

Report on	Tourism Business Engagement Programme
Date of Meeting	14 th January 2021
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	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
	To outline the business engagement work ongoing through our tourism forum, webinar series and whats app group.
2.0	Background
	This tourism forum has been up and running since Monday 16th March in response to the onset and predicted impact of Corona Virus on local businesses. Established by Tourism Development Officer, the Group now has 130 participants representing business from every sector of hospitality and tourism across Mid Ulster.
3.0	Main Report
	<p>The tourism forum has been posting regular updates on supports for businesses in the sector including financial, human resource, legal and is a one stop shop for up to date information in an evolving and rapidly changing situation for businesses. Businesses can post questions, scroll through previously published information and search on links to some of the following: nibusinessinfo, tourismni, hmrc and the public health agency.</p> <p>This Business Engagement Officer over the past 9 months has hosted 45 webinars to date targeting issues relating to our tourism and hospitality sector.</p> <p>We have hosted experts from right across the sector including:</p> <p>Niall Gibbons CEO, Tourism Ireland John McGrillen, CEO Tourism NI Colin Neil, Hospitality Ulster Joanne Stuart, NI Tourism Alliance Janice Gault, NI Hotels Federation</p> <p>We have on an ongoing basis hosted law experts from Cleaver, Fulton, Rankin (CFR) and accountants from FPK/FPM covered through Tourism NI TED Scheme.</p>

	<p>Businesses have been encouraged to sign up for the Embrace a Giants Spirit brand with TNI Business Solutions Team.</p> <p>The Tourism Ireland digital team have presented on content and social media planning and outlined their industry opportunities programme.</p> <p>We have also profiled over a series of webinars Mid Ulster Council supports in terms of Covid grants and Economic Development Programmes, many of our tourism and hospitality businesses have taken advantage of these programmes. We have also delivered training on selling on social media in particular Instagram, Facebook and building your business profile on LinkedIn.</p> <p>An average of 25 businesses dial in to each session and the Q&A to these experts that follows means the sessions last on average 1 hour and 15 minutes.</p> <p>The webinars are working so well as businesses get an opportunity to get advice from some of the top law, tourism and accounting experts in the country, it is tailored to the tourism and hospitality sector hence it is relevant plus the social aspect of interacting one to one is also vital. Businesses have also used the contacts to draw down innovation vouchers through Invest NI and win other supports.</p> <p>Many have used the contacts made to appeal negative decisions on Covid supports and successfully overturned these. Participants who regularly dial in have also cited the mental health benefits of the webinars.</p> <p>All webinars are recorded, and Tourism NI use the Q&A on their websites to populate their FAQ section.</p> <p>The tourism team plan to continue the webinars into 2021 starting with a focus on mental health and resilience in mid-January and into February and then looking at recovery planning in line with Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI plans for March and April and into Q2.</p> <p>All businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors are welcome to join the WhatsApp group or webinars.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial:
	Human:
	Risk Management:
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:

	Rural Needs Implications:
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	For information.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Record of MUDC Business Engagement programmes