



11 November 2021

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Development Committee to be held in The Chamber, Dungannon and by virtual means Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon, BT71 6DT on Thursday, 11 November 2021 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

A link to join the meeting through the Council's remote meeting platform will follow.

Yours faithfully

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive

AGENDA

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
3. Chair's Business
4. Deputation - Coalisland Development Association

Matters for Decision

- | | |
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| 5. Upcoming Tourism Trade Shows, Holiday World, Dublin | 3 - 4 |
| 6. Community Development | 5 - 10 |
| 7. Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Consultation on 'How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers' | 11 - 18 |
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| 13. | Feasibility study – Reopening disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes | 57 - 62 |
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Matters for Information

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Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.

Matters for Decision

Matters for Information

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| 19. | Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 14 October 2021 | |
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Report on	Upcoming Tourism Trade Shows, Holiday World, Dublin
Date of Meeting	11 November 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 inform Council of planned tourism promotion at Holiday World, RDS, Dublin 26-31 st January 2022.
2.0	Background
	Holiday World, Dublin, is hugely popular, targeting consumers who are looking at both international and domestic travel. This show attracts consumers looking for short break staycation offers in Northern Ireland as we will feature as part of the Tourism NI Village.
3.0	Main Report
	With the growth in the lucrative staycation market, Mid Ulster Council Tourism plan to attend this show as part of the Tourism NI village and promote our key tourism product and the region as a whole. We will in particular focus on the Spring break market and offers around accommodation and our key attractions. This work will complement the work ongoing on our new tourism website and the tourism brand for the region.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Stand with Shell Scheme plus VAT, travel and expenses for 2 staff per day. Electrics and stand furniture plus graphics. Total EURO3,000.
	Human: 2 x Staff daily available and working on the stand over the duration of the show.
	Risk Management: Risk Assessment is carried out in conjunction with Business Exhibitions, as part of attendance at the show.

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: na
	Rural Needs Implications: Businesses from right across the district will be promoted.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Approve purchase of stand, associated costs and staff expenses and mileage to work at this exhibition.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	

Report on	Community Development
Date of Meeting	11 th November 2021
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officers	Philip Clarke - Community Services Manager, Oliver Morgan – Good Relations Manager, Michael McCrory - PCSP Manager

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Community Grants - to agree the rolling grant awards - Local Community Festivals, Good Relations and Decade of Anniversaries, and to agree to open the Strategic Events Grant.
1.2	VPRS Storage Scheme - to approve request from DFC Syrian Refugee Team to contribute towards the VPRS storage scheme.
1.3	Community Development - to update on Community Development.
2.0	Background
2.1	Community Grants – Council annually delivers an open call for its main grants, and then delivers a number of rolling community grants programmes; Good Relations and Local Community Festivals. Council also annually delivers the Decade of Anniversaries Grant.
2.2	VPRS storage scheme – a scheme to support Syrian Refugees in Northern Ireland. Donations of food, household items etc. are stored at the central 'Storehouse' at North Down. The Storehouse North Down is an ideal space to collect, hold, sort and distribute the donations received, and in partnership with their sister charity Kiltonga Christian Centre are providing volunteers and resources towards the refugees' needs.
2.3	Community Development includes the following areas: Community Support, Good Relations, PCSP, and Strategic Community Development.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Community Festivals grant is a rolling programme – 4 applications recommended for awards total £2,755.

	<p>Good Relations – no submissions See grant award recommendations in Appendix 1 for approval.</p> <p>Council publically advertised all of its grants this year with the exception of the strategic events grant (minimum number attendance 1000 people), due to Covid 19 and the guidance for events and gatherings during the year. The strategic events that were in the system, as part of the 3 year process were informed that they could approach Council regarding their strategic event as long as they had permission to proceed with the event in line with Covid 19 guidance. As part of the 3 year process Council publicises all grants with the proviso for the strategic grants and venues; where groups can choose to have their previous application used, or resubmit. This process was introduced 2 years ago, based on consultation with groups, and allows groups who deliver similar activity each year to use their same application. It is proposed, to ensure the process remains the same for all grants, and in light of the new Covid 19 guidance, that the strategic events be publically advertised. This will allow community groups with strategic events that meet the criteria to apply (this will not impact on the current grants). The criteria that an event and claim must be submitted by 31st March would still apply.</p> <p>3.2 VPRS storage scheme - Support from Council is requested towards the logistical operation of the store house and distribution of essential items to assist the Syrian Refugee Resettlement scheme (led by DFC). The amount requested is £300.</p> <p>3.3 Community Development</p> <p>Community Support The Community Support team is currently working with groups to open up their community facilities. The team has also recommenced its supporting communities activity with regard to estate inspections.</p> <p>Good Relations Good Relations is continuing to deliver the Plan for 2021 – 2022.</p> <p>Peace IV Local Action Plan – the local shared space projects are now complete.</p> <p>Closure of programmes and grants is currently taking place; alongside the communications, and research projects.</p> <p>An extension to SEUPB to June 2022 has been submitted to allow the completion of the towns shared space project which is at design stage for part of the project and pre tender for the remainder.</p> <p>Connecting Pomeroy – as per previous.</p> <p>PCSP –Ongoing as guided by the PCSP Partnership.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u>

	<p>Community Festival awards £2,755 VPRS Storage Scheme - Kiltonga Christian Centre £300 Strategic Events – budget £75,000 (allocated to date £41,000, balance £34,000)</p> <p><u>Professional Support</u> None</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> None</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u> None</p>
5.0	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
5.1	Community Grants - to agree the rolling grant awards - Local Community Festivals, Good Relations and Decade of Anniversaries, and to agree to open the Strategic Events Grant.
5.2	VPRS Storage Scheme - to approve request from DFC Syrian Refugee Team to contribute towards the VPRS storage scheme.
5.3	Community Development - to update on Community Development.
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	Appendix 1 Good Relations and Local Community Festivals Grant Awards

Appendix 1

Community Festivals November 2021 (Maximum £1200)

No	Organisation Name	Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Requested	Awarded
1	Friends of Killymoon Castle	Community	Festival of Crafts and Carols at Killymoon Castle	4	£1,200	£840
2	Brocagh Emmett's GFC	Sports	Brocagh Bay Run	4	£4,450	£840
3	Kilnaslee community and development group	Community	Christmas festival	6	£950	£475
4	Rock Ladies Gaelic Football Club	Sports	Rock New Year's Day Run 2022 ("RNYDR")	6	£1,200	£600
					Total	£2,755

Bands	Score	%
7	30-39	40%
6	40-49	50%
5	50-59	60%
4	60-69	70%
3	70-79	80%
2	80-89	90%
1	90+	100%

Report on	Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Consultation on ‘How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers’
Date of Meeting	11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officer	Celene O’Neill, Community Planning

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Members of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Consultation on ‘How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers’ and to seek Members’ approval for Mid Ulster District Council’s Response.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Northern Health and Social Care Trust is consulting on ‘How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers’. A workshop to seek Members’ views was held on Tuesday, 19 October 2021. A draft response has been prepared for Members’ consideration and approval prior to the submission closing date of 29 November 2021.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	A draft Consultation Response has been prepared for Members’ consideration. A consultation session was held for Members on 19 October 2021.
3.2	<p>The Consultation document sets out proposals for a new way of purchasing domiciliary care services from non-statutory providers to ensure that services are provided equitably, sustainably and meet the growing needs of the population.</p> <p>The draft response asks five questions as follows.</p> <p>Question 1: Do you agree with the reasons and the need for change outlined in the document?</p> <p>Question 2: Do you agree with the Trust’s proposed model for purchasing services from non-statutory providers?</p>

3.3	<p>Proposed Model 2: Cost/volume contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *A contract with providers for a guaranteed level of care hours (block) *The remaining percentage of care hours would be purchased using a spot purchasing arrangement from the contracted Provider *Contracted providers must accept all referrals both guaranteed and spot purchase <p>Question 3: Do you agree with the creation of geographical areas or lots within the Trust area?</p> <p>Question 4: An outcome of initial equality screening considerations is available on the Trust website. Do you agree with the outcome of this screening?</p> <p>Question 5: The Rural Needs Act NI - Do you have any evidence to suggest that the proposal within this document would create an adverse differential impact?</p> <p>General Comments: Please provide any other comments</p> <p>The draft response includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about change to the Northern Trust’s current service model which has a good balance between the % of statutory provision and non-statutory provision • Difficulties in accessing domiciliary care packages in the first instance • Non Statutory providers and risk to service delivery – ability to meet contract requirements, consistency of service provision, workforce shortages, lower salaries, poorer terms and conditions • Continuity in service delivery during the transition from short term domiciliary care to long term care • The importance of good communication between carer and service user • The creation of geographical ‘lots’ within the Trust area • Equality and Rural Needs • Alternative models of delivery eg social economy • Quality, standards, monitoring and review
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: None</p> <p>Human: None</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To approve the draft Response to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Consultation on 'How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers'.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Draft Mid Ulster District Council Response attached.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust Consultation on 'How we propose to purchase domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers'

Mid Ulster District Council Response

Question 1: Do you agree with the reasons and the need for change outlined in the document?

Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and understands the challenges and pressures faced by the health sector to deliver high quality domiciliary care within the community.

Council welcomes the Northern Trust's retention of the mixed economy of statutory and non-statutory provision in domiciliary care however, the consultation document does not provide details of the percentage of care delivered through statutory provision and that through non-statutory providers. Our view is that the Northern Trust has previously set a good example in domiciliary care provision due to the high level of care that is directly delivered by the Trust. This is in comparison to other Trusts with a higher percentage of privatised care who have faced significant care shortages. The Northern Trust model is perceived to be a better service model, with more statutory provision thus reducing the risks of service shortages. Council is concerned that the Northern Trust is moving towards delivery of a higher percentage of private provision and reducing the amount of statutory provision. Can the Northern Trust confirm the new percentage allocation of statutory provision to planned procured non-statutory provision?

Council accepts the reasons why the Northern Trust intends to change the procedures for purchasing domiciliary care provided by non-statutory providers. While this consultation exercise focuses on the internal mechanisms that the Trust will use to procure non-statutory providers, Council suggests that it would also be useful for the Trust to broaden the scope of this exercise by consulting the wider public on the quality of, and satisfaction with, domiciliary care services provided on the ground.

With this in mind, regardless of how domiciliary care is procured, Council wishes to highlight the difficulties faced by people in accessing care packages in the first instance. This consultation paper does not address how the new procurement system will resolve the resourcing issues faced by providers that prevent people having their care package in place when they leave hospital and need help at home.

Question 2: Do you agree with the Trust's proposed model for purchasing services from non-statutory providers?

In choosing a purchasing model, it appears that the Trust's decision-making process is based on the assumption that there will be a sufficient, or indeed over-subscribed number of private contractors tendering for the 'lots'. The Trust intends to limit the number of contracts that can be awarded to each provider and ensure that contingency providers are in place. *"Each lot will have a minimum of two providers. A provider cannot be awarded all contracts within a lot to ensure at least one contingency provider exists."*

On the ground evidence suggests that there is in fact a workforce shortage in the sector which has significantly impacted on the ability of providers to deliver the service. Attracting and retaining domiciliary care workers has resulted in workforce pressures as a result of, or made worse by Brexit, the Covid19 Pandemic and lack of parity between the pay and conditions enjoyed by carers employed in the statutory sector and those employed by private companies.

Many carers with years of experience have left the sector and have been replaced by less experienced staff. Some private sector staff are not paid for travel (time or expenses) between service users and have found themselves much better off employed in the retail sector for example. Better training, pay and conditions on a par with statutory employees will encourage staff to remain in the sector and this in turn will have a positive impact on the provider's ability to provide a consistent service and a satisfied end service user. This consultation paper makes no reference to this issue and no plans to mitigate against this. There is no mention of how the Trust plans to attract and retain staff in the sector. A procurement paper on service provision should recognise and address these very important issues.

The Contract terms and conditions must be realistic and deliverable. We accept that it is reasonable for the Trust to require a degree of flexibility, however some providers have raised concerns about referrals being issued at very short notice, leaving a very short timeframe for care worker response and first visit. The Trust has specified that providers must accept all referrals within the contract hours, however if it is impossible to achieve this within the timeframe set, providers will simply not tender for the service.

Council notes the Trust's intention to create a model that provides new service users with an initial short-term service for up to 6 weeks. Service users with long-term needs then transfer to a long-term service after this initial period. Members have emphasised that it is essential there is no disruption to the standard and consistency of care provided during this transitional period.

As highlighted in the consultation document, effective communication is key to building good relationships between the care worker and the service user. Consistency in service delivery and staffing is essential, particularly for older people, and those with dementia or mental health issues. Some service users are more comfortable with visits at set times of the day to minimise uncertainty and disruption to their private lives. The consultation document does not provide detail on service delivery at this

level but it is a very important consideration, as is the training of care workers to a high standard in both statutory and non-statutory provision. Meeting the individual needs of the service user has a major impact on satisfaction with the service from both provider and client point of view.

Members noted the data in the consultation document relating to the length of service user visits, with the bulk of visits taking between 0-15 minutes and 16-30 minutes. Council queried the usefulness of setting time bound targets for providers or even measuring this data as it is not a measure of quality, but of quantity. While the amount of time spent with a client is important, it is more useful to measure the satisfaction of the client in terms of their interaction with their carer and the assistance they received as an indicator of service quality.

Question 3: Do you agree with the creation of geographical areas or lots within the Trust area?

The approach considered most appropriate by the Trust is to create areas based on the 10 large towns in the historic Borough Councils, which will be known as 'lots'. In Mid Ulster, the 'lots' are Cookstown and Magherafelt. Members queried if general population figures for each geographical location or 'lot' will be used to determine the amount of care hours purchased. Decisions should relate to the size of the population who are most likely to need domiciliary care now and in the future (eg older people, people with a disability) rather than on generalised population figures that include children and people of working age.

Question 4: An outcome of initial equality screening considerations is available on the Trust website. Do you agree with the outcome of this screening?

There are a higher number of female care workers in the domiciliary care sector in general, and reports of lower wages and poorer terms and conditions in the non-statutory sector. Lack of workforce planning, staff shortages and high vacancy rates place undue pressure on existing staff, mainly women, service users and their families. Care sector workers are integral to the quality of care provided and a long-term commitment is required from the Trust to promote socially responsible care provision and an acceptable level of financial resource.

Question 5: The Rural Needs Act NI 2016 places a duty on public authorities, including government departments, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. Do you have any evidence to suggest that the proposal within this document would create an adverse differential impact?

The rural nature of some of the 'lots' or geographical areas must be taken into consideration. Much of the surrounding Cookstown and Magherafelt area is rural in nature. Longer travel time between service user visits impacts on consistency in the timing of visits and ultimately service user satisfaction. Employee payment for travel expenses and travel time impacts on the ability to recruit and retain employees and as a result, the provider's ability to meet contract requirements. The rural nature of 'lots' therefore has a direct impact on the overall quality and standard of service delivered.

General Comments: Please provide any other comments.

Mid Ulster District Council urges the Trust to consider alternative models for domiciliary care provision and to investigate the potential to engage social economy providers, who are less concerned about the bottom line and more about quality and re-investment in the service. There are some excellent examples of social economy domiciliary care models in Ireland that could be explored, developed and supported in the Northern Trust area.

Council also notes that a review of procurement arrangements has been built into the contract term of three years with potential to extend up to 24 months. Based on that rationale, Council would welcome and encourage a regular review of the system, similar to this current process, which would indicate a commitment by the Trust to continuous improvement in service delivery standards.

Report on	Health Issues for Mid Ulster
Date of Meeting	11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officer	Martina Totten, Community Planning

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Members of the key health issues for Mid Ulster to support lobbying and engagement with the health trusts.
2.0	Background
2.1	At recent meetings of the Development Committee a number of issues have been referenced regarding health provision in Mid Ulster.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	A draft report on the issues members have raised through Committee and working group relating to health provision in Mid Ulster. This is to help support lobbying and engagement with the health trusts and other health organisations. Please see attached in Appendix 1.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u> Financial: None Human: None
4.2	<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> None
4.3	<u>Risk Management Implications</u> None
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To inform Members of the key health issues for Mid Ulster to support lobbying and engagement with the health trusts.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Draft Mid Ulster District Health Issues report attached.

Mid Ulster District Council
Health Paper – Issues for Discussion
December 2021

Primary Care Provision

Transforming Your Care was published in 2016 laying out the Transformation of the Health Service, including Primary Care. However, the strategy has yet to be resourced or implemented since it was published.

Issues in Primary Care are most acute in the South West and Dungannon area and this has been documented for the past 10 years. This has also been referenced by the British Medical Association over the same period.

There is a chronic shortage of GPs in the Dungannon area. There is also a high proportion of GPs due for early retirement in the coming years.

There is not only a need to train new GPs through increased university places **but to support and encourage greater GP trainee practices for the Dungannon and Mid Ulster areas. It is also important to incentivise GP's to take up work in our rural areas that are in crisis. Alongside this in the short term it is important to resolve the issues with GP pensions to seek to retain current GPs.**

Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) of practice-based physiotherapists, mental health workers and social workers will super charge Primary Care Practice. **There is a urgent need for MDT to be put in place in Mid Ulster as soon as possible.** GPs need a timeframe of this implementation, so they can make the necessary preparations in their businesses. The full MDT is not in any area of Mid Ulster; even with the identified crisis in Dungannon regarding GP provision.

Large percentage of GP practices are not fit for purpose. The MDT scheme does come with an Infrastructure budget but we need clarity from the Health Minister when exactly they will be fully rolled out so that GPs can make the necessary preparations.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners who will support GPs on a number of areas including assessment, diagnosis, treatment, intervention and much more, **need to be imbedded throughout Primary Care**, including Care in the Community, particularly in mental health.

The **Pilot Paramedic Scheme** which supported a triage and treatment system in a number of Dungannon practices **needs to be reinstated and progressed** from a pilot to mainstream programme and extended throughout the district

Waiting lists are having a catastrophic impact on Primary Care Services with practices under immense pressures treating chronic conditions as a result of waiting lists. **The recycling of patients from waiting lists to GPs needs to be addressed as a priority.** In light of the new processes being introduced as part of the response to Covid 19 and access to GPs; there is a recognition of the need for a triage system, however it needs to be supported by MDT's and not an overreliance on reception staff. There remains a vast difference across surgeries regarding patients being seen by a GP. **Is there a**

quality target for GPs to ensure equity in provision? Further there is some reference to people being able to move between GP practices however at a local level that is not an option if there is no availability.

In recent years, the British Medical Association referred the Out of Hours Service in the SHSCT to the General Medical Council as being unfit for purpose. A number of reports were published, including one from the RQIA, however, no recommendations from these reports have been implemented. **When will these recommendations be implemented?** What is the current status of the Out of Hours Service being removed from South Tyrone Hospital and as stated by the BMA, the travel time for people to receive urgent care.

Dungannon Health Hub

Due to the reduction of services and its peripheral location, much of Mid Ulster has the poorest access to acute hospital and care provision. Two thirds of Mid Ulster's population of 145,000 are rural; and by 2037 83% will be aged 65+ (against an NI average of 68%). During Mid Ulster District Council's extensive community consultations to draw up the new 'Community Plan' for Mid Ulster, the issue causing most concern was the ongoing reduction of health and social care services and facilities in the area and the apparent lack of investment in alternative provision.

Opportunities now exist across sites which are already in public sector use in Mid Ulster, where services have been removed, which would facilitate the co-location of a broad range of localised health and social care provision, while also achieving a greater integration of service delivery. These sites have the potential to deliver a comprehensive range of local diagnostic facilities, primary care and elective surgery provision, which will also contribute to alleviating the pressures on Antrim and Craigavon. In line with the Bengoa Report, this seeks to "provide simpler and easier access to healthcare professionals and diagnostic equipment needed to assess and diagnose conditions". **Whist the Mid Ulster district has lost two acute hospitals, it does not have a Community Care and Treatment Centre in any of its three hub towns.**

The Council was last updated that the Department was reviewing its capital priorities under its 10 year capital plan, which would the Dungannon Health Hub, was under review in early 2019. However, even after numerous requests, Council have received no further updates to this. **Can the Department please provide an update on its Capital Build Programme and the Dungannon Health Hub**

Oakridge

The Council are aware that several business plans have been submitted to the Department of Health for a new build at Oakridge but due to lack of funding, they have lapsed. When we last met with the SHSCT Capital team in 2019, we were informed that a business plan had been updated and submitted to DoH. Given the age and state of repair of the Oakridge building; the vital service it provides to the District; and the length of time this issue has been presented as a priority (over the last 10 years), **Council still would urge the Department to consider the Oakridge business plan in their capital programme as a matter of priority,**

Integrated Care System

Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) welcomes and supports a health service model that enables collaborative working, like that presented in the Integrated Care Draft Framework consultation in September 2021.

Whilst MUDC fully supports a model that is based on the principle of local level decision making which is underpinned by a population health, it has significant concerns regarding the formation of both the Area Levels and Locality Levels and how they align to the Mid Ulster Council area. The Council believes that a significant barrier to addressing the health needs of the Mid Ulster population is because the district straddles two Health Care Trusts. When developing and delivering health programmes in the district, in partnership with the Health partners, it is for the majority of cases, only with one Trust. Gaining the participation of both trusts to deliver a district wide service or programme is often challenging and it can prove frustrating as to how different the two Trusts operate and are managed. The details provided so far does not provide MUDC with confidence that this practice will cease under a new Framework. **MUDC would seek greater assurances that the new structure has considered in detail, how council areas that sit across more than one Health Trust, will be better served.**

MUDC also has reservations to the reference made to Local District Electoral Areas (DEAs) within the structure. Whilst Council is aware that a few Councils have adopted a DEA approach to certain services, it also understands that this approach is not without its challenges. **MUDC can see merit in engaging with communities and citizens through a DEA fora but would not support a DEA structure for decision making or delivery purposes.**

MUDC agrees with the inclusion of Community Planning Partnerships in the AIPB membership. However, MUDC also feels that Council should be represented at this Board, given its integral part to service delivery at a local level. MUDC are aware that frameworks and policies often mistake Councils and Community Planning Partnerships as one and this is not the case, Council are an equal partner in terms of delivery and fulfilment of the Plan. **Again, MUDC would stress its position that both Community Planning and local government needs to be represented at the board, as separate entities.**

Furthermore, for Council and other partners to be represented there would need to be a clear Terms of Reference for discussion, engagement and decision making, as often partnerships can be used to sign off contentious decisions, stating a partnership as a consultative body. Legacy councils have experiences of similar bodies that were established to oversee specific health services in the locality. However, instead of the decision making and delivery roles that they were intended to be, they were used solely for the purposes of perceived consultation and community engagement, which in the end was largely ignored by the health service. MUDC is fully endorses an Integrated Care System that is truly underpinned by local level decision making but will not participate in a structure that simply pays lip service to local autonomy. **MUDC would seek further clarification and reassurances to both the genuine level of autonomy and the decision-making powers of the Area Level and Locality Level Partnerships.**

Ambulance Response

In recent years, Mid Ulster has recorded consistently higher response times than the NI average, increasing year on year. Mid Ulster travel time to a hospital with major injury treatment capabilities is over eight minutes longer than the NI average. The District and its road network is predominantly rural, adversely impacting on travel times. The priority for NIAS should be to direct resources and effort to the area worst affected. **What mechanisms are DoH/NIAS putting in place to specifically tackle Mid Ulster's growing response times.**

A longer term solution will require planning and investment to ensure greater availability and more rapid deployment of vehicles in rural areas furthest from acute provision. This should also include developing the capacity of existing local ambulance stations as well as exploring the potential to use Mid Ulster as a regional base for some or all parts of the service. **We would be keen to explore the previously discussed opportunity to locate a new NIAS Station at the Desertcreat site, near the new NI Fire and Rescue Learning and Development Centre.**

Mental Health Strategy

The Mental Health Strategy is most welcome as a means to drive forward the health and wellbeing agenda for the next 10 years. To date the provision of mental health services in Northern Ireland has been vastly underfunded. The number of people experiencing mental health problems has increased exponentially over the years to an estimated one in five. Waiting times to access support services have increased in line with this. In Mid Ulster, local community consultations have indicated that individuals and families have faced barriers to accessing the right mental health support services at the right time and therefore, a regionally consistent response for people suffering from mental health problems is essential.

Whilst Council appreciates that the Strategy is subject to confirmation of funding and will require significant investment outside of the Departments existing budget, to deliver it, we would seek clarification on progress.

Poverty

Areas of deprivation have a significant impact to the health outcomes of an individual. Health data and more specifically, Health Inequalities data, clearly identifies the geographical locations of high-risk individuals.

Mid Ulster Community Planning is fully committed to reducing poverty and the impact of poverty on the health of our citizens. In 2019, in the absence of a Regional Anti-Poverty Strategy, partners came together from statutory agencies, business and community to look at a range of priorities impacting on poverty; with the aim to create a Poverty Plan that seeks to identify strategic actions for partner delivery. A number of poverty issues were identified through the development of the Plan for Mid Ulster, including those pertaining to health inequities such as higher levels of lifestyle illnesses and premature death. To tackle these issues, a comprehensive plan of actions has been developed to improve health and wellbeing of our people; through increasing support to those in poverty to engage in better health and wellbeing activities and lifestyle choices. **Mid Ulster Community Planning would welcome support from our health partners to the delivery of these actions.**

Report on	1. COVID Small Settlements Regeneration Programme 2. Request from Dungannon Enterprise Centre
Date of Meeting	11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme The three government departments of DfC, DfI and DAERA are proposing to jointly fund a COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme across 10 local authority areas targeting rural settlements with 1000 - 4999 inhabitants. This is predicated on each Council developing a <u>Small Settlement Regeneration Plan</u> in consultation with a local stakeholder engagement forum.
2.2	Request from Dungannon Enterprise Centre Correspondence was received on 7 October 2021 from Mr Brian MacAuley, CEO, Dungannon Enterprise Centre, on behalf of their Board, requesting Council to lease its site on Feeney's Lane, Dungannon to the Centre for a 10 year period.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme Background A draft discussion paper (Appendix 1) has been received from the Department for Communities setting out arrangements for a proposed Small Settlements Regeneration Programme which will target investment in small settlements with population from 1000 - 4999 to aid recovery from the COVID pandemic. Settlements with populations below 1000 are not precluded provided supported projects align with programme outcomes and demonstrate value for money.

Under the proposed delivery arrangements Local Authorities will be responsible for developing a COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan in conjunction with key stakeholders from across the Council area.

Funding allocations

The indicative budget for the overall Programme is £19.5m across 10 local authorities (£6.5 from each Department). Within this Mid Ulster would receive **£2.3m**. Councils are expected to provide match funding of **10%** of their investment plan costs. Funding to be channelled to Councils via Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.

Delivery timescales

It is envisaged that DfC will issue a letter of offer to Council before Christmas 2021 with the expectation that Council will submit its Regeneration Plan for approval ahead of **March 2022**

DfC has made it clear that Councils must endeavour to deliver their Regeneration Plan by **March 2023** with all funding to be spent within this timescale.

Constraints on project selection

The selection of projects for inclusion within the Regeneration Plan are framed by the following constraints:

- **Timescale** – projects selected must be deliverable by March 2023. Deliverability includes issues such as planning permissions, statutory approvals and land ownership.
- **Value for Money** - VFM will be a key consideration in the approval of the Regeneration Plan by DfC. The Programme targets settlements of between
- 1000 – 4999. Settlements below 1000 will not be precluded provided a robust VFM case is put forward.
- **Fit with Departmental policy objectives** – all projects included in the Regeneration Plan must show alignment with DfC, DAERA and DfI policy interest – which focus on differing targets and KPI's.
- **Resources for management and delivery** – this programme will add to existing significant work pressures across the delivery team structure within Council. Resource funding of £102,018 would be available for staff time involved in delivery.

The constraints identified would favour the selection of strategic scale projects which are capable of delivering positive, visible impacts in the short term.

DfC has indicated a possible follow up phase depending on the success of this initial programme.

3.2	<p>Request from Dungannon Enterprise Centre</p> <p>The correspondence from Mr Brian MacAuley (on Appendix 2) outlines that Dungannon Enterprise Centre’s charitable mission supports the economic development of the area through the fostering of profitable enterprises. It highlights the Board’s concern that the town centre is facing very difficult economic times ahead and needs support from wherever it can get. It notes the retail sector is particularly suffering and indicates a key part of the solution is increasing footfall and visitors to the town.</p> <p>The correspondence requests Mid Ulster District Council to lease its land at Feeney’s Lane, Dungannon to Dungannon Enterprise Centre, for a 10-year period, to develop the site as a semi-permanent outdoor space to hold initiatives and events that would attract local residents, visitors and shoppers back into the town. Mr MacAuley states that it would be their intention to create a working group of the Enterprise Centre Board and co-opted traders to plan and manage the initiative and to source funding for the project.</p> <p>In conclusion, Mr MacAuley highlights the site is located adjacent to the Market Square and the entrance to the Hill of the O’Neill, and Dungannon Enterprise Centre believe that a comprehensive programme of events held on the Feeney’s Lane site will enrich and compliment the Council managed events run throughout the year.</p>
4.0	<p>Other Considerations</p>
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme 10% match funding contribution from Council of £230,022 (based on a funding allocation of £2.3m)</p> <p>Human:</p> <p>COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme Resource funding of £102,018 would be made available to Council from DfC for staff / delivery costs.</p> <p>Risk Management:</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications</p> <p>COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme To be developed.</p>

	<p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme To be developed.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:-</p> <p>COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme</p> <p>(i) To note details on the new COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme.</p> <p>(ii) To approve that officers work up proposed options and bring back a report to Members for discussion.</p>
5.2	<p>Request from Dungannon Enterprise Centre</p> <p>To consider correspondence from Mr Brian MacAuley on behalf of Dungannon Enterprise Centre Board, requesting Mid Ulster District Council to lease its site at Feeney’s Lane, Dungannon to the Centre for a 10 year period, for the purposes of developing the site as a semi-permanent outdoor space to hold initiatives and events.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 - COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Request from Dungannon Enterprise Centre – 7 Oct 2021</p>

COVID RECOVERY SMALL SETTLEMENTS REGENERATION PROGRAMME - DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER

Background

1. The issue of support for the physical regeneration of smaller, rural settlements i.e. those with population of under 5,000 people, arises on a regular basis. Historically, the Department for Communities' (DfC) and its predecessors' physical regeneration activities have been targeted within urban areas (settlements with a population of 5,000 and over). In 2016, the then Minister for Communities, Paul Givan, announced plans to extend this support to settlements with a population below 5,000. However, the Executive was then suspended meaning the additional budget was not secured. The proposal, consequently, did not proceed.
2. Earlier this year Minister Hargey wrote to Ministerial colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to secure their agreement to start the process of discussion around the focus, scope and format of a COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme. Developing and implementing a programme based on regenerating small settlements would complement the recently delivered COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme and provide a mechanism for investing in these areas to aid recovery from the pandemic. This paper sets out the key aspects of the proposed Programme.
3. It is intended that the proposed COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme would build upon the successful collaborative approach of the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme. This saw the three Departments contribute to the establishment of objectives, jointly fund and oversee the delivery the programme. Councils worked with stakeholders to identify priority projects for delivery on the ground.



Policy basis

4. DfC's Urban Regeneration and Community Development policy framework has as a core objective, the vision of creating urban centres which are sustainable, welcoming and accessible to live, work and relax. Aligned to achieving this objective, the Department has supported the delivery of a number of programmes across our towns and cities. These include revitalisation, public realm, urban development grants, and comprehensive development schemes.
5. The proposed COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme would aim to implement similar types of interventions in smaller settlements. Projects would aim to address identified need, and provide infrastructure that would service rural communities.
6. Similarly, DAERA has provided support for smaller settlements through initiatives including the Village Renewal Programme. This initiative provides infrastructural improvements such as enhanced public realm, better footpaths, street furniture and lighting, and public seating. Plans are developed by local stakeholder groups, in conjunction with DAERA and local Councils.
7. DfI is focussed on supporting projects that progress its policy objectives relating to active travel, promoting connectivity and access to services, and/or creating and enhancing green / blue spaces. Potential projects could include:
 - cycle tracks or lanes - including pop-up cycle lanes and creating space on pathways for cyclists;
 - pavement or footway widening to allow for physical distancing;
 - cycle parking and charging facilities;
 - connection pathways to access town centres the centre of settlements and key services – adapting existing routes and/or creating desirable new ingress and egress routes;
 - tree planting incidental to creating/improving walking or cycling paths; and
 - parklets, rain gardens, living roofs and living vertical gardens.



Programme principles

8. The overarching principles of the COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme are set out below:

- projects should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders;
- projects should be based on agreed local investment plans;
- projects should address specific local concerns and deliver specific, measureable benefits;
- programme parameters should be flexible enough to allow for the development of local solutions;
- the Programme can support new and innovative actions; and
- projects supported should include 'quick wins', delivering visible results within reasonable timescales.

Programme format

9. Responsibility for identifying project proposals within the rural settlement context would sit with each Council, and would reflect the priorities and opportunities identified at a local level. Key considerations in the development of projects for support would include the establishment of need that should be served, and the value for money case for the proposed actions. In developing any proposals for funding, Councils would be responsible for, where necessary, the appointment of an Integrated Consultancy Team, concept design (RIBA Design Stage 2), public consultation, securing planning permission, and the development of a business case.

10. While it is proposed that projects would be located within settlements with populations between 1,000 and 4,999, there will be no firm rule that precludes projects in settlements below the 1,000 threshold. This will provide maximum flexibility for councils to develop a balanced plan of investment in their areas and will not arbitrarily exclude viable projects which may be just under the threshold. However, all of the projects will need to demonstrate value for



money (VFM), and the VFM argument may be easier to make for larger settlements within these parameters.

Funding mechanism

11. It is proposed that funding would be channelled to councils under Section 29 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This approach was taken with the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme and previously by the Department in its response to the Bank Buildings Fire. It would provide flexibility for councils to begin project delivery quickly to meet the immediate needs of smaller settlements as they recover from the impact of the pandemic. It would also provide security and certainty to councils to allow them to develop investment plans aimed at supporting small settlements in a very different environment.

12. The intended process would be to engage with councils to set out the programme aims, assist them with establishing stakeholder fora, and develop investment plans for their areas. Draft plans would be assessed by a strategic oversight group, drawn from senior DfC, DAERA and DfI officials, with a view to issuing letters of offer to Councils to enable them, for projects that are well developed, to begin project delivery and incur spend immediately.

Programme funding

13. It is intended that the programme would commence in 2021/22 and run over 2 years. The quantum of this allocation will depend on funding that can be secured by Departments, but is indicatively estimated at £19.5m (DAERA £6.5m, DfC £6.5m, DfI £6.5m). Resource funding may also be available, but this has yet to be confirmed. It is anticipated that letters of offer could issue to councils in November/December.



14. Depending on the success of this programme, a possible follow up phase could be considered, building on experience gained and identified needs.
15. Councils will be expected to provide an element of funding support towards the programme. This can be capital or resource with a specified minimum of 10% of their investment plan cost.
16. The process for approving business cases for projects should be commensurate and proportionate with the scale of funding required. It is envisaged that any project costing in excess of £500,000 would require Departmental approval in line with existing approaches. Approval for smaller projects would be delegated to Councils to undertake, in line with established financial management processes and subject to test drilling by Departments.
17. As detailed above, the business case for funding the programme will be collaborative, setting out the aim to further policy objectives from all three policy departments.

Programme timeframes

18. As above, the programme is aimed at delivering projects that are already well developed and should result in positive, visible impacts in the short term. These projects should contribute to assisting small settlements recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and complement funding support already provided by the three Departments. It is envisaged that subject to Ministerial agreement, approval of a business case, and securing of funding, that the programme would be delivered over a 2 year period.

Delivery model

19. The delivery model for a COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme would replicate the approach taken for the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme, which has worked effectively and involves similar



stakeholder organisations and bodies. Indicative funding envelopes would be allocated to councils, and prioritised projects developed to reflect local need/demand.

20. Each Council would develop a “COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan” in consultation with key stakeholders from across the council area. A local stakeholder engagement forum should be established (if no suitable group is already in place) to inform this process and prioritise actions in line with agreed programme objectives.
21. DfC, DAERA, and DfI officials will support this process by engaging with stakeholder fora as they develop their Plans. This early engagement will help to determine whether a robust economic and policy case can be made, bringing into play the experience of officials. Each Council will submit a Plan for review by Directors from DfC, DAERA and DfI, to ensure deliverability and strategic fit with the programme, Departmental, and PfG outcomes, as well as other cross departmental initiatives such as the High Streets Taskforce.
22. In line with other funding programmes managed by departments, procurement and project delivery assurance will be sought from CPD, as has been provided in support of the COVID-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme. Preliminary engagement has already taken place and agreement reached for CPD to offer similar support and input as with the COVID Recovery Revitalisation Programme.

Indicative funding allocations per Council

23. Given the different policy focus of each department, a different approach to determine indicative funding allocations will be required. It is proposed that DfC and DfI allocations are based on populations between 1,000 and 4,999 within each council area. DAERA’s proposed approach is to base allocations on rural populations within each council area. An indicative breakdown of allocations to each council is shown in the table below.



Council area	DfC allocation (£)	DAERA allocation (£)	DfI allocation (£)	Total (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	140,139	333,953	140,139	614,411
Ards and North Down	661,673	349,039	661,673	1,672,385
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	1,013,089	962,965	1,013,088	2,989,142
Belfast	-	-	-	-
Causeway Coast and Glens	605,920	698,848	605,919	1,910,687
Derry City and Strabane	668,807	412,814	668,807	1,750,428
Fermanagh and Omagh	450,331	778,664	450,330	1,679,325
Lisburn and Castlereagh	669,464	460,002	669,465	1,798,931
Mid and East Antrim	651,187	510,534	651,187	1,812,908
Mid Ulster	663,120	973,983	663,120	2,300,223
Newry, Mourne and Down	976,270	1,019,198	976,272	2,971,740
	6,500,000	6,500,000	6,500,000	19,500,000

24. Given that Belfast City Council has a very small rural population (1,162), it would only attract an indicative allocation of around £11,000. It is therefore proposed to exclude the Council area from this programme as funding of this scale would not permit any substantive project to be funded.

25. DfI funding can only be allocated to projects where there is a clear connection to blue/green infrastructure, climate change outputs/outcomes. DfC and DAERA funding should be focussed on projects located within settlements with populations between 1,000 and 4,999. There will be no firm rule that precludes projects in settlements below the 1,000 threshold, however, as with all supported projects, alignment with programme outcomes and value for money must be demonstrated in investment plans and business cases.

Project Selection

26. Within the financial allocations as shown above, Councils would be responsible for identifying projects and establishing priority within their geographical areas. This process should be informed by the stakeholder engagement fora and



should show clear connections to the outcomes and objectives of the overall programme.

