

Report on	Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Mary McGee

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform and update members on the work of the Tourism Development Group. The group met on 9 January 2018 at Burnavon, Cookstown and hosted David Henderson, Lake Torrent at the meeting.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Tourism Development Group, comprises members from the local authority, tourism business representatives and key stakeholders in the tourism sector. This group is a working group taking leadership and membership from and reporting to Mid Ulster District Council Development Committee.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Ratified minutes of the most recent meeting of the Tourism Development Group dated 9 January 2018 are attached as Appendix 1.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u> Financial: N/A Human: N/A
4.2	<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> N/A

4.3	<u>Risk Management Implications</u> N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	N/A
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 9 January 2018.

MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Tuesday 9 January 2018 at 10.00am in Burnavon, Cookstown

Attendees:

Chair Cllr S Clarke – MUDC
Cllr F Burton – MUDC
Cllr W Cuddy - MUDC
Cllr M Kearney – MUDC
N Bell - Lissan House
C O’Neill – Walsh’s Hotel
M McGeehan – J&K Coaches
H McDermott – Ashbrook B&B
H McCloy – Jungle NI
J McGrillen – Tourism NI
R Mullholland – Ballyscullion
T McCrory – Heraldic Craft
N Somerville – Horses Welcome
S Wiggins - SWC

Officers:

M Browne – Head of Tourism
M McKeown – Tourism Manager
M McGee - Business Engagement
M Beattie – Tourism
G Bell – Tourism Officer
C Bell- Tourism Officer
G Major – Tourist Information Supervisor
A O’Keefe – Business Support
T McCance – Head of Culture & Arts
B McCormick – Seamus Heaney
HomePlace

D Henderson – Lake Torrent
W McMullan - GBT

Apologies:

C Lowry – Blessingbourne Estate
G Mullholland – SWC
A McCreesh – Director of Business &
Communities
A-M McFerran - The Old Thatch Inn

1. Launch of Mid Ulster Visitor Guide

Photoshoot took place with MUDC Chair, officers and members of TDG.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 15 November 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2017 were circulated in advance and taken as read and correct.

Proposed: N Bell

Seconded: Cllr M Kearney

3. Matters Arising - None

4. Preview of Tourism Hub/Digital Strategy – G Major

G Major informed that the Hub was still being populated and would be launched at next TDG meeting. He requested information on events and news stories from trade to upload onto the hub. HOS informed that training will be available to all tourism businesses and will offer support to industry.

5. Cluster Reports

Officers read their reports and any additions were recorded.

5.1 Seamus Heaney Cluster

Following on from the evaluation report of the Seamus Heaney Fam trip held on 30/11/2018, the Business Engagement Officer informed that a local coach operator enquired about repeating the trip for a group of approximately 50 Active Retirement groups in June 18.

5.2 Archaeology, History & Heritage Cluster

The Tourism Manager announced that HED, TNI and HLF are collaborating together to encourage cultural and heritage sectors to avail of £400,000 funding to raise the profile of N Ireland as a cultural heritage destination in the European Year of Cultural Heritage. Tourism Manager informed that she would make an application as soon as she was aware of the eligibility criteria.

5.3 Outdoor Recreation

The next meeting will take place on 10/01/2018.

5.4 Events

HOS informed that a review of 2017 corporate and strategic events would be undertaken before planning of events for 2018.

Tourism Manager reported that TNI applications for the International Tourism Events Fund 18/19, to support home-grown international tourism events, will close 16 January 18. She also informed of the TNI's National Tourism Events Sponsorship Scheme 2018/19, to support home-grown national tourism events, will close 25 January 2018. She encouraged members to look at TNI website for further information.

5.5 Good Food Circle

Business Engagement Officer notified members of opportunities under the NI Regional Food Programme to promote quality regional food in NI, ROI and GB. She informed that MUDC and SWC will make a joint application to host local food based events with private sector businesses. Business Engagement Officer to circulate details of the programme.

