

Report on	Davagh Forest Observatory/Visitor Centre Update
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Mary McKeown

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
1.1	To update the council on the progress of the Davagh Forest Observatory and Visitor Centre project.
2.0	Background
2.1	On October 2015 the Council's Development Committee took the decision to scope out a potential new tourist attraction for the district at Davagh Forest adding to the existing mountain bike trails, utilising the potential of the site and the uniqueness of both the built and natural heritage.
2.2	On November 2015 the Council appointed Outdoor Recreation and Cogent to work up a business plan and an economic appraisal which had to be prepared and submitted with the application to DAERA.
2.3	In March 2016 the ICT tender was awarded to Teague & Sally, Cookstown for the new visitor hub building, which will be located in Davagh Forest to facilitate an application to Rural Development Programme Tourism Measure.
2.4	Initially Council was lead to believe that the application process would open before the summer of 2016. Due to internal issues DAERA delayed to opening date for the Rural Tourism Programme until the summer of 2018.
2.5	The Mid Ulster Davagh Forest Dark Skies project team submitted the round one application along with Economic Appraisal and Business Plan to the DAERA Rural Tourism funding programme for £500k.
2.6	At the October 2017 meeting of the Councils Development Committee permission was granted to seek additional of £245k from the Landfill Tax Fund for additional funds for the interpretation offering inside the building to ensure that the visitor would enjoy a fully immersive visitor experience. Later that month the Council received notification that the application had been successful.

<p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p>	<p>On 25th July 2017 notification was received from DAERA announcing that the Rural Tourism scheme open call for full applications will be made on 14th August, with a closing date of 27th October 2017 which was extended to February 2018. An application was submitted to the DAERA on the 14th December 2017</p> <p>Planning permission was granted for the project at the November 2017 meeting of the planning committee.</p> <p>At the January 2018 Development Committee permission was granted to seek additional funding from DAERA's Rural Tourism Programme for an outdoor element of the project.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>On the 8th January 2018 Council staff were notified by DAERA that the Council's Phase 1 application had been successful up to the value of £500k which is the maximum grant.</p> <p>Procurement for the internal interpretation of the Visitor Centre has now taken place and this will be reported to the P&R committee later this month.</p> <p>After submitting the expression of interest form for Phase 2 DAERA Rural Tourism programme, Council received permission on 19th January 2018 for Council to carry out a scoping study for the outdoor element of the visitor experience up to a maximum of £25k prior to making a full application.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this project will commence March/April of 2018 with a projected date of opening in the spring of 2019.</p>

4.0	Other Considerations																				
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Breakdown of amended budget and funders: -</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Funders</th> <th>Amount £000k</th> <th>Specific</th> <th>Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> <td>£250,000</td> <td>Planning, fees, construction.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>DAERA Rural Tourism Fund – Round 1.</td> <td>£500,000</td> <td>Construction</td> <td>Successful</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Landfill Tax Funding</td> <td>£245,000</td> <td>Indoor visitor experience.</td> <td>Successful</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DAERA Rural Tourism Fund – Round 2</td> <td>£250,000</td> <td>Outdoor visitor experience</td> <td>Initial Expression of Interest has been submitted and notification has been granted from DAERA to carry out scoping study up to the value of £25k</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Funders	Amount £000k	Specific	Status	Mid Ulster District Council	£250,000	Planning, fees, construction.		DAERA Rural Tourism Fund – Round 1.	£500,000	Construction	Successful	Landfill Tax Funding	£245,000	Indoor visitor experience.	Successful	DAERA Rural Tourism Fund – Round 2	£250,000	Outdoor visitor experience	Initial Expression of Interest has been submitted and notification has been granted from DAERA to carry out scoping study up to the value of £25k
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4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>																				
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>																				
5.0	Recommendation(s)																				
5.1	For Information.																				
	Documents Attached & References																				