27. To guide project identification and development, DfC's urban regeneration project interventions include revitalisation, public realm, urban development grants, and comprehensive development schemes. Councils may wish to consider inclusion of similar types of projects and developing new innovative approaches to regeneration of their target settlement(s). However, the key regeneration objectives should still be the primary focus of interventions – creating vital and viable towns and villages that meet the needs of local citizens and the surrounding areas. Key outputs could include resident and visitor satisfaction with the appearance and environment of the townscape, civic pride, footfall, vacancy rates. The provision of large grant schemes, similar to those delivered under the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme, to individuals or businesses is not envisaged within this programme.

28. Some proposed objectives to cover DfI's policy interests, supporting active travel, promoting connectivity and access to services, and/or create and enhance green / blue spaces, for example could be drawn from the following exemplar project ideas:

- cycle tracks or lanes - including pop-up cycle lanes and creating space on pathways for cyclists;
- pavement or footway widening to allow for physical distancing;
- cycle parking and charging facilities;
- connection pathways to access town centres the centre of settlements and key services – adapting existing routes and/or creating desirable new ingress and egress routes
- tree planting incidental to creating/improving walking or cycling paths; and
- parklets, rain gardens, living roofs and living vertical gardens.



29. DAERA objectives for the programme could be drawn from the following high level policy areas:

Village investments emanating from the integrated village plans such as:

- derelict and vacant site enhancement;
- environmental improvements;
- conservation and upgrading of rural culture and heritage (natural and built); and
- gateway projects.

Proposed SMART objectives for the programme

30. The following SMART objectives are proposed for the programme:

- By December 2021, each district council will have established, or identified, a suitable stakeholder engagement forum to support the development and delivery of its Regeneration Plan.
- To agree a costed COVID Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Plan for each district council by March 2022.
- To support each district council to deliver its Regeneration Plan by March 2023.
- By March 2023, 70% of residents surveyed, in smaller settlements where projects have been delivered, agree that funded works would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area.
- By March 2023, 70% of people surveyed while using rural settlements where projects have been delivered for work, tourism or leisure, agree that the improvements to the area would encourage people to live, work, visit and invest in the area.
- By March 2023, attitudinal surveys completed by traders indicate that 70% believe that schemes funded through this Programme will have positively impacted on sales figures.
- By March 2023, attitudinal surveys indicate 40% of the public agree that projects supported would encourage people to change from car use to more environmentally friendly choices such as walking and cycling for journeys of under two miles.



- By March 2023, each Regeneration Plan will support projects which increase the use of land for active travel (i.e. extended footways, cycle ways, connecting pathways) which connects people with key services and ensures accessibility for all including those with disabilities.

APPENDIX 2

REQUEST FROM DUNGANNON ENTERPRISE CENTRE

From: Brian MacAuley <brian@dungannonenterprise.com>
Sent: 07 October 2021 10:57
To: Adrian McCreesh <Adrian.McCreesh@midulstercouncil.org>
Cc: Councillor W Cuddy <Walter.Cuddy@midulstercouncil.org>; Councillor D Molloy <Dominic.Molloy@midulstercouncil.org>; yvonne@outoftheboxconsulting.co.uk
Subject: Council Site on Feeney's Lane

FAO Adrian McCreesh

At the Dungannon Enterprise Centre Board meeting yesterday, it was agreed that I would write to the Council requesting that the Council lease its site on Feeneys Lane to the Centre for a 10 year period.

Dungannon Enterprise Centre's charitable mission is to support the economic development of the area through the fostering of profitable enterprises. The Board is very concerned that the town centre is facing very difficult economic times ahead and needs support from wherever it can get. The town centre retailing sector is suffering and it is our view that increased footfall and visitors to the town is a key part of the solution.

To that end, the Enterprise Centre would like to lease the land on Feeneys Lane, owned by the Council for a 10-year period, and develop the site as a semi-permanent outdoor space to hold initiatives and events that would attract local residents, visitors and shoppers back into the town. It would be intended to create a working group of the Enterprise Centre Board and co-opted traders to plan and manage the initiative and to source funding for the project.

As you are aware, the space is located adjacent to the Market Square and the entrance to the Hill of the O'Neil, and we believe the a comprehensive programme of events held on the Feeneys Lane site will enrich and compliment the Council managed events run throughout the year.

Considering that the town centre's is now recovering from two lockdowns, we would ask that the matter be brought to the Council for consideration as a matter of urgency.

Regards

Brian MacAuley (CEO)

Dungannon Enterprise Centre

2 Coalisland Road, Dungannon, BT71 6JT

+44 (028) 8772 3489

brian@dungannonenterprise.com

www.dungannonenterprise.com

www.purpledot.co.uk

Report on	Extension to Davagh Forest Service Level Agreement
Date of Meeting	Thursday 11th November 2021
Reporting Officer	Head of Parks
Contact Officer	Nigel Hill

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 review current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Broughderg Area Development Association to include caretaker and cleansing duties within the OM Visitor Centre.
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council Parks Service currently maintain seven Service Level Agreements with community based organisations in support of leisure and outdoor recreation services. The value of these service Level agreements range from £9,925 to £2,000 dependent on the scope of the services provided.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Mid Ulster District Council have maintained a Service Level agreement with Broughderg Area Development Association (BADA) since 2015. Cookstown legacy Council established the original SLA in 2013 with the community group to assist with outdoor/external operational maintenance activities at Davagh Forest in support of the developing visitor facilities on site. Mid Ulster District Council currently allocate £6,000 annually to Broughderg Area Development Association (BADA) for agreed services. The close working partnership is off significant benefit to council in terms of local community commitment, support and supervision of one of our most remote visitor attractions.
3.2	June 2021 finally welcomed the long awaited opening of the OM Dark Skies Park and Observatory in Davagh Forest. The following months have enabled council to monitor and assess customer facing, support systems, and associated resources that underpin daily service delivery within the Dark Sky Centre. Back house services that include caretaker and cleansing duties have been provided over this period by council's visitor advisor staff, an arrangement which has now been reviewed and recognised as unsustainable given the existing visitor servicing demands on the current staff compliment.

3.3	A proposal to extend the current services provided by Broughderg Area Development Association to include caretaker and cleaning duties within the centre was presented to the community group for consideration. The agreement would provide on-site support services on a daily basis equating to 11 hours per week on a flexible rota. The calculated cost of this service equates to £104.50 per week/ £5,434 per annum.
3.4	The proposal to extend current community SLA arrangements to include additional duties within the centre will result in a total annual SLA payment of £11,434.00 to Broughderg Area Development Association. Council review all Service Level Agreements annually based on interim performance indicators, this ensures that service level objectives meet with council's satisfaction and monitored continuously.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Sufficient Service Level Agreement contributions have been ring fenced within the current financial year 2021/22 to accommodate the extended service.
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policy and procedures
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policy and procedures
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policy and procedures
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members are asked to note the content of the report in relation to the extension of current duties and activities associated to the current Service Level Agreement with Broughderg Area Development Association.
5.2	Members approval is sought to extend on-site support services on a daily basis equating to 11 hours per week on a flexible rota. The calculated cost of this service equates to £104.50 per week/ £5,434 per annum.
5.3	Members approval is sought to amend the current annual Service Level Agreement with Broughderg Area Development Association to reflect a total annual SLA payment of £11,434.00 for services provided at davagh Forest and OM Dark Skies Park & Observatory.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	None

Report on	Greenlough Greenway Path Creation
Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	N Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	A Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Council approval to enter into nine Permissive Path Agreements with nine different landowners in relation to lands in and around Clady River, Inishrush and Greenlough for the creation of a path network, known as Greenlough Greenways.
2.0	Background
2.1	In 2016 Mid Ulster District Council granted were approached by Bann Valley Community Group to support the Community Group in the creation of a network of pathways along the Clady River. At this time approvals were granted, (Appendix Minute Ref D221/6).
2.2	Since 2016, 5 kilometres of circular walking trails along the Clady River, Inishrush and Greenlough have been created by the Community Group.
2.3	The Community Group wish to extend this by a further 2 kilometres and are continually working with the landowners to secure access (Appendix Map).
2.4	There is a data counter located on the walkway and approx 2,440 people use this pathway monthly according to records presented by the community group.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The 5 kilometre path network has been developed through the determined and dedicated efforts of the Bann Valley Community Group and the local landowners. In order to secure the longevity of the project the landowners have requested to enter into Public Path Agreements (PPA) with the Council. Thereby securing access to the pathway network should the community group for whatever reason cease to operate in the future.
3.2	Under a Permissive Path Agreement the landowner still owns the land however the Council is responsible for the maintenance and insurance of the pathway. Early discussions with the Community Group have indicated that they may be willing to

3.3	<p>enter into a Service Level Agreement with Council regarding future maintenance and inspection pathway network.</p> <p>There are nine landowners along the length of pathway. The next stage of the project is to secure landowner agreements through Council's Countryside Development Officer and legal team.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: There are no financial costs associated with the creation of the nine Permissive Path Agreement's.</p> <p>Estimated path maintenance costs of £4,000 requires to be budgeted within annual maintenance allocations.</p> <p>Human: Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.</p> <p>Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>Members approval is sought to enter into nine Permissive Path Agreements with nine landowners in relation to the development of the path network along the Clady River, Inishrush and Greenlough, known as Greenlough Greenways.</p>
5.2	<p>Members approval is sought to investigate the potential of establishing a service level agreement with Bann Valley Community Group. A future detailed report to be submitted to committee for consideration/ approval in due course.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix – Minute Ref D221/6 Appendix – Map of path network</p>

D221/16

Bann Valley Community Group

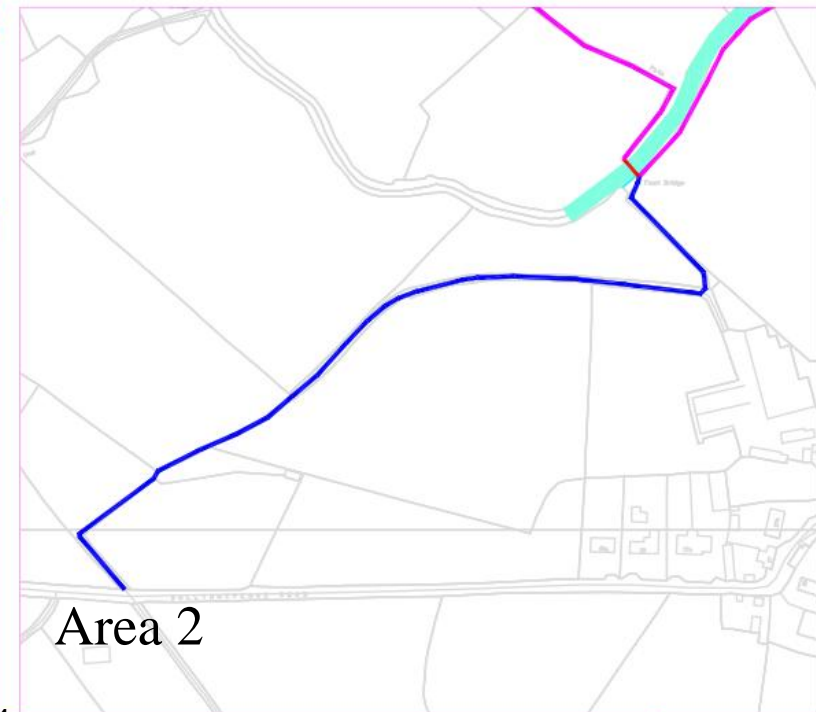
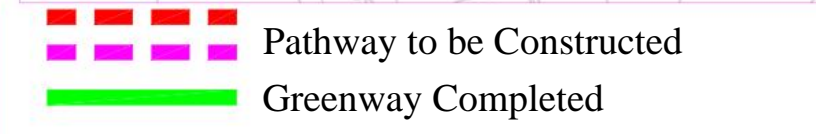
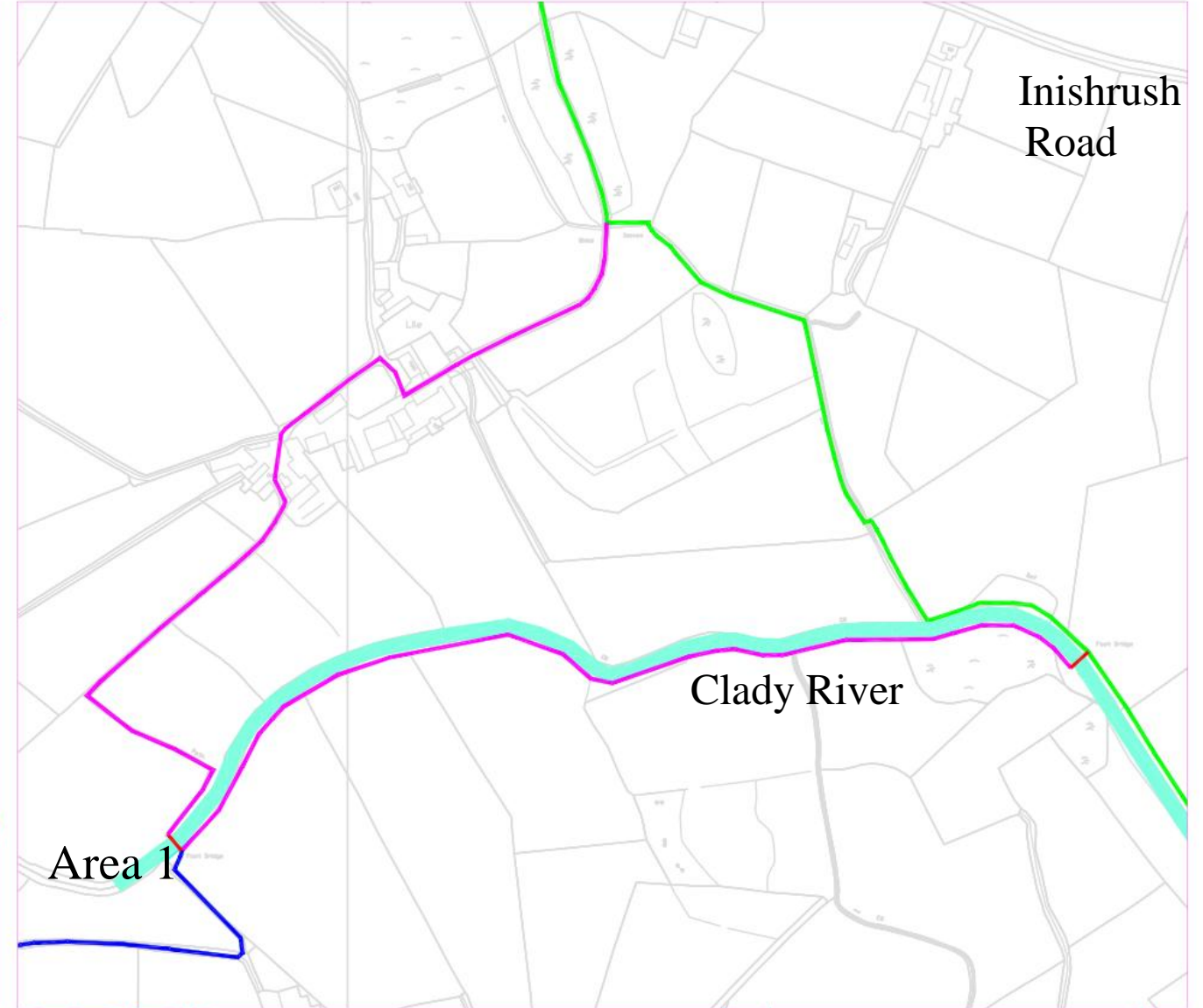
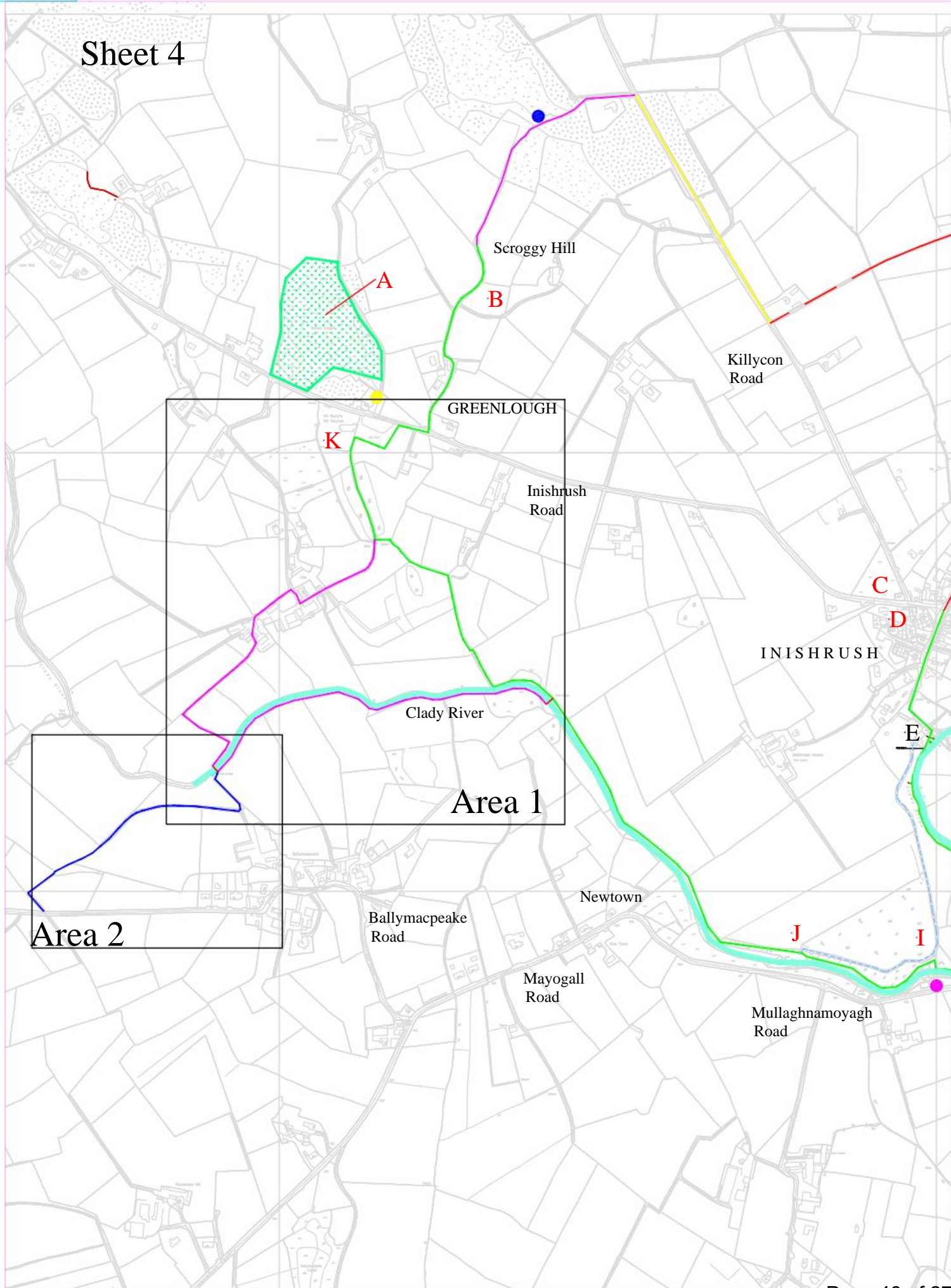
The Head of Parks drew attention to the previously circulated report to request that Bann Valley Community Group Project receive support from Mid Ulster District Council.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson

Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be granted subject to all formal landowner agreements and Letter of Offer conditions being met by the Bann Community Group, Mid Ulster District Council would support the request in the form of a conditional letter of commitment to manage and maintain the designated path for a period not in excess of ten years post project completion.

Sheet 4



NO.	REVISION	DATE

Client

Title
**Greenway - Phase 6 -
Footbridge to Footbridge**

FILE NO.	DESIGNED	date
DRAWN	CHECKED	date
TRACED	APPROVED	date
Dwg. No.	BD/GIG/06	
Scales	1:500	
		Revision

**BANN
DESIGN**

112 Inishrush Rd
Portlengone
Co. Antrim
BT44 8LG

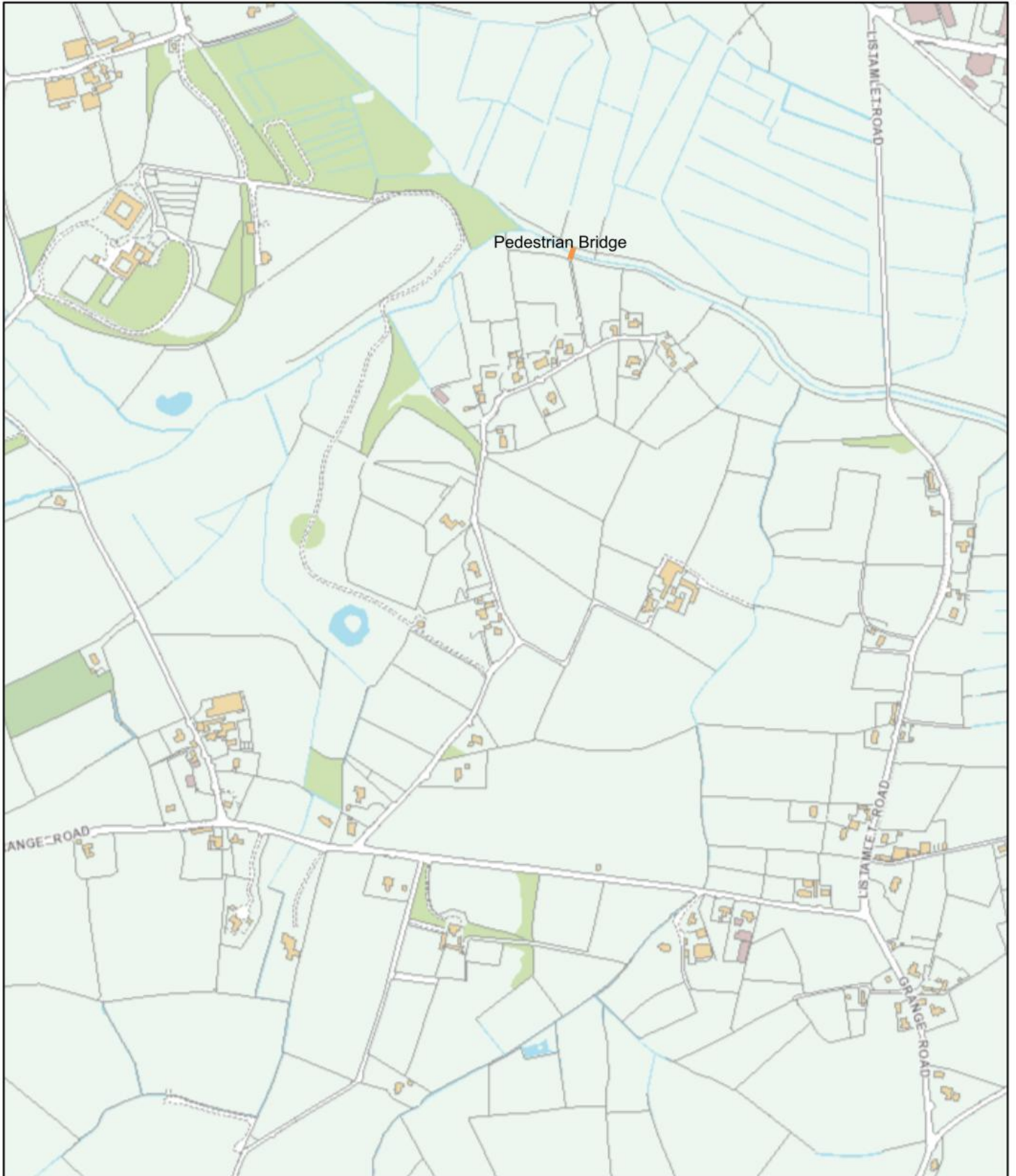
Report on	Pedestrian Bridge, Seyloran Land, Dungannon
Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th November 2021
Reporting Officer	Nigel Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	A H Reid

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 seek Council approval to accept the transfer of a pedestrian footbridge crossing the River Rhone from Seyloran Lane, Dungannon, from Department of Infrastructure (DfI).
2.0	Background
2.1	DfI contacted Council regarding the pedestrian bridge over the River Rhone, as shown in App 1, in late 2020. DfI believed that this pedestrian footbridge formed part of a Right of Way. Initial investigations, carried out by Council, confirmed that a pathway ran through these lands back to the early 1900s (OSNI historical 3 rd Edition 1900 – 1907). It should be noted that these are early investigations and that this path is not at this stage asserted as a public right of way under the Access to the Countryside Legislation (NI) 1983.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>DfI Rivers do not retain a remit to protect or manage Public rights of Ways, their role and responsibilities are listed below. The bridge at Seyloran Lane is serving no purpose to DfI Rivers. DfI Rivers have indicated that they would intend to remove the bridge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement sustainable flood risk management policies to facilitate development management and planning decisions. • reduce the number of properties currently at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea; • maintain flood defence and drainage infrastructure in a satisfactory condition; • maintain as necessary the designated watercourse network; • provide flood maps and risk information; • discharge our Lead Government Department responsibility of the co-ordination for the Emergency response to flooding incidents. • support and motivate all our people to achieve DfI Rivers' objectives; and • deliver quality services for our customers and stakeholders in a fair and equitable way.

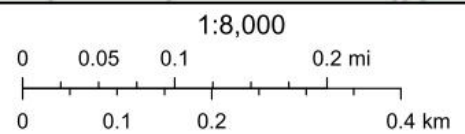
3.2	Following consultation with Council Officers, Dfl carried out repairs to the bridge, in early 2021 (Appendix).
3.3	A bridge survey was conducted, report attached in Appendix.
3.4	As the bridge serves no purpose to Dfl they have requested to transfer the foot bridge to Council for future maintenance and responsibility.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: There will be no cost associated with the transfer of the bridge
	Human: Officers time in preparing the transfer documents
	Risk Management: Significant repairs have been carried out and the bridge has been surveyed and deemed structurally safe.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members approval is sought for ownership transfer regarding the bridge at Seyloran Lane over the River Rhone from Dfl to Council.
5.2	Members approval is sought to further investigate existing and potential public access opportunities along the River Rhone, Seyloran and bring a public path proposal in due course for committee consideration.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix: Location Map Appendix: Engineer's Survey Report Appendix: Bridge Repairs

Seyloran Lane, Dungannon



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 Mid_Ulster_Boundary



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Your Ref

Our Ref: MU/SS/102

Date: 14th October '21

Email liam.oneill@fermanaghomagh.com



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hOmaí

Alison Mc Cullagh
Chief Executive

Building Control & Licensing

Re: Seyloran Lane Bridge

Further to previous correspondence and a subsequent site visit- with a representative from DfI Rivers in attendance- I wish to provide the following commentary.

As I understand, the Bridge was built some decades ago by the previous Dept. of Agriculture/Rivers Agency to provide pedestrian access on a right of way. It is a steel framed/ timber deck structure, 10m span x 1.5m wide.

Ref Figs 1 & 2 in Appendix A.

The steel beams, supporting the bridge decking, are in robust order, with no evidence of structural deterioration. The foundation blocks, supporting the structure, are also in robust order. The timber decking, however, does exhibit considerable structural deterioration – as may be expected with such material (Design life 15-20 years). A full replacement of the decking is required at this time. Also, some of the timber handrails/posts may merit replacement, due to their current condition.

PS A recent photo has been provided, showing full replacement of timber decking, with anti-slip central covering- provided by DfI Rivers, as I understand.

Liam O' Neill

MBA BSc CEng MICE MIEI

Chartered Engineer

14th October '21

Your Ref

Our Ref: MU/SS/102

Date: 14th October '21

Email liam.oneill@fermanaghomagh.com



Fermanagh & Omagh
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ComhairleCeantair
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Alison Mc Cullagh
Chief Executive

Building Control & Licensing

APPENDIX A

Your Ref

Our Ref: MU/SS/102

Date: 14th October '21

Email liam.oneill@fermanaghomagham.com



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District Council
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Fhear Manach agus na hOmaí

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Fig 1 Side elevation of Bridge

Your Ref

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Alison Mc Cullagh
Chief Executive

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Fig 2 Bridge decking (timber) deterioration

Seyloran Lane/ River Rhone Bridge Refurbishment Works completed by DfI Rivers 2021



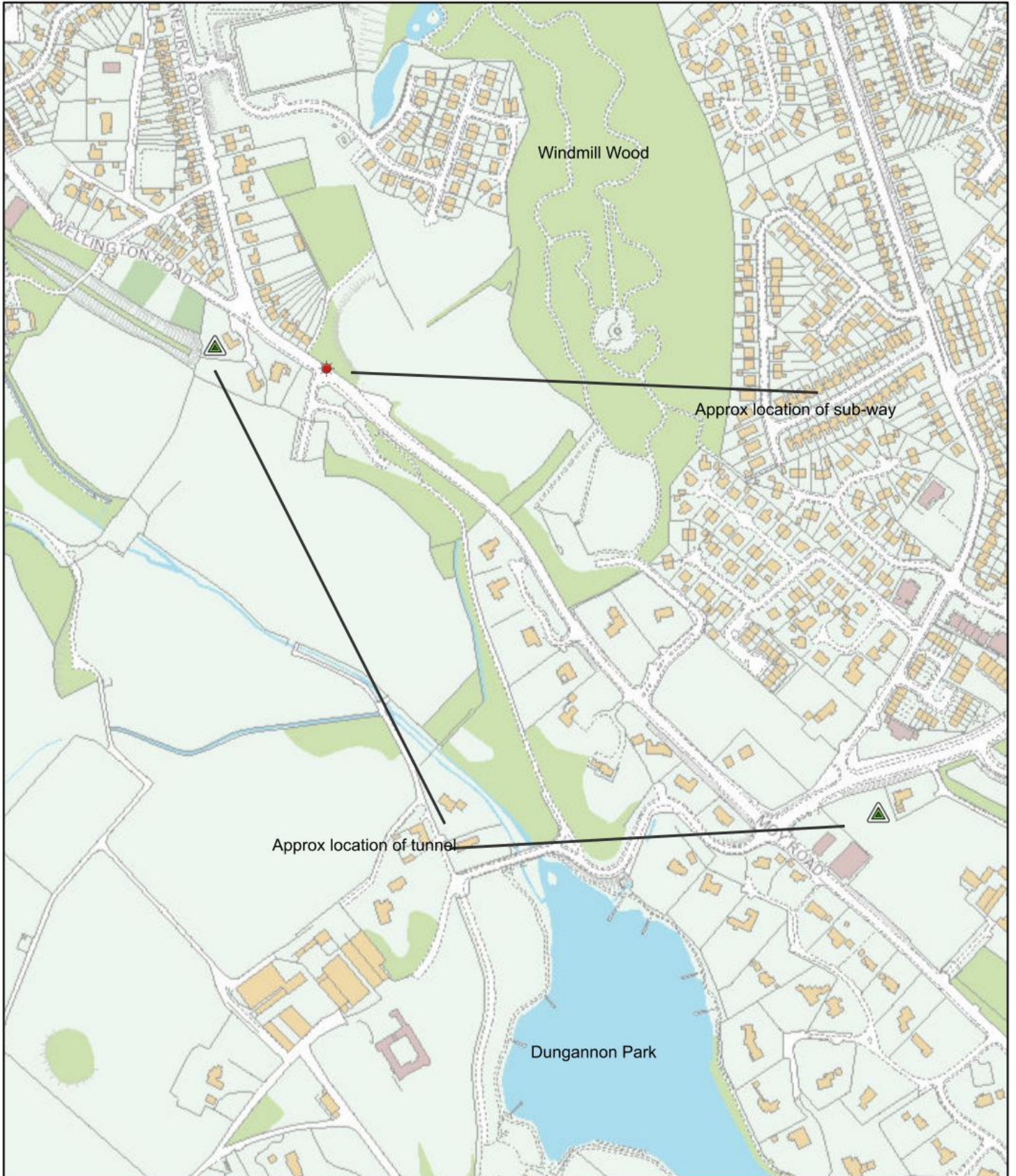
Report on	Feasibility study – Reopening disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes
Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	N Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	A Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

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

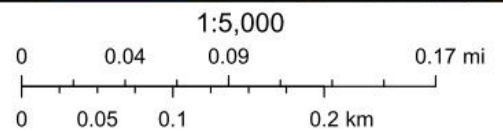
1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek Council approval to appoint a qualified consultancy to develop a feasibility study for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes (Appendix Map).
2.0	Background
2.1	The Portadown, Dungannon and Omagh Junction Railway opened a Dungannon in April 1858. In September 1961 the station was relocated as the line was extended to Omagh railway station completing the Portadown – Derry railway route that came to be known as 'The Derry Road'. In 1876 it was taken over by the Great Northern Railway and built a branch line from Dungannon to Cookstown in 1879. The line ceased to operate on 15 February 1965. A section of the now disused railway line tunnelled from Milltown through to lands adjacent to what is now Gortmerron link Road. The tunnel remains closed at both ends but is suggested to remain relatively intact.
2.2	Within the same proximity, OSNI Historical 2 nd Ed (1846 – 1862) maps further illustrates a short under pass/tunnel under the Moy Road. Historically this tunnel linked a private laneway, which ran from Northland House to Moygashel Mills. This tunnel has been recently reopened at one end by contractors (at Tunnel Lodge) to facilitate development.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Council wish to appoint a team of suitably qualified consultants to explore potential options to reopening these tunnels for public access and to provide off-road links to Dungannon's green spaces. Council Officers will investigate the potential to link the reopening of the tunnels to potential Active Travel projects, for the purposes of creating linkages to new and existing walking and cycling routes across the town.

3.2	The feasibility study will seek to research, consult, develop and advise council on the options to unlock the potential of the tunnel infrastructures and create the business case platform for an exciting subterranean access project. This has the potential to be a significant active travel asset for Dungannon town and railway enthusiasts nationwide.
4.0	Other Considerations
	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
4.1	<p>Financial: Feasibility study for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes estimated budget allocation £20,000.</p> <p>Budget identified under MUDC Capital Programme 2020-2024 as part of the Outdoor Recreation Strategy subject to Council approval of annual capital budget allocations.</p>
	Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members approval is sought to progress with the procurement and appointment of qualified consultancy to develop a Feasibility Study/Business Case for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes in conjunction with potential future Active Travel development opportunities for Dungannon town.
5.2	Members approval is sought for P&R committee approval for all identified capital expenditure associated to project as presented.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	App – OSNI Historical 2 nd Edition 1846 - 1862

Railway Tunnel & Sub-way Dungannon



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OSNI Historical 2nd Edition 1846 - 1862

Railway Tunnel

Sub-way Tunnel

Report on	Sports Representative Grants
Date of Meeting:	11 th November 2021
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Leigh Gilmore, Participation Manager Margaret McCammon, Community Development Officer

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 present to Members the proposed community grant allocations for the range of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports Representative Grant - Team and Individuals (October 2021)
2.0	Background
2.1	The Sports Representative Grants (Individual and Team) is a continuous rolling programme.
2.2	Previously in October 2021, Members approved the recommendation for the period September 2021.
2.3	Eligibility criteria compliance was completed by officers followed by grant programme assessment.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Detailed analysis of the proposed grant awards are attached with Appendix A for information.
3.2	Summary detail is as follows: The Sports Representative Grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Individual application was received during this period • 1 Team application was received during this period. • Proposal to award a total of £650 in respect of the above 2 applications.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: The Sports Representative Grant is a continuous rolling programme with an annual allocation for 2021/2022 of £15,000; however £8,000 was allocated in June 2021 to Small Sports Grants leaving a revised budget of £7,000.

	£2,275 was approved in September, £1,650 In October leaving a balance of £3,075. Should the grants recommendations contained within this report be approved, £2,425 remains available to be allocated for the remainder of this financial year until March 2022.
	Human: Officer time.
	Risk Management: In line with Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this report and give approval for the sports grant allocations as recommended within this report.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix A: Grant recipients and amount of grant award.

Appendix A: Grant recipients and amount of grant award.

Sportsperson Representative on eligible cost to a max of £250

Name		Project Title	Amount Requested	Band	Amount Awarded
Lara	Scott	FIG Trampoline & Gymnastics World Age Group Competition	£2,180	1	£250
Total					£250

Band	Amount
1	£250.00
2	£225.00
3	£200.00
4	£175.00
5	£150.00

Sports Representative on eligible cost to a max of £500

Name		Project Title	Amount Requested	Band	Amount Awarded
Erins Own Lavey GAC, U15 Hurlers		Feile na nGael Finals (74)	£2,800	3	£400
Total					£400

Band	Amount
1	£500.00
2	£450.00
3	£400.00
4	£350.00
5	£300.00

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council
held on Thursday 14 October 2021 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road,
Magherafelt and by Virtual Means**

Members Present

Councillor Molloy, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Black (7.30 pm), Burton, Clarke*, Corry*,
Cuddy, Doris*, Elattar*, Kerr*, McNamee, Milne*, Monteith*,
Quinn*, Wilson

**Officers in
Attendance**

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Ms Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment
Mr Browne, Head of Tourism
Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing
Mr Hill**, Head of Parks
Ms Linney**, Assistant Director of Development, Strategic
Community Development
Mr McCance, Head of Culture & Arts
Ms McKeown**, Assistant Director of Economic
Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes
Mr Clarke**, Community Development Manager
Mr O'Hagan**, Head of ICT
Mrs Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

**Others in
Attendance**

Councillor Gildernew***
Councillor S McGuigan***

Deputation – South Tyrone Empowerment Project
Ms Bernadette McAliskey***

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Cllr Molloy in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

D171/21 Apologies

Councillor Hughes.

D172/21 Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Molloy reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest.

The Chair declared an interest in agenda item 9– Cycling Ireland Regional Cycle Hubs as he was a member.

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in agenda item 10 – Swim Ulster as he was involved in that.

D173/21 Chair’s Business

The Chair advised that item 14 Community Development report would now be taken for Decision immediately after item 11 Cahore Playing Fields, Draperstown.

The Chair referred to letter received by members from an Event Promoter in relation to an event at the Hill of The O’Neill requesting that it be raised at tonight’s meeting. He advised that the matter had now been raised and referred to the relevant Officers for consideration and take forward.

D174/21 Deputation – South Tyrone Empowerment Project

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Bernadette McAliskey from South Tyrone Empowerment Project and invited her to make her presentation.

Ms McAliskey thanked the committee for giving her the opportunity to present to the meeting tonight. She provided an overview of the service provision provided by STEP – MIDUS (Mid Ulster Advice Services from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2021 (appendix).

She advised that MIDUS undertook to provide across all 5 levels of advice provision: Basic access to information; Interpretation of information; Assistance to act on information; Advocacy and representation and Challenging Policy. She said that the total number of unique individuals over the period from 1 April to 30 September 2021 ranged to 7,000 plus. The welfare topic/issue ranged from: Welfare benefits, debt management plans, housing, immigration, legal rights, family issues, employment rights, education advice, health and mental health, tax and consumer rights. Client feedback resulted in 96% satisfaction with support received and 87% satisfaction with outcome.

She advised that STEP also provided: Internal referral to and from MIDAS to: Welfare Reform and Debt Advice; Homeless Support; Family Support; Access to Crisis Hardship/Prevention of Destitution Funds; Immigrant and Migrant Work Integration Support.

The Chair thanked Ms McAliskey for her presentation and said that it was good to hear some of the feedback and as elected representatives, there was nothing in the report which was a surprise when dealing with people in need on a daily basis. He stated that the last 18 months had been extremely trying for society in general and where possible to lend a hand or give advice really helped people.

