

<b>Report on</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Christmas 2022 Town Activities</li> <li>2. ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</li> <li>3. Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 Nov 2022)</li> <li>4. Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022</li> <li>5. Hidden Heritage</li> <li>6. Sperrins Hillwalking Programme</li> <li>7. Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services</li> </ol>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	10 November 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>Christmas 2022 Town Activities</b> In an effort to create greater festive ambience and lift people's spirits in our 5 largest shopping towns, officers have organised street entertainment, music, etc on Saturdays leading up to Christmas.</p>
2.2	<p><b>ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</b> Over the past number of years, a group of eight Councils from north and south (as listed below) have provided a financial contribution towards ICBAN to support their work; Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils. For the current year 2022/23 Mid Ulster District Council have in place a Service Level Agreement with ICBAN, outlining the projects to be undertaken.</p>

2.3	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 Nov 2022)</b> Mid Ulster Enterprise Week is now in its fourth year. The activities this year includes mix of in person events and online webinars encompassing a range of issues pertinent to all types of businesses, set within the context of the current economic climate.</p>
2.4	<p><b>Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022</b> Council continues to support the recovery of the tourism industry within Mid Ulster, and to extend the reach of the 'Embrace A Giant Spirit' campaign.</p> <p>While the autumn/winter period is traditionally seen as the shoulder season for the tourism industry, this time of year offers some unique opportunities for Mid Ulster to continue to position the region as a visitor destination.</p> <p>It also allows time to build on the campaign work, which has taken place in both the spring and summer periods 2022 and to continue to promote the new 'Visit Mid Ulster' website and to build engagement on the associated social media channels.</p> <p>In so doing, the campaign will further consolidate the Unwinding Time brand, while also being used as a key vehicle for promoting OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory as it enters what is its most significant period as a dark sky site.</p>
2.5	<p><b>Hidden Heritage</b> Hidden heritage tours are organised annually across the District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites and destinations on their doorstep, which often go unnoticed.</p> <p>All tours departed from the Burnavon Theatre, Cookstown with pick up points in other locations. The cost to attend each tour was £20 pp, which included coach transport, tour guide, entry into the attraction (if applicable) and refreshments.</p>
2.6	<p><b>Sperrins Hillwalking Programme</b> The Sperrins Partnership is a joint initiative involving the four Sperrins Councils with the purpose of delivering on a number of agreed action plans in a co-operative, co-ordinating manner under the themes of Tourism, Heritage, Infrastructure and Environment. The four Councils involved in the Partnership are Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council.</p>
2.7	<p><b>Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services</b> In late 2021, the 11 Council SOLACE Economic Recovery Group (led and facilitated by Belfast City Council) established a Working Group to progress research into options for the future delivery of entrepreneurship, start up and growth support. Research had identified there is a case for change. There are shortfalls in NI's business start-up performance (relative to other UK regions/ the UK average position) that create the need to review/reposition the support infrastructure, with a view to a step change in performance. Furthermore, the enterprise ecosystem tends to be complex and difficult to navigate meaning that those seeking support often find it difficult to get the right help at the right time. In</p>

