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| Report on | Darina Allen Visit |
| Date of Meeting | 12 September 2019 |
| Reporting Officer | Michael Browne |
| Contact Officer | Mary Mc Gee |

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

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| 1.1 | <p>This report outlines the planned visit to the region in October by Darina Allen, Ballymaloe and Caroline Hennessy, Head of the Irish Food Bloggers Association and member of the Irish Food Writers Guild. The Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme and the Seamus Heaney cluster members are coordinating this visit. The idea was born out of a recent study trip to Cork by the Seamus Heaney cluster who collectively felt it was an opportunity not to be passed to host a reciprocal visit to NI. This visit will involve a coming together of three of the Invest NI Collaborative Growth networks, namely Seamus Heaney Cluster, Strangford and Taste Causeway and involve networking and developing new partnerships. The visit will also profile Mid Ulster chefs and food producers as part of the newly launched Taste the Island initiative, the 2019 celebration of NI Food and Drink. TNI will profile this event as part of their PR around Taste the Island.</p> |
| 2.0 | Background |
| 2.1 | <p>Darina Allen is the author of several successful books on Irish food and is a leader of the slow food movement in Ireland she was instrumental in establishing a network of farmers' markets in the Co Cork. In the 1960s she was sous-chef at Ballymaloe House and started giving courses in cooking. Later she moved the cookery classes to her newly established Ballymaloe Cookery School. She is the founder of first Farmers' Markets in Ireland and continues to be involved in helping set up new markets, she is still chair of the her local Midleton Farmers Market. She manages and runs her world renowned Ballymaloe Cookery School and Hotel in Shanagarry, Co Cork and writes for many local and national newspapers including the Irish Examiner.</p> |

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| 3.0 | Main Report |
| 3.1 | <p>Darina Allen with Caroline Hennessey will visit Northern Ireland as part of her visit from 6-8 October 2019. She will spend 2 days in mid Ulster and visit a number of businesses. This visit will have the following outcomes -</p> <p>For Darina Allen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To highlight the best of local NI food and provide her with editorial content for her weekly column in the Irish Examiner. • To provide an alternative source of producers. • To engage in helping to inform future hospitality skills initiatives • To explore options for future partnership options with suppliers and establishments in NI. <p>For the Seamus Heaney cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share best practice in network formation, structuring and creating suitable food/drink/tourism offerings relevant to specific customer segments • To enable network members to learn from others as to how best to exploit their local assets creating value for customers • Create an opportunity for local NI businesses to further develop commercial partnerships • To consider options to enhance the NI food tourism experience via the networks • Through site visits, showcase best practice food tourism in action • To explore opportunities for collaborative R&D, collaborative distribution, collaborative sales <p>For Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage businesses in support of Taste the Island campaign which will be running parallel • To engage with one another in support of the achievements of clusters • To identify opportunities for commercial development/upskilling • Develop stronger connections with one another and share learnings <p>Proposed Itinerary</p> <p>6th October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.30 - Arrive Ballyscullion Park • 18.00 - Tour Ballyscullion Park with Richard Mulholland • 18:45 - 21.00 – Dinner at Ballyscullion Park <p>7th October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 09.00 - Continental Breakfast, Ballyscullion • 10.30 - 12pm - Eel Brunch at Bakehouse NI, Bellaghy with Bronagh Duffin • 12.15 - 14.15pm - Seamus Heaney HomePlace tour, book signing and debrief on cluster activity. • 14.30 - 15.30 - Visit Lough Neagh Fisheries, Toomebridge • 16.00 - Return to Ballyscullion Park • 18.00pm – 21.00 - Networking and sampling showcase event, featuring local chefs and food producers at Ballyscullion - invite to all clusters, |

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| | <p>Council and Stakeholders including TNI, INI and regional food ambassadors.</p> <p>8th October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 09.00 - Continental Breakfast, Ballyscullion Park and depart. |
| 4.0 | Other Considerations |
| 4.1 | Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications |
| | Financial: £2,500 to cover cost of room and equipment hire, catering, refreshments, photography and all associated costs. The tourism section are seeking funding to cover elements of this from Tourism NI and are currently in discussion on this with them. |
| | Human: Tourism staff support required. |
| | Risk Management: Risk assessment will be carried in conjunction with the host establishments and Darina Allen staff. |
| 4.2 | Screening & Impact Assessments |
| | Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A |
| | Rural Needs Implications: N/A |
| 5.0 | Recommendation(s) |
| 5.1 | Proceed with this event to promote and showcase the Seamus Heaney cluster and food producer across Mid Ulster. Darina Allen will also do a book signing in Seamus Heaney HomePlace as part of her visit. |
| 6.0 | Documents Attached & References |
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