Update list annually
    - Heritage and Tourism sites

- Policy and procedure review
- Inform tourism stakeholders
- Clear visible signs

Ms M McKeown (TSM) advised that Mr Johnny Graham (Dfl), Mr David Roberts (TNI) and herself would be happy to answer any questions that members may have.

The Chair thanked Ms M McKeown for her presentation and asked for any comments that members may have in relation to Brown Signage.

Councillor Bell thanked Ms McKeown for her very extensive report. The member referred to signs which were currently erected illegally and enquired what the process and policy was to having these signs removed.

Mr Graham advised that policy was there for that process which is taken forward through their maintenance section. A notice is served on the operator who erected the signs illegally and if they refuse to co-operate Dfl can go in and remove them and any costs associated with that removal are then transferred back to the operator. Dfl do not usually go in and remove a one-off sign but go into an area and take them all down rather than being seen as targeting one particular area or business. Mr Graham advised if there was one particular sign members may want removed due to causing issues or contentions, he asked that Dfl be made aware, and this will be addressed. Sometimes signs block sightlines and cause road safety hazards and these are investigated. Mr Graham said that at present there is an issue with staff resources in removing illegal signs and was something that the department was working on.

Councillor Bell enquired if Council were to establish the illegal signs in collaboration with Dfl and TNI could a proposal be made to have all these signs taken down expediently.

Mr Graham said that he could not guarantee the timeframe as there was a process involved as the operator would have to be notified and afforded the opportunity to remove the sign. Due to staff resourcing issues and being referred to maintenance section this could be an issue as their priority is road maintenance. Mr Graham asked if there was a list of signs members were concerned about, then these should be compiled and forwarded on to Dfl who would address them.

Councillor Corry said that she would like to raise two issues. Firstly, in relation to Sperrins Gateway signage, these signs are dilapidated and seen better days by far. The member stated no-one wants to take ownership or maintain the signage which was disappointing as this was one of our biggest tourist assets and disgraceful the way it was left lying.

Councillor Corry also enquired about how criteria or eligibility was met if it was not about a specific business but more about a site, i.e. Bellaghy Hunger Strikers Graves, with hundreds and thousands of visitors coming to visit each year but do not know where the local graveyard is, stopping at local shops and other places enquiring.

Mr Graham in response to process around Sperrin Gateway signage advised that there were a number of signs out there that does require maintenance and if Dfl were

made aware them, then work can be carried out between DfI, TNI and Council. Signs can be redesigned and priced back to Council as Council owned signs, but there is a number of Council owned signs which don't need maintenance but can take report of inventory of the signs for maintenance and repair. If Council owned signs, then can work with Mary and her team to get the signs designed and costed in conjunction with TNI. In terms of business signs, would need to liaise with business owner to invest in that sign which sometimes can be a lengthy negotiation. Mr Graham advised that they would work with Council regarding Sperrin Gateway signage.

Mr Graham in response to query around eligibility advised that it has to be a tourist led facility and TNI will provide advice on whether it is a tourist facility or not. If that is the case, then consideration will be given to paying for the signage on an A or B class road.

Councillor Gildernew said as Chair of the Tourism Development Group, she had already foreseen the audit and the preview she had seen had been much more in-depth, with work going into it being formidable and fabulous on behalf of the team. The member referred to the interactive map and said that it was really good when you go into your own area or other tourist areas, this makes tourism much more accessible for visitors coming to the area. The member said that she would like to raise a question around the policy and failings of the policy in terms of seasonal businesses which are not accessible 24 hours per day and asked if policy would be revised to meet the needs.

Mr Graham advised that the division only implements the policy and do not make the decisions as headquarters deal with that and asked if there was anything which was within the policy which needed addressed which is up for review, now is the time to raise issues and these will be reassessed, but at the moment seasonal type businesses do not meet the criteria.

Councillor Clarke referred to previous comment where it was stated that signage was only available from A and B class roads.

Mr Graham agreed that this was the case, but it would be signposted right into the facility taken from the B class or C class roads but would be signposted from the A and B class roads.