Ms McAliskey thanked members for giving her the opportunity to make her presentation tonight and said that if any Councillor needed to contact the organisation with any kind of query that she and her staff would always be happy to help out in any way that could.

Councillor Black entered the meeting at 7.30 pm.

The Chair thanked Ms McAliskey for attending tonight and she withdrew from the meeting at 7.31 pm.

Matters for Decision

D175/21 Economic Development OBFD

The Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes presented previously circulated report to provide members with an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council:

(i) Social Enterprise NI: Council Membership 2021/22

Resolved To approve that Mid Ulster District Council subscribe to become a member of Social Enterprise NI at a cost of £800.

(ii) Christmas Off Street Car Parking Charges Dungannon & Magherafelt

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

Resolved To approve the temporary reduced tariff for the first 3 hours of 10 pence in all Off Street Pay & Display Car Parks in Dungannon and Magherafelt from Saturday 20 November 2021 to Saturday 1 January 2022 (6-week period) at a cost of £23,400.

D176/21 Update on Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme 2021/22

The Head of Culture & Arts presented previously circulated report and sought approval for the following:

- (i) Provide members with an update on the 2021/22 Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Funding Programme
- (ii) Provide members with the list of projects approved for funding by Department for Communities
- (iii) Seek approval to set up specific finance codes to incur expenditure for each project where required

- (iv) Seek approval to utilise the approved Council framework Contractors where required
- (v) Seek approval to initiate a tender process to appoint a suitably qualified Contractor to install automated doors at the five locations as identified within section 3 of this report

Councillor Doris said that she was happy to propose the recommendations and commended the great work which has been carried out, but was also aware of still more work to be done. She also wished to commend Department for Communities and Sinn Féin Minister, Deirdre Hargey for the huge investment in helping to progress this.

She referred to the report being raised later in the meeting in on what she had asked for back in July in relation to leisure services and stated that there has been great work being done even more than she was aware of. She said that it would be important for the Communications team to highlight this all over social media and any other avenues in making it known of what facilities which will be there and were there for people with additional needs.

Councillor Kerr stated that he would be happy to second the recommendations and also agreed that there was great feedback being received on the report. He said that there was a great need for facilities for disabled and autistic children throughout the Council facilities. He referred to 3.11 of the report in relation to the purchase of accessible picnic tables and enquired if these would be wheelchair friendly.

The Head of Culture & Arts clarified that the picnic tables would be wheelchair accessible to allow families to sit together around the table.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council:

- (i) **Provide members with an update on the 2021/22 Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Funding Programme**

Noted.

- (ii) **Provide members with the list of projects approved for funding by Department for Communities**

Noted.

- (iii) **Seek approval to set up specific finance codes to incur expenditure for each project where required**

Resolved That approval be given to setting up specific finance codes to incur expenditure for each project where required.

- (iv) **Seek approval to utilise the approved Council framework Contractors where required**

Resolved That approval be granted to utilise the approved Council framework Contractors, where required to deliver the projects identified.

- (v) **Seek approval to initiate a tender process to appoint a suitably qualified Contractor to install automated doors at the five locations as identified within section 3 of this report**

Resolved To initiate a tender process to appoint a suitably qualified Contractor for the installation of automated door at the five locations identified (Mid Ulster Sports Area, Maghera Leisure Centre, Cookstown Leisure Centre, Greenvale Leisure Centre and Tobermore Golf Centre.

D177/21 Lough Neagh Partnership Core Funding 2021/22

The Head of Tourism presented previously circulated report to approve annual contribution for year 2021/22 towards the core running costs associated with Lough Neagh Partnership (LNP) in the delivery of marketing tourism, recreational, environmental and heritage activities on Lough Neagh (LN) and the shoreline on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve that:

- (i) Mid Ulster District Council fund Lough Neagh Partnership £22,000 as requested subject to funding being secured from all five Councils on the shores of Lough Neagh.
- (ii) Lough Neagh Partnership submit a quarterly update to MUDC.

Councillor Kerr said that he was glad to see reference being made to Coalisland Great Places Project as a great deal of work has been done in the area including its industrial heritage.

He referred to section 6 of the report – NIEA Shoreline Plan and enquired if there were any more specific details regarding the project or would this be brought to a future meeting. He said that a lot of Lough Neagh falls within his own DEA and would be very interested in seeing what projects were coming forward for proposal.

The Head of Tourism anticipated that a report would be bought to committee before Christmas on Lough Neagh.

D178/21 Sports Representative Grants

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing presented previously circulated report to present to members the proposed community grant allocations for the range of Sports Representative Grants – Team and Individuals (September 2021).

The Chair wished to pass on his congratulations to one of the recipients Darren Rafferty who recently became Irish Junior Champion for time-trial and road racing.

Councillor Ashton said that she would be happy to propose the adoption but sought clarification on the grant aid programme and whether it was anticipated to be spent within this financial year or was there going to be any underspend.

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing advised that currently there was a balance of £4,725 and had seen an increase in the amount of submissions this last few months as we arise out of the Covid restrictions. At this moment in time it was anticipated that funding would most likely be spent by the year end.

Councillor Ashton advised as it was coming near the time for looking and reviewing budgets and although she took into consideration the amounts which were being awarded to the recipients which go out and represent this area, but felt it may be worthwhile looking at a grants reallocation review if there was an overspend within other sports areas.

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing said that he would investigate the matter.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That it be recommended to approve the Sports Grant Allocations to the value of £1,650.00 as recommended within the report.

D179/21 Cycling Ireland Regional Cycle Hubs

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing presented previously circulated report advising that the Membership Development Officer for the Ulster Branch of Cycling Ireland has contacted Mid Ulster District Council with a proposal to establish a Regional Cycling Hub in the District

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the report and to approve the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that will seek to establish a Cycling Ireland Hub at a suitable location within the Dungannon area and for Council to meet the costs of the initial enabling works and ongoing annual cost of electricity supply.

D180/21 Swim Ulster

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing presented previously circulated report to advise that the Operations Manager at Swim Ireland had contacted Mid Ulster District Council with concerns over current pricing mechanisms for bookings across the Districts three swimming pools. The purpose of this report is to outline the current pricing costs for swimming club/organisation bookings across all Mid Ulster District Council Leisure sites and give consideration to an amended rate.

He outlined 3 options for consideration:

- (a) Do Nothing** – this option would maintain the status quo in line with the pricing rates as previously approved in February 2021. Swim Ulster have advised they would find it difficult to maintain current operations within the district if they were to pay these rates therefore potential loss of income and/or reduction in coaching hours/pool bookings based on Swim Ulster's available budget. Potential impact to the 3 x Mid Ulster District based swim clubs and clubs within neighbouring Councils.
- (b) To offer Swim Ulster the same price that local clubs avail off** - instead of working towards the approved pricing of £25.00 per lane (25m) and £40.00 per lane (50m) then adopt the local club rate of £7.90 per lane price. Whilst this would be acceptable to Swim Ulster, it may bring pressure from other club groups including those that reside outside the District who appear content with the rates. Potential loss of up to £4.3k - £4.9k per annum in income based on current Swim Ulster rates. Concerns that this loss in income may not be able to be realised elsewhere during this period of recovery from the Covid pandemic.
- (c) Hybrid approach to Swim Ulster Pricing** – 18 out of the 48 weekly spaces for specialised Swim Ulster coaching is currently apportioned to the 3 x Mid Ulster District based swim clubs therefore a direct benefit of Governing Body support to residents in our District. This equates to 37.5% of total spaces.

Officers have pressed Swim Ulster to make available more coaching spaces for Mid Ulster District residents therefore Swim Ulster have committed to working towards making available 24 out of the 48 weekly spaces (50%) available to the 3 x Mid Ulster District based swim clubs over the next 12 months and putting support in place with the 3 x clubs to help them achieve this.

Additionally Swim Ulster would seek to hold at least two skills camps in the Mid Ulster area per year. (Holiday time).

Therefore propose to offer the same percentage discount to Swim Ulster charges to recognise the benefit of this coaching provision for local swimmers within the Mid Ulster District area, i.e. £12.50 (25m) and £20 (50m).

This would be more in line with what other Council's charge. Whilst there would be a decrease in income, approx. £2.7k-£3k per annum, it would not be as severe as option B and the non-monetary benefit is increased provision for Mid Ulster District residents.

Councillor McNamee enquired how much it would cost to use Greenvale Leisure Centre.

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing advised that this would work out at roughly £12.50 a lane/per hour for 25m and £20 a lane/per hour for 50m.

Proposed by Councillor Clarke
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to progress with Option C as detailed within Section 3.10 of this report.

D181/21 Cahore Playing Fields, Draperstown

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing presented previously circulated report to provide an update to Members on a leasing proposal for Cahore Playing Fields, Draperstown and seek approval to proceed following an expression of interest process.

Councillor Elattar said that she would like to propose to accept the recommendation as it seemed to be the sensible approach as money needed to be spent to bring pitches up to standard, with the leasing arrangement allowing the cost to be recouped in a relatively short period by Council. This also allowed local clubs to take over the responsibility of the pitches which would benefit the local community as a lot of important work was carried out by these clubs in all areas of community of life.

Councillor Cuddy said that it seemed a very complicated process and couldn't understand why the Council just did not step out and let the two clubs talk to the landowner directly and progress on that way. He said that it was suggested that it would take £55k to upgrade the pitches before it was passed over which seemed very complicated. He was aware of Dungannon United Youth and Dungannon Thomas Clarkes having their own issues going through and felt that any public organisation needed to have policies in place in the event of the wheels starting to come off and felt that Council were stepping outside policies which may become very difficult and unhelpful for the clubs. He said that he appreciated that the two clubs were providing fantastic services to the area but felt there was a need to keep this as tidy as possible. He enquired if there was a possibility of Council signing this over to the Clubs without the expense so they could actually draw down funding themselves as a clear and transparent way forward should be shown to any club to help them as much as possible. He stated although there was no capital building project, £55k was still going to be spent and felt that the Property team would have been involved in this as they had a lot of experience on projects delivering onsite work, being able to follow it though and knowing how things would play out in the future. In his opinion there was a certain amount of risk involved and although he would like to see this progress, it was vital that it went through the proper channels and policies of this organisation otherwise it was going to end in tears.

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing advised that there was an arrangement with the landlord until 2043 which was an obligation and a responsibility for the Council while in that lease. He said that whilst £55k would be referred to the Policy & Resources Committee, it would be an initial spend of £33.5k for one pitch. He said that the purpose of this lease would help enable and build capacity within the local community to prove tenure and a pitch that would allow them to bid them into future grant programmes which could potentially bring a floodlit 3G to the local area for use of local clubs. He stated that with or without the lease and having gone through the Pitches Strategy at the minute and working away through that, the Council has an obligation to that community facility in terms of upgrade and whether a lease progressed or not it was highly likely the Council would have to spend money for improvement works for the two pitches in any case.

The Strategic Director of Environment referred to comment regarding Council stepping outside policy and advised that Officers were working within the remit of Council policy. She advised that the pitches at the aforementioned location was substandard particularly the soccer pitch and Gaelic pitch with work done previously by legacy Magherafelt Council on one but the other two pitches were very waterlogged and needed work to be carried out on them. She concurred with the Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing comment regarding work needing completed whether the lease goes ahead or not as there was an obligation to carry out this work over the next number of years. She also agreed with the Assistant Director in regards to his comment regarding one of the football clubs having an opportunity to apply for funding and if they were successful then the Council wouldn't undertake to carry out the work on that pitch as it would be done as part of their application which would give them an opportunity to invest and grow the club in that particular area. She stated that there was a lot of requests coming in from football clubs as some of the pitches were substandard and there was an onus on Council to make them fit for purpose before signing them over to anyone else and significant investment made. She said that the club were currently applying for funding and needed proof of tenure and this was why it was effectively being brought forward. In the event of them not having a pitch tenure, they would not be able to apply for funding which would potentially be available to them.

Councillor McNamee seconded the proposal and agreed with the previous Officers as the Council would be leasing this pitch for a good few years to come and money needed to be spent on upgrades to provide pitches for the people of the area which we were providing for at the minute. He said that it would be unwise to do what Councillor Cuddy was suggesting to pull the rug from under the clubs and allow them to negotiate which was unfair as there had been a similar situation in Cookstown where the Beechway facility was offered to Cookstown Youth with pitches being maintained every year and feels that this issue should be similar.

Councillor Wilson referred to Councillor McNamee's remark and advised that the Council owned a piece of ground at Beechway and even though it was a housing executive owned, the Council had a very long lease which was slightly different in what was being dealt with here. He stated if the pitches had to be brought up to speed, his concern would be that this was brought before committee in February and a report in front of members tonight to go ahead with this, but he had raised an issue about another sporting facility and it has never reached this table which made him wonder and said that he would leave it at that.

Councillor Cuddy advised that although the report was brought in February, the deputation was in last month. He said that it would be great to see it being delivered and was not against the project and important that facilities were there throughout the district and remarked about a comment being made about the club wishing to submit an application for funding for a 3G pitch and enquired why £55k was going to be spent on a pitch when it was anticipated to turn it into a 3G pitch in the not too distant future. He said that it was great to see funding being allocated to soccer, Gaelic and rugby pitches etc. but was more concerned about what happens down the line and sitting here in a year's time or less where the same club will be coming forward again seeking the Council's Technical team to deliver on a significant project. He stated that he wasn't against the proposal but felt that there was an onus on Council to be cautious due to what could happen in the future for example a mistake being made resulting in a lot of expense for Council. He said that the

Council's Capital team were stretched at the moment and going down this path was a possible serious issue for the Council in the future. He concluded by saying that he wouldn't be voting against the two clubs getting what they required, but his issue would be the process and wished to see an even approach for everyone.

The Chair advised that he was sure the Officers had taken consideration of Councillor Cuddy's remarks.

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing referred to process and mechanism and advised members that there was a workshop coming up in a few weeks' time regards the Pitch Strategy which was all building towards an investment plan with members approval hopefully which would set out a process for the next number of years for all pitches across the district – football, Gaelic, rugby, hockey and bowling. In relation to process and mechanism it has been understood from the formation of Mid Ulster District Council that all of the pitches over all the different sporting codes with little or no investment from year to year, outside of routine maintenance or additional monies or funding being leveraged in would be investigated. He said that hopefully over the coming months there would be an opportunity to nail down that mechanism and process that would hopefully see it prioritise an investment plan over the next number of years.

Councillor Elattar stated that the Officers had outlined very clearly why there was a need to go forward with this now and appreciated what Councillor Cuddy had said about not voting against it as these pitches in Cahore were not fit for purpose. She advised that people could be knee deep in water with the soccer teams having to travel sometimes to Dungiven to be able to play matches and further afield as they cannot access the pitches which were meant to be used. She agreed money needed to be spent on these pitches whether or not the lease goes ahead but this lease would allow for the clubs to apply for outside funding which would be able to add to what these pitches offer and would be a good thing for Council and the local community as a whole.

Councillor McNamee advised that the landlord was open to extending the lease.

Proposed by Councillor Elattar
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve that Officers:

- 1) Proceed to progress to the next stage by drafting, agreeing and executing terms with the successful submissions in line with LPS valuations for pitch 1, 2 and 3 for a period of 25 years with option to extend
- 2) Proceed to engage with the landlord and extend the term where relevant to ensure agreements are co-terminus
- 3) Assign a rental value of £1,000 per annum to the pavilion for a separate keyholding agreement – subject to annual review and monitoring
- 4) Refer upgrade costs to the Policy and Resources Committee for a budget allocation of £55,000.

Councillor Burton enquired if there had been any contact with Caledon Football Club and asked if the committee would agree to issue a letter to them. She said that this was a similar situation as there was a blockage in a pipe which was waterlogging their pitch also

which resulted in it being awkward for the youth wing to play as there was a need to support them.

Councillor Burton advised that she would send on the relevant details to the Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing to investigate a possible way forward.

D182/21 Community Development

The Assistant Director presented previously circulated report to provide an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

- Community Grants - to agree the rolling grant awards - Local Community Festivals, Good Relations and Decade of Anniversaries
- Capital Discretionary Grants – to approve the capital discretionary grant
- Emergency Support funding – to approve the venue/facility funding support
- Community Development - to update on Community Development

(i) Community Grants - Local Community Festivals, Good Relations and Decade of Anniversaries

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve grant award recommendations outlined in Appendix 1.

(ii) Capital Discretionary Grants

Councillor Cuddy enquired about the process for the discretionary grant and enquired does a recipient receive £50k or nothing.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that the award was for £50k to a group with a project at a minimum value of £300,000 and this allowed the group to proceed. She noted this was the only group who applied to the grant that was in a position and ready to proceed with their project. The officers continue to work with the other projects and the grant will open again next year, pending members approval re the budget. She said that only one group was at a state of readiness with a minimum of £300k project which allowed them to receive a £50k contribution from Council to help them achieve their project.

Councillor Cuddy said that this was a quick turnaround after the group providing their presentation to committee last month and having it delivered this month.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that one of the conditions was that the group applying for funding had to provide a presentation to committee and this was arranged last month. Officers have been working with the group since they submitted their application earlier in the year when the grants were opened. She stated that the ongoing process allowed for Officers checking the group's business plan, site visits, meeting re the project criteria, with the final part of the process being a presentation to committee due to the size of the investment by Council.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve Capital Discretionary Grants award of £50,000 based on successful applications to the grant programme.

(iii) Emergency Support funding

Councillor Monteith referred to 3.3 and said that it was something that he would be happy to support and move forward with and enquired if this was open to any voluntary group or for any group which didn't receive any kind of support in the past.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that it was open to any voluntary & community group which takes part in delivery of community development activity in the district and is based on being not for profit, community constitution and volunteering.

Councillor Monteith sought clarification on what the difference was on the facilities grant and the one we currently do.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that the one which was given to venues was for overheads and contribution to maintenance, and this one allowed for wider spend on wider community facilities opening up. She said that the allocation from DFC was £134k and it was stipulated that this was for opening up for the community and not just reacting to community emergency issues. It was to take on board social distancing or the need for an extra toilet in a facility. She said although it was small amounts of money, it tied in with other similar funds at this time to allow groups to undertake this type of activity. She confirmed that this was for community development facilities only, and not just for the 44 venues that come forward under the venues grant.

Councillor Monteith said that he would be happy to propose and referred to the Community Development Programme and Anti-Poverty issues. He asked that the Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development engage with some of the local schools on issues which they were facing in relation to Universal Credit – free school meals and funding. He said that funding depended on free school meals and pupils in the school, but with the £20 reduction it's omitting a lot of people out of Universal Credit and felt that this was going to cause havoc with a lot of the schools funding and a huge hole in schools budgets.

He proposed that the Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development make contact with local schools and take forward with the Department for Education on issues relating to reduction of Universal Credit on funding for schools. Also the whole funding mechanism for funding for schools needs to be looked at as it was a complete farce for people living in poverty in order to provide an education for their children. The situation is the more children a school has in poverty, the better budget they get and surely this should not be the way to move forward in the future as there was an onus to keep people out of poverty, not to keep them in it to keep the schools open.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Monteith's comments and stated that the same sentiments had been raised with him also.

Councillor Kerr agreed with Councillor Monteith and stated that he had also been contacted by parents and teachers as the £20 was a major lifeline to some families and to see the Tory Government withdraw it was quite ironic when there was a Tory MP complaining about seeking a pay-rise when he was earning in excess of £80k. He felt that these types of people were disillusioned and not au fait with hardship and dealing with low and economical issues.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council:

- (i) To approve to approve the venue/facility funding support.
- (ii) That the Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development make contact with local schools and take forward with the Department for Education on issues relating to reduction of Universal Credit having on funding for schools.

(iv) Community Development

Noted.

Matters for Information

D183/21 Special Development Committee Minutes of Meeting held on 2 September 2021

Members noted Special Development Committee Minutes of Meeting held on 2 September 2021.

D184/21 Minutes of Development Committee held on 16 September 2021

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 16 September 2021.

Councillor McNamee enquired about the current status of the 5 Year Play Park Strategy and the roll out of Year 1.

The Head of Parks advised that all proposals had been submitted in relation to the 5 Year Play Park Strategy. He advised that Procurement department had received a number of interested companies through the framework with regard to Expressions of Interest and were now in the process of uploading our tender specification onto the framework with regard to the actual process of preparing the submissions from the companies. He confirmed that things had progressed with the initial stages of the 5 Year Strategy.

Councillor Kerr referred to D163/21 – Washingbay Walkway and advised that he still hadn't received an update. He said that he raised this issue at last month's Development Committee meeting and also at full Council and was extremely disappointed.

He also referred to D160/21 – Economic Development report and alluded to comments made by Councillor Monteith and the Chair regarding the shortage of haulage drivers which was affecting Ireland. He asked if it would be possible to liaise with local secondary schools, colleges and representatives from local haulage industries to see what the Council could do as a local authority to try and entice young people, people on low income or unemployed to become HGV drivers to try and take a new approach on the issue as there was huge shortcomings of recruitment into the industry.

He felt that due to a huge shortage of HGV drivers regionally, the Council should be exploring heavily subsidised lessons and testing for young people and unemployed as every other trade had funded courses, so why not haulage as it was an expensive endeavour beyond many.

Councillor Monteith referred to item D158/21 in relation to Christmas Events and ongoing issues in Dungannon.

He said that every single day there seemed to be a new company opening up roads, blockages and temporary traffic lights and said that Dungannon is a complete and utter mess currently with traffic works on almost every main road in around the town, housing estates/developments. He stated that people were bemused with the digging up of footpaths and was aware of one footpath being dug up every week for four weeks by four different organisations which was scandalous. He said that Council were trying to encourage traders and run events which looked like a ring of steel trying to get into the town in relation to temporary traffic lights and road works which was farcical.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith

That a Dungannon DEA meeting be held with the upmost urgency with Road Officials and with whatever companies that's responsible for road works. Officers to investigate concerns beforehand rather than waiting for full Council endorsement.

He said that our Economic Development team and Councillors needed to see Road Service and Utility Companies responsible around the table as no-one can give him a straight answer on why this was happening right now, week on week leaving housing estates and footpaths in a complete mess, with construction debris being left lying around the streets and was sure that other members maybe also getting complaints.

He felt that this issue needed to be taken very seriously otherwise there was going to be a very disappointing Christmas for the traders of Dungannon as people will not make their way into town whilst they have to face this onslaught on a daily basis at the minute.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy seconded Councillor Monteith's proposal.

He said that it was ridiculous to see the destruction caused by these road works on people's daily lives, being hemmed in, not getting in or out and no disabled access along footpaths and agreed that this was an upmost urgency.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that a Dungannon DEA meeting be held with the upmost urgency with Road Officials and Utility Companies which were responsible for road works. Officers to investigate concerns beforehand rather than waiting for full Council endorsement.

Councillor Wilson advised that this same issue was also raised at the Environment meeting on Tuesday night past by Councillor Cuthbertson where it was agreed that this be the same process. He said that he also had received complaints regarding this and that a road in Cookstown had also been closed for a fourth time which was outrageous. Last Monday Cookstown DEA held a meeting with Gas to the West contractors regarding the road closure to make their feelings known although he would be unsure whether Councillors concerns were listened to or not. He stated that the contractors had alluded to a huge push being put on as there was a moratorium by the end of November as they could not continue on with works after this date and agreed with previous proposal to get them in front of us.

Councillor Cuddy said that he agreed with the sentiments of the previous speakers.

He advised that Councillor Wilson referred last month to SGN who were targeting Cookstown and Dungannon areas and mostly businesses foremost. He said that quite a few residents had applied online within different areas but very few people seem to be able to get connected to the gas and felt that this was the first organisation who came and started to dig up the roads and footpaths several years ago. He said that last month it was suggested that the Council organise a meeting or source information to see how many residents actually connected up as traders and people who utilise the town could understand it better if they could see a dividend at the end, but said that he wasn't confident of the numbers connected up to the gas network in Dungannon. He said that utility companies were not digging up the streets and footpaths for nothing and would eventually be of benefit in the long term, but such a pity that so much was happening at once. He advised that the utility companies usually fix up the roads and footpaths reasonably well afterwards but more of a concern was the dirt and debris which was left behind and likened to walking through a mucky field. He referred to new road from Killyman Road to Moy Park which was resurfaced less than a year ago after gas pipes installed into houses and although the road surface seems good, residents were being constantly tortured with the noise of empty heavy Lorries going past due to the uneven surface of the road. He agreed that there was a lot of work to be done regarding this issue and agreed with previous speakers that this needed addressed as it was a huge issue for the Council to deal with as soon as possible.

Councillor Burton agreed with Councillor Wilson about the concern being raised at Environment Committee and whilst travelling home on Tuesday night after the meeting and although being aware of signs at the traffic lights in Dungannon, felt it was like a minefield. She said that local people were probably aware of the situation of the traffic lights but for people from outside the area this could be very confusing and very poor on behalf of these utility companies to continue to carry on the work.

She referred to comments made by Councillor Kerr in relation to the lorry drivers and going forward how the Council could assist them and felt that another matter which should be investigated was the regulations around CPC training and the astronomical cost and

how often it has to be renewed, every few years which adds extra financial burden and very off putting for people. She said that it was tough enough to keep a vehicle on the road with raising costs of fuel and maintenance and criteria around the working hours drivers were allowed to drive and asked if this could also be considered.

Councillor Ashton also followed up on comments made by Councillor Kerr in relation to the shortage of HGV drivers. She said that it was quite apparent around Dungannon area the shortage of employees across industry and felt that it may be worthwhile investigating the wider piece through Economic Development on how to support employers on how to attract people especially now that the furlough scheme has ended. She said that some companies had tried to open up again but hadn't the workforce and felt in the short term this may help some of these industries which were struggling at the minute.

The Chair agreed that it would be worthwhile having engagement to see what assistance could be provided to help these industries.

Councillor Monteith referred to D159/21 in relation to Department for Health Consultation on the Integrated Care System and enquired if there was an update. He also referred to meeting with GP providers as there was another 3 to 4 weeks of frustration and distress from local residents unable to access GP services either through normal working hours or Out of Hours with the service continually being based in Craigavon which was unacceptable. He referred to the recent news about funding being made available in for people in London and listening to them saying that it was the right for a patient to have a face to face appointment with their GP if they so wish, but this was most certainly not the case in this area and presumably in other areas as well. He was keen to see if there was any update on the two meetings as he was receiving phone calls each day, but was concerned about a phone call from a distressed family on Tuesday which were told that a relative of theirs had to go to hospital immediately, ambulance sent for the patient at 12.30 pm and at 9 pm that night their relative was still waiting in the ambulance outside Craigavon Hospital with a row of ambulances all waiting and people wonder why there were no ambulances available. He said that our Health Service was a mess, it was creaking and collapsing around us and the solution seems to be that the Southern Trust keeps sucking all the services into Craigavon and Daisy Hill and let the rest of the areas wither on the vine.

The Chair advised that he had contacted the Trust regarding the Out of Hours services at South Tyrone Hospital this week which was referred back that no decision had been made. He was advised that the Chair of the Council had written to the Trust asking the same question and was told that he should refer back the answer the Chair was going to receive. He said that was as good as it got and no further forward unfortunately.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that was the response in relation to Southern Trust but stated that Officers would continue to follow this up. In regard to the two meetings, there hasn't been any dates finalised but this would be followed up and would stress the urgency of these.

Councillor Monteith advised that the Northern Trust and Southern Trust normally meet members before Christmas and suggested that rather than received their nice, glossy report which tries to portray how wonderful a job they are doing and felt if they were to

come this time, then an agreed Agenda should be agreed to carry out a proper discussion rather than members sitting listening to a PR exercise.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith

That it be recommended to Council that an agreed Agenda be drawn up between the Trust and Council on important issues members wished to be discussed relating to what people were dealing with on the ground.

Councillor Doris agreed with Councillor Monteith's comments and said that an agreed Agenda would be much more time efficient for everyone involved. She said members were due to meet the Northern Trust next Tuesday 19 October.

Councillor Kerr said that he would be happy to second Councillor Monteith's proposal and agreed with what he had said about the Trust coming to Council trying to make out they were doing a world-class job and all Councillors were aware on a daily basis that this was far from the truth. He stated that people needed to have access to healthcare as a lot of people were veering towards private clinics which was an absolute farce as it was our human right to have entitlement to healthcare. He said that everyone had conversations with family and friends around long term health problem or injuries and most likely have no other option but to go privately which was also an added financial burden.

Seconded by Councillor Kerr

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that an agreed Agenda be drawn up between the Trust and Council on important issues members wished to be discussed relating to what people were dealing with on the ground.

Councillor Elattar said that she could understand the problems people had experienced attending the Northern Trust and Southern Trust as she had personally experienced it herself over the last few weeks, but felt that the ultimate responsibility lay with the Minister for Health and felt that this was who the Council should really be targeting. She said that the Trusts were doing their best to work underneath the guidelines of the Department for Health and the finance they receive and felt if this issue was to be addressed properly, then the Council should be talking to the Department for Health and not the Trusts.

Proposed by Councillor Elattar

To make contact with the Minister for Health to address the important issues which needed addressing.

Seconded by Councillor Molloy

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to also make contact with the Minister for Health to try and address the issue of healthcare concerns.

Councillor Burton referred to D151/21 Chair's Business and enquired if there was any update or response on the issue she had raised regarding the pregnant mothers and birthing pools at Craigavon Area Hospital.

The Strategic Director of Environment advised that she would investigate the matter and provide a response to Councillor Burton.

The Chief Executive referred to the two health issues which were raised by members and advised that Officers would investigate to see where they currently were and any correspondence received would be shared with members. In relation to GP meeting, he advised that he had two dates in his diary which was being worked upon but just waiting on confirmation. He said that he would endeavor to firm up the days this week and share any progress with members.

Councillor Kerr sought an update regarding Washingbay Walkway fencing.

The Head of Parks said that he was aware that Councillor Kerr was seeking further information regarding this and said that Officers were working the best they could in relation to getting this resolved and were sourcing the funding for that. He said that he hoped to provide a complete report but reassured the member that this was progressing on the basis that additional funding was sourced to pay for the works 100% and hoped that these works could be extended to the existing contractual arrangements onsite. He said at the moment it was looking positive the works could be conducted over the next number of weeks at no additional cost to the Council.

D185/21 Economic Development OBF1

Members noted update on key activities as detailed below:

- Coalisland Great Places Project
- Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2021
- DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre

The Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes referred to the shortage of skilled staff in many local businesses raised by members earlier in this meeting and at the previous committee meeting. She advised that the Consultant appointed by Council to develop Mid Ulster's new Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Action Plan had been made aware of these issues and would ensure these were considered in the new Plan. She stated that Mid Ulster's first meeting of the LMP was due to convene in October 2021 and invitations would be issued shortly. She added that there is still a few political parties who have yet to nominate their representatives to the Mid Ulster LMP and once this happens, the first meeting will be convened. The issues relating to the shortage of HGV drivers, and staff shortages in the manufacturing, engineering, agri-food sectors, etc. would all be taken on board and discussed at the LMP meeting.

D186/21 Leisure Disability Provision

Members noted update which outlined the current provision in leisure centres for those with additional needs (minute reference: C154/21).

D187/21 Master Plan/Business Case - Maghera Walkways

Members noted update on the appointment of Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) to develop a Master Plan/Business Case for the potential development of lands between Mullagh Road/Tobermore Road as an outdoor recreational green space for the Maghera area.

Councillor Black said that it was good to see this project moving forward and a real opportunity to provide some quality open space to the residents of Maghera and the surrounding areas and was looking forward to seeing the concepts coming forward in due course.

Live broadcast ended at 8.35 pm

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst members consider items D188/21 to D189/21.

Matters for Decision

D188/21 Davagh Forest Mountain Bike Trails – TRPSI Application

Matters for Information

D189/21 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 16 September 2021

D190/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.45 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening please raise your hand in the normal way and keep raised until advised to lower it
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda.



MIDAS

Mid Ulster

Advice Services

Overview of service provision
from
01 April 2019-30 Sept. 2021

What did we say we would do?

We undertook to provide across all 5 levels of advice provision:

1. Basic access to information
2. Interpretation of information
3. Assistance to act on information
4. Advocacy and representation
5. Challenging policy

How much did we do?

- + **Total Number of Unique Individuals over the period: 7,000 +**
- Average enquiry per individual client over per year: 09
- Average contact with each client per enquiry =1.43
- Average no. of contacts per unique client = 11.5

April 2020- April 2021 snapshot

Welfare Topic / Issue	Numbers
Welfare Benefits – all types	23321
Debt including DROs, Debt Management Plans, IVAs	265
Housing	2846
Immigration	1061
Legal rights	173
Family issues	645
Employment rights	5891
Education advice	363
Health and mental health	489
Tax	162
Consumer	359

How well did we do it

Complaints:

- + Year 1: – 4
- + Year 2: - 2
- + Year 3 - 1.
- + Client feedback:
- + 96% satisfaction with support received.
- + 87% satisfaction with outcome

Staff Support and Training

Happy workers are productive workers

All staff are:

provided with regular supervision & 1-1 Support

Regular updates and training on changes in policy & legislation

Access to health and mental health support

Individual work station and Advice Pro licence

Challenges Areas for Improvement

Challenges:

Cookstown & Magherafelt Office

Electoral area targets

Impact of Pandemic

Solutions & improvements

Relocation & Upgrade

Research on underlying reasons
and adaptations to these – review

Reviewed; adapted remote and
blended service ; reviewed holistic
STEP provision to best need holistic
need

Covid Impact on clients and Service.

Covid did not create inequality but it deepened and widened it

Increase in

- + Poverty
- + Financial crisis and hardship
- + Emotional Stress and Mental Health concerns
- + Also increase in
- + Community Support and Shared Work

Added value to MIDAS

STEP also provides:

- Internal referral to and from MIDAS to:
- Welfare Reform and Debt Advice;
- Homelessness support
- Family Support
- Access to crisis hardship/ prevention of destitution funds
- Immigrant and | Migrant Worker Integration Support

Thank You

Questions?

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 21 October 2021 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Molloy, Chair Councillors Ashton*, Black (7.10 pm), Burton*, Clarke*, Corry*, Cuddy*, Doris*, Elattar*, Hughes*, Kerr*, McNamee*, Milne*, Monteith*,
Officers in Attendance	Mr Brown, Head of Tourism Ms Linney, Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development Ms McKeown, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer
Others in	Councillor S McGuigan***

Deputations

Empower Project re Tourettes Group
Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch
Mid Ulster Pride
Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor Molloy in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

D190/21 Apologies

Chief Executive.

D191/21 Declarations of Interest

The Chair Councillor Molloy reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest.

D192/21 Chair's Business

The Chair advised that questions would be taken after each completed presentation.

The Chair advised that Councillor Kerr wished to raise an issue under Chair's Business and invited him to address the committee.

Councillor Kerr thanked the Chair and members for allowing him the opportunity to raise this important matter tonight.

He referred to the survey which was being carried out by both the Secondary Students Union and the Parent Engagement Group on the affordability of school uniforms. Both organisations were seeking school students' views on uniform costs amid huge concerns on high prices and branded PE kits.

He advised that research carried out by the Parent Engagement Group found that the average price spent on post primary school uniforms was £378 and £173 on primary school levels, with one Grammar school in the north's PE kit costing up to £259. This is a huge amount and very difficult for working class families and whilst grants were available in some cases this only covered a fraction of the cost. Over this last number of years school uniform prices had dramatically increased but the impact on students and families has been hugely ignored.

With the recent School Uniform Exchange Programme carried out by the Volunteers of the Coalisland Community Foodbank and Dungannon Youth Resource Centre which was a helping hand for hundreds of local families.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr

That the Council write to all Primary and Secondary Schools within our Council area to make them aware of this survey and encourage their students to participate and to invite the Secondary Students Union and Parents Engagement Group into a future committee meeting to educate Council more on the School Uniform campaign and other pressing issues.

Seconded by Councillor Corry

Councillor Corry said that she was happy to second Councillor Kerr's proposal as she was aware of the Students Union currently carrying out a campaign on it which was a very worthwhile campaign. She agreed that the rising cost of school uniforms was a huge struggle for families to take on and the whole branding of PE kits and socks etc. was very expensive. She referred to the discussion around gender neutral uniforms where people would have a choice and very important for Council to carry this work forward.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to:

- 1) Write to all Primary and Secondary Schools within our Council area to make them aware of this survey and encourage their students to participate.
- 2) Invite the Secondary Students Union and Parents Engagement Group into a future committee meeting to educate Council more on the School Uniform campaign and other pressing issues.

The Assistant Director of Development, Strategic Community Development advised that she would take this matter on board.

D193/21 Empower Project re Tourette's Group

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Josie McGuckin from Empower Project and Ms Louise and Deaglan McCallion re Tourette's Group (appendix 1).

Ms McGuckin advised that the Empower Project was a community project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI. The Empower Project is led by a community organisation called DADS (Dyslexia, Autism, Dyspraxia Support) which has been operating for over 20 years and was originally set up as a self-help group for parents who have children with learning difficulties.

Councillor Black entered the meeting at 7.10 pm.

She advised that the Empower Project had recently been supporting a local family whose child was being monitored for ASD. His parents became concerned about his involuntary body and vocal tics as these behaviours were causing problems for the child both at school, at home and in all social situations. The Empower Project began to suspect Tourette Syndrome and they tried to get statistical evidence about this condition in Northern Ireland. It was discovered that no statistics were actually available so it was felt that there was little/no support for these children with Tourette's. A call was made on social media to find out if there were many families locally with children who had Tourette's and to everyone's amazement, 10 families contacted the Empower Project. Tourette Syndrome is a neurodevelopmental (brain condition) which can be lifelong or children can grow out of it. Tourette's is not rare as many as 1 in 100 individuals show signs of Tourette Syndrome, most of them remain undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and/or misunderstood. Tourette's is genetic and affects males more than females with no cure and no medical test that can tell you if you have it. These children are referred to CAMHS for intervention and are often prescribed drugs to help the condition. Tourette Syndrome begins in childhood between the ages of 2-18, with the average age of onset is between the ages of 6-8. Most people associate Tourette's with verbal or physical Tics and found that:

- Criteria for Diagnosis
- Diagnosing Tourette Syndrome is a long and difficult process
- There are few experts in this field

Environmental factors that may impact Tourette Symptoms:

Stress	Anxiety
Fatigue	Excitement
Holidays	Illness
Hunger	Life & School Transitions

Ms McGuckin advised that Deaglan and his mother Louise would like to speak to committee to outline his experience of Tourette's Syndrome.

Deaglan thanked the committee for allowing him to opportunity to tell his story and his personal experiences of dealing with Tourette's Syndrome on a daily basis. He updated the committee on his daily challenges and said that he had one short and simple point to make "Be Kind".

Mrs McCallion said that her family would like to see more awareness and more understanding for what her son went through on a daily basis. She said that they were lucky that people were there to help like Empowerment Group and Councillor Milne who had done so much for them as a family. She said that doing normal family things like going shopping and other things makes it so much harder for them when staff members were pointing fingers, laughing, sniggering and being refused from cinemas and many other places and stressed that Deaglan had a human right to be a child too. She said that her family would really appreciate help and support with getting awareness in the public domain of Tourettes. She commended the support from Ms McGuckin and her team at Empower which they done for her family alone, which has been a lifeline for them as there was nowhere else they could turn to as there was nothing there for Tourettes Syndrome and pleaded for help for her family.

