

<b>Report on</b>	Glenone Wood Development Agreements Mid Ulster District Council and Forest Service Northern Ireland
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Head of Parks
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Nigel Hill

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To seek approval for development proposal at Glenone Wood, Portglenone in partnership with Forest Service NI.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In June 2013, Outdoor Recreation NI was commissioned by the former Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council to complete a Forest Recreation Audit for all Forest Service NI's owned forests within the council area. This report was completed and submitted in December 2013.
2.2	With the merging of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Cookstown District Council (CDC) and Magherafelt District Council (MDC) to become Mid Ulster Council in April 2015, the Council considered it an opportune time to complete a similar audit of those forests formerly in the CDC and MDC areas thus allowing a complete overview of the current recreation facilities and future potential for all forests within the new Mid Ulster council area to be determined.
2.3	It is recognised that whilst some of the forests in the former Cookstown and Magherafelt District Council areas currently provide a range of outdoor recreation and activity tourism opportunities, the potential of the Forests in terms of providing for the local population and visitors, has not yet been realised.  The 11 forests included within the study are as follows:  <i>Bann Woods South, Cookstown Forest, Creggan Forest, Davagh Forest, Derrynoyd Forest, Drum Manor Forest Park, Iniscarn Forest, Moydamlaght Forest, Moyola Forest, Portglenone (Glenone) Forest and Pomeroy Forest</i>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Portglenone Forest (413ha) is made up of 9 pockets of woodland located on both sides of the River Bann stretching from Bracknamuckley Wood north of Portglenone, to forest blocks located just above New Ferry. Four of these pockets are located within the Mid Ulster District Council area – Moneystaghan Wood, two blocks at Glenone Forest and one block at Ballymacombs More. The block at Ballymacombs More is not forested, but rather is a lowland peatbog. Portglenone Forest is owned and managed by Forest Service NI.

The River Bann is managed by Waterways Ireland. A Coarse Angling Facility that is located to the north of Ballynease is managed and maintained by Mid Ulster District Council (formerly Magherafelt District Council).

3.2 Glenone Wood was identified as a priority two development proposal by the Forest Recreation audit in 2013. The audit suggested the creation of trails on existing forest roads and the provision of picnic, barbeque and seating facilities and associated visitor infrastructure.

3.3 The following SWOT analysis details the strengths and weaknesses in Glenone Wood and the opportunities and threats that have the potential to influence the future development of outdoor recreation. These were identified through fieldwork, consultation and desk research undertaken at the time of the audit in 2013. The current position remains relatedly unchanged in terms of access to Glenone Wood however some opportunities and improvements have been achieved in relation to the new public access path from Bann Bridge at Portglenone to Glenone Wood. This project was delivered in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Mid Ulster District Council and opened to the public in December 2018.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic level of recreation opportunity on site at Glenone Forest</li> <li>- Strong recreational resource in the form of the River Bann</li> <li>- Existing visitor services and facilities at Coarse Angling Facility and Portglenone Forest</li> <li>- Enjoyable views of the river</li> <li>- Peaceful place to recreate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilities in Glenone Forest and at the Angling facility require upgrading</li> <li>- Limited features within the forest itself</li> <li>- Limited recent investment in the forest</li> <li>- Basic and unwelcoming signage</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

- Develop and promote a looped walking trail within Glenone Forest
- Maintain or upgrade the fishing stands within Glenone Forest
- Upgrade the facilities at the Coarse Angling Facility
- Provide additional fishing stands to allow the facility to be used for international competitions
- Community pathway – investigate option of linking Glenone Wood and the Coarse Angling Facility to Bann Bridge, Portglenone along river bank
- Development of a walking trail along the length of the River Bann, from Toome to Coleraine, using pockets of forest and private land.
- Partnership approach to further recreational development of the area as a whole through engaging with public and private partners, Waterways Ireland, Rivers Agency, Causeway Coast and Glens BC, Mid and East Antrim BC, community organisations, recreational users etc.
- Creation of a ‘welcome’ for visitors to the forest through appropriate signage, creation of seating areas etc.

- Portglenone Forest already provides recreational facilities in the form of walking trails
- Forest is located within Mid Ulster District Council area.

**Suggested Recommendations for Future Development**

- 3.4 The provision of new signage at Glenone Wood and Coarse Angling Facility, to create an excellent visitor welcome, information and directional waymarking. Develop a looped multi use trail suitable for walkers, family cyclists and users with limited mobility within Glenone Wood. This should focus on upgrading the existing trail within the forest and along the riverside path. Current developments to upgrade and increase the number of fishing stands at Glenone Forest and public path for walkers and cyclists, linking Glenone Forest to Bann Bridge along the river bank have already been initiated by Mid Ulster District Council.
- 3.5 The proposal to develop a ‘Blueway’ in addition to the current Lower Bann Canoe Trail has also been considered by council. This is a long distance, riverside trail which would be suitable for walkers, cyclists and users with limited mobility. The combination of land based and water based trails, would result in a ‘Blueway’ following a route from Portglenone to New Ferry.
- 3.6 The development potential of Glenone Wood, Portglenone provides an opportunity to provide a valued local resource. Simple improvements such as waymarked trails can make a marked difference to the recreational value of the forest, for a relatively modest investment. Developing new facilities and activities is recommended, the existing car park

3.7	<p>could be upgraded and expanded if necessary. Development proposals are subject to available funding streams and partnerships.</p> <p>In order to formalise existing usage of the forest and prior to any planned development Mid Ulster District Council is required to create Lease and Licence Agreements with Forest Service NI to enable any future development of the forest to proceed.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: MUDC will be required to offer an annual rental payment to forest Service not in excess of £2,500 per annum.</p> <p>Human: Existing staff resource.</p> <p>Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures associated to rural proofing.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That Members note the strategic importance with the establishment of Lease and Licence Agreements between Mid Ulster District Council and Forest Service NI in relation to the recreational management of Glenone Wood, Portglenone.
5.2	That Members approve in principle the establishment of Lease and Licence Agreements with Forest Service NI.
5.3	Endorsement is sought to present Lease and Licence Agreements and associated LPS valuation (not in excess of £2,500) for P&R Committee approval.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 Glenone Wood Lease Map
6.2	Appendix 2 Glenone Wood Licence Map A
6.3	Appendix 3 Glenone Wood Licence Map B
6.4	Appendix 4 Partnership Reporting Document MUDC and FS 3 October 2018