Councillor Clarke referred to a C class road and stated that this would have to come from somewhere else in the first instance.

Mr Graham advised if it was within a town for a bed & breakfast, it would have the shape of a bed on the sign and not naming the business, as it is not seen as an advertisement feature.

Councillor Clarke referred to rural areas which would impact on different Council areas also.

Mr Graham said if there was a particular area to let the department know and this would be investigated.

Councillor Clarke referred to areas around Davagh, OM and Stone Circles which are within Mid Ulster, but two townlands of Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

Mr Graham advised that the department does work in collaboration with other partners in Councils but was not to say that this would be assessed separately and could be assessed together as one application.

Councillor Burton welcomed the representatives who came along tonight to discuss brown signage. The member stated as previous Chair of the Tourism Development Group, she wanted to commend Mary and her team for the work, they have put into this, which has not been done within the last few months, but with a lot of work going on for years to reach this point. She said that it was her understanding that there was an idea at the beginning when this policy was set, that it would be reviewed within 7 years and now we are into 10 years and no matter what it is after 10 years, it needs looked at in her opinion and a review is something that Council would be very keen to push for at this stage. The member advised that she represents the Clogher Valley area where quite a lot of small rural businesses were established during Covid and would be important for Council to really support our small businesses as getting to a rural location can be difficult and they need help and support. The member said it was her understanding that Council had to write to the policy makers and was something that we really need to push for in this area as the policy and procedures around this needs to be looked at as soon as possible.

Mr Graham said that these can be brought to the local division where it would be forwarded on to the headquarters with any concerns in which members may have for a combined review of the policy. He said that he understood the frustration with the length of time for the review of the policy but due to Covid and other factors like staffing resources, but wanted to reassure members that it is currently being reviewed at present.

Councillor Wilson advised that he was the first one to raise the issue around brown signage especially around the criteria being set by Tourism NI and was curious to know what criteria the Department use to work with DfI to allow brown signage. There was one particular business within Mid Ulster close to Cookstown that the Department had turned down but was hopeful that this was going to be granted. He enquired what the criteria was that the Department would class as tourism attraction is.

Councillor Wilson also enquired whether the applicant was responsible for erecting the signs themselves.

Mr Roberts in response to Councillor Wilson's first query advised that in the first instance this was about signposting people to facilities and attractions which are being used by visitors. He was aware that some of the categories within the policy does need to be reviewed and a case to reconsider whether one or two new categories need to be added in. He said that there is quite a number of categories that are used by locals and visitors like golf courses, picnic sites and restaurants, a whole range of existing facilities that would be multi-use and there was a need to review the policy. From Tourism NI's prospective there was a need to keep the visitor at the forefront and recognise that there will be certain types of categories and facilities that do not meet the criteria due to very limited visitor use. He said that things are evolving and new

experiences coming on board and consideration needs to be given on how to reflect that.

Mr Graham in response to Councillor Wilson's query regarding cost transfer advised that Dfl works with the applicant and TNI on what the applicant wants on the sign and what Dfl can provide due to certain guidelines on what can be implemented. Signs are designed within Dfl Roads and costings responsibility of the applicant, with Dfl going out and erecting the sign on the road. Mr Graham said that Dfl sometimes find particular issues within very rural areas, with limited verge widths around junctions, sightlines and practical issues with putting signs on very minor roads without putting them into the hedge and the possibly of being overgrown in a year's time. He confirmed that the applicant does pay full cost of the sign and putting it on site.

Councillor Wilson enquired about the turnaround time in the event of someone making an application to Council working in conjunction with Dfl and TNI and enquired if there was sufficient manpower in place to turn this around quickly and having it erected.

Mr Roberts advised that when an application is received that this is very quickly checked against TNI database of existing signs, applications and criteria. He said that this is a very quick process with a dedicated team to lead on this and as soon as criteria is satisfied, TNI will inform Dfl to take forward for implementation.

Mr Graham advised that the design and costings does not physically take long, but more down to industrial issues with staff and manpower within this last 12 months in trying to get the signs erected on site. He advised that options were being investigated at the moment i.e. small-scale contractor but would be reluctant to go down that route as additional costs would have to be transferred onto the applicant. Mr Graham advised that the Department was doing their best to get additional staff resources to get the signs out.