The Chair thanked Deaglan and his mother for their comments and said that he knew from their presentation that everyone which was online tonight wouldn't have been emotionally affected by this and have empathy for the family and thanked them for bringing this to members attention. He said that awareness and education will bring down barriers and was amazed at some of the statistics that 1 in 100 develop some kind of symptom and advised that a few members wished to come in and make some comments/questions.

Councillor Milne said that he was pleased to see the McCallion family again and stated that this situation was really well explained by them tonight and an excellent presentation as this was the reality of life for Deaglan and his family. He said that for 10 years this family hasn't had a break as there was no respite or nothing else and all built in around family. He referred to this Council which was very caring, supportive and recognised all the needs of people and asked that Council Officials make contact with Ms McGuckin and the McCallion family to see what they could do to further support to raise awareness from the Council and do whatever we can do to further look out. He stated that on behalf of his own party he had brought the matter to the attention of Stormont and they were currently researching and prepare statistics and said that a meeting with Ms McGuckin and the McCallion family would be coming to the fore very soon. He concluded by saying that this presentation was excellent and very heartfelt and thanked them all for coming into tonight.

Councillor Elattar thanked Ms McGuckin for the presentation and also Deaglan and his parents for their contribution including the videos and said that there definitely needed to be a lot more awareness of Tourettes Syndrome and stated what stuck in her mind the most from this evenings presentation was Deaglan's words "Be Kind" and this should be a message which should be taken away for everyone in every aspect of life. He felt that the Council and other organisations within the local community could do with having awareness raised and an education event and thanked Deaglan for his input tonight.

Councillor Monteith shared previous members sentiments and thanked Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his family for an excellent presentation and commended Councillor Milne on his work so far in bringing this forward to the Council as some good work was going on. He said that it was an area he would have some knowledge off but not an awful lot and thanked Deaglan's parents for allowing members to see the closed videos which were made public, but felt it was important that the videos were shared to raise awareness. He felt that it was important to have Deaglan and others like him to educate and teach the Council and staff about raising awareness about the difficulties which they face and felt it may be an encompassing thing which may be worked upon as months go on especially when he heard Deaglan's mother saying that they weren't allowed into the cinema and shops amongst other things. He advised that the Council would have provided funding over the years for retail staff and felt it may be worth investigating about building this into the staff training and also building into our Economic Development funding about Tourette friendly shops and Tourette friendly staff and across our different venues and definitely thinks that this was something that could be taken forward. He felt it was important to get the bit between the teeth and take forward in conjunction with Deaglan's family and indeed the many other families out there. He commended the presentation and well done to Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his family for all the work which was already going on and something that the Council could really take a grasp of.

Ms McGuckin thanked Councillor Monteith and said that they welcomed his comments.

Councillor Corry thanked Ms Guckin, Deaglan and his parents for the fantastic presentation and concurred with previous comments. She said what has come out of this tonight was awareness and education from what Deaglan had said on the video about when it was explained to his class about his condition their understanding and acceptance went a long way. He said if there was anything the Council could do amongst staff and leisure centres and putting the programme out further for awareness regarding cinemas and retail sectors etc. then we should try our best to accommodate that.

Ms McGuckin advised that the Empower Project can also provide training to staff and to any other members which need it.

The Chair thanked Ms McGuckin, Deaglan and his parents for coming along tonight and providing the presentation to make members aware of this condition and empowering the Council to possibly do something about it. He asked that Ms McGuckin and Council Officials to make contact to see what Council could do in the future to help out. He thanked the star of the show Deaglan for coming along and letting members know the difficulties he endured on a daily basis.

Deaglan said that he found the whole experience tonight amazing as everyone on the zoom call was just so kind.

The group withdrew from the meeting at 7.30 pm.

D194/21 Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch

The Chair advised that no representation was in attendance tonight from Inland Waterways Association of Ireland - Blackwater Branch.

D195/21 Mid Ulster Pride

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Molly Farrell and Mr Joshua Cuddy from Mid Ulster Pride and invited them to make her presentation (appendix 2).

Ms Farrell advised that statistics provided in 2019 by Queen's University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth found that 60% of students who received the RSE was not useful. 73% said that they rarely or never received the RSE and even more shockingly 1 in 5 male teenagers do not think consent is required for sex.

She said that Mid Ulster Pride represented Celebration, Loving and Belonging.

She highlighted their short term and long terms goals:

Short term goals were: Training from the Rainbow Project, HEReNI and other charities; Bring that training into the community; Work with businesses or the Council in creating an LGPTQ+ Safe Space.

Long term goals were: Bring the training into schools; Establishing a Safe Space Class within schools of Mid Ulster; Working with parents to improve their knowledge.

The Chair thanked Ms Farrell for her impressive presentation and was inspiring to hear what the group were doing and how she was affected herself growing up and her development as a person.

Councillor Corry thanked Molly and Josh for their presentation. She advised that she had met Molly at Mid Ulster Pride a few times and felt it was heart-breaking that people have to leave their own homes and move to another country to be who they are and felt that this needed to change as everyone needed to be treated with equality and respect and be who there are in the place in which they live in and where they were from. She said that she was looking forward to the Coffee Morning on Saturday and said that when you were at a Pride Event it was great to see so many people together happy, the music and the buzz and stated that the group were doing brilliant and was looking forward to the events next year and wished them every success. She said that it was important that Council do everything they possibly could to support the group.

Councillor Kerr thanked Molly and Josh for their presentation and advised that he had recently attended their fundraiser in Coalisland. He referred to their annual Pride event in Cookstown and said that it was unfortunate that he couldn't stay longer due to other

commitments, but wished them every success going forward and looked forward to attending future events. He said that he was very sorry to hear that Molly had to leave home due to her sexual orientation, it's the 21st century and people needed to realise that discrimination like this was no longer acceptable as everyone was equal and love is love. He referred to comment regarding the education system and sexual consent and said that he wholeheartedly agreed with her and believed that the education system needed an overhaul as sexual consent needed to be taught in schools and also acceptance from the LGPTQ+ community. He said that there was a great focus after the devastating murder of Sarah Everard regarding sexual consent and misogyny towards women and totally agreed but said that these were conversations for another time. He thanked the group for their presentation and hoped going forward that the Council could be a progressive organisation helping the group out.

Councillor Hughes echoed her fellow colleagues comments and thanked Molly and Josh for attending the meeting tonight to update the committee. She said that on behalf of herself and SDLP colleagues they would like to do anything they could to help the group out and was a great honour to walk with Mid Ulster Pride in Cookstown in September and looked forward to the next event.

Councillor Burton thanked Molly and Josh for coming along tonight and welcomed them to the committee tonight. She advised that she wished to come across humbly and respectfully but also wanted to say about her understanding. She said that she knew that the group were seeking to have respect for their community and for their beliefs and she asked for the same as someone who believes the Bible and would put a lot of faith on what the Bible tells us about what's best for our lives and believed that it had the ultimate wisdom, guidance and truth for all our lives. She said that she would like to say that where we all wish to seek dignity and respect, she would also want to have that for people who were different from the beliefs of others with different opinions and not the popular choice in today's society which has already been said in the meeting to hold fast to what was Biblical teaching. She said that she really believed that where your life was concerned, she really enjoyed having her faith, praying and reading her Bible and really believed that the living word of God which can really change lives and from that prospective, she also believed that God created man and woman and that was the first marriage between Adam and Eve and really believed that this was like a prototype of how marriage was set up in the Lord's eyes. She felt that the Bible was a really good teaching point to come from and said that she believed that the Vatican held the same views and certainly defended the freedom of personal rights and said that the group had their beliefs and she had hers and whilst she wished to be respectful, thoughtful and really say this passionately with conviction but also with empathy as she wouldn't want to come across as someone who was harsh. She believed that too much of the past was around religion and that religion was man's attempt to reach God, but felt that Jesus and his love was God's way to reach man and thanked the committee for listening to her.

Councillor Monteith welcomed Molly and Josh to the Development Committee and commended them for their presentation which was very well spoken and a daunting process which took a lot of courage. He said that it was great to hear the experiences the group has had but also distressing to hear some of the other experiences which had been expressed very eloquently and was saddened to hear that Molly felt the need to leave her home because of who she was, but thankfully she was back now and hoped

that she felt a little bit more comfortable and hoped that events which were being run help towards that. He advised that when he spoke to Josh on the day of Pride he was very complimentary of the Council Officers already about working closely with them which he was glad about and hoped that this may continue in the future. He referred to the previous presentation from the Tourettes Group and said that this also needed to be a process rather than a one-off as relationships needed to be built on compassion and working together to get the message. He referred to the presentations here tonight and summed up the words described by Deaglan earlier which epitomised as “Be Kind” and felt this was very appropriate to the experiences of what the group was going through. He said it was fair play to the group which has been a beacon as he was aware of a number of people within the group’s community locally which did not feel in a position at this stage to attend Mid Ulster Pride events as he had been talking to a few of them in the run up to the event but were appreciative that these were taking place. He said that these people hoped that possibly next year may be the year for them and said that it was a great thing that they were doing and wished the group all the best.

Councillor Elattar wished to thank Molly and Josh for coming along to the committee meeting tonight to make their presentation. She said that like the other speakers, she found it very sad that young people including Molly had to move away for their local community because they cannot be who they are within their own local areas. She commended to group on the work they were doing and hoped to attend the next event organised by Mid Ulster Pride and was unfortunate she was unable to attend this year. She enquired where the group’s events were advertised.

Ms Farrell advised that events were advertised on Facebook and Instagram. She said that the group were slowly getting the hang of Twitter and hoped to start looking at formulating a newsletter to provide updates as often as possible.

Mr Cuddy also added that Mid Ulster Pride had a website – *midulsterpride.com* – which was up and running but not fully populated with events yet but was a good place to go to get all the relevant information.

Councillor Cuddy congratulated the group on their fantastic presentation and said that they were young people coming through this part of the outside world and was aware that they were following their passion and wished them well. He said if Mid Ulster Council could help them in any way then they would.

Mr Cuddy thanked Molly for providing the presentation and let the committee know how pleased the group were to have had great help from Mid Ulster Council, especially from Good Relations Department who were very good to them and hoped that this could continue going forward. He reiterated with what Molly had said about the group providing training and hoped that this would be a bit better sorted for the group also. He commended Councillor Burton and said that it was a hard thing for her to say and did it very well with a lot of eloquence and everyone at Mid Ulster Pride respect everybody’s views and encourage people to go even when there was protests, everyone was entitled to their views and entitlement to be existence and hoped that a favourable arrangement can be reached without stepping on each other’s toes. He advised that the group was founded by a member of the Church of Ireland Andrew Rawding and he thought the message that Jesus left us was “*do unto others as you would have them do unto you*”

which was a message of love and acceptance and that was one of the group's guiding principles were; belonging, love and celebration. He said that everyone was entitled to their views and everyone at Mid Ulster Pride had great respect for that and had a broad diverse range of people with religious views on their committee and can be a very divisive issue, religion and LGPTQ+ matters, and this was left for people to make up their own minds. The group just wants to make the world a bit safer and habitable for people who were living this life as it was not a choice that the person gets to make and a hand which has been dealt, much in the same way as any other form in which life takes which there was no choice in and were just here to try and make it more easy and comfortable as possible for everyone.

Ms Farrell advised that she left this country when she was 19 to go and live in a foreign country that didn't speak English and that was the first country she felt safe and comfortable enough to hold a girl's hand as she walked down a street. She advised the committee that she was of a very strong faith which she had a deep love and compassion and she felt that through that love she was able to come back to this country and do what she was doing and not be as scared as she had been. She said at the start it was not easy to do Mid Ulster Pride and often a long night of wanting to hide due to shame and that burning desire for nobody to know you and thought to herself if this was how she was going to feel, then how do people feel who have not lived as she has and said that this was something she wanted the committee to think about. She said she wished to feel comfortable living in her country but still couldn't bring herself to hold a girl's hand, but would support anyone who wished to try and thanked the committee for listening to her and being so courteous.

The Chair thanked the group for their presentation and their words and hoped in time there would be a situation where a person can walk down a street with whoever they love in this country very soon and would fully support the group on that. He thanked the group for coming along tonight and wished them all the best for the future.

Representatives from Mid Ulster Pride left the meeting at 8 pm.

D196/21 Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Deirdre Murphy re Conflict in Gaza and invited her to make her presentation.

Ms Murphy advised that in 2015 she visited Palestine as part of a Trade Union delegation to witness the situation first-hand. The group met with a variety of people in Palestinian society from teachers and farmers to doctors, as well as members of the Bedouin community. She said what shocked her with all of these people was the lengths to which Israel goes to make their lives impossible i.e. stopping an ambulance and holding it up for hours, likewise holding doctors and nurses at some of the numerous checkpoints which you find around the Occupied Territory.

The farmer, for instance, had guns trained on him constantly while he was trying to grow his produce and at night the army would come in, wreck everything he had and pull up all his produce, but still he persevered.

One night her group went at 2am to a large area of wasteland where Palestinians queue for hours to enter what could only be described as cattle cages to enter Israel for menial badly paid jobs. This process, which involves them being fingerprinted, searched and delayed, can take up to three hours. Were it not for the arrogance of the Israelis in charge, from countries around the world, whose role is to make this experience as unpleasant as possible for the workers, this process would take just minutes. These workers barely see their children in the week.

That was one of the images that could never be forgotten. The other image was while visiting Hebron, a once vibrant Palestinian city, now a ghost city where it's impossible to see a Palestinian in its commercial centre as they are being ethnically cleansed from there. The Israeli Defence Force clear them from their homes and move the settlers in instead, thus ensuring the city's economy is destroyed.

She advised that during this visit, they encountered settlers who denied there had ever been a place called Palestine, their guide, a Palestinian university professor, was not allowed to escort them in certain parts of Hebron, although it has always been a Palestinian city. She said that her group had to be led by young Israeli guides, ex-members of the IDF, who had left the IDF as they refused to continue persecuting Palestinians. When they met back near the coach, the guide was frogmarched away by the IDF and had to take a taxi to meet them later. He had been walking a few metres on a road that Palestinians were not allowed to use and the image of that gentle man's face as he was dragged away will forever encapsulate Israel as an apartheid state in her mind.

She stated that the group also visited a reservoir that used to supply the Palestinians with their water and is now redirecting it to the many illegal settlements so they can have swimming pools and lush green grass. What was most shocking was to see that they had employed a Palestinian to oversee the reservoir knowing he could never avail of this water for himself and his people and this was the only way he could earn a living. Palestinians have to buy their own water back from the Israelis where it is stored on the roofs of their homes in tanks.

She referred to another memory while staying in Bethlehem the group asked a taxi driver if he could drive them to Jerusalem, a twenty-minute drive away, were it not for checkpoints, he said he was unable to do so and broke down as he told us why. Even though his wife had cancer he could not take her to hospital in Jerusalem as only men of over 65 could travel there, he had family in Jerusalem and could not visit the city, but our group which came from thousands of miles away could. The illegal settlers have their own apartheid roads connecting them directly to Jerusalem, while Palestinians travelling to work or to study or to visit family or hospital might take up to six hours to travel through the network of checkpoints.

Ms Murphy said that like everyone who visits the Occupied Territory and East Jerusalem (it is impossible to visit Gaza) she was traumatised by the inhumanity of the occupation and the casual cruelty of the way Palestinians were treated. This is something will stay with her forever and is impossible to forget. In Ramallah there is a mural that says, 'now you have seen, you are responsible.' That is true for everyone I know who has been to

Palestine, and there are many. When you return you feel an obligation to tell the truth of what you saw and would urge people to visit for yourselves and to tell that truth.

The Chair thanked Ms Murphy for her presentation and her personal experiences which made it all the more heart-rendering, especially when it was witnessed with her own two eyes. He said that this took us back to the previous presentation regarding humanity and people coming back here and nothing changes. He referred to people from all around the world observing this but this still continues to go on and have to ask yourself why nothing has changed.

Councillor Kerr thanked Ms Murphy for providing the committee with her very emotive account of her business to Palestine. He agreed with comment regarding the deliberate dehumanisation of the Palestinian people from the Arabs and the account Ms Murphy has portrayed does not be mentioned by the mainstream media and a one-set narrative where it was self defence against Palestinian militant groups but more to do with dehumanisation, it's supremacist, fascism and the exact same way a certain state treated other people in the 40's and just textbook tactics and nothing has changed.

He wished to thank Ms Murphy for carrying out her humanitarian work and for outlining her account and it may be the case that some Councillors saying that as a Council in the North of Ireland how could we help the Palestinian people, he said that this was done by challenging the mainstream narrative and educating people and letting people know about the horrific events and the living hell the Palestinian people endure on a daily basis. He said that in Gaza, missiles and fighter jets swooped overhead and was aware that previously Council had passed a motion supporting the BDS Movement as a corporate position and hoped that engagement could take place with Council Officers on how they maximise that motion and also to help Ms Murphy and other activists on the telling of the Palestinian peoples cause.

The Chair thanked Ms Murphy for coming along to the meeting tonight to provide her personal experience and said that awareness and education was key to make people aware of the situation on the ground and wished her and other activists the best of luck.

Ms Murphy advised that every single person could help the Palestinian people by just being human beings and said that this was not about religion but more to do with pure inhumanity and genocide of the Palestinian people. She said that everyone could help by reading all the Jewish/Israeli authors like Ilan Pappé, Abby Stein, Gideon Levy and Mikhal Dekel. If members wished to read about Palestine or to know more then she would encourage everyone to read a book by Miko Peled called 'The General's Son' which was a brilliant book and really easily read as this was about Miko's father who was a General in the Israeli army and this can also be listened to on YouTube or audio. She said that everyone can all help by boycotting Israeli produce and boycotting Hewlett Packard, Puma and McDonald's who were all huge contributors and all these companies were keeping the occupation and the absolute inhumanity towards these people who had done nothing other than being born and reared on their own land. She advised that no-one was saying that Israel cannot occupy piece of the land as it was given to them by the British state, but when Israel was committing genocide in such a dreadful, blatant way and being supported by America with \$4 billion a year then this was the issue. She concluded by quoting the Reverend Bill Shaw from Belfast as she went to a talk that he

done a few years ago after he went with a cross community delegation of people years previous to Palestine and he said *'I saw and it was my duty to come back and speak'*.

Ms Murphy thanked the committee for listening to her presentation and inviting her along tonight.

The Chair advised that this concluded the presentation for this evening and thanked everyone for their attendance this evening.

D197/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.22 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening please raise your hand in the normal way and keep raised until advised to lower it
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda.

DADS/Empower Project & Tourette's Support NI

Presentation to Mid Ulster District Council
Development Committee

Thursday 21st October 2021



DADS & Empower Project Manager

Josie McGuckin



DADS & Empower Project Manager

Josie McGuckin





Empower Project is a community project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI. The Empower Project is led by a community organisation called DADS (Dyslexia, Autism, Dyspraxia Support) which has been operating for over 20 years and was originally set up as a self-help group for parents who have children with learning difficulties.

During this time, we have touched the lives of thousands of families all over Northern Ireland by supporting them, being the listening ear, teaching families new skills and strategies to help them with their children and acting as an advocate for families working with statutory agencies



In 2015 DADS in partnership with the NRC (Northern Regional College), Magherafelt was successful in developing a 5-year project called the Empower Project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund NI where parents, the wider family circle, and professionals were offered information sessions, training sessions, parent and professional conferences, activities for the children and siblings, coffee mornings/support meetings for parents.



Recently we have been able to offer parents and professionals the opportunity to achieve a CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Autism and OCN Level 2 in ADHD. Since 2015 11,000 participants have engaged in Empower Activities.



Since January 2021 we have moved into a 2 year extension programme piloting a Social Enterprise concept by introducing a small cost for some or all activities to allow the DADS group to try and sustain its current activities after the funding ends in December 2022



The Empower Project has recently been supporting a local family whose child was being monitored for ASD. His parents became concerned about his involuntary body and vocal tics. These behaviours were causing problems for the child both at school, at home and in all social situations. We began suspect Tourette Syndrome.



The Empower tried to get statistical evidence about this condition in Northern Ireland. They discovered that no statistics were actually available so it was felt that there was little/no support for these children with Tourette's

A call was made on social media to find out if there were many families locally with children who had Tourette's and to our amazement we had 10 families contact the Empower Project



What is Tourette Syndrome?



Tourette Syndrome is a neurodevelopmental (brain condition) which can be lifelong or children can grow out of it.

Tourette's is not rare; As many as 1 in 100 individuals show signs of Tourette Syndrome- most of them remain undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and/or misunderstood.

Tourette's is genetic and affects males more than females

There is no cure and no medical test that can tell you if you have it. These children are referred to CAMHS for intervention and are often prescribed drugs to help the condition.

Tourette Syndrome begins in childhood between the ages of 2-18. The average age of onset is between the ages of 6-8. Most people associate Tourette's with verbal or physical Tics.



So, what are Tics?



Tics are an involuntary, repetitive motor movement or vocalization

Sometimes children shake their heads every few seconds or blink their eyes or twist their wrists which makes learning in school very difficult. They may also use curse words or other socially inappropriate phrases.

Other students may tease, make fun of and imitate the tics because they don't understand.



Criteria for Diagnosis

Diagnosing Tourette Syndrome is a long and difficult process

There are few experts in this field



To get help a child must:

Have at least 2 motor tics

Have at least 1 vocal tic

Tics do NOT have to be concurrent

Childhood onset before the age of 18

There has to be at least one year since the onset of first tic in most circumstances.

This creates major problems for both the children and their parents

MOTOR TICS

Simple Motor Tics: Eye blinking, grimacing, nose twitching, leg movements, shoulder shrugs, arm and head jerks, etc.

Complex Motor Tics; Hopping, clapping

Complex Motor Tics; Hopping, clapping, throwing, touching (self, others, objects), funny expressions, sticking tongue out, kissing, pinching, tearing paper or books, echopraxia (repeating actions), copropraxia (obscene gestures)



Vocal Tics:

Simple Vocal Tics: Whistling, coughing, sniffing, screeching, animal noises, grunting, throat clearing.

Complex Vocal Tics: Linguistically meaningful utterances such as – “I’ve got it”, “Oh boy”. “Now you’ve seen it”.

Speech Atypicalities: Unusual rhythms, tones, accents, intensity of speech, stuttering

Other types of Vocal Tics:

Echolalia: Involuntary repetition of someone else's words

Palilalia: Involuntary repetition of one's own words

Coprolalia: Involuntary utterance of curse words or other socially inappropriate phrases or sentences.

Other Tics: (Not everyone with tics has Tourette Syndrome)

Transient Tic Disorder of Childhood: One or two tics that last from a few weeks to a few months, don't change and eventually disappear.

Chronic Motor and Vocal Tic Disorder: One or two tics appear in childhood never change and never go away.



The nature of Tics:

Naturally wax and wane

Change in appearance and frequency

Change in severity and intensity

Can sometimes be suppressed for short periods of time

Can be suggestible

Can appear to be purposeful

Tics seem to worsen during pre-puberty and puberty



Environmental factors that may impact Tourette Symptoms:

Stress

Fatigue

Holidays

Hunger

Anxiety

Excitement

Illness

Life & School Transitions



Suppression of Symptoms can result in:

Worsening symptoms

Inability to concentrate on task at hand

Shutting down

Fatigue and/or worsening of symptoms at end of day

Classroom meltdowns

Often explosion of symptoms at home



How has the Empower Project helped these children with Tourette Syndrome?



Promoted Tourette's Awareness month (15th April – 15th May) with a video from a local child –Deaglan McCallion

The National Lottery Communications Team made contact with BBC to take a short video with Deaglan, his parents and Manager of Empower emphasising the need for more research and support

A What's App group has been developed for parents to support each other and share experiences.

A get together was organised for parents and children in Seamus Heaney Centre Bellaghy.



Set up a community group called Tourette's Support NI
Formed a Facebook page with Deaglan McCallion
designing the logo

With the help and support of Cllr Ian Milne met Deputy
First Minister Michelle O'Neill

Attending an awareness and promotion evening in
ASDA Cookstown on Tuesday 26th October to try and
make staff and customers aware of Tourette Syndrome
and promote acceptance.



Tourette's Support NI aim to offer the following:

Regular support meetings for parents

A range of activities and outings for children with Tourette's and their friends

Awareness and promotion campaigns in local communities and with statutory agencies

A Facebook page for sharing information

Social media platforms for engagement and interaction between parents and children



As you can see Deaglan and all the children who have Tourette Syndrome need help and support. Their childhood has been damaged and they feel isolated and often humiliated. Deaglan's message to society is short and to the point.

“Be Kind”



What are we asking for?

We want the Council to understand the nature of neurodiversity. One in 4 of the population has a learning difficulty. Apart from Tourettes we have ASD, ADHD, OCD leading to depression, anxiety, aggressive or explosive behaviour, lack of social or emotional skills. Very often accompanied by an inability to communicate their pain.

We want the Council to let us train both their members and their staff to understand these conditions.



We want the Council to push learning difficulties and support families as they would for children who have obvious physical disabilities

We want the Council to understand that there is no difference between being blind, being deaf and being mentally challenged.

We want the Council to work with us, continue to support us and help to fund into the future the work we have begun.



Contact Information:

Tel: 02879301606

Email: info@empowernetwork.co.uk

Website: <https://empowernetwork.co.uk/>

Facebook: @tourettessupportni



Mid Ulster Pride Presentation



-
- **Good evening, and thank you.**
 - **My name is Molly Farrell, I am speaking on behalf of Mid Ulster Pride.**
 - **Address a short term and long term plan for Mid Ulster.**

Shame

“Shame feels like an exposure - another has seen what I have done that is so bad and hence shameful - but it also involves the attempt to hide” (Sara Ahmed, 2016)

The statistics

- 2019 by Queen's University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth found that 60% of students who received the RSE was not useful.

Even more shockingly 1 in 5 male teenagers do not think consent is required for sex.

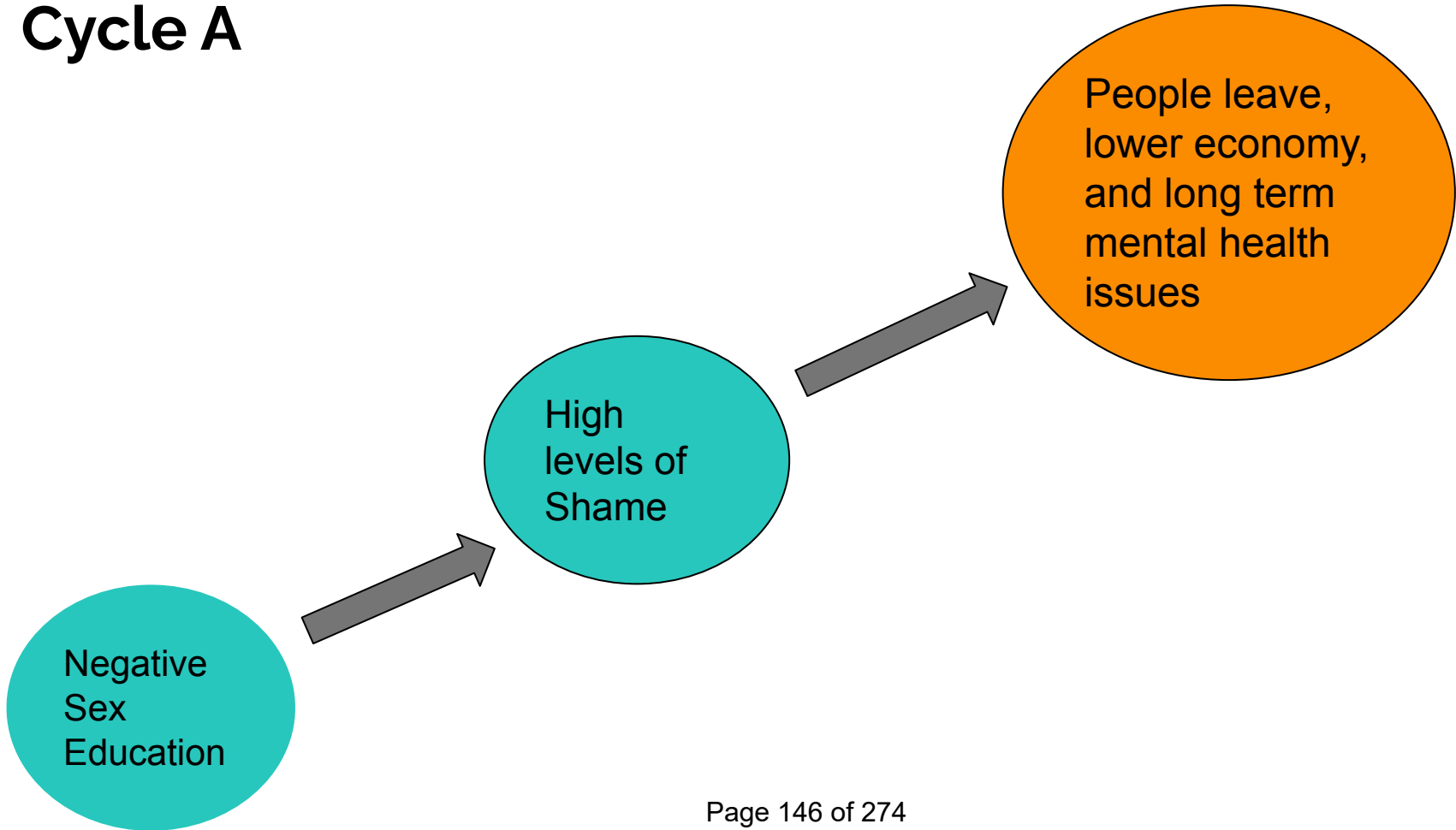
- 73% said that they rarely or never received the RSE

Mid Ulster Pride

- Celebration
- Loving
- Belonging



Cycle A



Cycle B

Improve the Sex Education



Reduce the shame felt within LGBTQI Community



LGBTQI People stay in Northern Ireland as they feel safe



The economy of Northern Ireland thus, grows. People feel safe, and don't feel as ashamed to be themselves.



People stay, invest in business and bring more creative ideas to the sector

Short Term Goals

- Training from The Rainbow Project, HERe NI, and other charities
- Bring that training into the community
- Work with businesses or the council in creating an LGBTQ Safe Space.

Long Term Goals

- Bringing the training into schools
- Establishing a Safe Space Class within schools of Mid Ulster.
- Working with parents to improve their knowledge

THANK YOU



Report on	1) Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes 01.09.2020 & 22.09.2020 2) Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes 05.08.2020 & 22.09.2020 3) Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 10.05.2021 & 28.06.2021 4) Maghera Town Centre Forum Minutes 06.08.2020 & 21.09.2020 5) Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) - QUB Report: 'The Border After Brexit'
Date of Meeting	11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes 01.09.2020 & 22.09.2020 Cookstown Town Centre Forum was established in 2002 to develop a partnership approach for the development and delivery of key town centre initiatives. The Forum meets at regular intervals throughout the year.</p>
2.2	<p>Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes 05.08.2020 & 22.09.2020 Magherafelt Town Centre Forum was re-established in January 2017. The forum meets to act in an advisory capacity, playing a fundamental role in the development and delivery of key town centre initiatives.</p>
2.3	<p>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 10.05.2021 & 28.06.2021 Coalisland Town Centre Forum was established in March 2019. It is a partnership of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations working together to deliver a range of strategic economic actions to develop Coalisland town.</p>

2.4	<p>Maghera Town Centre Forum Minutes 06.08.2020 & 21.09.2020 Maghera Town Centre Forum was established in August 2018. The forum meets on a regular basis allowing Council to work in partnership with agencies, businesses and community and voluntary groups to ensure Maghera can achieve its full potential.</p>
2.6	<p>Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) - QUB Report: 'The Border After Brexit' Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) represents 8 Councils from along the Irish Border these are Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils. On behalf of its members, ICBAN commissioned a new report 'The Border after Brexit: Experiences of Local Communities in the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland'.</p>
3.0	<p>Main Report</p>
3.1	<p>Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes 01.09.2020 & 22.09.2020 Minutes of the meetings of Cookstown Town Centre Forum held on the 1st & 22nd September 2020 are attached at Appendix 1</p>
3.2	<p>Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes 05.08.2020 & 22.09.2020 Minutes of Magherafelt Town Centre Forum meetings held on 5th August & 22nd September 2020 are attached at Appendix 2.</p>
3.3	<p>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 10.05.2021 & 28.06.2021 Minutes of the meeting of Coalisland Town Centre Forum held on the 10 May & 28 June 2021 are attached at Appendix 3.</p>
3.4	<p>Maghera Town Centre Forum Minutes 06.08.2020 & 21.09.2020 Minutes of Maghera Town Centre Forum meetings held on 6th August & 21st September 2020 are attached Appendix 4.</p>
3.5	<p>Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) - QUB Report: 'The Border After Brexit' ICBAN commissioned a report 'The Border after Brexit: Experiences of Local Communities in the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland'. The report has been co-authored by Professor Katy Hayward and Dr Milena Komarova of Queen's University Belfast. It is based on the results of a Brexit research initiative, which took place between May and September this year.</p> <p>This is the fourth report of this type, which ICBAN and Queen's University Belfast have completed. The research consisted of three parts – an online survey of 394 unique responses, focus groups and stakeholder interviews with participants across the Central Border Region, from both sides of the border. The survey focusses on the comments and viewpoints submitted by respondents.</p> <p>The research and resultant report sought to give voice to the people from this Region, and to provide a means to record and report on these opinions. As with</p>

	<p>the previous reports, this latest publication will be brought to the attention of those involved in the high level discussions on the subject.</p> <p>The report is available on Appendix 5.</p>
	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/A
	Human: Officer Time
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications:
	Rural Needs Implications:
5.0	Recommendation(s)
	It is recommended that Members;
5.1	Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes 01.09.2020 & 22.09.2020 Note minutes of Cookstown Town Centre Forum meetings held on 1 and 22 September 2020
5.2	Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes 05.08.2020 & 22.09.2020 Note minutes of Magherafelt Town Centre Forum meetings held on 5 August and 22 September 2020.
5.3	Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 10.05.2021 & 28.06.2021 Note minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum meetings held on 10 May and 28 June 2021
5.4	Maghera Town Centre Forum Minutes 06.08.2020 & 21.09.2020 Note minutes of Maghera Town Centre Forum meetings held on 6 August and 21 September 2020.
5.5	Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) - QUB Report: 'The Border After Brexit' Note the "ICBAN -The Border After Brexit Report" - October 2021

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p data-bbox="225 226 1362 293">Appendix 1 – Minutes of Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes 01.09.2020 & 22.09.2020</p> <p data-bbox="225 338 1374 405">Appendix 2 – Minutes of Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes 05.08.2020 & 22.09.2020</p> <p data-bbox="225 450 1337 517">Appendix 3 – Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 10.05.2021 & 28.06.2021</p> <p data-bbox="225 562 1331 629">Appendix 4 – Minutes of Maghera Town Centre Forum Minutes 06.08.2020 & 21.09.2020</p> <p data-bbox="225 674 1193 707">Appendix 5 - ICBAN -The Border After Brexit Report - October 2021</p>

Appendix 1

**MINUTES OF COOKSTOWN TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING HELD
TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 12.30PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present:

Councillor Wilson	Mid Ulster District Council
John Downey	PSNI
Chris Magee	PSNI
Sharon McGowan	Department for Communities
Ursula Marshall	Cookstown Disability Forum
Paul Wilson	Large Independent Retailer
Sean MacMahon	Property Developer
Andrew McConnell	Large Independent Retailer
Mary McCullagh	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council

In attendance: Deborah Ewing Mid Ulster District Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor John McNamee and Councillor Kerri Hughes, Mid Ulster District Council; Tom Jebb, Vintners Association; TP Sheehy, Small Independent Retailer; Annette McGahan, Mid Ulster PCSP; Patrick Anderson, Department for Communities; Peter Beckett, Large Independent Retailer; Sean Falls, Translink; Roisin McAllister, Fiona McKeown and Adrian McCreesh, Mid Ulster District Council.

Councillor Wilson advised members that Glynn McGarry, PSNI is off long term at present and is being replaced by John Downey. He passed on get well wishes on behalf of Cookstown Town Centre Forum.

2. MINUTES OF TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING

It was proposed by U Marshall and seconded by A McConnell to ADOPT the minutes of the Town Centre Forum Meeting held on 7 July 2020.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. UPDATE ON MID ULSTER TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS

The Town Centre Managers Progress Report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. M McCullagh provided an update on Mid Ulster Town Centre Projects as follows:

a) Town Centre Recovery Plan

A copy of the Town Centre Recovery Plan was issued to Forum members following Council meeting in July 2020. An update of the Recovery Phase Actions is as follows:

Repurposing Public Realm Spaces/Pavement Café Areas

There have been five enquiries for pavement café licenses with one application being approved to date.

Additional Cleansing and Planting within our Towns

The Council's Technical Services and Property Services teams are continuing to clean pavements on a regular basis with summer seats being washed on a monthly basis. Planting is taking place within the town centre to visually enrich their look and feel.

Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme

Funding was secured to roll out the Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grants Scheme to the value of £562,000 (this was made up from: Department for Communities (DfC) Tranche 1 - £281,000; DAERA - £148,000; Mid Ulster District Council - £133,000). M McCullagh advised that all monies have now been committed.

The grant was available to all eligible commercial businesses located within the Mid Ulster Council area. The scheme offered a discretionary grant of up to 100% of eligible costs, with a minimum of £500 up to a maximum of £3,000 grant per property. Funding is for capital items, to assist businesses to help provide a safe environment for visitors, shoppers and workers in line with government guidance.

This was a rolling programme with applications opening on Monday 10 August 2020. Funding was provided on a first come first served basis.

A McConnell stated that many businesses missed the grant opportunity due to retrospective funding being ineligible. M McCullagh advised that there were many enquiries from businesses regarding retrospective funding and stated that Council staff recommended businesses look at other areas, which could benefit their business.

Councillor Wilson advised that there is an over commitment to the grants. He expressed his thanks to Council staff for the quick turnaround in the delivery of the

grants and to DfC and DAERA for their funding contribution. He stated that there would be a Tranche 2 of grants with S McGowan, DfC confirming that they have committed money towards this but that DAERA have not confirmed any commitment at present. A meeting is being held on Friday 4 September 2020 and that Council will be updated accordingly.

A McConnell also commended Council for the quick turnaround regarding grants and advised that he would welcome a second tranche of funding.

J Downey and C Magee joined the meeting at 12.45pm. They introduced themselves to the members.

Town Centre Marketing

Open for Business Video Messages – a number of Cookstown traders submitted 30 second clips informing customers that they were ‘open for business’ and this was shared on Council social media platforms.

Confidence Mark Window Stickers - #ReconnectWithConfidence window stickers were issued to businesses with the Cookstown town centre and surrounding villages, which had evidence that they were taking positive steps to ensure customer safety. The initiative was geared towards boosting customer confidence to return to our towns and villages in the knowledge that businesses were taking positive steps to keep their customers safe. A high number of Cookstown businesses are displaying the stickers.