	<p>turn creating the need for a more effective ecosystem of support that offers greater connectivity and simplification for clients.</p> <p>SQW Consultants were appointed (again led by Belfast CC) to undertake an options analysis and subsequently, developed a Business Case detailing a potential future operating model, outlining the potential scale of the financial requirements for Councils to consider and also to inform positioning and engagement with DfE, DfC and other potential funders/contributors, including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><b>Christmas 2022 Town Activities</b></p> <p>In the 5 main towns, there will be street entertainment on Saturdays from 12noon – 3pm from Saturday 26 November until Saturday 17 December 2022. This will include characters in costumes walking around the towns greeting children and handing out sweets, live musical entertainment and face painting. The purpose of this is create a little festive cheer for shoppers / families in the run up to Christmas.</p> <p>This will be in addition to the traditional Christmas switch-on events in the 5 towns to be held on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dungannon Switch on event 26 November from 1pm – 8pm</li> <li>• Cookstown Switch on event Friday 25 November from 6.30pm – 8pm</li> <li>• Magherafelt Christmas Market Saturday 26 November from 11am – 10pm &amp; Sunday 27 November from 1.30pm – 6.00pm.</li> <li>• Magherafelt Switch on event Saturday 26 November 7.30pm – 8pm</li> <li>• Coalisland Switch on event Sunday 4 December from 1pm – 7pm</li> <li>• Maghera Switch on event Saturday 3 December 3pm - 6pm</li> </ul> <p><b>ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</b></p> <p>The report attached on <b>Appendix 1</b> provides an update on ICBAN’s work across the areas outlined in ICBAN’s SLA with Mid Ulster District Council. On review of the 6 month progress report, the work is on track across all areas.</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022)</b></p> <p>Mid Ulster’s fourth Enterprise Week will take place from Monday 14 to Friday 18 November 2022, with a series of online webinars and in-person events to support local businesses, from start-up through to growth. Eleven events are being staged across the week, to build digital capacity, sales, help businesses continue to adapt to and explore new ways of working, with the help of digital/social media and guidance on managing mental health and people. The full programme of events during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week is attached on <b>Appendix 2</b></p> <p>If Members wish to attend any of the events, please register via the following link;  <a href="http://www.midulstercouncil.org/EnterpriseWeek">www.midulstercouncil.org/EnterpriseWeek</a></p>

3.4

**Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022**

The campaign will position Mid Ulster as an ideal staycation destination for NI domestic markets and a key gateway destination for ROI markets, centring on Mid Ulster’s unique offering of as NI only Dark Sky Park which provides a chance to escape and get away from it all. The campaign will showcase our Autumn walks, dark sky, fabulous food and drink, places to stay and spa breaks.

The Council wishes to use a broad range of channels for the campaign to reach the above target segments, with an emphasis on those which are digital. The campaign will provide an opportunity to further grow the new Visit Mid Ulster social media channels with a clear and consistent call to action that will drive traffic to the Visit Mid Ulster website.

The campaign will use the following channels:

<b>Channels</b>	<b>NI Domestic Market</b>	<b>ROI Market</b>
Digital Advertising incorporating the new TV advert.	√	√
Local Radio Advertising / Cool FM with daily competitions	√	
Social Media Content using Visit Mid Ulster social media channels as primary source and other Council owned channels as secondary sources where appropriate.	√	√
Influencer Partnership	√	√

The campaign will run from 24<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 to maximise opportunities to tap into the school holiday planning, half term day tripping and staycation market readiness.

3.5

**Hidden Heritage**

The 2022 Hidden Heritage tours proved to be extremely successful allowing visitors the opportunity to sample unique visitor experiences whereby they could step back in time and discover what is on their doorstep. An additional tour, Poetry and Prayer was included within the series.

- Killymoon Castle All-American WW2 Tour - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 9.30am -2.30pm

This tour was fully booked. The group were met by Lady Molesworth for morning refreshments before being led on tour of the Castle. They we then given a tour of the newly enhanced Cellars by Private Tony Vickery who was stationed at Killymoon Castle during WW2. This new experience helped raise awareness and resulted in Killymoon being able to deliver additional WW2 tours during the rest of the summer.

- A Village of Ages - Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022,

An historical walking tour of Donaghmore Village was scheduled however the date was changed to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September to secure living history actors. Unfortunately, this was cancelled at short notice as it coincided with the official mourning period of Queen Elizabeth II. This tour will now take place in the 2023 series.

- Poetry and Prayers – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1.30pm to 6.00pm

This was a Spiritual Tour around Lough Neagh and tour was fully booked. The group were led on a spiritual journey, during which they discovered the rich monastic tradition found along the shores of Lough Neagh and visited Ardboe Cross, Washing Bay and Benburb Priory.