The Chair thanked Ms McKeown (TSM) and representatives from Dfl and Tourism NI for coming along tonight to answer queries from members on brown signage.

*The representatives from Dfl and TNI withdraw from the meeting at 7.35 pm.*

## **Matters for Decision**

### **D067/24      Development Report**

The Strategic Director of Communities and Place (SD: C&P) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for the following –

- Irish Language Plan 2024 – 2025
- D-Day 80
- Development Department - Update

Councillor Wilson advised that Killymoon Castle were having D-Day celebrations that weekend with some impressive shows and one of the lanterns would be ideal for that.

*Councillor Monteith declared an interest in Dungannon Gaelic Forum.*

Councillor Monteith said that he would be stating his opposition to the D-Day events to promote British militarism.

Councillor Monteith stated that this Council in the interests of equality have not supported or being involved in events in the last number of years in relation to significant centenaries in Irish history and only a token gesture paid to Centenary 1916, nothing done for the War of Independence, 1920's and civil war. If we are supposed to be working together on these issues, felt there was certainly no equality, and his name would not be part of any glorification of British military activity and wished to state on record his opposition to that proposal.

Councillor Monteith referred to item 2.9 – PCSP and stated that within the report there is an issue relating to the Justice and Security Act and the use of stop and search. Councillor Monteith wished to put on record that stop and search is used disproportionately against the nationalist/republican community, it's used disproportionately against communities deemed to be nationalist and republican, it's used disproportionately against the Irish people and an absolutely scandalous piece of legislation where by a member of the British police force can stop you even with no suspicion in whether they believe you are involved in an activity or not. The member said that he would again be stating his opposition to this abhorrent, draconian legislation and should be resisted at all points.

Proposed by Councillor Bell  
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to –
- Approve the annual Irish Language Plan
  - Approve proposal for D-Day 80
  - Note the Development update.

#### **D068/24 Community Grants**

The Chair advised members that Councillor Mallaghan was in attendance and invited him to address the committee.

Councillor Mallaghan thanked members for allowing him the opportunity to address the Development Committee tonight. The member advised that like everyone else he had received the papers last week in regards to Community Grants and had a good opportunity to read through them, but having looked at the limited information which was available within the report and trying to cross analysis with the guidance which is provided during the application process, he found it very difficult to understand how some of the applications had correlated with the objectives that they were trying to achieve. The member advised that he had contacted the Development department and asked for additional information and yesterday was advised that he would not be in receipt of that information, he had reminded Officers since of his rights as a Councillor in terms of the constitution of this Council that he is entitled to see additional information if it's requested. He understood that between a week receiving papers and Development committee commencing that this was a short timescale, but did not have the opportunity to investigate further the information required in order to be in a sound mind to make that decision, particularly when it comes to full Council at

the end of the month. The member said that he was not convinced through the very limited information through the report that some of these applications meet the criteria as set out by guidance as published on the Council website. The member felt that this was of great concern and important to attend the meeting tonight to share his concerns with the rest of the committee but would still like the opportunity to receive the information that he had requested so that the right decisions can be made going forward.

Councillor Bell said that by listening to Councillor Mallaghan he felt it would be prudent that the request that has been made be given a fair hearing and information forthcoming and would make a proposal to defer this particular item to full Council.

Councillor McLernon seconded Councillor Bell's proposal.

Councillor Wilson said that he had listened to the objection but felt that members needed to have faith in our Officers and if there was a query which came in against the criteria which is set, then Councillors have a right to listen and hear that. The member cautioned in that we have all along, every report, every grant in which has come before us has always been approved as members always had that faith within the Officer team dealing with it. He said what strikes him is that the money requested is always £1,500 and very few not on that figure.

Councillor Molloy said that he understood what Councillor Wilson was saying but in previous times committee has been asked just to approve a recommendation but now we have been placed with options and felt that it would be prudent to have all the relevant background information to make that decision.