Video to Promote the Reopening of Mid Ulster Towns and Businesses – The Economic Development Team worked with the Communications Team to commission a professional short video to promote the ‘Reopening of Mid Ulster Towns and Businesses’ and encourage the public to support their local traders and shop local. The video was published on Councils social media channels in mid July.

Business Storytelling – local businesses/owners are participating in building interest stories about themselves and why their town is important to them. TP Sheehy provided this for Cookstown advising that the family have been trading for over 100 years and what they have been doing throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. The aim is to encourage public support/engagement with local traders through this initiative. This may be run out to other businesses moving forward.

Mid Ulster Online Retail Pack (Guidance and Posters Available) - The Economic Development Team developed a useful online retail pack containing Government guidance for the retail sector as they return to work. The pack also contains a range of social distancing posters. Several local businesses have availed of the online pack.

b) Physical Regeneration/Improving Infrastructure

Rural Regeneration Projects

Under the Rural Development Programme, 37 villages will access funding to develop and deliver projects identified through their respective village plans. To date projects have been identified through the village planning process and consultation with the

local community groups to determine projects that can access grant aid through the Programme.

A professional led design consultancy team was appointed with Economic Development Officers working alongside Technical Services to deliver the schemes. Assistance will be provided to 11 villages in the former Cookstown District Council area. Projects have been completed in Ardboe, Ballyronan, Orritor, Lissan, Drumullan, Coagh, Rock and Sandholes. Moortown and Pomeroy are near completion with Stewartstown and Broughderg in the near future.

Mid Ulster Town and Village Spruce Up Scheme

Mid Ulster Town and Village Spruce Up Scheme offers discretionary grants of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property for external and/or internal improvements. Knox and Clayton were appointed to assist in the delivery i.e. assessment of applications and management and monitoring of the successful projects.

Phase 1 projects are nearing completion. In June 2020, 69 Letters of Offer were issued to businesses under Phase 2 to a total value of £250,000. Members were advised that some scheme completions have been delayed due to Covid-19. M McCullagh advised that there is still a large amount of businesses on the waiting list and stated that Council continue to lobby for the next phase of money.

Councillor Wilson thanked M McCullagh for the update.

5. UPDATE ON COOKSTOWN CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON 2020

Michael Browne, Head of Tourism, joined the meeting at 12.48pm to present on the proposal for corporate events in 2020 and apologised for being late which was due to technical difficulties.

He advised members that his department are compiling a report to present at Council meeting in July 2020 on corporate events. There is normally 18 corporate events held annually throughout the district but due to the current situation with Covid-19 the delivery of the events has to be considered.

In line with this M Browne is presenting to all Town Centre Forums to gauge opinions in order to feed into the report. He advised that with the R number and level of infections on the rise that the Council will be looking at providing online/virtual events going forward but is open to hearing suggestions from the members.

Councillor Wilson advised that he believes it would be madness to bring people onto the streets at present in large crowds. He asked members for their opinions. A McConnell agreed that bringing people together at present for Halloween and switch on events would not be advisable. U Marshall stated that she has responded to this query in her role on other Town Centre Forums and would be adverse to bringing people together at present. She stated that at present Northern Ireland is the worst in the UK for R number. She suggested that the Halloween event is considered as virtual at present and depending on the situation at Christmas, a further review could be held. S MacMahon

agreed with the consensus. P Wilson requested if the money saved through the delivery of the events could be utilised to assist struggling retailers. Councillor Wilson stated that the money for the events is allocated to the Tourism budget annually, this money has already been reallocated to the Economic Development budget for the delivery of grants etc.

Councillor Wilson stated that he was aware of the PSNI would be adverse to events being held outdoors as they would have to police them. J Downey agreed with this opinion.

Councillor Wilson advised that the big issue concerning Christmas events is the image of Santa and that he should be included in any virtual event.

M Browne thanked the members for their contribution and will take all of these into consideration when completing the report. If a meeting is required at another date, he stated that it would be accommodated. M Browne left the meeting at 1pm.

6. COOKSTOWN TOWN CENTRE FORUM

a) Membership

Councillor Wilson noted that the number of members on the Town Centre Forum who do not attend meetings or send apologies is concerning. He stated that M McCullagh and he would review attendance.

b) Timing of Forum Meetings

At the Cookstown Town Centre Forum meeting on 7 July 2020 it had been agreed that the times of the Forum meetings be reviewed to accommodate other members. An email was issued to all members on 4 August 2020 providing them with two timing options for holding the meetings – 12.30pm and 5pm. Members were asked to notify Council or their preferred time by Friday 21 August 2020.

Only six responses were received with all indicating their preferred time of 12.30pm. It was agreed that meetings would continue with this timeframe.

7. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

As things are moving forward at pace Councillor Wilson proposed that if events or second tranche of grant monies need to be discussed then a meeting would be convened.

The next date will be set and members will be notified accordingly.

The meeting ended at 1.05pm



**MINUTES OF COOKSTOWN TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING HELD
TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 12.30PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Present:

Councillor Wilson	Mid Ulster District Council
Councillor McNamee	Mid Ulster District Council
Councillor Mallaghan	Mid Ulster District Council
Sharon McGowan	Department for Communities
Ursula Marshall	Cookstown Disability Forum
Paul Wilson	Large Independent Retailer
Sean MacMahon	Property Developer
Andrew McConnell	Large Independent Retailer
Annette McGahan	Mid Ulster PCSP
Sean Falls	Translink
Mary McCullagh	Mid Ulster District Council
Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Johnny McNeill	Mid Ulster District Council

In attendance: Deborah Ewing Mid Ulster District Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Kerri Hughes, Mid Ulster District Council; Tom Jebb, Vintners Association; TP Sheehy, Small Independent Retailer; Patrick Anderson, Department for Communities; Peter Beckett, Large Independent Retailer; Raymond McGarvey, Cookstown Chamber of Commerce; and John Downey PSNI.

Councillor Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting, expressing a particular welcome to Johnny McNeill.

2. STREETSCAPE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

M McCullagh advised members that today's meeting was a one item agenda, which is to bring to your attention a new Streetscape Funding Opportunity from Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure.

Council has been informed that Department for Communities (DfC) has received formal notice that Department for Infrastructure (DFI) will be contributing £5m across NI towards Tranche 2 of the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme, subject to Department of Finance approval of the revised business case.

Mid Ulster District Council have been allocated £464,659 of funding to support active travel, promote connectivity and access to services, create or enhance green/blue spaces. This could include initiatives such as introducing cycle lanes, cycle parking, tree planting, adjustments to public realm areas (taking account of physical distancing requirements), and connection pathways to access town centres etc.

Mid Ulster Council considered this funding opportunity at its Development Committee Meeting on 10 September 2020 and agreement was obtained in principle (subject to gaining Full Council approval on 24 Sept) to submit the schemes proposed for the 5 large towns i.e. Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Coalisland and Maghera.

Funding applications have to be submitted on the morning of 24 September 2020. The purpose of today's meeting is to review the draft proposals for Cookstown town centre and to receive feedback to enable preparation of application. As the schemes are subject to funding and approval members are asked not to release any information discussed until such times that a letter of offer is received.

In order to prepare draft designs for each scheme Council have agreed to contract the services of an external ICT Team. M McCullagh introduced J McNeill from Council's Capital team who will present the draft designs for Cookstown.

J McNeill shared draft designs and options on Microsoft Teams for all members to review. He advised that the option selected for Cookstown streetscape was near the Burnavon, which had adequate vacant ground available to carry out works. The proposal is for an area for outdoor gatherings whilst maintaining social distancing and includes freestanding canopies, which can fold in or out, and seating for approximately 36 people. Option A was unattainable due to the electrical charge point at the car park. Option B is the preferred choice located at the side of the Burnavon beside the steps leading from the Burn Road car park.

U Marshall sought clarification on what the purpose of the area would be. Councillor Wilson advised that it could be used for live performances or as an outdoor public area for small crowds. F McKeown advised that the seating area will include tables and chairs which will allow people to meet safely whilst social distancing. She stated that this area is public realm space, which is largely underutilized. The furniture will be mobile and can be taken away as and when required.

U Marshall asked if windbreakers would be included. J McNeill stated that there would be glazed screens with planters inside to ensure that the area is designated with no spill out.

Councillor Wilson advised that, M McCullagh had received an email from Neil Bratton, DFI Roads NI as he was unable to attend the meeting, to advise that they would not be content for the front of the Burnavon (which is owned by DFI) to be used for this project due to wheelchair, mobility scooters and pram access. U Marshall agreed stating that there are already access issues at this point due to cars parking at the side of the Burnavon, which makes accessing the dropped kerb difficult.

J McNeill advised members that consideration is given for the conceptual idea at present. Consideration will be given to all members if funding is provided and designers will be employed to take the idea forward. Councillor Wilson advised that consensus is required from the Forum in order to proceed with the application.

A McConnell asked if there was potential for the money to be used in other areas such as increasing the number of electrical charge points within the town.

F McKeown responded by advising that the funding is available for a variety of items such as cycle tracks/lanes, physically distancing measures within the town centre; connection pathways; tree plantage; drainage systems etc. Members were advised that the projects have to be realistic and complete by March 2021. In order to achieve this Council looked at areas owned by Council or Government Departments as land ownerships have caused issues and considerable delays in the past. At present the electrical charge stations in Cookstown are located at South West College and the Burn Road car park, there are no plans to increase this at present but this will be noted and Officers will find out the process for applying for additional points, if this is something the Forum wish to progress.

Councillor Wilson reiterated that this project is for a quick turnaround and advised that other available sites can be reviewed should other funding become available.

A McConnell asked if the split across all five towns was fair. F McKeown advised that proposals were agreed at Council with the aim to implement projects across the five areas, which were achievable within the timeframes. She requested that should members have other suggestions where funding could be allocated that they are forwarded to M McCullagh.

Councillor McNamee thanked F McKeown for the explanation and stated that this is only application stage and plans can be looked at in more detail if successful, including disability access.

It was proposed by Councillor McNamee and seconded by U Marshall that the application for the Streetscape Funding Opportunity is completed based on the recommendations discussed today.

Councillor Wilson thanked J McNeill for the presentation.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

Appendix 2

MINUTES OF MAGHERAFELT TOWN CENTRE FORUM Wednesday 5 August 2020 AT 6:00PM

Present:

Councillor Clarke	Mid Ulster District Council (Chair)
Councillor McLean	Mid Ulster District Council
Councillor McFlynn	Mid Ulster District Council
Councillor Brown	Mid Ulster District Council
Shauna McCloskey	Mid Ulster PCSP
Ursula Marshall	Disability Forum
Mark Stewart	Vintners Representative
Sharon McGowan	Department for Communities

In Attendance:

Davina McCartney	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies:

Councillor Totten	Mid Ulster District Council
Claire McOsker	Professional Sector Representative
Marcus Finlay	PSNI
Frances Bradley	Escape Beauty
Jack Keatley	Magherafelt Trustees
Patrick Anderson	Department for Communities
Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION	ACTION
1.	WELCOME The Chairman, Cllr Clarke welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	MATTERS ARISING Public toilets have reopened across the district. Equipment is not in place to remove chewing gum in house – a specialist company needs to be employed. Rainey Street footpaths to be resurfaced in January. M Stewart highlighted the covers for the water meters on Rainey Street go missing on a regular basis.	Note Note Note Note

	Contractor has been appointed for civils work and pay on foot machine has been appointed. The programme was delayed due to Covid 19 awaiting a programme from the contractors.	
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING Amendment to minutes requested by Cllr McLean. Minutes of previous meeting 6 July 2020 Proposed by: Cllr McLean Seconded by Cllr Clarke	Note
3.	AUTUMN EVENTS M Browne highlighted the need to make changes to the usual events calendar. Members were concerned about how numbers would be controlled for any events. Members felt something needs to be done but whatever is planned needs to strike a balance. Everyone to feedback ideas to M Browne / D McCartney.	All
4.	MID ULSTER COVID-19 BUSINESS GRANT SCHEME D McCartney outlined the Mid Ulster covid-19 Business Grant Scheme, which opens on 10 August 2020.	Note
6.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS D McCartney highlighted the Bank of Ireland Begin Together Awards. Details to be circulated. M Stewart highlighted a service Hospitality Ulster are working with to facilitate the hospitality sector to assist with track and trace. M Stewart asked if there were plans in place if a local lockdown was implemented. D McCartney to check details of emergency plan with emergency planning team.	MUDC Note MUDC
8.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING To be circulated. Meeting ended 6:10pm	

MINUTES OF MAGHERAFELT TOWN CENTRE FORUM
TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 @ 6:00PM
 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.

Present:

Cllr Sean Clarke	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Paul Mc Lean	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Sean Mc Peake	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Wesley Brown	Mid Ulster District Council
Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum
Mark Stewart	The Coachman
Brian O Kane	Specsavers
Claire McOsker	Bank of Ireland
John Keatley	Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce
Jack Keatley	Magherafelt Trustees

In Attendance:

Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Johnny Mc Neill	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies:

Adrian Mc Creesh	Mid Ulster District Council
Davina McCartney	Mid Ulster District Council
Darren Totten	Mid Ulster District Council
Una Morgan	The Dugout Bar
Marcus Finley	PSNI
Patrick Anderson	Department for Communities
Frances Bradley	Escape Beauty Retreat

DISCUSSION	
1.	This was a one item agenda to discuss a proposal for using the civic space by installing a canopy and other items in Magherafelt town centre. This proposal will be part of an overall application seeking funding that has been made available from Department of Infrastructure and will be subject to approval.
2.	C. McKenna and J.McNeill presented an outline of the project. The project in the Magherafelt town centre civic space consisted of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3nr x Permanent canopies • 9nr x Table/chair sets (36 seats), spaced to current Covid guidelines

- 18nr x fibreglass planters (moveable), with artificial plants
- 32nr x glazed screens to define area to be developed.
- 3nr x Lighting sets, 2nr x per canopy
- 2nr x cycle racks

The approximate cost of this project is in the region of £55,000.

After looking at the draft proposal U. Marshall said that, it must be minded that the kerb and paving has yellow tags and drop kerbs must be in place.

M. Stewart was concerned about wind speeds regarding the canopies. This level of detail has still to be worked out. If the project were approved wind speeds would be a critical factor. It was agreed that the canopies need to be sturdy and able to withstand wind speeds of at least 24 mph.

Cllr W Brown asked about heating and J Mc Neill said that there would be electric heating.

F.McKeown said that this scheme is part of an overall application being prepared for funding to the Department of Infrastructure (DfI). Similar projects are also being developed for Dungannon and Cookstown. The timeline is a challenge and everything is subject to funding approval.

Cllr W Brown asked about the budget and F.McKeown said the whole project was 100% funded and this includes the necessary professional fees of approximately £120,000. The overall approximate costs for all projects in the application to DfI is in the region of £490,000 and the projects must be delivered quickly.

Cllr Brown also asked about the management of the canopies and who controls its use so that there is no anti-social behavior happening during the day. F.McKeown said that a management plan would be created for the use of the canopies. U. Marshall also asked F.McKeown who can use the canopies and was told that they were for anyone to use.

All attendees felt it was a worthy project if managed correctly.

Meeting ended 6:40pm

Appendix 3

Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum Meeting Monday 10 May 2021 at 12.30pm Microsoft Teams

Present

Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council (Chair)
Cllr Joe O'Neill	Mid Ulster District Council
Brian O'Neill	Coalisland Credit Union (Vice-Chair)
Raymond O'Neill	Coalisland Traders Association
Francie Molloy	Coalisland Residents & Community Forum
Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum
Dermott McGirr	Translink
Avril Sharkey	Department for Communities
Pete Waugh	PSNI
Aaron Treacy	PSNI

In Attendance

Raymond Lowry	Mid Ulster District Council
Catherine Fox	Mid Ulster District Council
Oliver Donnelly	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION
1	Apologies Cllr Dan Kerr Mid Ulster District Council Cllr Niall McAleer Mid Ulster District Council Adrian McCreesh Mid Ulster District Council Mark Kelso Mid Ulster District Council Fiona McKeown Mid Ulster District Council Mark Leavey Mid Ulster District Council Michael McGibbon Mid Ulster District Council Colin Mc Kenna Mid Ulster District Council Aedamar McCrossan PSNI
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting - Monday 22 March 2021 Proposed by U Marshall Seconded by F Molloy and agreed: - The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 March 2021 were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

3.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – Monday 22 March 2021

Cllr Doris asked for an update on the oil spillage on the area in front of the Island Taxi office.

R Lowry stated that Fox Contracts have been notified of this and will endeavor to clean the area up.

Action: R Lowry to follow up with Fox Contracts to clean oil spillage in front of Island Taxi's

R Lowry also updated that the street furniture is on order and will be delivered shortly and that it is within the contract for Fox Contracts to plant flowers in the new planters.

B O'Neill stated that there was a meeting with MUDC in relation to the Brackaville Playpark and potential to refurbish the park as well as improving access. N Hill is to liaise with the landowner in relation to improving the access route.

R Lowry stated that the Road Safety Audit was carried out on 5 May 2021.

F Molloy asked if there was a light installed at the Civil Rights memorial stone, as it does not appear to have been turned on.

Action: R Lowry to check if light installed at Civil Rights memorial stone.

R O'Neill raised a number of points around the Public Realm Scheme. He asked as to the full cost of the 33 additional car parking spaces on Brackaville Road and that there was an opportunity to create spaces adjacent to Donnelly & McAleer pharmacy as opposed to creating an event space.

He also stated that there are 20 businesses closed on Main Street where once there were 48 in total. He also raised about potential increase of carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of the increased traffic in the town.

Also raised issue of whether there was a flood risk assessment carried out pre public realm. Finally, he highlighted that there was a consultation exercise carried in 2016 by MUDC, which stated that 62% of respondents stated that Main Street should be kept a 2 way process.

R O'Neill raised the issue of illegal traders operating in Cornmill car park and that MUDC should erect illegal trading signs in the car park to deter the traders.

- **Gortgonis Recreation Centre Redevelopment**

R Lowry updated members on the Gortgonis Redevelopment Scheme saying it is progressing well and it is hoped that the project will commence before the end of the year. Phase One will include the building of a play park and there will be no disruption in play facilities on the site.

F Molloy stated he and representatives from MUDC met with Department for Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey MLA regarding the Gortgonis project and that it remains a priority project for Neighbourhood Renewal.

	<p>R Lowry also updated on the Active Travel Project to be delivered in Coalisland, which includes creation of a link from the towpath to the footpath on Gortgonis Road creating a safe looped walk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre Recovery Plan <p>C Fox updated members on the Town Centre Recovery Plan stating that traders in Coalisland took part in videos, which was released to encourage customers back into the shops.</p> <p>There is also a plan to roll out a Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme within the next few months to encourage spend within the various towns and villages in Mid Ulster. In relation to the events, these once again have been postponed until further notice.</p>
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Cllr Colvin and F Molloy both raised issues with Fibrus and disappointing response from the customer service team in relation to omitting of houses. O Donnelly updated that a meeting was being held with Fibrus, Councillors and MLA's where these issues would be raised.</p> <p>R O'Neill raised that the kerb on the traffic island outside LMG Tiles was damaged.</p> <p>Action: R Lowry to check when the kerb is to be replaced</p> <p>R O'Neill requested if there was any support for the purchase of lands adjacent to the Fianna Football grounds approx. 19 acres.</p> <p>Action: Council to provide details of any funding Streams</p> <p>Meeting ended at 13.30pm</p>

Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum Meeting
Monday 28 June 2021 at 12.30pm
Microsoft Teams

Present

Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council (Chair)
Cllr Joe O'Neill	Mid Ulster District Council
Francie Molloy	Coalisland Residents & Community Forum
Avril Sharkey	Department for Communities

In Attendance

Mark Leavey	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Catherine Fox	Mid Ulster District Council
Oliver Donnelly	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION																										
1	<p>Apologies</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Cllr Dan Kerr</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Niall McAleer</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Robert Colvin</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Malachy Quinn</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adrian McCreesh</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mark Kelso</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fiona McKeown</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Michael McGibbon</td> <td>Mid Ulster District Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aedamar McCrossan</td> <td>PSNI</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peter Waugh</td> <td>PSNI</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brian O'Neill</td> <td>Coalisland Credit Union</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ursula Marshall</td> <td>Mid Ulster Disability Forum</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Patrick Anderson</td> <td>Department for Communities</td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Dan Kerr	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Niall McAleer	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Robert Colvin	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Malachy Quinn	Mid Ulster District Council	Adrian McCreesh	Mid Ulster District Council	Mark Kelso	Mid Ulster District Council	Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council	Michael McGibbon	Mid Ulster District Council	Aedamar McCrossan	PSNI	Peter Waugh	PSNI	Brian O'Neill	Coalisland Credit Union	Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum	Patrick Anderson	Department for Communities
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2.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting - Monday 10 May 2021</p> <p>Proposed by F Molloy Seconded by Cllr Doris and agreed: -</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 May 2021 were a true and accurate record of proceedings.</p>																										

<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – Monday 22 March 2021</p> <p>M Leavey updated that the contractor is to undertake a cleanse of the Public Realm scheme and this will include a clean up of Oil in front of the taxi rank. O Donnelly is to speak to the taxi rank and the landowner to ask if there are alternative parking arrangements they can work on.</p> <p>Action: Fox Contracts to try remove oil spillage in front of taxi rank Action: O Donnelly to speak to taxi company and landowner to see if alternative parking arrangements can be looked at</p> <p>F Molloy stated that he is unhappy with the planters in the Cornmill area. He stated that the scheme opened up the area and then the planters were put in place and closed the area up again. Cllr Doris agreed saying they are unsightly and asked if the one closest to the Civil Rights memorial stone could be moved.</p> <p>Action: M Leavey to investigate relocation of the planter from Events Space.</p> <p>Cllr O'Neill highlighted that there vehicles are being parked on the Event Space and asked if bollards could be erected to prevent this. M Leavey updated that there are plans to erect bollards adjacent to the dropped kerbs.</p> <p>Cllr Doris stated that the hanging baskets around the town look well but asked if there is any potential for putting more up.</p> <p>Action: Council to check if more hanging baskets could be put up around the town.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Coalisland Project Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalisland Public Realm <p>F Molloy expressed his disappointment that the recent visit by Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey to Coalisland received very little newspaper coverage. He stated that the Chair of the Town Centre Forum should have been recognized. C Fox updated that this was an event organized by DFC and that Council input was limited. A Sharkey said she would report this back to P Anderson.</p> <p>M Leavey updated that the scheme is nearing completion with the only areas needing addressed being Barrack Street Car Park. Outstanding work here includes resurfacing and fencing. There is a snagging & defect list that is currently being addressed.</p> <p>Cllr Doris asked if there could be a plaque erected in the area where Brannigans house once stood. F Molloy suggested that it would be good if there could be an information panel or similar to show how the area once looked.</p> <p>M Leavey stated that Council are in discussions with DfI regarding the resurfacing of the town. DfI are currently in a legal dispute with a contractor so no resurfacing work is being carried out in the area.</p>

	<p>M Leavey updated that the Road Safety Audit has highlighted the need for a crossing point on Main Street outside O'Neill's Pharmacy. This would mean the street losing one car parking space. Council are to liaise with the traders to ask their views on this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gortgonis Recreation Centre Redevelopment Council are planning on going out to consultation after the July holidays with regard to this scheme. • Town Centre Recovery Plan C Fox updated that council are working on an application to DFC for a Revitalisation project for the town. This will comprise three main elements; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Festive lighting scheme 2. Town branding / Merchandising 3. Lineside EI scheme MUDC are also submitting an application for an improved lighting scheme under the DfI Active Travel programme. <p>F Molloy asked if Sandy Row or Newtownkelly was part of this application. C McKenna confirmed this was not part of the scheme and that these projects could come under a Public Realm Phase II scheme.</p> <p>F Molloy raised that there was a possible planning issue in the area in front of Newell Stores as it is over the canal basin.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>C McKenna updated on the current issue regarding Fibrus and that MUDC are continue to gather evidence from residents on how Fibrus is working out. O Donnelly updated that he is member of a Fibrus Facebook group where customers express their disappointment at the service Fibrus is providing. F Molloy stated that he has contacted Fibrus on behalf of constituents and they are not responding back to him.</p> <p>C McKenna stated that Fibrus are erecting upwards to 400,000 poles across NI and they are working with property owners on this but ultimately that can place them where they see fit provided it falls within the service strip in front of properties.</p> <p>It was agreed to hold the next meeting at 17.30</p> <p>Meeting ended at 13.30pm</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Meeting TBC</p>

Appendix 4

MINUTES OF MAGHERA TOWN CENTRE FORUM WEDNESDAY 6 AUGUST 2020 AT 6PM Microsoft Teams

Present:

Cllr Brian McGuigan	Mid Ulster District Council (Chair)
Cllr Sean McPeake	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Kyle Black	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Cora Corry	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Martin Kearney	Mid Ulster District Council
Jonathan Crawford	Crawford's
Una Morgan	The Dugout Bar
Gary Burns	Maghera Development Association
Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum
Patrick Anderson	Department for Communities

In Attendance:

Davina McCartney	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Michael Browne	Mid Ulster District Council
Sharon Arbuthnot	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies:

Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Michael McCrory	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION
1.	WELCOME Una Morgan welcomed everyone to the meeting of Maghera Town Centre Forum.
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 8 JULY 2020 Proposed by Una Marshall Seconded by Cllr M Kearney and AGREED That the minutes of the previous meeting on 8 July 2020 were a true and accurate record of proceedings.
3.	MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES Public toilets in Maghera reopened on 15 July 2020.

4.	<p>AUTUMN EVENTS 2020</p> <p>M Browne highlighted that events cannot proceed as per previous years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and if events go ahead, they will have to be in a different format. Following discussion it was agreed events should go ahead in a safe manner. Officer to explore the option of lighting up the Largantogher Walkway and Walled Garden at Halloween and Christmas involving the local community and schools if possible. Members to forward any ideas to Officers for consideration.</p>
5.	<p>MID ULSTER COVID-19 BUSINESS GRANT SCHEME</p> <p>D McCartney highlighted the Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme opens for applications on 10 August and full details are available on Council website. The Mid Ulster Town Centre Recovery Plan was circulated previously.</p>
6.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>D McCartney highlighted the Bank of Ireland Begin Together Awards (previously circulated). Members were asked to forward through any nominations.</p> <p>G Burns asked for an update on Maghera Public Realm Scheme. D McCartney advised consultation process would begin again in Autumn.</p> <p>S McPeake asked for update on Fibrus – D McCartney advised box building was due to start at end of July in Maghera. U Morgan confirmed they had started work.</p>
7.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>To be circulated.</p>

MINUTES OF MAGHERA TOWN CENTRE FORUM
MONDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2020 @ 6:00PM
 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.

Present:

Cllr Brian McGuigan	Mid Ulster District Council (Chair)
Cllr Martin Kearney	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Sean Mc Peake	Mid Ulster District Council
Jonathan Crawford	Crawford's
Gary Burns	Maghera Development Association
Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum

In Attendance:

Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council
Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Catherine Fox	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies:

Adrian Mc Creesh	Mid Ulster District Council
Davina McCartney	Mid Ulster District Council
James Armour	Maghera Historical Society
Cllr Kyle Black	Mid Ulster District Council
Patrick Anderson	Department for Communities
Conal McKee	Department for Infrastructure
Neil Bratton	Department for Infrastructure
Una Morgan	The Dugout Bar

DISCUSSION	
1.	<p>Meeting started at 6pm. This was a one item agenda to discuss the proposed Maghera lighting project and associated concept drawing, in relation to funding made available from Department of Infrastructure. The project is to form part of an application being submitted for consideration, and subject to Department of Infrastructure approval.</p> <p>Some members were experiencing technical difficulties getting into the meeting such as Conal Mc Kee and Una Morgan.</p>
2.	<p>C. McKenna presented an outline of the project. The project proposal is a Maghera Lighting Scheme, which will be an extension of Park & Ride with the installation of street lighting on Tobermore Road from 30mph zone out to Craigadick Park & Ride facility. It is anticipated that this project will be delivered through the DfI Street lighting division and adopted by them on completion. The approximate cost is in the region of £42,500 which is 100% grant funded.</p> <p>Everyone attending agreed that this project was on the radar for a long time.</p>

Cllr B. McGuigan said that he felt if the opportunity to get lighting installed is here then we should run with it.

Cllr Kearney said that this was a good news story because people have had to get to the bus stop for years in the dark with no lights.

Cllr S McPeake felt it was a worthwhile project and has no problem supporting it.

J. Crawford asked if the speculation about increasing the size of the Park and Ride was happening?

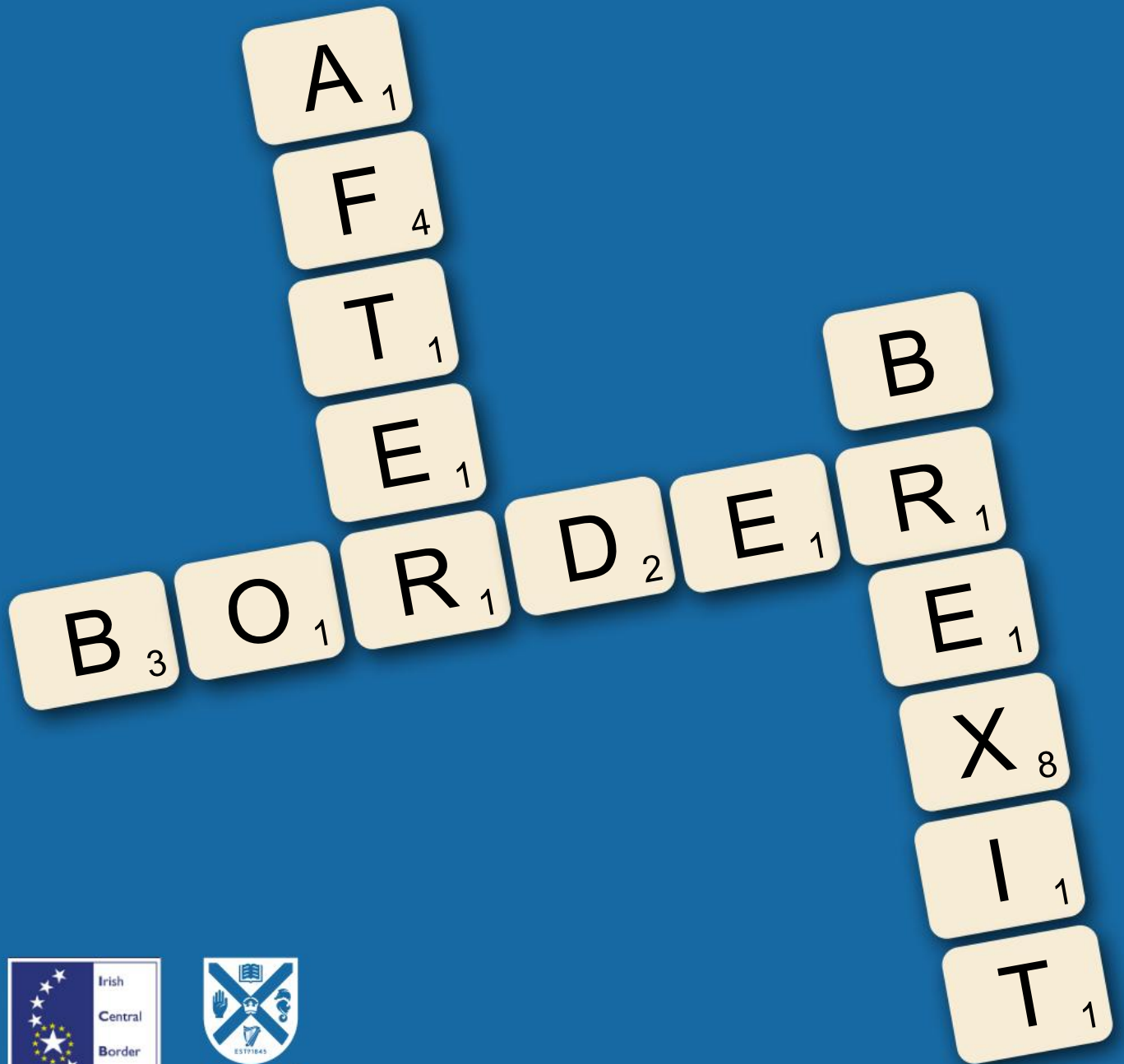
Cllr B. McGuigan said that this would help with the parking in the town because the spaces were precious in the town as it was.

Approved for sought the proposed draft project for the lighting scheme from the Tobermore Road up to the Park and Ride in Maghera. All attendees felt it was a worthy project.

Proposed by Cllr S McPeake
Seconded by Cllr B McGuigan

THE BORDER AFTER BREXIT:

Experiences of Local Communities in the
Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland



This ICBAN initiative is part of the 'Border Catalyst' Project, working with Queen's University Belfast and enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund.

THE BORDER AFTER BREXIT:

Experiences of Local Communities in the
Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

A report prepared for the Irish Central Border Area Network

By

Katy Hayward & Milena Komarova

Centre for International Borders Research
Queen's University Belfast
Belfast

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Executive Summary

The project

- ▶ These are results from the ‘The Border after Brexit’ project run by Queen’s University Belfast in conjunction with the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) of 8 local authorities in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland: Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.
- ▶ The research consisted of three parts – a large online survey of 394 unique responses, two focus groups and five individual interviews with stakeholders across the region, from both sides of the border.
- ▶ From the first week in January to the end of June, we also conducted a ‘temperature gauge’ on Brexit and the Protocol in which we kept track of relevant media stories and events across these islands. This formed the basis of a blog every six weeks, which summarised the main stories and occurrences. These were published on the QUB and ICBAN websites.
- ▶ The research is a follow-on from three previous reports: *Bordering on Brexit*, which was completed in late 2017 (found at <https://go.qub.ac.uk/bordering>); *Brexit at the Border*, the results from which were published in 2018 (found at <https://go.qub.ac.uk/brexitborder>); and *The Border into Brexit*, which was published in December 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/TheBorderIntoBrexitFull>), just before the UK exited the EU.
- ▶ With the end of the transition period and the Withdrawal Agreement (including the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland) and the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement coming into effect, this research sought to discover the experiences of people living and working in the border region. The purpose of the study has been to create an opportunity for the voices of local people on both sides of the border to be heard.
- ▶ Two years after the Protocol was negotiated in order to ‘avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland’, the future of relations across the island of Ireland, within Northern Ireland and between Britain and Ireland feels very much tied to the nature of the UK-EU relationship.
- ▶ The challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation need to be understood in light of the post-Brexit, post-Protocol conditions, which are currently in embryonic form.

Saliience of Brexit

- ▶ The level of interest and engagement in the subject of Brexit has only grown since the UK withdrew from the EU. This is not just so for those in Northern Ireland but also for those in the border counties of the Republic of Ireland. The effects of Brexit are ‘live’ cross-border concerns.
- ▶ Even though we might have anticipated a weariness with Brexit at this point, 85% of our survey respondents say that Brexit is important to them; indeed, 6 out of 10 say that it is very much so.
- ▶ We asked how the weight of importance given to Brexit had changed in the course of the past year. Almost half of our respondents (48%) say that Brexit has increased as a matter of importance for them in this time. Only 9% said it had decreased in importance for them.
- ▶ The overwhelming number of responses stress negative or problematic aspects of Brexit as being the main reason why they consider it to be more important than ever before to them.
- ▶ It is the negative *societal*, rather than economic, impact of Brexit that appears to have been the biggest reason for it growing in importance in people’s minds in the past year.

Impact of Brexit

- ▶ Just under half of our respondents say that the actual impact of Brexit on their lives since 1 January 2021 has been significant or very significant.
- ▶ Over half our respondents (53%) say that the impact of Brexit has been worse or much worse than they had expected, with only 13% saying it has been better than they feared.
- ▶ Only 17% say that Brexit has been insignificant. The respondents who report this are disproportionately from the border counties in the Republic of Ireland, which has remained in the EU. Those based in Northern Ireland who say that the impact of Brexit has been insignificant are both Leavers and Remainers.
- ▶ The most reported experiences of the impact of Brexit are economic. Around half of respondents point to problems with the supply, delivery, delays in delivery, and general availability of goods.

- ▶ However, qualitative data we gathered suggest that concerns with societal divisions and community relations are at the forefront of people's minds when thinking generally of the significance of Brexit.
- ▶ The 'Leavers' among our respondents tended to point out that what had been delivered in terms of Brexit, either politically or in purely economic terms, was not what they felt they had voted for.

Uncertainty worsened by lack of information

- ▶ Although not quite as pervasive as they were in 2019, uncertainty and lack of clarity continue to be of serious concern. Persistent uncertainty is the reason given by many of our respondents for the increased importance of Brexit to them since the end of the transition period.
- ▶ There are new and varied causes for post-Brexit uncertainty, such as the consequence of the pandemic and difficulties in finding information on practical matters for which the terms have changed, e.g. cross-border healthcare entitlements.
- ▶ Accessing information is particularly difficult in the border region and adds to the uncertainty. As one person in a focus group commented, 'You're getting two different... sets of information from the north and the south. You don't know what applies to you.'
- ▶ The challenge for maintaining good community and cross-border relations has been exacerbated by the poor communication caused by difficulties in contact during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the political sensitivities around Brexit and the Protocol.

Continued concerns

- ▶ Among a set of concerns we enquired about, people in the Central Border Region are most concerned about political stability in Northern Ireland (81%) and about north-south cooperation (79%).

- ▶ There are solid levels of concern for both practical and general issues relating to Brexit, including inadvertent mobile phone roaming charges, decreased choice/ increased price of consumer goods, and the economy of Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Levels of concerns for NI's place in the UK internal market and its constitutional position in the UK (around 4/10) are perhaps higher than we might expect given the proportion of respondents who live in the Republic of Ireland (over 4 in 10) and who hold British citizenship (1 in 8).
- ▶ Although around a third have been reassured (possibly by the Protocol and the TCA) that a hard border is now not a possibility, well over half (57%) remain concerned that there could yet be a hard Irish land border in the future.
- ▶ This shows overall that there is a real sense of flux and, with it, anxiety when it comes to the post-Brexit conditions, and that this exists on both sides of the border from people of various backgrounds and identities.

Importance of cross-border cooperation

- ▶ The Covid-19 pandemic brought considerable new difficulties for cross-border movement, living and cooperation.
- ▶ Overall, three-quarters of respondents consider the impact of Covid-19 measures to have restricted their cross-border access to services. This is bound to have an impact that will last at least into the medium term in terms of opportunities lost etc.
- ▶ The differential in the timing and scale of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout on either side of the border are seen to have caused practical difficulties.
- ▶ 9 out of 10 of our respondents consider cross-border cooperation to be important across a range of issues (with 7 out of 10 saying it is very much so), including for community relations, cross-border projects between Councils, and business development.
- ▶ Respondents stress the importance of cross-border cooperation and integration as the only way forward to address the present challenges of both Brexit and Covid.
- ▶ The risk of political instability and societal unrest is one that is identified as a post-Brexit and post-Protocol concern for people on both sides of the border.
- ▶ Half of respondents say that the experience of the past 12 months has made them less optimistic about the future in light of Brexit.

