

<b>Report on</b>	Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Allison O'Keefe

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To present Minutes of Tourism Development Group meeting held on 22 September 2020 and approved at Tourism Development meeting held on 9 December 2020.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p>Tourism Development Group (TDG) was established to create a working forum between Council and private sector businesses. The TDG will assist with policy development and support the implementation of Council's Tourism Strategy and associated work in order to create economic growth, increase visitor numbers and create employment.</p> <p>The group meet on a bi-monthly basis and as per the agreed Terms of Reference all business will be reported to Council through the Development Committee.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	The ratified minutes of the most recent meeting of the Tourism Development Group dated 22 September 2020 attached Appendix 1.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.2	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>Mid Ulster Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster.</p>
4.3	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	N/A
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix A – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 22 September 2020 and Officers Cluster Report

**MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
**Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 10.00am via Zoom**

Present

Cllr Francis Burton (Chair)	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Sean Clarke	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council
Colleen McGrath	Education & Skills NRC
Simon Wiggins	Education & Skills SWC
Tanya Purvis	Education & Skills SWC
Norman Bell	Visitor Attractions
Claire Murray	Local Food Producers/ Farmers Markets
D Friel	Vintners

In Attendance

Michael Browne	Mid Ulster District Council
Tony McCance	Mid Ulster District Council
Mary McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Mary McGee	Mid Ulster District Council
Charmain Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Genevieve Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Graeme Major	Mid Ulster District Council
Sharon Arbuthnot	Mid Ulster District Council
Martha Beattie	Mid Ulster District Council
B McCormick	Seamus Heaney HomePlace
K Gordon	OM Dark Sky and Observatory

	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Apologies</b> Terry McCrory, Craft Sector</p> <p>Cllr Burton welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked businesses for their continued input. She asked that it be recorded that she has commended staff within Council, on their continuing work to provide assistance and support to businesses and acting as a lifeline to many.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting held on 28 April 2020</b> Having been circulated in advance of the meeting the minutes were taken as read and correct.</p> <p><i>Proposed:</i> N Bell                      <i>Seconded:</i> H McCloy</p> <p>Cllr Burton thanked H McCloy for standing in as Chair at the previous meeting.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	

<p><b>3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Brown Signage</b>  M Browne provided an update and stated that having contacted Transport NI (TNI) who have informed him that they do not have a definitive list of brown signage within the district. He stated that the purpose of an audit was to ensure signage within the district was current and any no longer fit for purpose would be removed. Cllr Doris suggested other businesses who may be interested in brown signage. M Brown responded that this is a challenging piece of work considering the size of the district and felt with other priorities on staff and resources due to covid-19 this matter would be put on hold for review in early 2021.</p>	<p><b>Cllr Burton and Cllr Doris to request signage audit is included on committee agenda when TNI SRO's next attend.</b></p>
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.2</b></p> <p><b>4.3</b></p> <p><b>4.3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Cluster Reports</b></p> <p>Officers' report was circulated in advance of the meeting and the following was in addition.</p> <p><u>Seamus Heaney Cluster</u>  M McGee reported that the cluster had completed stage 1 of Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme and are progressing to stage 2 funding application.</p> <p><u>Outdoor and Events Cluster</u>  G Major provided details on a programme of guided hills walks, within the district, led by B Adams and I McCory. He informed that these would take place on the last Sunday of each month, with the first held on 28 September and could be booked at the Bridewell. Officers currently in talks with Walk NI to package further unguided walks with a focus on health and wellbeing.</p> <p>H McCloy raised concern that landowners were closing access in parts due to issues, such as, destruction of fencing and littering. Cllr Burton replied that this was understandable Council are trying to encourage more visitors to take rubbish home rather than providing more bins. H McCloy added that there needs to be more co-ordination with landowners.</p> <p><u>Archaeology, History and Heritage Cluster</u></p> <p><u>National Trust</u>  N Bell raised concern over reduced opening hours or possible closure of National Trust properties, Wellbrook Beetling Mill and Springhill House. He asked if it was possible for Head of Tourism and Cllr Burton to meet with the National Trust CEO. M Browne informed that a meeting was being arranged between DEA members and National Trust prior to consultation ending. He agreed that the closure of two NT properties would be a terrible loss to mid ulster. M McKeown informed that a meeting is to take place by 8 October. H McCloy added that he had approached Springhill offering to run events on site.</p>	<p><b>Officers to co-ordinate with landowners for accessibility on walking routes</b></p> <p><b>Meeting to take place with officers, Cllr Burton, HOT and Tourism Manager prior to meeting National Trust.</b></p>