*Councillor Burton declared an interest in Bawn Development Association, Caledon Regeneration Partnership and Community Transport.*

Councillor Burton advised that Councillors had made these decisions back in the old Council and the decision was taken that going forward that this would be carried out by our Officer team. The member said that a lot of people were giving up their time freely to do a lot of work in their communities and felt that Councillors had to have faith in our Officer team as the process was there. The member enquired if there could be issues with other things and felt that a lot of these communities drastically need this funding to run their events and Council needed to be careful to be seen providing support when required.

Councillor Quinn said that he would share some of the concerns raised by Councillor Mallaghan and also concerns raised by Councillors Wilson and Burton in having faith with our Officer team. The member said that grants was not an easy process to go through but if questions are being raised and information required by Councillors then it's only but right that these are addressed. The member said that he didn't think it was out of place as Councillors would be in the firing line if something arises and would be happy to support the proposal.

Councillor Mallaghan wished to clarify that he was not questioning the integrity of Officers as he was aware that it was a mammoth task in trying to get grants out, this was about trying to get access to information.

Councillor Wilson requested that the information requested be shared with all members to try and move the process forward.

The Chair agreed that it would be important that the information be forwarded to all members as everyone was equal.

The Chair hoped that this matter could be solved before the next Council meeting at the end of the month.

*Councillor Mallaghan withdrew from the meeting at 7.47 pm.*

Proposed by Councillor Bell  
Seconded by Councillor McLernon and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to defer Community Grants to full Council until members have the opportunity to review the detail of the grants. Any additional documentation shared with a Member should also be forwarded to all Councillors.

#### **D069/24 Brantry BARD Group Service Level Agreement**

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure & Wellbeing (AD: HL&W) presented previously circulated report to seek approval to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Brantry BARD Community Group for caretaker and cleansing duties within Brantry Wood.

Proposed by Councillor Corry  
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the report and approve to:

- Enter into a Service Level Agreement with Brantry BARD Community Group to provide on-site support services 6 hours per week, 4 days per week on a flexible rota at an approx. cost of £100.72 per week/ £5,237.44 per annum.

This is for the period May 2024 – March 2025, and thereafter reviewed annually as part of the overall SLA report presented to Members on an annual basis. This will be reviewed for effectiveness and extension in line with other annual Service Level Agreements in support of Council's leisure and outdoor recreation services.

#### **D070/24 Stewartstown Community Group Service Level Agreement**

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure & Wellbeing (AD: HL&W) presented previously circulated report to seek approval to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Stewartstown Community Group (SCG) for caretaker and cleansing duties within Drumcairne Forest.

Councillor McLernon said that she would be happy to propose the recommendation within the report as it was very welcome to see the local community working in partnership with Council and doing a great job and this arrangement will be a great benefit to the Council and local community facilities. The member also wished to thank the AD: HL&W and Recreation & Countryside Officer for putting these arrangements in place.

Councillor Quinn said that he would be happy second the proposal as the work which has went into Drumcairne this last number of years has transformed it for the better. The member was aware of how active the local community were and how fierce they defend Drumcairne Forest but asked what was in place if in the event that someday the whole place is littered, and the work is not being done to the level Council expect. The member enquired if reviews were being carried out in the area, with someone going in and out inspecting the area.

The AD: HL&W advised that with all SLA's there is set agreement which sets out key performance indicators to make sure that each of our groups are well informed and have the adequate resources to do so. He advised that spot checks are carried out as part of the SLA's, agreement was Council would withdraw from these sites to the same frequency in which we do currently but does not mean that Council walk away completely. There is still some larger maintenance aspects in which Council were responsible and on some occasions would be in carrying out spot checks if inspectors were on route within the area. The AD: HL&W said that the aim is to meet with the groups formally every 6 months as part of a KPI review, but informally also on a quarterly basis, and hoped there is enough communication loop and feedback loop to address any issues, but if there were some distained areas of concern, there is scope within each SLA to withdrawn the services and financial investment. This would be reviewed each year and brought back to committee for consideration.