The success has resulted in securing further bookings for the tour guides who devised this unique experience. Customer comment: “An excellent guide in Jim, who provided lots of interesting information at each venue, poetry and song! Three wonderful talking points in Ardboe, Washingbay and Benburb! The food was delicious and a perfect ending to our day. I thought the group gelled very well too and we had some opportunities to have private chats.”

- The Emigrant’s Walk, Maghera Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 9.30am – 3.15pm

The last of the hidden heritage took place with Cathy O’Neill who led the group up Carntogher Mountain, following in the footsteps of our ancestors, where the views stretched across the hills. Customer comment: “I really enjoyed the Emigrants Walk. It was such a satisfying experience in so many ways for my mind and heart and senses. Historically and academically interesting, emotionally touching, the sight and smell of the beautiful landscape, the good fun and humour and ease of the walking company, the delightful and unique burn of a nip of Poitin on the mountain under a rock skelp. The comfort of tasty soup and bread at the end. I loved it all. I have been telling my family and friends about it. Thank you so much for putting the day on and your warm and friendly hosting of us all”.

Each tour catered for 20 people maximum at the cost of £20 per person. All tours sold out and the businesses ran these experiences separately to the public during the summer months, total attendees 60 people.

### **Sperrins Hillwalking Programme**

3.6

The four aforementioned Councils appointed Far & Wild to deliver a 2 day Walking Programme to promote the Sperrins region as a walking destination and to develop outdoor recreation for the local community and visitors, resulting in increased participation and ultimately improve physical and mental health.

The Mid Ulster leg of the event took place on the weekend of 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022 with 85 walkers participating across the two days (see images on **Appendix 3**). The four walks showcased the local heritage and the walking/countryside experience taking in Slieve Gallion, Davagh Forest and Moydamlaght and local tour guides, Embrace Tours, B Adams and S Clarke. Each day ended with entertainment provided by the local community and light refreshments at Shepherds Rest, Draperstown and Rath Dubh Community Centre.

A survey carried out to evaluate the programme and assist with planning for next year reported that: the Challenging Walk to Slieve Gallion sold out; camping and caravanning was most popular choice of accommodation; Facebook and Visit Mid Ulster website proved most effective promotional tool.

3.7

### **Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services**

Following the completion of the Outline Business Case, a preferred option was identified, which proposes support to be delivered in four key stages. These represent a continuum of support from pre-start support, through start-up and the growth journey thereafter, which may lead to transition to Invest NI supports and/or acceleration of high-growth potential at any point. These are working titles at present (there may be future decisions about positioning and branding that could shape these in advance of any proposed roll out):

- **Engage**

This will focus on engaging individuals in pre-start activities (outreach, awareness raising etc.) and lighter touch support for 'Volume Starts' (sub-VAT, self-employed etc.)

- **Foundation**

More intensive supports geared to establishment of 'employer enterprises' (Higher Value / VAT+ Potential starts) focused on start-ups that commit to be employer enterprises, ie, paid staff via PAYE (beyond the business owner and VAT registration), by an agreed timeframe. It excludes the self-employed and HMRC registered business with no employees.

- **Enabling Growth**

Level of supports aligned to growth aspirations and potential. This will be available to existing businesses, as well as those coming through this 'Start-Up Pipeline'

It should be noted that a client journey may be linear e.g. from foundation, through growth to scaling. Equally it may not be linear – a business may want to move from start up straight to accelerating at scale – (if high growth potential is identified). Existing businesses could join at growth (if they meet eligibility criteria). Also, individuals may exit at engage/pre-start, if they have had sufficient support to achieve their entrepreneurial ambitions.

An 11-Council Working Group is now working on the delivery of the preferred option, which involves the development of a number of workstreams for programme components, to support a future bid(s) for funding. These include a future procurement strategy and cost options analysis for procuring the different programme delivery strands, the development of a cross Council central management information system and the development of a new brand.