Business Engagement Officer also reported that the TNI skills report was delayed within the department and C Boyd, TNI, advised her to work with SWC at ways to progress skill shortages. HOS stated that the issue of skills shortages in other industries was highlighted in the Community Planning Forum.

Members were encouraged to apply to TNI Awards as an effective marketing tool and workshops were taking place on 10 January. Business Engagement Officer to circulate details on change of applications process.

6. Brown Signage Update

An application had been received from a new S/C property in Magherafelt. The tourism Officer explained briefly the policy developed by TNI and Transport NI. Cllr Cuddy recommended that tourism businesses be made aware of the regulations.

7. Mid Ulster Council Tourism Strategy

HOS stated that one year into the Tourism Strategy and on target to fulfil the objectives outlined. He informed that Seamus Heaney HomePlace has 40,000 visitors exceeding anticipated figures for the first year and will now concentrate on building HomeGround Trails.

He also informed that a review of the Sperrins Region took place with a Future Search Conference in September, resulting in the following five thematic groups having been set up to deal with fulfilling the potential of the Sperrins:

- Infrastructure
- Environment & Heritage
- Tourism & Branding
- Community
- Management

A review meeting took place on 11/01/2018 with positive contributions from stakeholders. The output of the conference is that a trust, similar to LNP, would be established to manage the region.

Member requested evidence of bed numbers and occupancy rates at the next meeting. HOS responded that MUDC are working with NISRA to make baselines more reflective and urged members to submit accurate figures. He informed that spend in Mid Ulster increased from £24m to £30m in 2017. Business Engagement Officer stated that NISRA did a call-out requesting occupancy rates from S/C businesses and advised that MUDC will follow-up with businesses to encourage submission of accurate figures.

8. Industry Update

Chair invited members around the room to provide an update on their business.

8.1 Lissan House

N Bell noted that John Paul Coyle was appointed as the new manager at Lissan House, Cookstown.

8.2 Skills Focus Programme

SWC reminded members of the Skills Focus Programme funded by the Department for the Economy and delivered by Colleges across N Ireland. The programme provides 75% to help SME's with less than 250 staff increase the skills levels of their employees. Information to be circulated to businesses.

Businesses reported an increase in group visits and income for 2017 with visitors travelling from as far as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, GB and ROI markets.

8.3 Craft

Craft producer expressed disappointed at the craft having been removed from the new Visitor Guide. Tourism Officer responded that it was felt a separate craft guide should be produced and pushed through the Arts department. HOT and HOA to meet with producer to discuss craft needs.

9. District Wide Monitoring Results

Members were informed that MUDC VIC's are currently undergoing Mystery Shoppers and have a target of 90% to achieve. Report to be brought to next meeting.

Tourism Manager reported that a review of visitor monitoring will take place before end of March 18 to include additional monitors at sites currently not recorded. Cllr Cuddy stated the statistics show sites improving and possibly requiring future investment.

10. TDG & Cluster Review

C Bradley, Community Places, will facilitate a workshop on 20 February to review the TDG and Clusters as per BTS recommendations. All members will be invited. A report will be presented to Council making recommendations following the review.

11. Lake Torrent Presentation

D Henderson attended the meeting to give a presentation to the group on the new £30m Lake Torrent Development in Coalisland, which will transform 163 acres of clay pits into an international motorsport Centre of Excellence, including a championship racetrack. He also discussed how the benefits to the local economy as the facility will provide jobs and attract up to 35,000 visitors thus increasing wealth in the area during the World Superbikes alone, which has been guaranteed to take place over 3 years from 2019. He highlighted the opportunities to the members for accommodation, visitor attractions, events, hospitality and retail. Cllr Cuddy stressed the importance of raising awareness to bring locals on board through media. Business Engagement Officer stated that the Council will work with local tourism businesses and Duffy Rafferty, PR, to raise awareness.

12. AOB – discussed in item 7.

Meeting ended at 12.35pm.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 13 March 2018 at 10.00am Tower Room, Ranfurly House, Dungannon.