Councillor Quinn said that we have great facilities throughout Mid Ulster and enquired if there was a system in place to monitor how many people attends these tourist areas like Drumcairne Forest.

The AD: HL&W advised that Council use footfall counters within each of these sites which is reported back through the P&R Committee, Corporate Improvement Objectives but doesn't go into the granular detail of each of sites of individual locations across the Council. The AD: HL&W said through his team a report could be brought back to this committee to provide an idea of our main visitor sites on the throughput over the last period of time. He stated that from Covid, footfall has increased extensively within our visitor attractions.

Proposed by Councillor McLernon  
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the report and approve to:

- Enter into a Service Level Agreement with Stewartstown Community Group to provide on-site support services equating to 6 hours per week, 4 days per week on a flexible rota at an approx. cost of £75.54 per week/ £3,928.08 per annum.

This is for the period May 2024 – March 2025, and thereafter reviewed annually as part of the overall SLA report presented to Members on an annual basis. This will be reviewed for effectiveness and extension in line with other annual Service Level Agreements in support of Council's leisure and outdoor recreation services.

## **D071/24 Economic Development Report - OBFD**

The Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes (AD: EDT&SP) presented previously circulated report to provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below:

- Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows/Events 2024/2025
- Hidden Heritage Tours 2024
- Mid Ulster Brown Signage Audit
- Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) 2023/2024 Funding
- Service Level Agreement – Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) 2024/2025
- MEGA – Progress Report for 2023/2024 and Third Funding Contribution for 2024/2025 via Service Level Agreement

Councillor Bell said that he wished to raise a question on item 2 – Hidden Heritage Tours 2024. The member said that he was sure that members would all agree that heritage is a very broad and diverse range within our Council area, but had noted that the plans for this year appear to place a concentration on the Plantation era of our local heritage and asked if the Officer could produce the total list that they have considered of the events for 2024 before seeking approval tonight.

Councillor Clarke concurred with Councillor Bell, we have a wide range of heritage in Mid Ulster and need to showcase it across the range and the first thing that he had noticed was that this was basically one period and would be interesting to show what other opportunities have been explored.

Councillor Corry advised that houses are well known, whether tourist destinations or wedding venues or similar things, but she had thought that Hidden Heritage Tours were a less known attraction of sites and felt that this was something that Council should be trying to promote.

The AD: EDT&SP advised that Officers could summarise the focus of hidden heritage tours in previous years and said that further options could be explored, in addition to those contained within the report, and an update brought to a future meeting for Members consideration.

Councillor Bell enquired if it was the case that in previous years Tourism department would take one particular topic to be concentrated upon for that one particular year. In other words, we take a particular aspect of our heritage and focus on that for 2021 and another topic in 2022 etc.

Ms M McKeown, Tourism Service Manager (TSM) agreed that this was the case. The TSM said that through our Heritage Cluster discussions it was decided where we are going for the next year, and it agreed through that group that we would look at our houses as it brought in the full of the district. This would mean that focus was going to be on Ballyscullion House in the North, Three Sisters Tours in the South which would take in Killymoon Castle, Lissan House and Springhill House and finally Blessingbourne in the Clogher Valley. When this is investigated, we look across the district and obtaining access into some of those houses that you cannot get into and this was why the theme was looked at “Who Lives in a House Like This” but issues can be taken on board and go back to review that. She advised the Tourism Team had completed earlier Tours in Broughderg area, OM Dark Skies area, a lot of archaeology heritage sites, O’Neill dynasty story and Banquet on The Hill etc. In previous years all these things have been looked at and each year a different aspect is looked at, similar to events run by the legacy Cookstown Council called Hidden Heritage Tours and Strolls in the Sperrins. This year the theme was the Plantation and looking at our great houses and providing that spread across Mid Ulster. The TSM said that Officers can look, review and investigate additional initiatives including organising a few other tours.

Councillor Bell said that on hearing the update he was happy enough with what was presented but not taking away from the point the Officer team were going to look at other heritage initiatives.

Councillor Corry referred to the matter around Plantation and said that there should be a balanced type of history as some people got their land and homes taken off them and was all well and good that these people had nice big houses, but there were a lot of people that didn’t have those bonuses.