<p><b>4.3.2</b></p>	<p><u>OM Dark Sky Park &amp; Observatory</u></p> <p>M McKeown introduced K Gordon, Duty Officer at OM Dark Sky &amp; Observatory. She announced that a launch would take place on 16 October. Local community group, councillors, media and other guests were invited and would be staggered throughout the day due to covid restrictions. The site will open to the public 17 October. M McKeown added that Brian Cox, who was to attend an event previously, would be rescheduled for some time in the future.</p> <p>M McKeown updated the meeting on a series of free promotional opportunities that have taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTE Radio – April 20</li> <li>• Jeff BBC – Aug 20</li> <li>• BBC Radio Ulster – Sept 20</li> <li>• Irish Times</li> <li>• IDA Accreditation – Sept 20</li> <li>• New website launched including online bookings – Sept 20</li> <li>• Tourism NI, Dublin</li> <li>• Meet the Buyer – Presentation to 500 plus American and Canadian tour operators looking to schedule itineraries 2022</li> <li>• Tourism Ireland – German Ezine</li> </ul> <p>Future scheduled opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virginia Media – Ed Finn</li> <li>• Barra on the Foyle – Feb 21</li> </ul> <p>She added that a week long campaign to promote Tyrone week on CoolFM ended with a prize donated by the Observatory and was the only paid marketing to date.</p> <p>K Gordon gave a brief introduction and stated that she looked forward to welcoming everyone to OM. She reported that since the website launched on 14 September online bookings have been very positive as well as telephone call, social media and visitors to the area.</p> <p>Cllr Burton looks forward to visiting the site and reported that the first bus tour from England visited Blessingbourne, Fivemiletown where she and Council Chair met with the group.</p> <p>G Bell informed that council have secured DAERA funding to develop augmented reality at Davagh solar walk and Ballyronan, as well, as the first on-water glamping village. Funding was successfully secured through RDP.</p> <p>N Hill also reported that a significant refurbishment and upgrade to existing offering will take place at Fivemiletown Round Lake and Blessingbourne in terms of accessible facilities, camping and</p>	<p><b>M McKeown to organise a visit for TDG to OM when suitable.</b></p>
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<p><b>4.4</b></p>	<p>caravanning, car park and cycling. Cllr Burton welcomed the news as the site was well used by both local people and visitors.</p> <p><u>Hotelier Cluster</u></p> <p>C Bell delivered her report and added that many establishments are looking to extend the Eat Out to Help Out scheme across mid ulster during October to improve customer confidence. Businesses will offer individual promotions but market collectively for the area. It was suggested speaking to council communications to tie into the Reconnect campaign. However, this will be reviewed due to circumstances.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Business Engagement Programme</b></p> <p>M McGee reported that business engagement continued online with up to 128 members on the WhatsApp group. She added that Hospitality Ulster, Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland use it as a go to resource and webinars continue to be responsive to issues.</p> <p>M McGee informed that L Goodall delivers two webinars to assist businesses who were successful to application stage of Tourism NI's Experience Development Programme. 15 applications across mid ulster have successfully made it through to next stage. She also gave a brief rundown of funding that was available to businesses in recent months to assist with covid. Cllr Burton stated that the forum and webinars have proved a lifeline to many businesses. M Browne added that speakers included Tourism NI CEO and Tourism Ireland CEO, legal and financial experts provided by Tourism NI and experts from across the sector.</p> <p>M McGee asked that thanks to H McCloy for his support and assistance was recorded.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>District Wide Monitoring</b></p> <p>M McKeown delivered District Wide Monitoring results, circulated in advance of the meeting, for the first two quarters of 2020. She reminded members that due to the covid pandemic some facilities were closed and therefore figures reduced.</p> <p>G Major reported that VIC figures for 2020 were greatly reduced in comparison to 2019 due to closure of facilities during lockdown. He informed that all VIC's within the district are now re-opened. He added that bespoke enquiries have increased from Dutch, German and Canadian markets, whilst local enquiries with regards to open spaces have increased.</p> <p>M Browne informed that touchscreens have been positioned in Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt and currently looking at software to roll out 24 hour visitor access.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Industry Updates</b></p>	

	All business representatives present gave an update on business and any feedback on their sectors.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Any Other Business - None</b>	

Date of next meeting - Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 11am.  
Meeting ended at 11.21am

**Mid Ulster Council Tourism Development Group  
Officers Cluster Report – Tuesday 22 September 2020**

**1. SEAMUS HEANEY CLUSTER – MMC GEE/C BELL**

The group met on 3 September 2020 via Teams. They have agreed to pursue stage 2 funding for the Collaborative Growth Programme. In order to do this they have invited current programme facilitator on the Causeway Coast and Glens – Taste Causeway - Sharon Scott to their next meeting and hope to follow up with Linda Jamison Invest NI on this. A number of members of the group have completed the Virtual Meet the Buyer event and feedback from this has been positive to date. The rural nature of Mid Ulster is now certainly a selling point with operators and it is important to continue to highlight this. Members also commented on how across the week of Meet the Buyer the cross selling amongst Mid Ulster businesses was key and sent out a very strong message to operators that we are ready for business.