After Brexit: positives and opportunities

- ▶ Respondents express an awareness that for any opportunities from Brexit or the Protocol to be realised, social stability and political certainty are essential.
- ▶ Neither the positives, nor the negatives of either Brexit or the Protocol are exclusively associated with those who voted Leave or Remain. Instead, benefits and opportunities are pointed out from across the spectrum, although the prevalent view of Remainers is that there are no positives from Brexit and the prevalent view of Leavers is that the Protocol has negative consequences.
- ▶ Those who see positives from Brexit tend to do so in terms of economic advantage (for both parts of the island of Ireland) or strengthening sovereignty.
- ▶ Altogether, the Protocol is viewed slightly more positively than Brexit. Again, positives are articulated mostly in economic terms, particularly in allowing N. Ireland to benefit from its 'unique' position and 'derive the best of both worlds'. The Protocol is also appreciated for having mitigated against the worst consequences of Brexit and avoided a hard land border. Leavers sharing positive views of the Protocol see these mostly as potentials unlikely to be realised in practice. Most Leavers, however, see the Protocol as a threat to UK sovereignty and British identity.

Foreword

On behalf of the management board of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd. I wish to commend to you 'The Border after Brexit' report.

ICBAN is the cross-border network for the area known as the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland. The members of the organisation are the eight local authorities who together make up the Region and ICBAN has been working since 1995 to help address common issues of cross-border cooperation to the area.

This is the fourth report of this type which ICBAN and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) have completed. In 2017 the Management Board of ICBAN had identified an absence of local community consultation on the impacts of the Brexit process on both sides of the border. Together with QUB we have sought to give voice to the people from our Border Region, and to provide a means to record and report on these opinions. Through the four reports, c.2000 responses have been gathered in total. We have also endeavoured to ensure that the findings are brought to the attention of those involved in the high level discussions on the subject and to this end we have ensured that the UK government, the Irish government, NI politicians, and those centrally involved in the EU, have received the reports and been made aware of the findings through media coverage, various fora, consultation processes and mechanisms. The reports serve as a timely reminder of what is tangibly involved in this process, and how it impacts on the people and businesses of this border region.

Brexit is the latest challenge to cooperation in the area; indeed, the border which runs through our Region has been central to the debate. The Management Board of ICBAN, which comprises 27 elected representatives from this border region, believe it is incumbent upon the likes of our organisation to highlight any opportunities or concerns for the communities and businesses of the area. We respect the differing political opinions within our Board, our member Councils and communities on the subject, and thus have been careful to ensure that this is a non-political and non-partisan initiative.

As a Board we hope and trust that this initiative adds value to the public discourse on the subject at this time. We are aware of the various important and valuable reports which have been delivered previously on the subject, and thus we have sought to not duplicate this good work, but to complement it.

The Brexit process has been constantly developing and this latest report provides a reference guide on the latest research on key discussion topics, such as how the

withdrawal of UK and Northern Ireland from the EU, and the Protocol for Ireland / Northern Ireland, are impacting on communities here.

I wish to record our thanks and appreciation to Prof. Katy Hayward, ably assisted by Dr. Milena Komarova and Mr. Ben Rosher and to Queen's University Belfast for their diligence, professionalism and commitment to the initiative. Also to our staff, our member Councils and everyone who has helped promote the initiative and to seek contributions. This initiative would not have been realised without the time and effort of everyone who completed the online survey, attended the focus group meetings and participated in the stakeholder interviews. Many thanks to you all again. And finally, our sincere thanks to the project's funders, the Reconciliation Fund of the Department of Foreign Affairs, without whose support we would have been unable to undertake this worthwhile initiative.

Councillor Eamon Mc Neill,
ICBAN Chair, October 2021

Acknowledgements

This report was co-authored by Professor Katy Hayward and Dr. Milena Komarova (Queen's University Belfast). We are extremely grateful to Shane Campbell, CEO of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) for his leadership and facilitation of this project, and to Joanne Breen and Andy Hallewell in ICBAN for their invaluable assistance from the early days of the project to the conclusion of this report.

We also wish to pay special tribute to Ben Rosher, whose meticulous research for the 'Temperature Gauge' aspect of the Border Catalyst project not only helped ensure we were fully briefed on the evolving and complex context for the impact of Brexit and the Protocol, but also served as an invaluable record of key events and debates during the first six months after the ending of the transition period.

We would like to thank each of the eight local authorities represented in the ICBAN cross-border partnership for their support for this initiative and helping to publicise the survey, and especially those Councillors and staff who 'went the extra mile' in supporting the project and the work of ICBAN in this regard.

This initiative is part of the wider 'Border Catalyst project and has been made possible through assistance from the Reconciliation Fund of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which has been invaluable. The authors' work on the project is also supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (UK), which funds the authors' fellowships through 'The UK in a Changing Europe', enabling them to work full-time on the research topic of 'The Future and Status of Northern Ireland after Brexit'. The funders have had no influence in the design or conduct of this report, which has been performed independently by the researchers, with the facilitating role of ICBAN staff in the distribution and promotion of the survey and the organisation of the focus groups and stakeholder interviews.

We extend sincerest thanks to all the respondents to the online survey for taking the time to complete the survey on a topic that has been so well-worn by now but which remains of pressing concern. We also wish to express particular gratitude to each one of the participants of the online focus groups and the five individual stakeholder interviews. Unfortunately, again, only a small fraction of the discussions could be included in the final report. We have, however, read and analysed them in their entirety and will continue to draw upon our participants' insights in other publications and presentations.

In this report, as with the previous three, we wanted to give as much space as possible to people in the region who are not often given the opportunity to be listened to on this topic. Our analysis has been confined primarily to categorisation of data and finding the predominant themes and common issues. As such, we have kept interpretation of the data and subsequent recommendations to a minimum. The report is, first and foremost, a presentation of perspectives of people from a range of backgrounds, age, occupation and viewpoints in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Introduction

The project

These are the latest findings of a project on the impact of Brexit on the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland. This research has been conducted by a small team at Queen's University Belfast in conjunction with the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), the cross-border partnership of eight local authorities in the area known as the Central Border Region (Figure 1).



Figure 1. A map of the local council areas covered by ICBAN

This work has been funded as part of ICBAN's 'Border Catalyst' project (<http://icban.com/border-compass/>) by the Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund. Additional financial support for the process of research analysis has been provided by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council through the 'UK in a Changing Europe' (<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/>).

This is the fourth of a series of reports we have conducted on Brexit and the Central Border Region.

The first report, *Bordering on Brexit*, was published in November 2017 (<https://go.qub.ac.uk/bordering>) and found that people in the region felt uninformed about Brexit, unrepresented in the process, and had deep fears about the consequences of it.

The second report, *Brexit at the Border*, published in June 2018 (<https://go.qub.ac.uk/brexitborder>), showed that ease of access to transport, health, education and other services was greatly valued by the majority of people on both sides of the border in this region. It also revealed that Leave and Remain voters in the region share a common priority for the border to remain as ‘seamless’ and ‘frictionless’ as it is today.

The third report, *The Border into Brexit* was published in December 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/TheBorderIntoBrexitFull>), just before the UK exited the EU. That report found that the revised Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson appeared not to have wholly reassured people in the Central Border Region about avoiding a hard border. People still expected disruption from Brexit, were still wary of the information they received on the topic, and still felt uncertain about the future impact of Brexit on daily life in the border region.

The research behind this report was conducted in three phases: an online survey (May-June 2021), Focus Groups (June 2021), and Stakeholder Interviews (August-September 2021). The research was as similar as possible in design to that of the previous studies, but we were affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and so all our focus groups and interviews were conducted online this time. The focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed.

There was an additional dimension to this study: the ‘Temperature Gauge’ that was conducted on a weekly basis for the first six months after the end of the transition period (January-June 2021). The purpose of this research was to monitor what was happening with respect to the impact of Brexit and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. We published regular blogs with Queen’s and ICBAN which summarised the events and debates of the past six weeks which helped create the post-Brexit, post-Protocol environment in which this research was being conducted (<https://icban.com/border-compass/>).

The context of the study

This research was conducted around half-way through the first year after the ending of the transition period. From the UK leaving the EU on 31st January to the end of the transition period on 31st December 2020 the UK was *de facto* still considered as if it were in the EU, in order to allow time to adjust to the new post-Brexit conditions. That year was dominated by speculation about whether the UK and EU would be able to come up with a trade agreement at all. As such, the concerns about a ‘no deal’ Brexit that had dogged the withdrawal negotiations and given rise to much anxiety in the border region (as we reported in previous studies) continued for another year, albeit this time in different form.

So tense were UK-EU relations over the topic of Northern Ireland that, in September 2020, the EU began legal proceedings against the UK for infringing the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement in its threat to give its ministers the powers to breach the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. This was stepped down in December 2020 when the UK retracted such a move, and the UK and EU agreed the terms of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.¹

However, tension was soon to come back to the fore once the Protocol came into effect. From the early days, it was evident that the Protocol was being viewed and interpreted quite differently by the UK and the EU.

The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the Withdrawal Agreement puts in place arrangements agreed by the UK and EU in late 2019 to meet their shared objectives:

‘to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, to avoid a hard border and to protect the 1998 Agreement in all its dimensions.’ (Article 1.3)²

The Protocol avoids having checks and controls on the Irish land border by having distinct arrangements post-Brexit.

1 Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and United Kingdom, 24 December 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948119/EU-UK_Trade_and_Cooperation_Agreement_24.12.2020.pdf

2 Revised Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, 17 October 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-Protocol-on-irelandnorthern-ireland-and-political-declaration>

It sees Northern Ireland continue to follow some EU rules and apply checks and controls on goods coming into it from across the Irish Sea. This allows Britain to have an independent trade policy, and it also allows the EU to be confident that nothing will come into its single market that doesn't meet its criteria. However, it does mean a significant adjustment for trade within the UK. The Protocol came into force on 1st January 2021. There are new customs and regulatory procedures for goods entering from Britain. This involves more paperwork and costs, and many businesses were not prepared for it.

The systems intended to help with such processes are also new. There have been teething problems with many of them, including in recruiting and training staff. All this is before the full force of the Protocol really comes into play, given the existence of 'grace periods' on the full implementation of the customs and regulatory controls on goods entering Northern Ireland from Britain. The unilateral extension of these grace periods was another source of disagreement between the UK and EU in Spring 2021.

The near-continual tension in UK-EU relations over the Protocol in 2021 also saw increasing manifestation closer to home, in British-Irish, north-south and inter-community relations. The increased checks and controls across the Irish Sea was, simply put, the price paid for avoiding them at the Irish land border. As such a very clear win/lose narrative around the post-Brexit Irish border was becoming apparent by early 2021. There was also a strong push-back to the idea that the Protocol protected the 1998 Agreement, with unionists making the argument that the new GB/NI trading relationship undermined the conditions for peace. Public opinion over the Protocol was divided, as was the Northern Ireland Executive. The DUP's five point plan to bring down the Protocol included not participating 'in any north-south political engagements on issues relating to the Protocol'.³ By the summer of 2021, the UK explicitly sought a 'renegotiation' of the Protocol and UK-EU talks began in August 2021.⁴

Although media attention and political debate has focused on the Irish Sea 'border' in 2021, the Irish land border has also significantly changed post-Brexit. Northern Ireland is now outside the European Union (EU) and the Irish border is an external border of the EU.

3 Arlene Foster 'astounded' at claims DUP stoking tensions over NI Protocol, Belfast Telegraph, 3 February 2021, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/arlene-foster-astounded-at-claims-dup-stoking-tensions-over-ni-Protocol-40045897.html>

4 Northern Ireland Protocol – Next steps, 21 July 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-ireland-Protocol-next-steps>

British citizens in Northern Ireland are no longer EU citizens and non-Irish citizens living and working in Northern Ireland no longer enjoy an automatic right to do so. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement forms the new basis for the trading relationship between Britain and Ireland, but also the legal basis for north/south relations that are not covered by the Protocol. As such there is no automatic free movement of services across the Irish land border. Article 11 of the Protocol states that it:

‘shall be implemented and applied so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, including in the areas of environment, health, agriculture, transport, education and tourism, as well as in the areas of energy, telecommunications, broadcasting, inland fisheries, justice and security, higher education and sport.’

However, this has become much more difficult than before given that Northern Ireland is outside the EU.⁵ This study – and the temperature gauge that goes along side it – is therefore of particular interest as an indication of the experience of Brexit in the border region that was the focus of much attention during the withdrawal negotiations. It is also a test of the conditions for cross-border cooperation created by the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement (including the Protocol) and Trade and Cooperation Agreement, not to mention the Memorandum of Understanding between the British and Irish Governments on the Common Travel Area and the New Decade, New Approach document which also have relevance for movement, funding and cooperation across the Irish border post-Brexit.⁶

Whilst political, economic and legal conditions for cross-border cooperation may be shaped by agreements (or lack of them) at intergovernmental level, it is at the level of local authorities, local services and community organisations that the real impact of big changes are felt and adjusted to. This is why a report of this nature is timely and worthwhile.

5 As noted, for example, by results of the Centre for Cross Border Studies' quarterly surveys in 2021 on the conditions for cross-border cooperation, see: <https://crossborder.ie/events/presentation-of-the-results-of-the-2nd-quarterly-survey-on-the-conditions-for-north-south-and-east-west-cooperation/>

6 Memorandum of Understanding on the Common Travel Area, 8 May 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/memorandum-of-understanding-between-the-uk-and-ireland-on-the-cta>
New Decade, New Approach, 9 January 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf

The study

The survey

A total of 403 responses were received for the online survey, which was open for 8 weeks up to the end of June 2021. We discovered that there were 9 duplicate responses to the survey, so the actual number of unique responses that were analysed for this study stands at 394.

The survey consisted of 3 substantive sections, which covered the topics of the importance and impact of Brexit, the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, and cross-border cooperation today (in light of such challenges as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic). The survey was publicised through the local authorities and participating institutions, mainly through the use of social media. Respondents were self-selecting and we make no claim that the cohort is a representative sample. The purpose was to enable people who live or work in the region, on either side of the border, to comment on these topics and share their experiences and perspectives.

The respondents

In similar proportions to the previous survey, 57.3% of our respondents are male and 41.9% female, with 0.7% preferring not to say. Also similarly to the 2019 survey, the majority of our respondents could be described as middle aged, with an underrepresentation of younger and older cohorts. Just over half (53.6%) were in the 46-65 age group, 29.3% were 31-45, 9.2% were over 66 and 7.7% were 18-30 [those under 18, who constitute nearly a quarter of the population, were not sought in this study].⁷

The largest proportion of respondents come from Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon (ABC) Borough Council district (21.3%), with the fewest coming from Cavan (4.2%).

⁷ An approximate calculation based on figures from the NI Statistics and Research Agency (<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2020-mid-year-population-estimates-northern-ireland>) and the Central Statistics Office of Ireland (<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp3oy/cp3/assr/>).

In this study, at least 52.8% of our respondents are working or living in the council areas in Northern Ireland, with at least 38.7% coming from council areas south/west of the border. When we consider that in the previous study in 2019, approximately 55% of the respondents came from Northern Ireland, we can see that **the level of interest and engagement in the subject of Brexit has not dramatically waned in the Republic of Ireland border counties.**

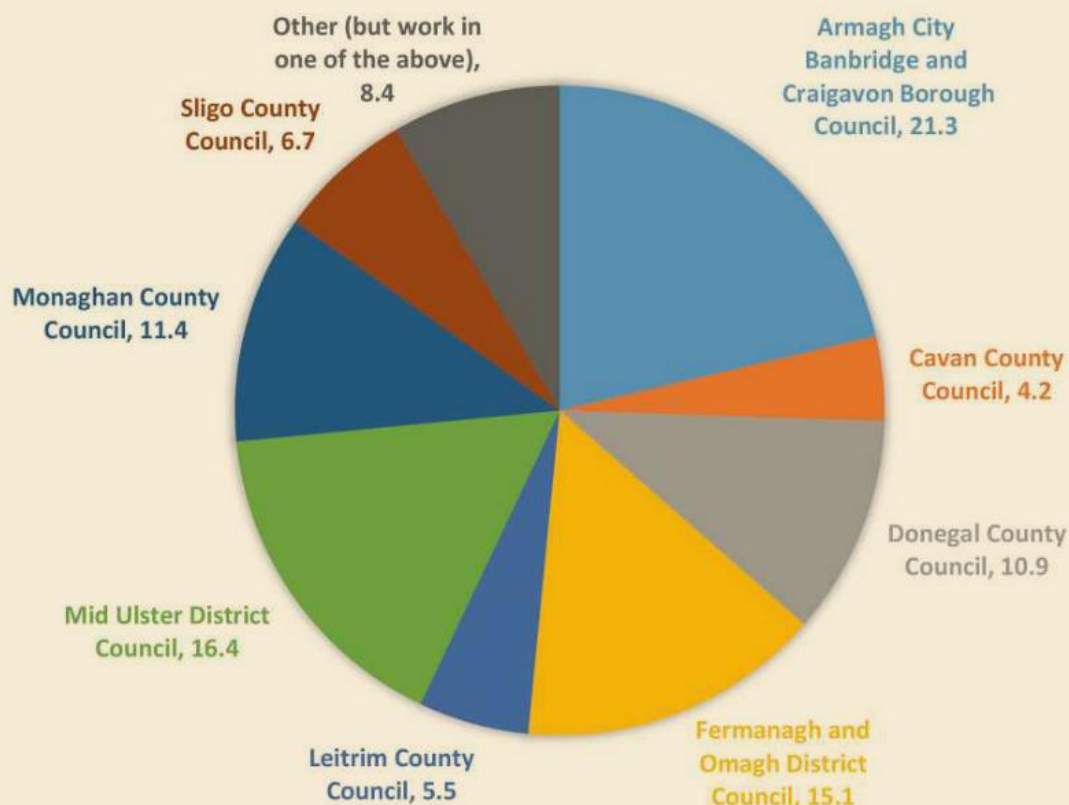


Figure 2. Place of residence of survey respondents, by local council area

One thing that has changed considerably from the previous surveys is the proportion of our respondents who hold exclusively Irish citizenship. This has risen from two-thirds in the 2019 survey to nearly three quarters (73.4%) in this one. That said, there was also a small rise in the proportion of respondents holding exclusively British citizenship (1 in 8). Only 11.4% say they hold dual British and Irish citizenship – a drop of 7 percentage points from the 2019 survey. 1.5% of our respondents hold other dual citizenships, with less than 1% holding another EU citizenship.

We have always asked our survey respondents how they voted in the Brexit referendum in 2016. This time, just under half (49.1%) say they voted Remain and 10.9% say they voted Leave – slightly lower and higher figures respectively than in the previous survey.

38% said that they had no vote in the referendum (broadly reflecting the proportion of respondents living in the Republic of Ireland). This means that approximately 1 in 6 of our respondents who voted in the referendum voted Leave.

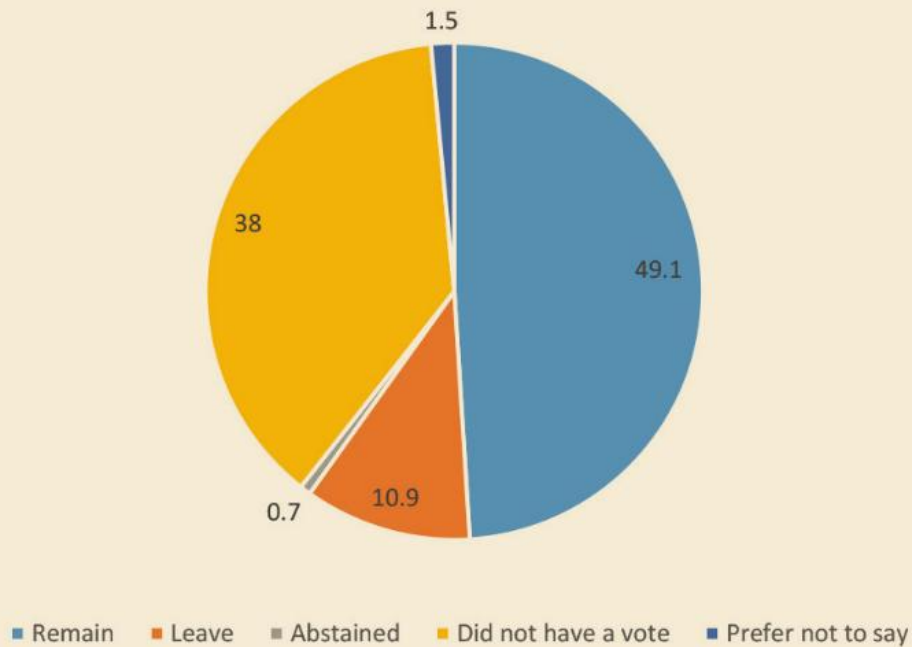


Figure 3. How survey respondents voted in the 2016 Brexit referendum

The importance of Brexit

Increasing importance

Although, given the self-selecting nature of our survey respondents, it is not surprising that only 2.2% say that Brexit has no importance to them, the weight of importance given to the topic is more than we might have anticipated, some five years after the referendum. **85% of our respondents say that Brexit is very or considerably important to them**, with 6 out of 10 giving it the highest importance.

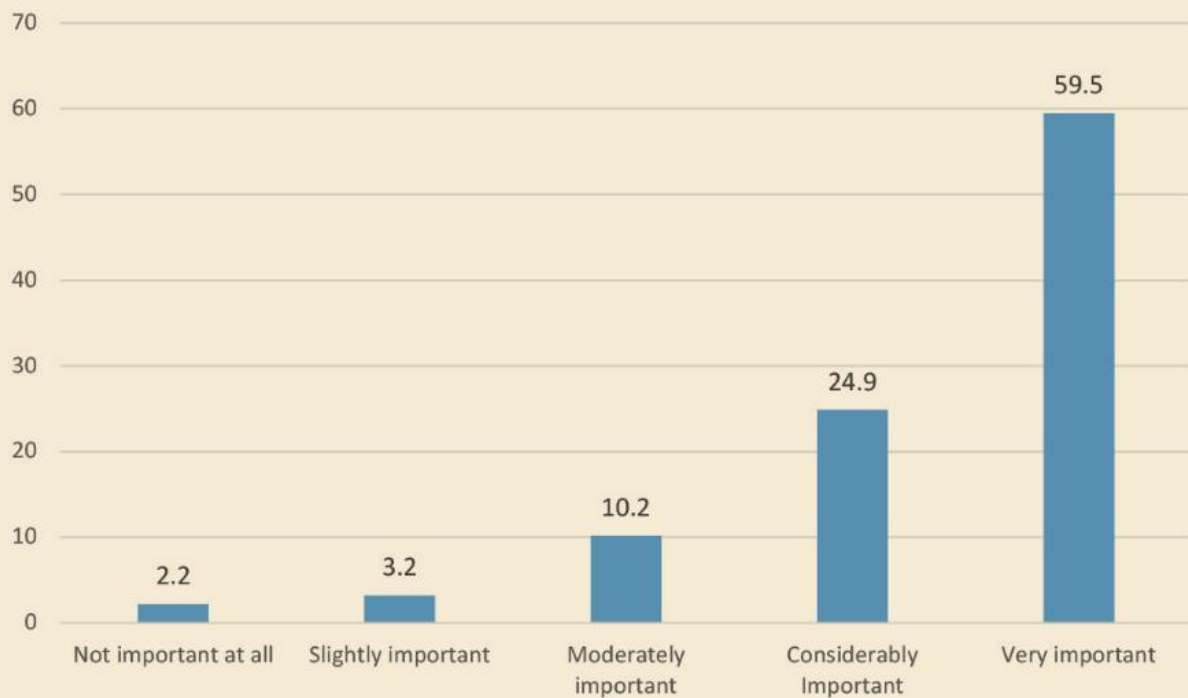


Figure 4. How important is the subject of Brexit to you now?

We wanted to assess the degree to which Brexit as a topic was seen to have been defused, if not resolved, in the border region post-Protocol and post-TCA. So we asked how the weight of importance given to Brexit had changed in the course of the past year. **Nearly half of our respondents (47.6%) say that Brexit has increased as a matter of importance for them in this time. Only 9.4% said it had decreased in importance for them.**

Why Brexit is growing in importance

In an open-ended question, we asked people to give reasons why Brexit had changed in importance for them, if it had. Approximately a third of our respondents answered this question. **The overwhelming number of responses stress the negative or problematic aspects of Brexit as the leading reason for its changing importance.**

Many such negatives are to do with its economic effects:

R37 ‘Dealing with repercussions of, and restrictions introduced as a result of, Brexit such as *lack of availability of goods, increased cost of services, change of suppliers* from Northern Ireland-based suppliers to Republic of Ireland-based suppliers and disruption of cross-border travel due to uncertainty in relation to insurance cover’

R66 ‘It is important to me as it is having a terrible effect on goods being delivered to my business from Europe and also increasing the time for parcels to be delivered from GB, as well as much *increased carriage charges.*’

Economic impacts exacerbate fears for peace

Another strong theme in the answers given points to the perception of damage to peace, stability and the potential for (or actual) return of violence. In fact, expressions of concern about rising or exacerbated societal divisions and damage to community relations indicate that it is **the negative societal, rather than economic, impact of Brexit that appears to have been the biggest reason for it growing in importance in people’s minds in the past year.**

R88 ‘It has upset the ethos of Northern Ireland. We have had peaceful coexistence between all sectors. The undercurrents were still there under the surface, but all sides were working together for the common good. *Now the differences are brought to the fore again and each group is concentrating on its own agenda.* Hopefully peace will survive. There is enough trouble with the Covid and customs’

R176 ‘Serious threat to our delicate peace process’

R47 ‘[U]nrest in NI over the Protocol has led to fears of a resurgence of violence.’

As some of the above quotes suggest, the effects of Brexit on both social relations (and peace) and the economy appear entwined in people's concerns. This relationship, or at least co-occurrence, is very openly stated by a number of respondents.

R42 'As a consumer, it has made every day trade more difficult and more expensive. Range of products has decreased as well. Tensions within NI are higher than have been for years'

R10 'It has become clearer the damaging effect Brexit will, and is, having on our economy and peace process'

R49 'Concerns over restrictions in free trade between UK/EU. Stability of NI peace process. Possible restricted access to goods and services from NI.'

A businessman – a participant in one of our focus groups – articulated the relationship between the economic and the socio-political effects of the Protocol succinctly:

'Business wise – the Protocol, yes, I have found difficult. We're not so bad, because we do a lot of work in Dublin, a lot of work in London, a lot of work in Scotland. We work throughout the UK and Ireland, but we have an issue getting products into Northern Ireland and then we have to move them onto Dublin.'

He went on to express how this concerns him as a unionist:

The Protocol is really in there to deter people from buying from the UK. From a nationalist perspective, people might think that's a good thing, I don't know. But from a unionist perspective, I think it's crazy. It's actually driving a wedge between the two communities ...the introduction of the Protocol, another border, is really alienating a huge part of the community. From the Protestant community, it's an alienation.' [**FG2 business person**]

Indeed, one survey respondent, having voted 'leave' at the 2016 Referendum on leaving the European Union, briefly yet aptly, reflected the above position by stating simply:

R149 'Brexit is ok, the Protocol has had a hugely negative impact'.

The impact of Brexit

A significant impact

We then asked about the impact of Brexit on people's lives since the end of the transition period. We see from this why it is that respondents place such importance on the subject of Brexit. **Just under half of our respondents say that the impact of Brexit on their lives since 1 January 2021 has been significant or very significant.** Only 16.7% say that it has been insignificant and 7% say there has been no impact all.

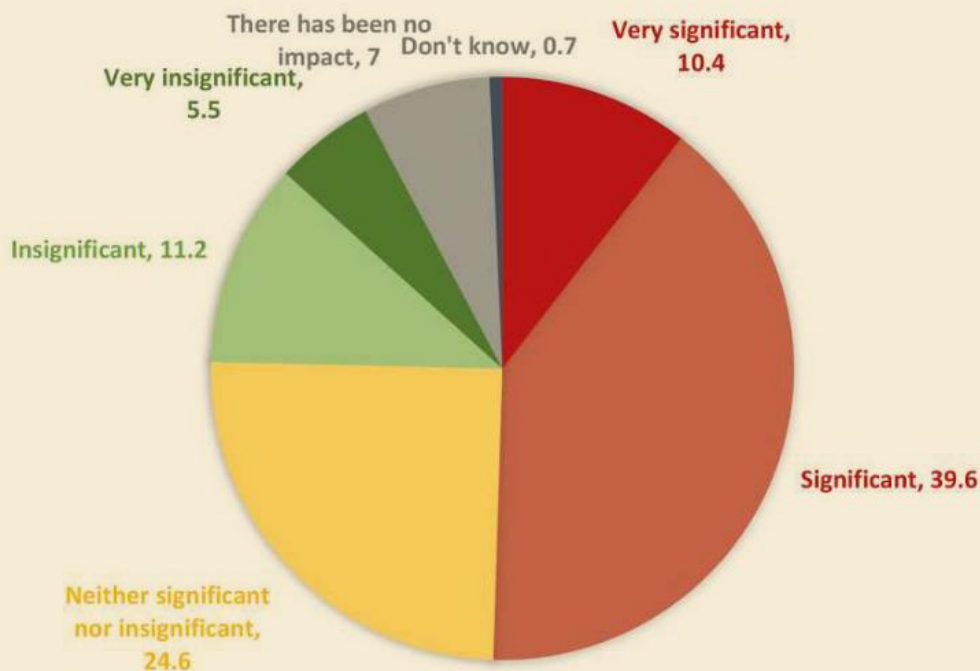


Figure 5. The impact of Brexit on life since the end of the transition period

Economic impacts are being felt

We asked an open-ended question to get more detail on the nature of this impact: *'Since the Brexit transition period ended in December 2020, what impact on your life (if any) have you felt from Brexit?'*

This was the open-ended question which received by far the most responses (only a few respondents did not complete an answer). **The most reported experiences of Brexit are economic. Around half of respondents point to problems with the supply, delivery, delays in delivery, and general availability of goods.**

Many people experience the impact of Brexit in terms of online shopping:

R233 'There has not be a big difference to me personally, however I have noticed: 1/Online shopping- more suppliers not willing to ship here. 2/Additional surcharges for some of those that do'

R21 'Shortages on shelves in shops in Jan/Feb - price increases on some goods - online orders from UK now too expensive'

R96 'I have found it harder to get the fresh fruit and vegetables I would normally get. I have noticed when purchasing things online that some companies just won't send to NI and when challenged they have blamed Brexit and said it makes it too complicated to send to NI'

R124 'Delays in receiving parcel mail, less choice of food (e.g. French cheeses), inability to order certain goods as companies do not want to deliver in NI'

R145 'Reduced choice of foodstuffs in supermarket due to NI Protocol's Irish Sea Border. Delays on NI Protocol's Irish Sea Border mean shorter time to expiry date of many food products purchased. Three orders (of five in total) placed on Amazon since then have not been fulfilled because supplier says no longer sending to Northern Ireland due to NI Protocol's Irish Sea Border and all this before "grace" periods even expire'.

Other consumers point to different but related types of problems, and to some solutions too:

R39 'Work - have had to address issues of VAT and Customs duties and look at sourcing materials from suppliers within EU. On the farm - importation of plants, animals etc has become much more complicated. On-line shopping - switched to Irish & EU websites to avoid customs and taxes'

R232 'Not able to access goods from GB as before. Most firms don't send to NI now. Some goods missing from shops. Goods more expensive'

R131 'With the enforced Irish sea border it has made business with the UK a lot harder. Needless to say it's increased costs by around 15%. This is not necessary and our political representatives need to negotiate this away'

R246 'Money does not go very far. Less food in shops. Packages a lot smaller for same price'

R269 'I feel the cost of living is increasing and I cannot get the items I want in NI now due to import fees, I am worried that my euro will have no value now in Fermanagh.'

As is obvious from the above examples, many people specifically stress the experienced increase in prices of goods or cost of living generally, as well as the resulting complications to daily life which Brexit has brought to the border region. **The themes of practical (and often negative) changes in everyday life, were particularly emphasised in the responses of 'Leavers':**

R6 'Some items not deliverable to my address, increase in prices, greater hope for a United Ireland'

R79 'Can't get essential goods for my business into the country as easily as before'

R82 'Businesses will not ship to here. I can't get clothes, simple things off amazon. Plants etc. Postage from Royal Mail and other places have increased their parcel prices. Price of food and things has increased.'

Experiences of businesses in the border region

While for many the negative economic effects described above concern them as ordinary citizens and consumers, for some there is a real worry with how these changes are influencing their own businesses:

R79 'Can't get essential goods for my business into the country as easily as before'

R80 'It's stalled our business output because we couldn't get raw materials. We have been charged huge fees, some bigger than the value of the products, when buying from the UK'

R130 'Export business with Canada finished - 17% Duty applied on goods from UK.'

It is notable that some of these problems do not relate to the Protocol – indeed, some of them (e.g. access to EU products) should have been avoided through the Protocol. However, those which relate to getting goods from Great Britain do, and they of course affect businesses in the border region as much as anywhere else in Northern Ireland.

Taking this survey in summer 2021 is too early for much adjustment to have taken place with respect to the bedding-in of the new post-Brexit and post-Protocol conditions. At the same time, the full force of the Protocol has not yet come to pass (e.g. under the grace periods for facilitating the movement of certain products into NI from GB which otherwise would be more difficult, if not banned, under the Protocol). This all adds to the sense of uncertainty and a sense of flux.

This small business owner from our Focus Group 2 explained some of the impact that the post-Brexit and post-Protocol trade barriers between Britain and Ireland, north and south, have had.

‘Is it affecting my business? – yes, hugely. I employ a girl at over £30k and all she does now is paperwork. **We still can’t do enough paperwork to try and get the products in.** ... The other side of the coin as well, a lot of the suppliers...are now coming under such pressure... it’s not worth the hassle. **They just don’t sell to Ireland at all – north or south.** I’m actually being forced to find new suppliers because the UK companies simply won’t sell because of the structures that have been put in place...that affects everybody.

I find the Protocol has been one of the most frustrating things that I have ever...I have heard of turkeys voting for Christmas, but that has to be as close to it as we’ll ever get.

From a business perspective, **it was not business-minded, it was politically minded in a lot of our own imaginations. Maybe we’re wrong, but that’s the way it is perceived.** That it is a political influence, to try and force you from the UK. That’s ok, just say it’s political, if you know what I mean.

The harming of businesses is what I find to really, really struggle with... I employ both sides of the community, in fact we employ a huge different number of nationalities, not just Protestant and Catholic. That is really affecting businesses and why is it there? I don’t know.’ **[FG2 business person]**

Brexit impact worse than expected

When asked as to whether this real impact of Brexit has been better or worse than expected, we can see that **over half our respondents (52.5%) say that its impact has been worse or much worse, with only 13% saying it has been better than they feared.**

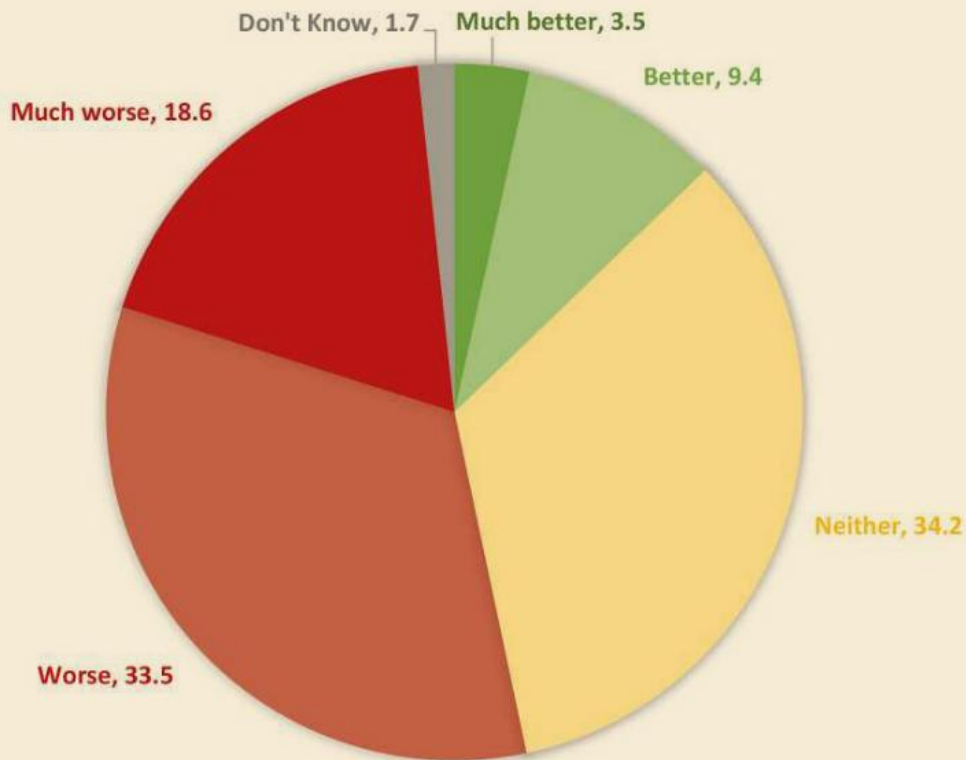


Figure 6. Experience of Brexit in practice compared to expectations

This is interesting because we know from our previous reports that respondents in the border region already held largely negative expectations about the likely impact of Brexit. The fact that it is felt to be worse than expected seems to come in relation to the economic impact – some of which felt a little unreal and speculative until the actual impact of adding customs requirements etc. to supply chains between these islands was felt. It also appears to relate to the sense of social and political tension around Brexit which, again, is now out of the realms of speculation and into the realities of everyday life and political decision-making.

Persistent Uncertainty

New causes of uncertainty

A central finding in our 2019 Report (*The Border Into Brexit*) was the overwhelming feeling of *uncertainty*, with exclusively negative connotations, which many of our respondents then shared. While uncertainty had characterised so much of the Brexit experience since 2016, the context of the 2019 General Elections and the long-stalling process of concluding an EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement served to exacerbate the pervading sense of insecurity at the time. Our present research shows that **uncertainty and lack of clarity continue to be a serious concern**, albeit perhaps not as pervasive as they were back in 2019.

One in every 10 respondents to the survey question of why the importance of Brexit has changed for them (if it had) specifically mentions some form of *uncertainty* arising from Brexit that is problematic for them – whether in a personal sense or with respect to the general political, social or economic situation in Northern Ireland:

R21 ‘Uncertainty about Irish sea border and instability of Stormont Executive’

R124 ‘A lot more uncertainty about living in NI as a non-British/Irish national’

R344 ‘Increased sense of uncertainty and loss of faith in political leadership in Northern Ireland’.

Some also pointed out practical issues with respect to a lack of information about, for example, cross-border rights and ability to travel, and ‘Cross-border illness entitlements’ (**R24**). Others pointed to a different type of uncertainty. For example, the role of media in exaggerating problems:

R240 ‘Misinformation & confusion are rife. Journalism is sensationalising the issues with no fact checking.’