The Chair advised that Officers had indicated that there were different themes for different years and if members had any extra themes, they wished to be considered then to liaise with Officers who were open to listen.

Proposed by Councillor W Buchanan  
Seconded by Councillor Black and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to –

- 1) Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows/Events 2024/2025  
**Approve** officer attendance at the various Tourism Trade and Consumer Shows/Events in 2024/2025 as detailed in the report, at a cost of circa. £10,000 from Council’s Tourism budget.

- 2) Hidden Heritage Tours 2024  
**Approve** content of the proposed Hidden Heritage Programme 2024 and the associated costs to deliver the Tours, circa. £4,000 to be borne by Council's Tourism Budget in 2024/2025. In addition, it was recommended that Officers explore and include a few additional heritage tours and bring back a report to Committee by way of update.
  
- 3) Mid Ulster Brown Signage Audit  
**Approve** Mid Ulster's Brown Signage Audit Report and Recommendations contained therein.
  
- 4) Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) 2023-2024 Funding
  - i) **Note** update report
  - ii) **Retrospectively Approve** that Council's Chief Executive sign and return the Addendum to DfC's Letter of Offer to Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (2023-2024) providing additional funding of £17,505.50 for internal staff costs.
  
- 5) Service Level Agreement: Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2024/2025)
  - i) **Note** ICBAN'S 2023/2024 Progress Report outlining actions completed against their 2023/2024 Service Level Agreement Projects.
  - ii) **Approve** Council's Service Level Agreement with ICBAN for the financial year April 2024 – March 2025.
  - iii) **Approve** the release of £14,750 from Council's Economic Development Budget (2024/2025), subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation as detailed in the Service Level Agreement.
  
- 6) MEGA – Progress Report for 2023/2024 and Third Funding Contribution for 2024/2025 via Service Level Agreement
  - i) **Note** MEGA's Progress Report (2023/2024), outlining actions completed against their Service Level Agreement Targets for 2023/2024.
  - ii) **Approve** release of third and final payment to MEGA to £15,000 for 2024/2025 financial year, from Council's Economic Development Budget, subject to Council being provided with all the requisite documentation as detailed in the original Service Level Agreement (2022-2025)

## Matters for Information

### D072/24 Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 February 2024

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 14 March 2024.

Councillor Burton said that after it was publicised regarding the towns spruce up schemes and was listed on the website at one stage that Fivemiletown was able to benefit from that which was changed. The member said that she had quite a number of rural villages asking if there was any support or help for them in terms of sprucing up their businesses and through NILGA she had raised this. She said that she was aware that DfC has a call out at the moment and enquired if Council were going to go down this line as she really wants to try and get support for the businesses. DfC has the Village Catalyst Grant Scheme, SEUPB has PEACE money for Urban Regeneration and DAERA has Digital Transformation with one of the calls currently open and would be really important as a rural Council to support the rural villages and businesses.

Councillor Monteith referred to D051/24 – MUDC Air Quality Report 2023 and said that he was aware of Councillor Molloy raising this issue at the last meeting. The member said that he would share his frustration as we seem to be going around in circles for many years and this cannot continue, and an action plan needed to sort these two areas out as a matter of urgency as nothing seems to be done. He said that reluctantly he would propose calling for another meeting and dismayed that this is just going down the same route once again.

The Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P) agreed that this matter was ongoing for some time regarding the two AQMAs as identified as part of our statutory report. The SD: C&P advised that there is an action plan associated with the two AQMAs. As members may be aware there has been a number of engagements with members and statutory agencies and a commitment made that this engagement will be repeated on a 6-monthly basis. He appreciated that members were of the opinion that things were progressing slowly but could provide assurances to members that work is ongoing, but this is not an easy fix for these two affected areas and we do need to look at a number of different scenarios in the interim. He concluded by stating there is an action plan in place and Council are working with different agencies and will continue to engage with them and members around the issue.

Councillor Monteith enquired how far away were we away from 6 months.

The AD: HL&W advised that June was the 6-month deadline.