The Outline Business Case was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) UK Shared Prosperity Fund team. They have responded to advise that they are considering the provision of funds in the current

financial year towards assisting Councils' technical assistance requirements (to include the procurement strategy, brand development and MIS), as well as allocating resources towards a potential business grants programme in late 2022/23 (depending on funding being available). They have further advised they are considering the allocation of funding at significant levels in 2023/24 and 2025/25 towards the activities outlined in the Business Case, subject to the submission of a detailed proposal from the 11 Councils and a number of conditions, including:

- Councils being required to continue to make a contribution in line with their Statutory obligations. It is anticipated this would be an average of what Council were contributing to NIBSUP + programmes match. As soon as this is clarified, members will be updated.
- Inclusion of dedicated support activity for underrepresented groups, which differs from the Labour Market Partnership, which has no provision for entrepreneurial support.
- Further development of outcomes and objectives.

An 11-Council Working Group is continuing to liaise with other business support agencies who may also provide a contribution to elements of the new programme. Once a detailed Proposal has been developed this will be brought back to Development Committee to consider. It will include what funding opportunities exist and the level of match funding required and for the Council to decide if they will be part of this or not.

**Other Considerations**

**4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**

Financial:

**Christmas 2022 Town Activities** - The additional Christmas activities in the 5 towns will cost in the region of £15,000 to be paid out of the existing economic budget.

**ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)**

Provision was made in 2022/23 Economic Development budget for ICBAN to receive funding of £15,000 per annum.

**Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 November 2022)**

Provision was made in 2022/23 Economic Development budget circ. £28,000

**Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022** - £11,000 in respect of 2022/23 expenditure.

**Hidden Heritage**

Provision of £2,000 was made in existing 2022/23 Tourism Development budget.

	<p><b>Sperrins Hillwalking Programme</b> Provision was made in the 2022/23 Tourism Development budget of £3,500.</p> <p><b>Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services</b> Level of Council match funding to be identified by Officers following development of more detailed proposals and response from DLUHC UK Shared Prosperity Fund Team</p>
	<p>Human:</p> <p><b>Christmas 2022 Town Activities</b> Officers time</p> <p><b>ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</b> Officers time</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14-18 November 2022)</b> Officers time</p> <p><b>Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022</b> Officers time.</p> <p><b>Hidden Heritage</b> Officer time</p> <p><b>Sperrins Hillwalking Programme</b> Officer time</p> <p><b>Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services</b> Officer time</p>
	Risk Management:
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:
	Rural Needs Implications:
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members; <b>Christmas 2022 Town Activities</b> <b>Note</b> update.
5.2	<b>ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</b> <b>Note</b> update report from ICBAN.



5.3	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022)</b>  <b>Note</b> details enclosed for Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2022.</p>
5.4	<p><b>Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022</b>  <b>Note</b> content of the Autumn Campaign.</p>
5.5	<p><b>Hidden Heritage</b>  <b>Note</b> content of report.</p>
5.6	<p><b>Sperrins Hillwalking Programme</b>  <b>Note</b> content of the report.</p>
5.7	<p><b>Outline Business Case: Future proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <b>Note</b> Mid Ulster District Council is participating in an 11 Council collaborative Working Group which is developing a proposal to the DLUHC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to request resources towards technical assistance to support work to progress research into the future delivery of business start provision and, potentially, support for a business grant programme in early 2023; and,</li> <li>ii) <b>Note</b> that the 11 Councils are developing a Bid for funding (led by Belfast City Council), based on the Outline Business Case for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services, which seeks to provide a continuum of business support, from start-up to growth in 2023/24 and 2024/25. A detailed Proposal will be brought back to Council's Development Committee at the appropriate juncture to consider if Mid Ulster Council wishes to be part of this new Programme and if so, consider what match funding may be needed from Council.</li> </ul>
6.0	<p><b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b></p>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April-Sept 2022)</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> - Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 – 18 Nov 2022) Events Programme</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> - Sperrins Hillwalking Programme – Mid Ulster Event Photos</p>