Complicating factor of Covid-19

Some of this uncertainty can be attributed, at least indirectly, to the ‘interference’ of the Covid-19 pandemic which respondents suggested was temporarily decreasing the importance of, and concerns about, Brexit (e.g. **R93** ‘The impact of COVID-19 has been of more immediate concern to me.’). While a small number of respondents stated that Brexit has had no effects at all so far on their lives, another few noted that Covid has masked/delayed or even compounded the effects experienced:

R326 ‘Whereas the full negative effects of Brexit will not be fully realised until the present pandemic has subsided i.e. travel, trade and tourism, the isolation of our six counties has already begun in relation to health, education and well-being’

R270 ‘Given that life is dominated by Covid right now it is hard to say what impact Brexit has had because life is just not normal’

R363 ‘Pandemic has masked the real effects as nobody can travel. We are a traditional arts industry who performed to a live audience. We have yet to see the true long-term damage of Brexit with regard to public funding of the arts. We have lost 50% income from performance. Brexit and Covid are equally harmful but Covid will go away.’

Becoming informed in the border region

The above discussed sense of anxiety and uncertainty is very well reflected in our focus group discussions and is linked to the question of the influence of the various sources of information available to border residents on the changes affecting lives after Brexit. Sometimes the range of sources can be positive, but it can also add to the sense of confusion.

‘I think [people in the border region] are getting [information on Brexit] from a range of sources. Employers seem to get a lot from *InterTrade Ireland*. The government departments offer information as well, the information is on the government websites, north and south. ... and then obviously you have Citizens’ Advice and Citizens’ Information which are helping people with their benefits and so on [**FG1**]

‘There are a lot of sources of information out there, **if there was one focal point for people to go to, it would make things easier. You do hear a lot of different things from different sources, it can be hard to know what’s real and what’s not at times.** It would make things easier, to go to one reference point’. [FG1]

Another member of the Focus Group agreed about the need for ‘one point of contact’ and information. They highlighted by way of example the lack of awareness about the loss of the Cross-border Healthcare Directive, which was temporarily reinstated by the Minister for Health in Northern Ireland in order for NI patients to seek and pay for treatment in the private sector in Ireland and have the costs reimbursed by the Health and Social Care Board.⁸

‘You’re getting two different... sets of information from the north and the south. You don’t know what applies to you.’ [FG1]

Interestingly and by contrast, an interviewee from an organisation lobbying for the improvement of the conditions for cross-border work stressed a positive experience with the use of reliable sources of information:

‘Throughout the whole Brexit process since the 2016 referendum and until now, what has been your main source of information with respect to impact on cross-border workers like you?’

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies and EURES. Both of those would be good sources. It was very difficult at the start; I don’t think anybody knew! There’s obviously a lot of information in the media, but I don’t always take that at face value. But luckily there are some good sources for cross-border guidance from EURES and from the Centre for Cross-Border Studies. There is another place, but I normally get the links through EURES. They are very good’.

8 <http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/travelfortreatment/>

Influence of unreliable information sources

The discussion in both focus groups emphasised the importance of social media which can add to confusion and contribute to a sense of insecurity, exacerbating political tensions.

‘The other quite confusing point of information is Facebook. A woman contacted me a couple of weeks ago, that she needed a passport for her dog, to go from one side of the border to the other – which isn’t true, but she read on Facebook that she did. Obviously, the woman was very distressed, so it’s just things like that. If people had one reliable point of contact for information, I think it would have been useful’ [FG1]

‘Facebook and Twitter! I work in a rural area, but I live in a very loyalist area in [name of small town], so I live in an urban area. All of the protests and anything else were on the whole against the Protocol... [at the root] has been Facebook pages, has been Twitter feeds and it has been [roadside] signs and things. So, it’s faceless people who are writing stuff and then calling people out onto the streets or whatever’. [FG2]

Some discussion in the focus groups highlighted the extent to which the effects and influence of digital media and digital communication (with the associated inequalities of access) have been extended disproportionately by Covid-related restrictions on travel, movement and face-to-face contact.

This comment demonstrates how the border region is particularly badly affected by problems around lack of good quality and reliable information. It speaks well to how **Brexit-related uncertainty, mixed messages or conflicting information in the border region, rural disadvantage in access to broadband infrastructure, and the common difficulties of online communication have damaged the possibility for dialogue in the border region at a time of growing political pressure:**

‘But when you’re working from home and you’re in no direct contact with anyone else face-to-face, it’s very, very difficult to do this kind of [cross-border, cross-community] work.

We’ve tried to have difficult conversations...but even to try to deal with tensions in a virtual room is very difficult. People can leave a room, they can turn cameras

off, they can turn their microphone off... people can disengage very quickly if they don't want to get involved in a conversation...

So, even in terms of urban versus rural, and the digital divide for us has been a really major issue. We could have reached out to our 300 members in a normal society, in a normal world. Now we're very conscious that at least 30% of our members are not engaging, as they don't want to do virtual, or they can't. So, the digital divide and broadband has been a massive issue, about accessing people in rural communities about any of these conversations'. **[FG2]**

Such problems in communication at this critical time are likely to have long-term consequences.

Concerns around Brexit & the Protocol

Common concerns around political stability and cooperation

The subjects of Brexit and, with it, the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement had been so much in the news from 1 January (as reported in our Temperature Gauge blogs <https://icban.com/library/>) that we were not surprised to find that 98% of our respondents have heard of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. There is a difference between being aware of something and having knowledge about it, of course. About half of our respondents say that they know a little about the Protocol, and an additional 40% say that they know a good deal about it. Only 9% confess to knowing nothing about it.

It is very difficult to differentiate between the impact of Brexit and that of the Protocol, both positive and negative. This is particularly true for a survey sample which crosses the Irish border and thus includes respondents who are still in the EU. Our tick-box answer questions do not attempt to do this, and instead just covered the range of issues that we know have been most significant and/or publicised since the end of the transition period. This is a set of questions that asks about levels of concern rather than experiences (those are left to the other type of questions).

We see from Figure 7 that the topics that **people in the Central Border Region are most concerned about (by far) are political stability in Northern Ireland (81% expressing concern about this), followed by north-south cooperation (79% are concerned for this)**. There are solid levels of concern (70-72%) for British-Irish relations, inadvertent mobile phone roaming charges, ability to access services across the border, the ability to work across the border, decreased choice/increased price of consumer goods, and the economy of Northern Ireland. There is middling concern (56%) for the economy of the Republic of Ireland.

Topics of least concern are NI's place in the UK internal market (44% concerned) and Northern Ireland's constitutional position in the UK (36% concerned). These levels of concern are perhaps higher than we might expect given the proportion of respondents who live in the Republic of Ireland (over 4 in 10) and who hold British citizenship (1 in 8). This shows overall that **there is a real sense of flux and, with it, anxiety when it comes to the post-Brexit conditions, and that this exists on both sides of the border from people of various backgrounds and identities.**

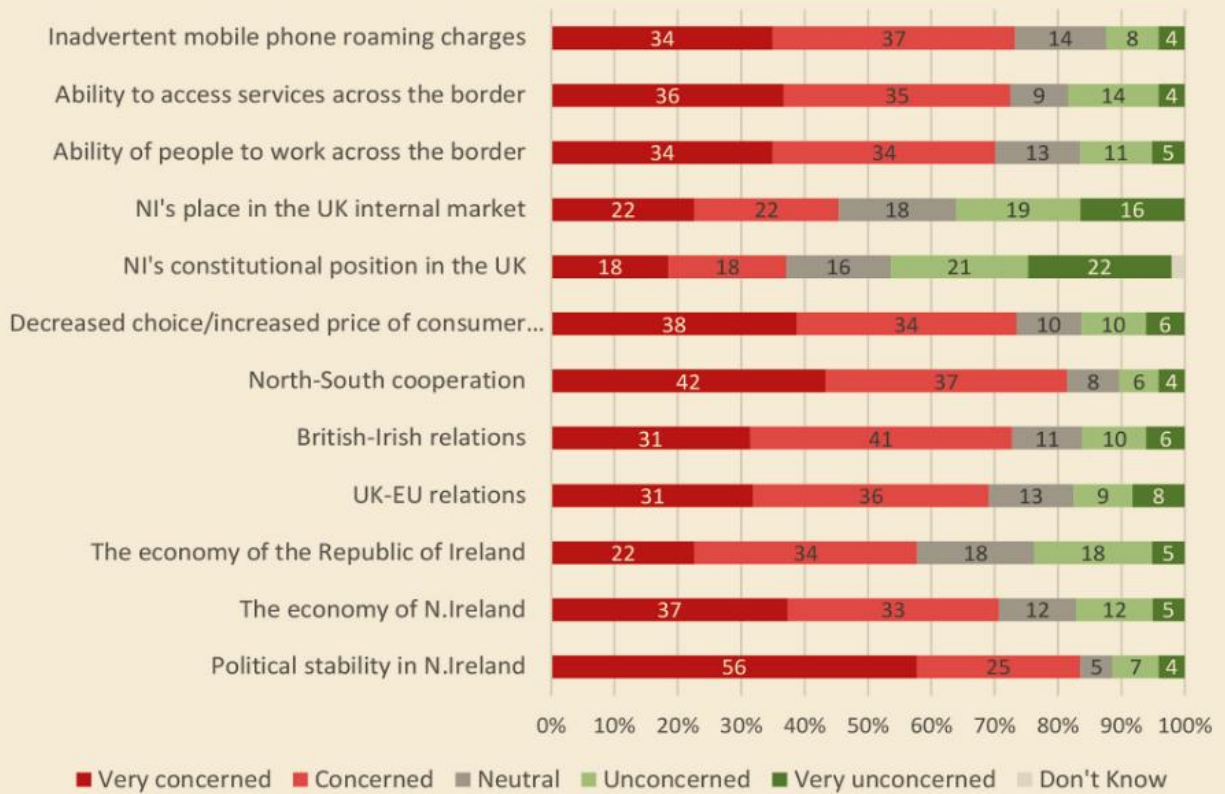


Figure 7. Levels of concern about areas of impact for Brexit and the Protocol

Rising concerns about social divisions and community tensions

The concerns for peace are reflected in a multitude of comments in response to the question about the already felt effects of Brexit. Observations of what had already become a reality on the ground include:

R11 '[Lessening] political stability in the North, outbreak of violence'

R10 'The increased threat of loyalist violence'

R48 'Feel less secure, particularly with political unease, violence. Feel the political system, particularly the Northern Ireland Executive has let people down by not working together to take the positive potential from Brexit.'

Multiple respondents discuss these problems in light of a sense of disappointment with political leadership. Such experiences are often interjected with concerned comments around the loss of general political stability:

R319 'It seems the right wing politicians and PUL community are using Brexit to ramp up tension'

R335 'Huge rise in community tensions. Disintegration of grown up politics across the world (including Britain, Ireland, EU and America)'

R67 'Destabilization of peace between both communities in N. Ireland. Tensions and violence resurrected and a return to N. Ireland's old community divides'

A sense of vulnerability

There is a real sense of acute pressure for some respondents, feeling the effects of these wider political tensions – particularly so from the sense of vulnerability in the border region:

R68 'It is having a negative effect mentally and psychologically ... It is making it very hard to survive with the EU, the Protocol and the Irish sea border all affecting trade and supplies from entering Northern Ireland and England'

R14 ‘Suppliers will not send items to NI and if they do, costs are diabolic prices. Also, why the residents of NI had to obtain a green card to travel 2 yards across the so-called border is beyond me. Men/Women in suits in London/Belfast making decisions affecting the everyday lives of those living on the border county peripherals.’

Hardening views

Similar observations and experiences were shared at length in one of our focus groups. Examples offered in Focus Group 2 succinctly demonstrate the extent to which concerns with societal divisions and community relations are at the forefront of people’s minds when thinking of the effects of Brexit generally, and of its economic effects more specifically:

‘[C]ross-community relationships have lessened. Particularly during the pandemic and more so even since the Protocol in January, the impact has been negative on cross-community relations. *There has been a real drawback of community relations work in rural communities. Groups are now becoming so insular and there’s a worry that may even be more so around border communities*, where relationships very much depend on PEACE funding and all the other opportunities that came pre-Brexit’. [**FG2 community worker**]

‘*Especially with young people, there has been a hardening of views*. Maybe Brexit is a wee bit in the background of it, but the biggest and most divisive thing in our area has been the road signs... I think there’s a vast misunderstanding. Irish identity is Irish, and people will speak it and it’s not a threatening language, but I think in the way [the Irish language] is being used in our area, it’s being seen as threatening’. [**FG2 business person**]

The same participant stressed at length the consequences of the recent erecting of Irish language signs in their local area where unionist and Protestant communities live too:

‘There was no hassle in the community until they put these up. Immediately we go to hassle overnight over these last six months. I’m sure the Irish language people that really care about it, don’t need that either. It baffles me...I think there’s a huge lack of understanding of where the other side is coming from’. [**FG2**]

Our focus groups provided a forum for a more detailed discussion of the above emerging themes. A particular emphasis was put on the hardening of attitudes and behaviour, especially on the unionist side and among the younger generation. As this community worker put it:

‘My son is 20-odd, his immediate reaction was to join the flute band. When the DUP leadership came up, his words to me were ‘I hope they put in a good hardliner’. Now that’s the younger community, that’s coming from Irish signs at the end of my road. That is exactly where that is coming from. Why would he want that? ...

I know a lot of unionist people are following Jim Allister [Traditional Unionist Voice party leader] now, than they ever were before. There’s a branch, a couple of branches happening here in County Armagh. The TUV has just recently set up one in Lurgan, so that sort of stuff has never been heard of before – people are moving from the DUP or Ulster Unionist, mostly the DUP to TUV territory’. **[FG2]**

However, for another participant, a young person from a border town, what exercises a greater electoral or political pool for the people of her generation is the difference between liberal and conservative positions of the political parties in Northern Ireland, over and above the ethno-national divide:

‘I’m a part of the youth council [and] I know the general consensus is currently, Sinn Féin is a more appealing party, just because of their liberal ideologies. So, even things like, they’re just not homophobic ... I know one of my Protestant friends didn’t even know that Sinn Féin was for a united Ireland. He even said Sinn Féin was a more appealing party because of that, just because of the fact that they have those views that aren’t, that don’t exclude people being who they are or whatever’. **[FG2]**

Concerns for EU citizens

As a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, the UK has set up an *EU Settlement Scheme* (EUSS).⁹ Under the scheme, (non-Irish) EU citizens and their family members living in the UK can apply to continue living there after 30 June 2021.

9 Source: UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

Furthermore, the entitlement of Irish citizens living in the Republic of Ireland to work in Northern Ireland and to access different UK benefits, is protected by the Common Travel Area. However, other EU citizens who live in the ROI but work in N Ireland must apply for the UK's *Frontier Workers Permit Scheme* to continue working there from 1 July 2021.¹⁰

Brexit Effects on EU citizens: A Case Study Interview

Over the past couple of decades EU citizens have gradually become an important part of social and economic life in the border region. Around 44% of EU26 and ROW¹¹ residents of Northern Ireland live in council areas located next to the border (DoE, 2018)¹². We enquired among NGOs who focus on supporting non-UK/Irish citizens in the border region about the effects of Brexit on this group so far. In the words of a key interviewee, Brexit has 'changed the feeling of belonging for many people and ... reminded people that they are not from here. And as time progressed, for example, **as the EUSS [EU Settlement Scheme] was introduced, the hostile environment was ramped up. It's changed and reminded people that it's not their right to be here and to live here but it has become a privilege. So, that has been a very big shift in how people feel about living here, emotionally... And this also translated into practical terms whereby people were asked to prove and evidence their rights** at a very basic level, especially since the end of the transition period.'

The practical aspects of evidencing one's rights which can be done by accessing one's status online, have proven tricky for many (residents, employers and service providers alike) and have meant that in practice a number of people, particularly from vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and children, have been put in a precarious situation:

'The whole application process was so complex really and labour intensive for so many that once it was applied for and submitted people were like 'it's done' and they forgot about it, and it only came to light again a few months or a year later **when they were required to prove their status and they did not know how to access it. ... So, keeping the status update or being able to access it is very difficult.**

¹⁰ Source: UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/frontier-worker-permit>

¹¹ E.g. Rest of the World

¹² 'Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland – Ireland Border'. Report by the Department for the Economy, NI. Available at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/movement-people-northern-ireland-ireland-border.pdf>

Helping the elderly or children has been a huge part of our workload on the EUSS so how those children will be able to access their status 10 years down the line is ...I'm not sure. I'm concerned that will be very hard to keep track of. **I know now the government are saying that employers and service providers can check people's status without being given access codes so it's all very well not having to worry about your codes ... but that also means pretty much anybody can check your status without your consent** and the implications of that'.

For employers and service agencies there have also been difficulties in always appreciating the extent to which, and the kind of evidence of people's rights, that is now required, particularly since the EUSS closed in June 2021: 'And so, from the beginning of July we have definitely seen a surge of employers, recruitment agencies, healthcare providers insistence on proving the status and **a lot of our interventions were to make them aware that they don't need to have status as yet. It's enough that they can prove they've applied**'.¹³

The lack of a Home Office follow-up training or awareness campaign for service providers on the ways of checking people's rights is, according to our interviewee, part of the reason for such difficulties. As a result, '**we've definitely seen people's rights being denied – Universal Credit being cut off** until people can access or produce their certificate of application or until we've intervened and explained to them that certificate of application is proof enough. **The same with healthcare, where GP practices wouldn't register people who have not had their actual status as yet.** Or if people couldn't provide biometric cards [biometric cards are only issued to non-EU/EEA citizens] – wherever they got that information from. ... But the healthcare one is worrying – that they kind of ask for status first and treat later which really should not be the case. ...[and] **at the vaccination centres people were also asked to prove their status so that was very worrying** [that] people took it upon themselves – the providers, nurses and volunteers – ... to limit that, to screen people for their immigration status. ... **That, I think, is showing the things to come in the health service in general – that it might not be policy but somebody somewhere takes it upon themselves, you know, at a reception desk, to be proactive** in that not very helpful way'.

13 This is because the Withdrawal Agreement guarantees the protection of existing rights to all those with status or until they have been refused the status grant.

On the one hand, the above encountered emotional and practical difficulties for EU citizens after Brexit have had a particular impact on those among them living in the border region who **‘are more confused and are more acutely aware of actually crossing the border every day or every other day. Especially if they ... live in the south and work up here in the north then their life changed more because there’s more formalities that they have to go through to access services**, and there’s more worry in terms of the bilateral agreements, of whether they still have the same rights, and whether on the basis of their national insurance over there – can they access health services here and can they access benefits?’

On another hand, our interviewee sees a bigger structural problem in terms of providing advice and support for EU citizens in the future, since after the closure of the EUSS there are now **‘95,500 people that suddenly became subject to immigration control that were not subject to immigration control before and there really isn’t much provision for immigration advice in NI. ... That conversation needs to happen – to provide advice and mechanisms of how to go about living here’**.

Cross-border cooperation

The value of cooperation

Given that ICBAN is a cross-border network, we took the opportunity to test the degree to which people in the Central Border Region consider cross-border cooperation to be important. Given that many respondents were alerted to the survey through their local authority, rather than through ICBAN itself, we might not necessarily assume that cross-border cooperation is a priority for them.

Nevertheless, we can see that **9 out of 10 of our respondents consider cross-border cooperation to be important across a range of issues**; with 7 out of 10 saying it is very much so. From this we see that cross-border cooperation is seen as essential for business development, for high-level Executive / Irish government and for community relations in the border region more broadly. This is incentive to keep prioritising such cooperation, especially in light of the concerns noted in the earlier questions.

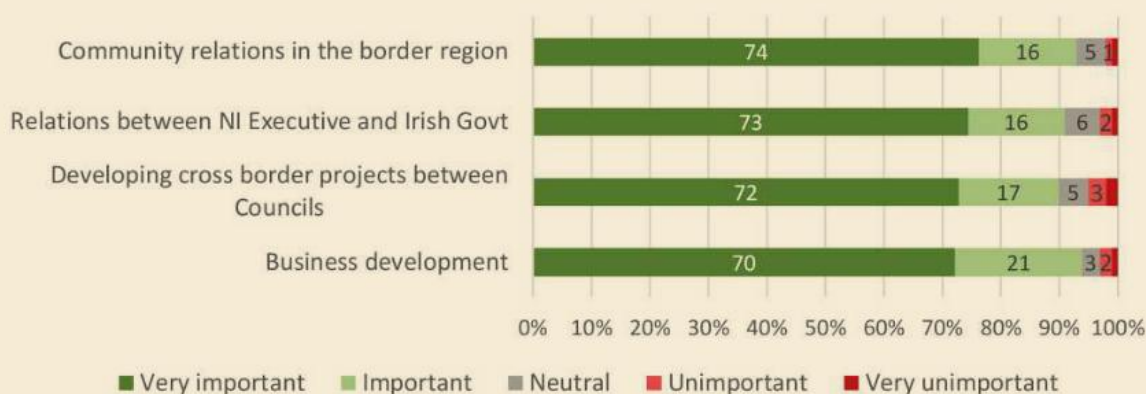


Figure 8. How important is cross-border co-operation for meeting common challenges?

Practical concerns for cross-border cooperation

The immediate economic repercussions and mitigations around Brexit on businesses and public bodies alike in the Republic of Ireland are different to those in Northern Ireland. This is confirmed by our interviewee from an educational institution from the southern side of the border for whom the effects were mostly potential rather than acutely present, and more so on their supply chain than in terms of the education process or relationships with students. He notes that he has been spared the full force of the UK exit from the EU as a benefit of the Protocol:

‘The main impact for us would be potentially on our supply chain. Our Estates, Service and the Faculties who are buying in products from the UK. It could have the impact of taking some of our normal suppliers out of the supply chain. Now, that hasn’t happened because of the Protocol....

So, the impact there has been relatively mild but there will be some of our lab supply companies who source through the UK and I could anticipate that as the year goes by there will be a gradual broadening out or diversification of our supply chain’. [**Educational institution interview**]

When asked about any existing or emerging issues, among others, with cross-border access to services since the transition period, our focus group 1 participants elaborated on the complications arising from the divergent systems of benefits and the **difficulties with sourcing a single point of information for the systems either side of the border**, particularly by frontier workers:

‘From individuals... **a lot of queries we would get would be to do with tax and secondary benefits, Child Benefit and then the Universal Credits and tax credits and things like that – which is a minefield for cross-border workers.** And those thinking about taking jobs on the other side. A lot of queries regarding that, because Universal Credit...people are changing benefits and when you change you have to go on to Universal Credit...that makes it quite messy.’ [**cross-border advisor, FG1**]

A further question brought up was one about difficulties with **recognition of qualifications**:

‘I work in a local authority, and I work in health and safety in particular. We have had issues for the last few years, with recognition of certification skills. In particular, in the south we refer to it as CSCS [Construction Skills Certification Scheme]. It’s very difficult getting clarification of that from anywhere. The northern equivalent is a CSR. There used to be a mutual recognition, but that was removed a few years ago. We are having difficulty getting recognition on that. ... Our national training centre for construction skills is Solas, they have suggested that the cardholder contacts them, pays the administrative fee to get a southern equivalent, which is ridiculous really. ... It’s proving a difficulty’. [**cross-border advisor, FG1**]

Our interview with a representative of a cross-border work lobby group (see box below) fleshed out some of the issues relating to the impact of prohibitive tax legislation on ROI residents, who live in the south of Ireland but work for Northern Irish companies or organisations.

Cross-Border Work: Issues for ROI citizens living in the Republic of Ireland and working in N. Ireland

Such residents of the border region have been able to avail of the ‘trans-border workers’ relief’ designed to allow for the equalisation of tax, e.g. payment of taxes to the HMRC while submitting tax returns to ROI Revenue. This piece of legislation is seen as ‘very restrictive’ for being prohibitive of the flexible conducting of work outside of Northern Ireland and as such, negatively affecting appropriate work-life balance for thousands of cross-border workers. By contrast, remote working conditions are made accessible to UK residents who work in the Republic of Ireland.

The lobby group’s membership includes Northern Irish businesses and Chamber of Commerce groups who recognise that *such prohibitive conditions for cross-border work can directly impact foreign direct investment in the border region*. In the words of our interviewee, ‘It impacts ... businesses heavily in terms of their ability to attract talent. ... If you have told someone when they go for an interview [that] yes, we’ve got this attractive position, we’ve got this attractive salary and package, but you can’t work from home because we would have to set up a second payroll. We don’t allow it because the Irish government don’t allow it. That puts off talent. When companies are thinking about having a business along the border area, it puts them off as well’.

Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic

As such, it is appreciated that *‘during the course of the pandemic the [Irish] government kindly waived the requirement or stipulation that all of the work had to be done outside of the State [through] a temporary waiver set to end at the end [on] 31st December 2021’*. The organisation has therefore *‘campaign[ed] for pragmatic solutions that would either change the legislation or allow some flexibility for remote working or for those ... claiming trans-border workers’ relief on the island of Ireland’*.

Effects of Brexit

Our interviewee does not see there being direct impacts of Brexit on the immediate conditions of work of Irish citizens living in ROI and working in N Ireland. They understand these conditions as protected by the Common Travel Area and the Good Friday Agreement but stipulate unknowns for future pension- and social security arrangements. Finally, the interviewee stresses the positive experience with support from across the political spectrum, north and south, for promoting resolution for the issues faced by cross-border workers.

The above discussion is perhaps a reminder, underscored by the extraordinary situation of a global pandemic, of the extent to which attention to preserving, and even extending, effective coordination in cross-border policy-making and delivery might be particularly necessary. Such a task is clearly made more complex by a post-Brexit environment where the legal frameworks across the island of Ireland will increasingly differ, while political sensitivities around cross-border cooperation at large have heightened. Our participants were all too cognisant of the political and pragmatic considerations informing any conversation around strengthening policy coordination between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland:

‘I’d like to see further cooperation. There are so many opportunities for more integration for people who live on the border especially. But generally, between the two jurisdictions, in terms of employment, housing, health, education; it’s just so disjointed. So, it’s more difficult than it needs to be. Life could be a lot easier, a lot more efficient and effective if more cooperation was to occur ...

If you put the ideology aside, there are lots of logical, good reasons for further integration and development. Especially when you live at the border, and you have to cope with demands of two jurisdictions and things like that. I would personally like to see more cooperation in terms of travel and work and employment opportunities, qualifications, education, and the rest of it. There are more opportunities, than there are hindrances’. [FG1]

Effects on Cross-border Health and Social Care Services

A respondent from a cross-border health and social care partnership provided us with a ready statement stressing that no immediate negative effects for cross-border health and social care have been experienced, and that those expected are being mitigated against.

‘How do you see Brexit impacting cross-border health and social care provision?’

‘A significant proportion of the work of [the partnership] is funded under the EU Programmes. Our current programme the INTERREG VA programme is funded until April 2022, with match funding provided by both Depts. of Health. As part of Brexit arrangements, the UK and Irish government guaranteed funding to projects already approved so that they can continue to the end date as planned. So there is no risk to the committed project funding provided by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). [The partnership] is currently consulting with our partners in relation to the new EU Peace Plus Programme which has a budget of approximately €80m to support health and wellbeing across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors from 2022-2027. The new programme is a further endorsement of the importance placed on cross-border collaboration in healthcare by the governments of the UK and Ireland’.

‘So far, have you witnessed any impacts upon cross-border health and social care provision?’

‘To date there has been little to no disruption on the work of [the Partnership] as a consequence of Brexit. The Department’s EU exit priorities include maintaining cross-border collaboration and access to care, such as the all-island Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Network and the North West Cancer Centre (NWCC) at Altnagelvin, which have been agreed and delivered through the NSMC structures established under the Good Friday Agreement. These two initiatives demonstrate the clear benefits of cross-border collaboration in healthcare in meeting population health needs, improving access to care and patient outcomes in ways that exceed the respective capacity of each jurisdiction’.

‘Are there any Brexit-related risks that you foresee as impacting upon the availability and quality of health and social care for the Central Border Region?’

‘The EU’s policy of freedom of movement and mutual recognition of professional qualifications within the EU means that many health and social care professionals currently working in the UK have come from other EU countries. This will also include frontier workers, of which there are many, workers routinely live in ROI and work in Northern Ireland and vis-versa.

Staff shortages is an increasing problem within health and social care systems and according to the NI DoH 'with the ending of free movement, EU citizens who move to the UK from 1st January 2021 for more than six months will be subject to immigration control and will be required to pay the immigration health surcharge as part of any visa application. However, certain groups, where a Member State continues to cover their healthcare costs in full, will be able to seek reimbursement of the surcharge'.

'Will emergency services still be able to cross the border to provide services?'

The National Ambulance Service and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service work together in border areas. They provide support to each other for emergency and urgent calls. Both services will keep working together to make sure this continues'.

The impact of Covid-19

Movement curtailed, differences exacerbated

Needless to say, the experience of cross-border movement had been curtailed more considerably in the 18 months prior to this study than at any time beforehand due to the restrictive measures imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Very strict rules about the distance people could travel from their homes and in what circumstances meant that border-crossing was simply not possible for many months between March 2020 and July 2021. At times, the infection rates were particularly high in border areas.¹⁴ The differences in rules applying on either side of the border caused some confusion, and the prospect of checks by An Garda Síochána on vehicles in the border region to clamp down on breaches of the restrictions on movement added to the sense that this was a particularly difficult time for cross-border cooperation in the region.

As such, the experience of Covid-19 cannot be ignored when it comes to assessing the environment for post-Brexit cooperation in the border region or the experience for cross-border workers in particular. **When the state comes to the fore in addressing a crisis, it is perhaps unsurprising that differences between policies either side of the border become most apparent.** One of our focus group participants noted the particular disadvantage experienced by cross-border workers when it came to government support to address the impact of the pandemic:

‘I had several people mostly from Belleek, working in Bundoran. The issue was no money, they weren’t getting the PU [Pandemic Unemployment] Payment, and I contacted several ministers in the south and nobody was willing to come forward.

14 This was true in the early days of the pandemic (e.g. Concerns raised as Covid-19 cases surge along Irish border, The Guardian, 29 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/29/concerns-raised-as-Covid-19-cases-surge-along-irish-border>) and in more recent times (e.g. The Sunday Times [Ireland edition], ‘Overspill’ from North raises Covid infections, 22 August 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/overspill-from-north-raises-Covid-infections-tdpg6d5km>).

I thought it was a disgrace that these people are paying tax in the south, yet when they needed it, they weren't getting the benefit they deserved and rightly worked for. I'm still really annoyed about it.

I know that the subsidy was there then, but it's the people who are self-employed in the south but living in the north – got nothing. Some of them really, rightly concerned about their business. It's just really, really scary. ... So, **it definitely opened a lot of people's eyes to the border, cross-border workers, and the issues that they face**'. [cross-border advisor, FG1]

These are good examples of the ways in which cross-border workers 'fall between the cracks' – and how this has particularly damaging consequences in times of crisis.

Access to services across the border

We asked just one question on the topic (Figure 9) and found only 14% saying that Covid restrictions had no impact on their normal access to services on the other side of the border. Almost a quarter say that the experience had a profound impact on their normal cross-border access. **Overall, three quarters consider the impact of Covid-19 measures to have restricted their cross-border access to services.** This is bound to have an impact that will last at least into the medium term in terms of opportunities lost etc.

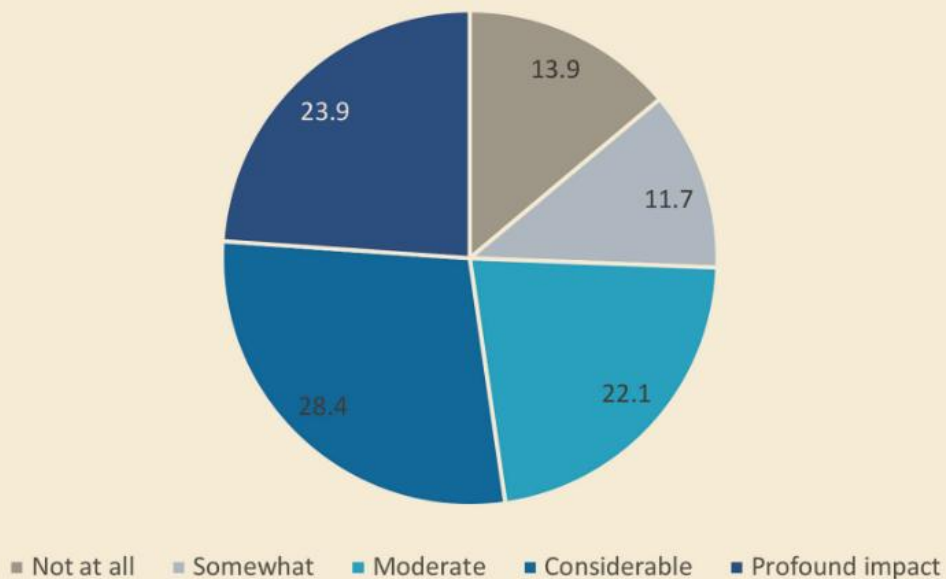


Figure 9. To what extent have Covid restrictions impacted on your normal access to services on the other side of the border?

Impact on behaviour

Respondents were also given the opportunity to include their own comments on the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on their normal access to services across the border. Only around a little less than half took that opportunity. Predictably perhaps, the impact pointed out by most was on their ability to travel – be it across the border or even out of their own area. Some form of a personally- experienced, observed in others, or generally anticipated restriction on travel was mentioned by many of those responding to this question. It has to be noted that such experiences were shared among ‘Remainers’ and ‘Leavers’ alike, showing that **the pandemic will have lingering effects on comfort and confidence in cross-border cooperation and movement across the board of political persuasions.**

As can be seen from the comments below, **restrictions on travel during the pandemic were often self-imposed**, stemming from the fear or expectation that people would be exposing themselves and others to a greater risk of infection.

R43 ‘We haven’t been able to travel across the border since lockdown and previously would have done on a regular basis. It hasn’t helped that the south is behind with the vaccination rollout and there is no alignment on the island, but that can be attributed to Brexit!’

R60 ‘Travel limits and fear of catching Covid and inconsistency of approach between the 2 jurisdictions particularly in early stages’

R80 ‘I haven’t felt comfortable driving a southern reg [sic] car across the border since the restrictions happened. I’m vaccinated but I am afraid someone will question me’.

Many among those affected by travel restrictions also expressed a concern with their effect on **visiting and interacting with family members across the border**, or on personal relationships more broadly:

R141 ‘I have relatives who live in Louth so we often would have met up for a day or night out either side of the border. There has been no travel either way in over a year’

R202 ‘Couldn’t visit my sister and her young family in the South (went for lunch most weekends pre-pandemic)’

R240 ‘Unable to visit family in nursing home care, unable to take same person to access healthcare in Sligo - had to arrange someone else to bring her’.

Others pointed out the effects on their ability to conduct usual shopping trips or even generally **access to goods**:

R53 'Covid restrictions have had a massive impact on how we can access services across the border. For example I previously done my weekly grocery shop in Lidl across the border. Due to restrictions I was unable to continue with this and now get my weekly shopping online from Asda. It is too expensive to shop local for the weekly grocery shop for a family of five. Even having access to the cinema and local beaches all stopped due to restrictions'

Still others have stressed multiple effects, including (for few) restricted access to work:

R9 'I can no longer go food shopping in my usual superstore. I cannot access my university library. I cannot travel to see family'

R139 'Travel has been restricted for business and leisure purposes'

R306 'Travelling to work. Working in the south but travelling to north'.

These comments and experiences show the diverse consequences of restrictions on movement in the border region and serve as a reminder of the range of cross-border experiences of those in the area.

Need for more cross-border coordination

The perception that there has been a lack of a joint cross-border approach to dealing with the pandemic adds to concerns in this area. Indeed, some respondents comment on the complications associated with the different approaches to the pandemic taken on either side of the border, or have directly suggested that an all-island approach to Covid was needed:

R137 'Unfortunately there has been no success in having same restrictions and same vaccination roll out on both sides of the border so many are afraid to cross the border to access services or shop. If vaccines could have been transferred to areas near the border this would have helped to protect cross-border communities'

R207 'I'm not too bad as am in the town. But I'm from right on border and the difference in approach/restrictions North and South has created a lot of confusion. I believe it has affected mental health for many people in this area and has led to a feeling of being hemmed in. I fully accept the stay local messaging when that was required, but when that changed in one area and not another, it was quite distressing for people'

R249 'Different strategies on both sides of the border - it should have been one all island strategy'

R314 'I live in the North but I work in the South. The difference in the pace of easing restrictions between the two jurisdictions has been stark, e.g. pubs and restaurants reopening later in the South'

R386 'The slow rate at giving out the vaccines is holding me back from crossing the border and visiting relatives and friends'

It is in the border region that differences in policies and state responses to a cross-border, global pandemic are most acutely experienced.

What are the opportunities?

Political analyses of the impact of Brexit

Our survey included two open-ended questions that inquired about the perceived positives or opportunities of each Brexit and the Protocol. Unsurprisingly, views of Remain and Leave voters differ on this point. **The prevalent view regarding Brexit from our respondents is that there are no, or very little, such positives.** While this was most often articulated simply as ‘None’, a number of respondents had taken the time to be more detailed, if at times, abrasive:

R47 ‘I can’t see any positives with Brexit so far. It has only served to deepen the gap between already divided communities. I don’t want my children growing up in a ‘them and us’ society. We have peace and I hope we don’t go backwards due to Brexit, and all that Brexit brings’

R53 ‘I don’t think Brexit can have any positive impact for us living in border areas. Even basic things like getting my car serviced took longer, due to some car parts taking longer to arrive at the mechanics garage, due to Brexit’.

Those who see positives in Brexit do so in both a mix of traditional pro-Leave terms and also new terms that relate to the unexpected conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic; such positive views focus on being freed from restrictions imposed by the EU:

R67 ‘[G]et the UK economy back to normality, free from the red tape that have hindered the rest of the EU block Countries that are still experiencing lockdowns and vaccine rollout issues’

R136 ‘The UK vaccine programme has been infinitely better handled than the EU’s. This makes a huge difference to recovering from the impacts of the pandemic’

R145 ‘UK Covid vaccination rates have saved the lives of many people who would have died in the EU’.

Along similar lines of ‘national sovereignty’, albeit from a very different perspective, a number of respondents also perceived the positives of Brexit in terms of how the relationship between the two jurisdictions has changed:

R139 ‘A border poll leading to a new Ireland for all peoples. A thriving all Ireland economy in Europe’

R39 ‘Positive Impact may be increased co-operation on mutual interests between N. Ireland and R.O.I.’

Some go further in their analysis of where Brexit will leave cross-border relations:

R7 ‘A greater detachment from Britain and the realisation that a border poll could happen soon’

R17 ‘An incentive for the promotion of a shared and united Ireland, a wider realisation of the failed northern state, opened up doors to both the EU and UK market’

R348 ‘It has highlighted the ridiculousness of the British border in Ireland and therefore increase the chance of a border poll’

R367 ‘Increased likelihood of creation of a United Ireland’.