Councillor Monteith said that he will withdraw his proposal at this stage.

The Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes (AD: EDT&SP) in response to Councillor Burton's query advised that she was aware of a number of funding opportunities and her team were currently reviewing these. She said that it was no longer as simple as making a funding bid on behalf of Mid Ulster, as all PeacePlus funding bids requires Northern and Southern Partners, as well as preliminary lead-in works associated with each bid which takes at least six months.

She advised Council is involved in a few PeacePlus bids already through ICBAN and has invested significant time and resources in relation to these.

She further added that PeacePlus Partnership bids, require a Lead Partner (on behalf of all interested Norh/South Partners) and if MUDC were to assume this role, it would

involve an enormous amount of work and resources in managing the entire programme on a North/South basis. She noted that Mid Ulster would not have the necessary resources to act as Lead Partner, without additional resources, but noted, however, she had been in liaison with some partner organisations to ascertain their willingness to lead a Rural application. In summing up, she advised she was fully supportive of trying to source funding for rural areas and concluded by indicating she would bring back a report to a future Committee meeting to update Members.

Councillor Burton referred to pollution of dog fouling within our whole Council area with a number of suggestions put forward at the last Council meeting. The member referred to Carrons Lane in Clogher which was only opened two weeks ago and already a complete mess again with persistent dog fouling. The member said that this was something that was talked about from when she became a Councillor in 2005 and wished there was a way to alleviate people who were totally tortured with this in their rural areas, towns and villages. There were some suggestions in what other areas were doing put forward to Council and hoped that something would be brought back as a way forward regarding suggestions made at the last Council.

The Chair advised that this matter was to be brought back to a future Environment Committee meeting.

Councillor Quinn enquired if there was any response back from River Blackwater matter and Arts Council invitation.

The SD: C&P advised that response back from Minister regarding Blackwater River would be coming via Environment Committee.

The SD: C&P advised he would confirm if the letter has been issued to Arts Council yet.

#### **D073/24 Corporate Events 2024**

Members noted contents of previously circulated update which provided information on the proposed Mid Ulster District Council Corporate Events Programme for 2024.

Councillor McLernon wished to thank Councillor Gildernew in raising the issue of Summer Bash last month on her behalf and also the committee and officials for supporting it. She said that the event has proven to be a great success year on year in Coalisland and showcases the vibrant community spirit especially when running along the side of Newell Stores 10k and a great success and great day out for all. She said that she was keen to see this event grow each year and look forward to seeing the Summer Bash this year again in Coalisland.

Councillor Quinn concurred with Councillor McLernon's comments and said that he was very excited to see the Summer Bash reinstated. He sought clarification from Officers on whether this was a one-off event, or will it be reinstated year on year as we go forward. He referred to the Coalisland Town Forum Meeting next week and decision around Summer Bash and asked if this was the remit of Coalisland Town Forum meeting or by Officers as decision is up in May and a decision needs to be made on it.

The AD: HL&W advised that this is a one-off event for this year and members may recall that another event was also taken out of the Corporate Event Schedule during the rate setting process that year and were able to take it back last year due to no Continental Market and also bring it back this year at the request of this committee. As outlined within the report and members are minded to reinstate this as part of the annual schedule of corporate events, then it be asked that it be considered through rate estimates for next year to ensure that the budget allocation is added in for next year otherwise it will be a similar situation again. In terms of planning for the event, this has already started and normally done in tandem with Keeper Lit, work is progressing, tried and tested and a just a matter of tidying that up and advertising for the event will commence shortly.

*The live broadcast ended at 8.16 pm.*

### **Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business**

Proposed by Councillor McLernon  
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public 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 D074/24 to D076/24.

#### **Matters for Decision**

D074/24 SHHP Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residency Project  
D075/24 Fivemiletown Partnership Proposal

#### **Matters for Information**

D076/24 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on  
14 March 2024

### **D077/24 Duration of Meeting**

The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 8.30 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, [Cookstown/Dungannon/Magherafelt].

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast as aforesaid, will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I will let you know before this happens.

I would 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 agenda.