**2. OUTDOOR & EVENTS CLUSTER – G MAJOR/S ARBUTHNOT**

COVID disrupted and halted Wild Adventure Weekend 2020 preparations that were agreed during early March meeting. Event still to go ahead but needs commitment from cluster members which is uncertain at this time due to the current and evolving situation. A series of guided hill walks as lead by Brendan Adams and Ita McCory are due to get underway as below with booking through the Bridewell priced at £10 each or £40 for all five. This will accompany a marketing campaign to highlight all public walks within the district.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Walk</b>	<b>Meeting Point</b>
Sunday 29 Sept 2020	The Carntogher Way (Derry/Londonderry)	An Carn Centre, 132A Tirkane Road, Maghera. (2 miles from Maghera)
Sunday 25 Oct 2020	Moydamlaght Forest and Bohildreaga (Derry/Londonderry)	An Dubh Centre, 53 Moneyneany Road, Moneyneany.
Sunday 29 Nov 2020	Slieve Gallion (Derry/Londonderry)	Iniscarn forest entrance, Iniscarn Road, Desertmartin (The forest is off the A29 Tobermore to Moneymore road. As you reach Desertmartin take the left turn before the shop. Follow this road for three miles until you come to a T-junction. Turn left. The forest is half a mile on the right.)
Sunday 31 Jan 2021	Crockmore / Crockbrack (Derry/Londonderry)	An Dubh Centre, 53 Moneyneany Road, Moneyneany.
Sunday 28 Feb 2021	Knockmany Forest Augher (Tyrone)	Forest car park on Knockmany Road. (Follow brown forest sign from roundabout in Augher and forest 1.9 miles on left hand side.)

**3. ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & HERITAGE CLUSTER – G BELL/M MCKEOWN**

**3.1 Experience Development Programme 20/21**

The Cluster Group were informed about the Experience Development Programme 20/21 launched by Tourism Northern Ireland. The Programme is designed to provide financial assistance to tourism organisations to support them in creating experiences that embrace our giant spirit and stimulate



demand for Northern Ireland tourism to benefit the wider economy. Benburb Priory Ltd. and Killymoon Castle have both submitted applications for the Programme.

### 3.2 Visitor Itineraries

A number of visitor itineraries are being worked up which include:

- 3 Sisters Tour taking in the big houses of Springhill, Lissan House and Killymoon Castle,
- Stars and Stones taking in Beaghmore Stone Circles, Davagh Forest and OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory,
- Famine Trail – which takes in the original famine pot in Friels, Swatragh,
- Maghera Heritage Trail which will take in a visit to the Glen Chapel, Maghera where you will see the Famine Plot and a headstone that remembers the large number of people who died in the parish during the famine,
- President and Queens which includes U S Grant Ancestral Homestead, Knockmany Chambered Cairn and the East Tyrone Driving Route.

### 3.3 OCN Level 2 Training in Tour Guiding

This is an 8 week course which will be delivered remotely/online. This qualification is designed to provide the learner with the skills in the Travel and Tourism industry to enable them to develop a tour commentary and lead groups on a guided tour. Any interested participants should contact G Bell asap.

### 3.4 OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory

The launch and opening of has been scheduled to open to the public on 17 October 2020. Barra Best recently visited the area which will feature in ‘Barra on the Foyle’ to be televised next year. He interviewed Mary McKeown who acted as the representative for OM, spoke with local tour guide Sean Clarke and stayed in Sperrin View Glamping pods during his time in the area.

MUDC has successfully secured DEARA funding for The Solar Walk in Davagh Forest and for the development of Glamping pods and an AR experience at Ballyronan Marina. Work will begin on these in the next month.

## **4. HOTELIERS CLUSTER – CBELL/MMCGEE**

The group met online where Roisin McKee, manager of the new Hotel & Tourism Sector collaboration (HATS), gave a presentation. Roisin outlined the new apprenticeship model which is being delivered by all the colleges.

The incentive is available to all employers to support the recruitment of new apprentices. An employer will be eligible for up to £3,000 for each new apprenticeship opportunity created from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. This bonus will apply to all new apprenticeship opportunities and includes apprentices who have been made redundant:

- Payment 1 - £2,000 after 90 days retention
- Payment 2 - £1,000 after 200 days retention from first employment

Roisin also explained the new 100% funding model for all short courses and training. The group also discussed the new challenge fund for the sector being launched by government. This fund will launch in late September and support innovative approaches and new collaborations to increase apprenticeship opportunities in Northern Ireland. Successful applicants could receive one off awards of up to £50,000.