Mid Ulster  
**Unwinding  
Time**



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

# Mid Ulster Brown Signage Audit

Development Committee  
Wednesday 10th April 2024

Mary McKeown, Tourism Service Manager



Mid Ulster  
**Unwinding  
Time**



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

## **BROWN SIGN POLICY BACKGROUND**

- Tourism brown signage policy in Northern Ireland is implemented by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in partnership with Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI).
- Brown signs are used as a traffic management tool to guide visitors to tourist destinations in a safe and sustainable manner.



Mid Ulster  
**Unwinding  
Time**



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

- The Brown Signage policy in Northern Ireland is based on a set of guidelines including the quality and accessibility of the attraction or destination, the potential number of visitors, and the impact of the sign on the local environment. The policy is also based on the principle that brown signs should only be used for tourism purposes and should **not be used for commercial or advertising purposes.**



- DfI and TNI work closely with local councils and tourism stakeholders to identify locations where brown signs are required, and to ensure that they are designed and installed in accordance with the guidelines. The process involved in implementing and applying for brown signs is as follows:
  - 1) The Council co-ordinates all applications.
  - 2) Tourism NI confirms eligibility of the application as a tourist destination.
  - 3) DfI will determine the extent of the signage to be provided and will design and erect all signs. As part of its duty to manage the road network, **DfI Roads will be ultimately responsible for whether signage is provided or not.**



- The policy has not been reviewed since 2014 or updated to ensure that it remains effective and sustainable, and to reflect changes in the tourism industry and visitor behaviours.
- Overall, the Brown Signage policy in Northern Ireland is a key element of the region's tourism strategy and plays an important role in directing the visitor to the visitor experiences in the Council area.



## **TOURISM TRADE FEEDBACK OF THE CURRENT PROCESS**

- The process in general seems to be lengthy, expensive and involves too many partners and stakeholders.
- Existence of illegal signs has resulted in feedback that DfI do not seem to police or remove them.
- It was noted that the eligibility criteria for a Tourism Body to be permanently open or have a certain accreditation can be too onerous and excludes a lot of smaller tourism businesses.
- Meeting to be held with TNI and DfI prior to applications being submitted.



## CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT

- Tourism NI and DfI currently do not hold information on locations of brown signage in MUDC area.
- Audit carried out in December 2022 until March 2023.
- All brown tourism signs were surveyed, photographed, geo-located and placed on a google map link
- A schedule of possible new and replacement signage was identified and will be submitted to DfI/Transport NI for approval.



## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

The main elements of the work carried out:

- All signs checked and repositioned if required
- Report any missing signage
- Improve the visibility and cleaning of signs
- Prepare a document displaying a photograph of each sign and its location noting what remedial action was taken or is required.
- Prepare and submit a report detailing what replacement or new signage is required.



## BROWN SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

All brown tourism signs were surveyed, photographed, geo-located and placed on a google map link, allowing all photos of the signs to be identified at their actual geographic location. [Interactive Google Map](#)





# BROWN SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

WIDER DUNGANNON AREA					
Ref	Attraction	Address	Area	WKT	Photo of Signage
A1	Altmore Fishery	1 Pomeroy Road, Donaghmore, Dungannon BT70 3BF	Wider Dungannon Area	POINT (-6.82 54.53)	
A2	Altmore Fishery	Aghnagar Road, Dungannon BT70	Wider Dungannon Area	POINT (-6.96 54.49)	
A3	Altmore Fishery	Inishative Road	Wider Dungannon Area	POINT (-6.94 54.55)	
A4	Altmore Fishery	Altmore Road, Dungannon BT70	Wider Dungannon Area	POINT (-6.95 54.56)	
A5	Altmore Fishery	Termon Road B4	Wider Dungannon Area	POINT (-6.99 54.58)	



## RECOMMENDATIONS GOING FORWARD

- Damaged signs
- Tourist sites no longer operating
- Update list annually
- Heritage and Tourism sites
- Policy and procedure review
- Inform tourism stakeholders
- Clear visible signs



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# QUESTIONS



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**THANK YOU**