Economic gains

Some of our Remain- or non-voting respondents note some perceived positives of Brexit, particularly in relation to business. Some such benefits are most easily exploited by those in the border region:

R282 ‘I had to change how I do business. Create a company in the ROI. The benefit of this is that I have not had to pay VAT. When I did business previously the goods that I imported from Switzerland into the NI company, I had to pay 20% VAT upfront. Bringing in goods via the Irish company means that it’s zero rated. The transportation is now coming via France to Rosslare and this is quicker’

R283 ‘Great opportunities for growth of my business in both the UK and EU markets’

R281 ‘Improved Business Opportunities. Great yearning to remain in EU’.

Other positive perceptions of Brexit's economic consequences were articulated in the terms of a more general advantage for Northern Ireland, for the Republic of Ireland, or - on one or two occasions - for the border region specifically. This included perceptions of there being benefits to trade and investment, to the creation of jobs, or advantages to own business/work, although such perceptions were occasionally tempered with the consciousness that economic advantage for some parts of the island does not always mean the same for others:

R357 'It has benefitted places like Dublin who have seen an influx of MNCs and other companies who want to locate in the EU region however, rural areas such as Donegal and other border counties experience a negative effect'

R239 'Opportunities for Republic of Ireland for businesses to relocate to EU location rather than UK'

R200 'It gives Northern Ireland a chance to grow their economy on its own and become more self-sufficient'.

It has to be noted that some of the responses to the question concerning the positives/opportunities of Brexit centre upon what the Protocol provides:

R400 'Allows businesses in N Ireland to trade and develop both within the UK and the EU'.

Indeed, this example bears some resemblance to another category of responses which we have notionally called 'best of both worlds' - one that is perhaps also best interpreted as a reference to the Protocol, rather than to Brexit as a whole:

R12 'NI can embrace its unique position in the U.K. and EU single market for goods'

R111 'Unique opportunities for NI - if people would get over the traditional rhetoric and grab the opportunities'.

Case Study: Effects of Brexit and the Protocol on larger businesses

In an interview a business representative from the agri-food industry spoke to us about the extent to which the Protocol has protected the business and local suppliers, and about some of the new problems they are encountering.

What from your perspective and experience, have been the effects of the Protocol?

'So, the Protocol works really well because we can move our product anywhere we want on the island of Ireland. And that is very, very important for us. There are no SPS issues, and there are no tariffs, it just moves freely as before. Then we have product that we have made both sides of the border, and because of the unfettered access to in the Command paper that the UK Government gave last year, it means that product that is made with Northern Ireland ingredients, irrespective of where it is made can go back into GB through Northern Ireland unfettered. That is very important for us. ... It's more or less the same as before. On the sale side it is working very, very well. On the purchasing side, it is a little more problematic. ... The fundamental problem I would say ... is that a lot of GB suppliers are still not ready and still don't know what to do. So, we had to make the decision that we had to work with these suppliers and help them sell to us. So that's extra work on us and that's the approach we have taken. The burden lies with us. ... As we get each supplier through the process... their skills have improved [but] we're here in September and we're still picking up the same problems.'

Why do you feel that this situation has arisen given that suppliers knew this was coming?

'I'd say because of the media in GB, people were thinking that once this Free Trade Agreement is signed, it'll be just the way it was. And there wasn't enough honesty... explaining that paperwork will still be needed here, regardless of whether there are tariffs or not. So the kind of expertise needed wasn't there and it seems to be a shock to the system.'

As experienced exporters to destinations in GB, Europe and beyond, the company had built up expertise in the complexity of paperwork associated with international exports. After Brexit, they are now well positioned to build on their existing expertise but are appreciative of the difficulties that small and medium enterprises are facing by contrast, particularly with knowing where to turn to for information, and with having the capacity to integrate this new knowledge into their systems:

'Chartered Accountants Ireland started running formal training courses. They were really good because it consolidated information and knowledge what we had gathered. It was formal and it gave structure to what we had learnt. ... I would also add that in Northern Ireland, the Chamber of Commerce was absolutely brilliant in that space for training. But that didn't seem to be replicated in GB. ... It was difficult to get information from a GB perspective. I don't know how an SME would have worked through that.'

At the same time, the effects of Covid-19 on the industry were said to have been just as serious, if not more impactful than those of Brexit, disrupting supply chains and requiring much longer lead times for orders, accruing extra costs for the business.

Positive views on the Protocol

Compared to their assessment of Brexit, respondents' assessment of the Protocol can be described as slightly more positive. Perceptions of there being any positives to the Protocol, however, tended to diverge and vary depending on one's espousal of a 'Remainer' or 'Leaver' position vis-à-vis Brexit as a whole. The respondents who do see some positives to the Protocol, articulate these mostly, or even exclusively, in economic terms. Some among them find the Protocol gives Northern Ireland access to both the EU and UK markets, describing this as 'the best of both worlds' and a 'unique' position':

R237 'It might help local trade directly with the EU without having to go through the UK; The 'best of both worlds' in so far as trade and customs goes'

R261 'Northern Ireland is in an ideal position to avail of so much to build on the country's economy and in turn have positive impacts on the country socially, environmentally etc. It's up to the government to take advantage of this unique position and make amazing strides for the country'

R141 'The Protocol is a positive thing for NI as it allows life to continue here as it has since 1998. To maintain peace on this island, we cannot have a hard border in place. The Protocol not only allows this to happen but it makes NI a more attractive place for businesses with unique access to the EU and UK markets.... It's time to promote the positives such as opportunities for employment and economic growth. This message is mostly for the NI Exec but also the UK government. As the implementors of both Brexit and the Protocol, they have a responsibility to promote the positives here and alleviate fears'.

There are a few Leave-voters among those sharing the 'the-best-of-both-worlds' interpretation:

R159 'Dual market accessibility'

R379 'Northern Ireland to be an innovative country that can span both EU and UK in its economy'.

However, ‘Leavers’ who do share an understanding that the Protocol may offer at least a potential advantage believe such potential is unlikely to be realised in practice:

R243 ‘Remaining in the Single Market whilst still maintaining its links as part of the U.K. has tremendous potential for inward investment from third countries. However, the EU will put impediments in the way of NI achieving these advantages’.

A similar pragmatic ‘best of both worlds’-type of position was also expressed by a businessman from our focus group 2. This illustrates well the type of rationale and attitude of those who may not see either Brexit or the Protocol in an entirely positive light but who are nevertheless prepared to accept that Northern Ireland needs to move on ahead on this basis:

‘I think Brexit, when I thought about it, I thought that maybe this is the case that people in Northern Ireland can actually be ‘we are the people of Northern Ireland’. We have an opportunity here, in my eyes to be a Hong Kong in the middle of Europe; where we can trade both ways, frictionless.

So, I can trade into the UK frictionless, and I can trade into the EU frictionless. We have an opportunity, that creates for the people of Northern Ireland – or whatever they want to call the place, but that creates a unity of people... personally speaking, are we ever going to get everyone to join a Dublin government – never. Are we ever going to get everyone to join a UK government – never’. [FG2]

Others find that the Protocol leads to economic advantage in the terms of increased opportunities for trade (particularly cross-border), more investment, jobs and gains for own businesses:

R210 ‘Improved opportunity for Irish traders’

R281 ‘Improved business status in Europe. Freedom of Travel retained’

R9 ‘Better all island economy. More FDI [Foreign Direct Investment]’

R17 ‘Further opportunities for business with less constraints, promotion and realisation of cross-border trade and its impact’

R202 ‘More North-South trade’.

Political analyses of the Protocol impact

Some respondents have constructed their answers in terms of the Protocol as a mitigation measure against the worst effects of Brexit:

R310 'I believe the Protocol will help protect some aspects of our life. Brexit was always going to be disastrous for everyone in Ireland, but hopefully the Protocol will mitigate the worst of it'

R220 'Avoids hard Brexit. Avoids hard border. Very minor progression towards All Island economy/society'

R291 'It has held off the absolute worst effects of Brexit. It has kept us at least somewhat tied to the EU. It has held off the prospect of an internal border in Ireland'.

As these quotes suggest, in some cases **the mitigating effects of the Protocol are seen in the terms of avoiding a hard border, and a number of participants have turned this avoidance into the main focus of their responses**, e.g. **R326** 'The possibility of no return to a hard border'.

Among some of those who voted 'Remain' at the 2016 Referendum, the Protocol is also viewed as a safeguard to the NI economy and one that should therefore be smoothly implemented:

R17 'The implementation of the Protocol is vital to the sustainability of the north's market and economy'

R141 'I was dreading Brexit but it has happened now and the impact on NI hasn't been bad. I'm so thankful for the Protocol that allowed us to end up in this situation'.

Criticisms of the Protocol

It is notable also that compared to other open-ended questions in our survey, there was a bigger proportion of ambivalent or ‘Don’t Know’-type responses returned for this question. We interpret this as testament of respondents’ awareness of what could be seen as contradictory political and economic effects of the Protocol:

R239 ‘Protocol is good in concept but is causing huge disruption in Northern Ireland as the details were not resolved in advance’

R244 ‘NI business opportunities are available but uncertainty is preventing them being actioned’.

Nevertheless, there are very strong criticisms too. Many, but not all, among those seeing the Protocol entirely in a negative light had casted a ‘Leave’ vote at the EU Exit Referendum. Examples of such responses include:

R96 ‘[T]he Protocol as it stands clearly isn’t working and the fact the EU triggered article 16 over vaccines makes me very uncomfortable. It feels like NI is stuck in the middle of UK and EU and is the scapegoat for issues the EU has with the UK and that every time the EU has a political problem with the UK we will be the ones to suffer first and most’

R145 ‘None, it is an unmitigated disaster being used as a political stick to the detriment of everyone in NI and it must go’

R155 ‘None - it is completely undemocratic and contravenes the Belfast Agreement’.

What Do 'Leavers' Think?

Disappointment

For each of our surveys we have also reported on the opinions of those among our respondents who state that they have voted 'Leave' at the UK 2016 Referendum on leaving the European Union. Given the continuous salience of the 'Remain' and 'Leave' identities in NI politics, we have continued to monitor the attitudes and feelings among this group, shared through our online survey.

In responding to the question of why the importance of Brexit may have changed for them over the course of the past year, **the 'Leavers' among our respondents tended to point out that what had been delivered, either politically or in purely economic terms, was not what they felt they had voted for.** While our question referred specifically to Brexit, some of the comments quoted below clearly focus on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol instead.

In most cases, a sense of disappointment with the outcome of Brexit negotiations and, on occasion, with the position of the negotiating parties – either the EU or the UK government – was palpable:

R79 'Because Northern Ireland has not been treated the same as the rest of the U.K.'

R82 'It has changed, the ability of not being able to trade freely with GB has impacted everyone's lives. Not getting food in supermarkets, soil for plants. This is crazy!'

R95 'It would appear that we have been "shafted" and not being delivered what was promised'

R105 'In hindsight I regret voting leave as I did not realise how NI politics are. GFA would complicate haulage, imports from GB to NI'

R236 'More determined to get the EU intransigence and bullying over the illegal Protocol removed and Northern Ireland to have no sea border'

R304 'I was told lies about Brexit by UK government and this has become apparent now'.

It is interesting to note, however, that not all comments on this question aligned with the above strongly negative perceptions of the outcomes of Brexit. The couple of quotes below also demonstrate that some among those who did vote Leave either see these outcomes in a positive light economically, or even anticipate potential political dividends (and less expectedly for this group - in terms of the possibility for a united Ireland):

R211 'The deal that N Ireland has ended up with will give us an advantage over the rest of the UK and Europe'

R178 'I'm even more determined to gain my democratic vote for a Reunited Ireland back in the EU'.

Identity salience

In addition to pointing out the practical (and often negative economic) effects on everyday life (emphasised by most respondents), **the responses of 'Leavers' to our question on the impact already felt from Brexit tended to stress how such change is entwined with the anticipation of political change and of loss of identity:**

R110 'Loss of identity, supply of goods and customs within our own country'

R155 'Amazon parcels, loss of democracy, Irish Sea border'

R243 'None as of yet. But seriously concerned by the rigid plans by the EU towards the movement of medicines and pharmaceutical drugs between the U.K. and NI after December 2021'

R272 'I feel my British identity is started to be erased'.

Yet, some (albeit few) 'Leavers' were still able to point out some positive effects:

R134 'More freedom. More opportunities. Better Covid response than other places'.

Leavers tend to have more positive views of Brexit and more negative views of the Protocol, for reasons of sovereignty:

R38 'Ability to develop and roll out the Covid vaccine'

R74 'The UK have the power to rule in their own hands again, this is priceless'

R95 'Our money not going to EU and that money kept and spent locally'

R110 'Ability to trade worldwide, removal of EU red tape'

R236 'Hopefully better border controls (not evident at present). The EU open borders idea is turning out to be a disaster for every country in the EU. Better trading relationships with non-EU countries. Getting back UK sovereignty from the non-elected EU bureaucrats'

R274 'Restrictions on immigrants from within EU, in particular to health care and social housing'

R149 'Brexit is fine as it gives the UK (NI included) a much wider market place. The problem and difficulties arise from the Protocol, which has a damaging effect on NI and indeed RoI'.

Notably, some comments focus on what the Protocol has potentially offered in terms of benefit:

R159 'The possibility of unhindered access to both markets.'

Although, of the minority of Leavers who see positives in the Protocol, a number are careful to point out that these are potential rather than already visible or realised:

R101 'Stronger economy once things are sorted out'

R131 'There is positives in dealing with the EU but if its having the effect of destroying trade with the UK then it needs to be removed'.

Significance of the Covid-19 pandemic

Although Leavers largely shared the experiences of the general cohort of respondents with the impact of Covid-19 related restrictions on their normal access to services, they were more likely to point out that there have been no changes or effects on their usual access to services.

R110 'I seldom need to access the border so restrictions don't bother me'

R379 'I rarely personally use services across the border'.

A few suggest that access to cross-border services was affected by the interaction between the Protocol and Covid-19, sometimes by way of personal preference rather than practical barriers:

R278 'I will not be traveling across the border to the south of Ireland until the Protocol is sorted out'

R234 '[Covid] affected people visiting families and trying to work [across the border] - however without the Protocol and a more sensible approach this could be better sorted'.

At least one respondent is adamant that 'There should be stronger restrictions at border to prevent spread of Covid from ROI' (**R170**).

Leavers' messages on the Protocol

Finally, do the messages that 'Leavers' have for the powers that be differ in some way from those of other respondents to the survey? **One type of message that 'Leavers' have often articulated, yet which is largely not present in the responses of 'Remainers', stresses the need for NI to be treated no differently than the rest of the UK.** As such, a clear criticism of the Protocol has found its way in a number of statements here:

R95 'To UK & Irish governments: Northern Ireland is as big a part of UK as England Scotland or Wales is, so treat us as such'

R105 'Sort out the internal border between GB and NI. Directed to HMG, EU and Irish gov'

R149 'Scrap the Protocol'

R236 'Stop playing politics and using Northern Ireland as a play thing. They are all ignoring the anger of the Unionist community which will erupt if the Protocol is not sorted out!'

Interestingly again, the above is a position not universally shared among 'Leavers', since **R323** for instance, states: 'To tell the UK government that they must honour their obligations and the treaty they signed up to'.

A good number among the 'Leavers' at the same time – both curtly and at times more moderately – express negative attitudes and expectations very specifically with respect of the EU:

R243 'The ludicrous and draconian rules currently being imposed by the EU at ports entering NI represent 20% of ALL paperwork that they use in ALL of their other borders with third countries. This is nonsensical and is clearly the EU being vindictive and aggressive towards the U.K. because its people voted for Brexit and its government complied with the wishes of its people. The EU's failure to compromise has created a very corrosive attitude towards it by unionists in N. Ireland and has raised the fear of street violence if the EU fails to see sense'.

R134 'We are independent and the EU needs to sort itself out and stop blaming the UK for its problems. NI executive need to concentrate on NI people and what is best for them'

R238 'Northern Ireland is part of the union of United Kingdom so the British Government needs to stand up and take control of that. We should not be bullied by the EU or Irish government. The Northern Ireland Executive should also be working as a whole to defend their own country'.

Such specific and vocal negativity towards the EU is perhaps one of the strongest characteristics of the messages of 'Leavers' to the powers that be, aligning very clearly with the messages and opinions expressed by those in Northern Ireland who most categorically oppose the Protocol and its effects on Northern Ireland. It is for these reasons that we concentrated on these topics in our interviews and focus groups.

Looking ahead

Persistent fears of a hard border

So much of the negotiation time for the UK withdrawal from the EU and the UK-EU future relationship had become dogged by the question of what would happen at and about the Irish land border. Now, with Brexit having happened and the Protocol in place, we thought it worth testing to see how much the concern for a hard Irish land border had been put to bed. In our 2018 study, 59% reported that they thought a hard border was more likely than they had anticipated in 2017. In the 2019 study, 83% of our respondents said they thought a hard border was more likely than they had thought in 2018.

In this survey we asked about whether this was still an ongoing concern. **Although around a third have been reassured (possibly by the Protocol and the TCA) that a hard border is now not a possibility, well over half (57%) remain concerned that there could yet be a hard Irish land border in the future.** This helps explain the importance that is given to the topic of Brexit that was noted above.

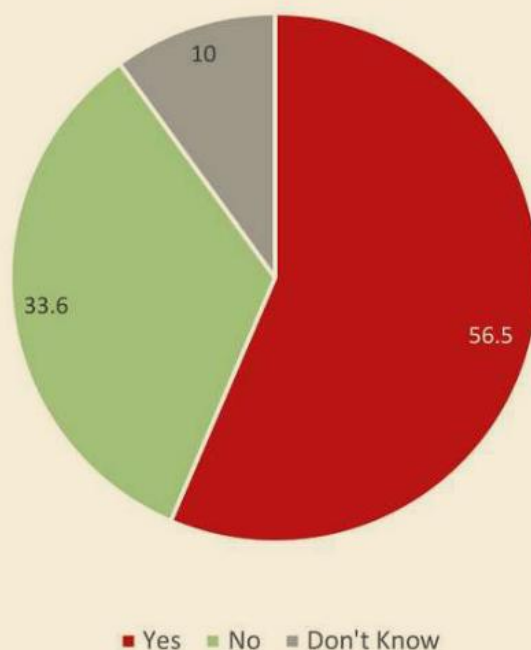


Figure 10. Do you have any concerns that there still may be a hard Irish land border in the future?

Optimism/pessimism for the future

In a follow-up question, we asked about the sense of optimism for the future when it comes to Brexit. This is in light of the fact that the UK and EU repeatedly stress their commitment to the 1998 Agreement and minimising the disruption caused by Brexit to ‘everyday life’. However, we found that **half our respondents say that the experience of the past 12 months has made them less optimistic about the future in light of Brexit.** Only 18.5% find grounds to be more optimistic than they were then.

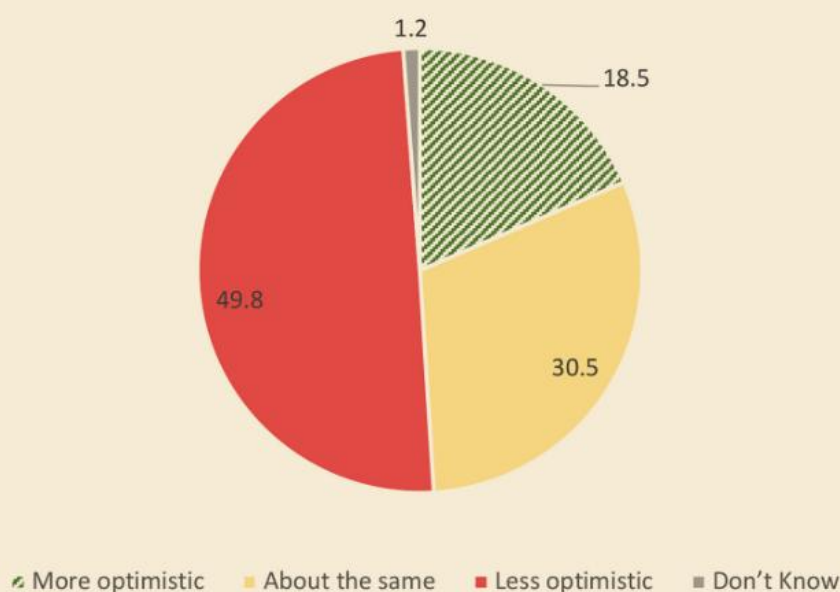


Figure 11. Would you say that, on balance, you are more or less optimistic about the future after Brexit than you were this time last year?

Against this background, but with a specific focus on Brexit and the Protocol, we asked about the degree to which the survey respondents were optimistic about the future of different aspects of cross-border life (Figure 12). Here, interestingly, we see less consensus than in many of the other questions. **People are more optimistic than pessimistic regarding cross-border travel, leisure, tourism, shopping and retail.** They are also considerably more optimistic than pessimistic about their business and job – although a large 43% say that they are unsure or undecided on the matter, which points to the persistent sense of uncertainty with respect to the economic conditions in the border region post-Brexit and (indubitably) post-Covid. Deeper analysis of the data does not reveal any particular patterns when it comes to whether respondents are more likely to be pessimistic than optimistic in answer to these questions – there seems to be diverse opinions that criss-cross jurisdictions, gender, age, and Leave/Remain voters.

It is notable that **the greatest concern is about good relations between communities in the border region, with 45% saying they are pessimistic or very pessimistic about this now.** This tallies with the fact that the greatest source of concern for our respondents post-Brexit and post-Protocol is with respect to political stability in Northern Ireland. The next greatest area of pessimism is around access to cross-border health services (39% pessimistic), and then for access to cross-border education or training (34% pessimistic).

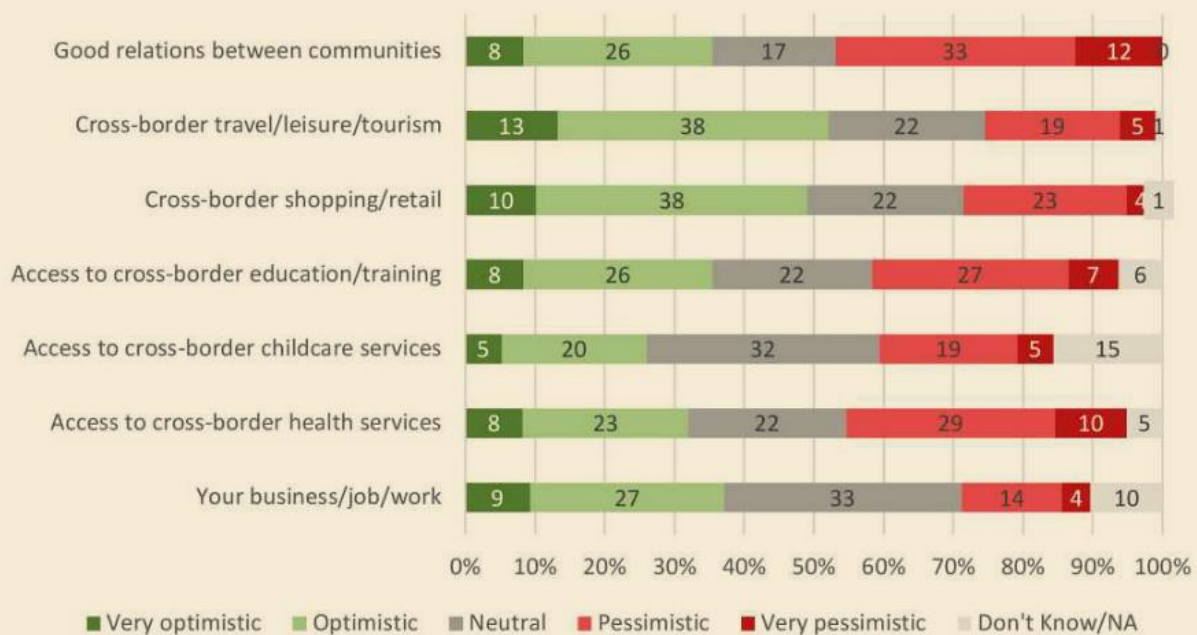


Figure 12. Living in the border region, and specifically in light of the impact of Brexit and the Protocol, how optimistic are you about the future of...?

Issues requiring further discussion

All our past-year surveys have concluded with a question asking respondents whether there were any particular issues relating to the impact of Brexit that they felt are not currently being addressed, yet which they would consider important for the border region. This year was no exception in this regard, and we asked respondents to take the Protocol into consideration too. Only around half of them answered the question and, while no single issue emerged as entirely dominant, the greatest number stated that there were no issues not currently addressed. This contrasts with the overarching response to the question in our 2019 survey when the majority made the

all-encompassing point that ‘everything’ was not being discussed; that there was ‘no honest discussion’; and that ‘issues [were] not [being] taken seriously’.

One positive interpretation of this year’s results could be that they reflect a general perception of the seriousness with which the implementation of Brexit (and/or the Protocol) is now being discussed and approached, and that the existence of such public debate is in itself a healthy sign for democracy. However, given the fractious nature of public and political debate over these issues, as well as the predominantly negative perception of the effects of Brexit (and/or the Protocol) discussed above, we suggest that a more cautious interpretation is warranted. The relatively low number of responses to this question might suggest instead a wariness with how the impact of Brexit and/or the Protocol is being discussed as well as with the negative political and societal effects of the discussion itself.

Among those responding to the question, the optimists who had a positive perception of the Protocol tended to suggest that such positives need talked up, understood and sold better:

R62 ‘The Irish Government and all political parties in the NI Executive need to get out there and start selling the benefits of the NI Protocol and do everything possible to attract FDA into NI and the border region. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to breathe new life into this part of the island, don’t waste it!’

R148 ‘All the media talk about is the point of view of one section of our community. They have and do not question some of the outlandish views of unionism towards the Protocol. Thus denying people the opportunity to drill down and understand what the Protocol is about and why it is in place’.

By extension, others among this group of respondents suggested that the Protocol and the ‘sea border’ need protected, implemented and kept in place (albeit with the occasional remark on the need to amend or simplify the Protocol):

R213 ‘The Protocol should be protected by all political parties, both north and south’

R137 ‘The negative aspects of the Protocol have to be addressed to encourage the unionists to accept the Trade Agreement they voted for, ie make it easier to trade between Northern Ireland and the UK. This is because this is not a normal trade agreement but a fragile peace agreement that is on the cards’.

Another group of respondents stress both the principal importance of protecting and maintaining cross-border cooperation and integration as the only way forward in addressing the challenges of Brexit and of Covid, as well as of the specific need to resolve the current disruption in cross-border services:

R293 'Recent gains on cross border health treatments have been wiped out overnight with Brexit. Even as neighbouring countries, there should still be room for cooperation'

R14 'The closure of local rural services, such as banks and schools, is making it harder for people living in border areas to survive!'

Finally, a few respondents have taken the chance to reiterate a recurrent theme and worry, expressed by many through different parts of our research, with the rising of social tensions and divisions, as well as the risk of violence and unfolding unrest resulting from Brexit:

R132 'The high risk of the eruption of violence as an outcome to the state of the border'

R239 'The political situation in Northern Ireland is the most worrying - people are feeling more marginalised and we are going backwards rather than forwards. Brexit is fuelling the fears of many Protestants in Northern Ireland'.

Conclusion

Messages from the border region

As in previous surveys, we asked our respondents what message they might want to give to ‘the powers that be’, namely the EU, the UK government, the Irish government, the Northern Ireland Executive, or cross-border development organisations. The overwhelming number of respondents did leave such messages and these were often elaborate and heartfelt. Such responses can be seen as largely reflecting the above emerging mixed picture of optimism and a sense of there being political and economic opportunities to be grasped, yet also of persistent concerns and fear, especially for the future of political stability and peace in Northern Ireland. Inevitably, they also reflect the rather contrasting views with respect to both Brexit and the Protocol that emerge from each of the ‘Remain’ and ‘Leave’ positions espoused by different participants.

Many messages called for a united Ireland as a way of addressing the perceived negative socio-economic and political consequences of Brexit. Some urged politicians and the Irish government in particular to plan or arrange for a border poll or, at the very least, to begin a serious and inclusive conversation about this possibility:

R10 ‘We need to begin laying the groundwork for a referendum on Irish reunification. Irish unity is the only sensible, workable, long term solution to the issues caused by Brexit’

R39 ‘My message would be to the Irish Government - I think that we should be promoting more all - Ireland co-operation with a view to opening a discussion on a United Ireland. I think that we should be encouraging and positive about this. I also think that the EU and the Irish Government underestimate just how much Brexit could de-stabilise things in N. Ireland again and harden attitudes. I think that it is also underestimated how much damage the Border and border restrictions have had on areas such as Donegal, Monaghan & Cavan’

R148 ‘Begin a discussion on how a united island would look, outline benefits, address peoples misgivings, discuss the shape of a United Island that can encompass all our traditions and beliefs’

R209 ‘I would want a Unity poll so that the North can return to the EU’

R221 ‘Now is the time for constitutional change and build on all the good cross community/border work that has been going on for years’

R260 ‘Time for change, time for a united Ireland with all identities catered for’

R279 ‘Let us be part of a united Ireland, clearly UK doesn’t want us’.

Interestingly, although not typically, among the above group there are at least a couple of respondents who have declared that their vote at the 2016 Referendum was for leaving the EU. **R6** states: ‘To the EU UK Irish Govt and Stormont, stop stalling [...] and get on with Uniting Ireland back in EU’; while on a slightly different but related note **R128** says their desire is: ‘For Britain to get out of Ireland’.

Equally, many have urged all involved to find a way to work together, to compromise or to be flexible. In essence, these are often conciliatory messages that plead with political institutions in Northern Ireland and on the island to be guided by their commonalities of interest, over and above political or ideological distinctions:

R3 ‘Stop with the aggressive language and work together to make NI better’

R47 ‘To the NI Executive: Ireland is your friend and nearest neighbour. We have a lot to offer each other if we work together for mutual benefit’

R119 ‘Work together not against each other. Green and orange politics is finished move forward’

R146 ‘To all of the powers to be: Please work together we are neighbours we need to co-operate with each other’

R205 ‘Having lived in England for 30+ years I can confirm that they (English residents) have NO INTEREST in NI at all and would dump it in the morning and the sooner some here in the North wake up to that fact the better the Province will be. People are sick of Tory lies and fraud, sicker still that we have Stormont incapable of working together for the benefit of the people that voted them in’.

While the desire to urge all sides to ‘make it work’ and protect peace above all is most commonly expressed by those stating a ‘Remainer’ position vis-à-vis Brexit, ‘Leavers’ too share similar sentiments: **R38** ‘No more political grand standing and sound bites get on with the job’. At the same time, in their call to the powers that be, **R79** also emphasises their desire for NI to be treated the same as the rest of the UK: ‘Northern Ireland needs to be treated fairly in the same way as the rest of the UK. The peace process needs to be paramount with no civil or political unrest’.

Concentrate on commonalities

A number strongly make the broader point that the very nature of politics in Northern Ireland (and with respect to Brexit) has been disappointing and needs to change. Again, therefore, they urge politicians to work for the better of all, leaving ‘orange’ and ‘green’ ideologies behind. Some in this group simply chastise politicians, asking them to ‘get a grip’, ‘get on with it’ or ‘sort it out’:

R19 ‘To NI Executive - make decisions based on what is best for the Country and your closest neighbour and not based on Green or Orange’

R37 ‘Message to political parties to stop fuelling nationalistic rhetoric to serve their own purposes’

R62 ‘My message would be to the NI Executive to wake up and smell the coffee... Brexit and the NI Protocol are here to stay and you need to grasp the opportunities that NI’s unique position offers and stop playing the petty orange/green politics of the past...the world has moved on, NI needs to catch up and leave its troubled divided past behind’

R96 ‘I wish the NI Executive could learn to work better and compromise equally. I wish they would really think about what is actually best for all the people of NI and not just take an opposing view to the ‘other’ side just because they don’t want to be seen to agree. I also wish they would base their policies around actual political theories and principles and not just ‘green’ and ‘orange’”

R344 ‘Time to drive home pluralism in Northern Ireland for future generations. Northern Ireland can become an incredible liminal dominion where Britain & EU can coexist and re-establish commonalities rather than splitting the difference’

R360 ‘Brexit is done, get working together to make it work especially for NI. It’s about the economy and people’s lives not some notions of sovereignty. It’s not sovereignty that puts bread on tables, it’s the functioning economy. Get on with it Boris, Micheal and Edwin’.

A number among ‘Leavers’ too share the above concerns that religious and political differences be put to one side and common sense and pragmatism prevail so that NI can be made to work better for all:

R84 ‘Sort this out. People in NI have suffered enough over the years of the troubles - put religious concerns and political differences to one side and think big - what’s best for the lives of people in NI - their health, education, financial security, wider economy and environment - UK and NI Gov’

R70 ‘NI Executive - the Protocol is here to stay, do your best to make the most of it for NI people and businesses and stop obsessing about the “constitutional issues”.

Conversely:

R68 ‘The EU need to back off and not interfere with the UK affairs and scrap the Protocol and Irish sea border as it’s having a negative effect on the Irish and UK economy through trade, health care and livelihoods’

R145 ‘To all and sundry, the NI Protocol must go now!’

R155 ‘The Northern Ireland Protocol drives a coach and horses through the Belfast Agreement - destroying the central tenant of consent’

R170 ‘Remove NI Protocol, place UK and Ireland in one independent trade bubble and move customs to South of ROI with free trade and movement across common travel area of UK and Ireland’

R355 ‘EU, Ireland and US need to respect Britain and NI’s sovereignty and remove the trade border down the Irish Sea.’

Finally, a few have called for peace – whether in the more general societal sense or in terms of the need for investment and funding. This is often in the context of calling upon the powers that be to ‘work against divisions’, or worrying about the extent to which peace is being undermined and threatened:

R26 ‘The importance of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. Maintaining peace in NI must be a priority as we don’t want to go back to the bad old days’

R65 ‘Invest in PEACE. Address poverty and poor education, this is key to a peaceful community. Focus on individuals and systems that improve lives, e.g. minimum wage, school completion, quality job opportunities’

R86 ‘Peace is paramount and should not be compromised’

R144 ‘The Protocol is here to stay but can the contentious issues be looked at. Also the peace process is very precious and needs to be protected’

R322 ‘To the British government: Leave our peace alone. England wanted Brexit we in NI did not. It is obvious why the Protocol is required. Honour your word and stop playing games with our future’.

Conclusion

After three previous rounds of research, ‘The Border after Brexit’ project was the first to take place after the UK withdrawal from the EU had come into effect. As such it was a unique opportunity to find out first-hand if and how the expectations, uncertainties, even fears and apprehension, that had been shared with us in previous years have now come to pass for the residents of the Irish Central Border Area.

In listening to the voices of local people on both sides of the border, the complex environment of challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation is very clear. This arises from the dynamic and unsettled post-Brexit EU-UK relationship, the continuing UK-EU talks over the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol, and the still embryonic form of the current arrangements. It is also, of course, now further complicated and strained by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We found that the salience and the impact of Brexit on the border region are widely considered as significant and increasing, and that for a multitude this has been worse than expected. While the most reported experiences of the impact of Brexit were economic, concerns with societal divisions and community relations were of particular prominence in people’s minds. The greatest concerns centre upon political stability in Northern Ireland and on cross-border cooperation. Moreover, uncertainty and lack of clarity continue. Difficulties in finding and accessing a single source of reliable information on practical matters, such as cross-border healthcare entitlements, come into sharp relief in the context of a health pandemic.

Mixed messages or conflicting information circulating in the social media have contributed to the hardening of political views as well as to confusion, while the common difficulties of online communication have damaged the means for dialogue in the border region at a time of growing political pressure. We also found that Covid-19 restrictions have seriously impacted the normal access to services, particularly across the border for people living on both sides.

With all these developments in mind, the people of the Irish Central Border Area feel less optimism about the future compared to last year. Albeit retaining hope for the benefits to come for cross-border travel, leisure and tourism, our respondents are particularly pessimistic about the future of good relations between communities.

Two years after the Protocol was negotiated in order to ‘avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland’ and to protect the 1998 Agreement ‘in all its dimensions’, the future of relations across the island, within Northern Ireland and between Britain and Ireland feels very much tied to the still-unsettled UK-EU relationship.

Appendix One: Survey questions

Section A: Introductory questions

1. **Area of residence ***
 - Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
 - Cavan County Council
 - Donegal County Council
 - Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
 - Leitrim County Council
 - Mid Ulster District Council
 - Monaghan County Council
 - Sligo County Council
 - Other (But work in one of the above areas)
2. **Please tell us what age group you are in ***
 - Under 18
 - 18-30
 - 31-45
 - 46-65
 - 66+
3. **Gender ***
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say
4. **Citizenship ***
 - British
 - Irish
 - Both British and Irish
5. **How did you vote in the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU in June 2016?***
 - Other dual citizenship
 - Other EU
 - Other international
 - Prefer not to say
 - Leave
 - Remain
 - Abstained
 - Did not have a vote
 - Prefer not to say

Section B: Brexit importance and impact

The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement of 2019 set a transition period for the UK until December 31st, 2020. During this time, the UK was preparing to fully exit the EU, remaining temporarily in both the EU single market and customs union. The transition period has now ended and Brexit has come into effect. The UK (including NI) is no longer a member of the EU and the new EU-UK relationship is governed by the terms of their Trade and Cooperation Agreement, concluded in December 2020. Here we ask a few questions about the importance and impact of Brexit on your life so far.

- 6. How important is the subject of Brexit now for you? Please use the scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = Not important at all and 10 = Very important?**
- 7. Has this importance increased or decreased since this time last year?**
Increased
No change
Decreased
Don't know
- 7a. If the importance of the subject of Brexit for you has changed since this time last year, please tell us briefly why or what has changed for you?**
- 8. Since the Brexit transition period ended in December 2020, what impact on your life (if any) have you felt from Brexit? (please give up to three examples)**
- 9. Would you say that any impact of Brexit on your life since the end of the transition period has been:**
Very significant
Significant
Neither significant nor insignificant
Insignificant
Very insignificant
Don't know
There has been no impact.
- 10. Given that Brexit has happened, has it been better or worse than you anticipated?**
Much better
Better
Neither better nor worse
Worse
Much worse
Don't know

Section C: The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland

A few questions about The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland now. The Protocol was jointly agreed by the UK and the EU to “address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation, to avoid a hard border and to protect the 1998 Agreement in all its dimensions” (Article 2).

- 11. Are you aware of/have you heard of the Protocol before?**
 Yes, and I know a lot about it
 Yes, and I know a little about it
 Yes, but I know nothing about it
 No, I have never heard of it
 Prefer not to say
- 12. Based on your present experience of Brexit and the Protocol, how concerned are you about the following? (Scale: Very unconcerned; Unconcerned; Neutral - Neither concerned or unconcerned; Concerned; Very concerned; Don't know; Not applicable)**
 UK-EU relations
 British-Irish relations
- 13. Living in the border region, and specifically in light of the impact of Brexit and the Protocol, how**
- North-South cooperation
 Political stability in Northern Ireland
 The economy of Northern Ireland
 Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market
 Northern Ireland's constitutional position in the UK
 Decreased choice/increased price of consumer goods
 The economy of the Republic of Ireland
 Ability to work across the border
 Ability to access services across the border
 Inadvertent mobile roaming charges

optimistic are you about the future of...? (Scale: Very optimistic; Optimistic; Neither-nor; Not optimistic; Very unoptimistic; Don't know; Not applicable)

Your business/ Job/ Work as self-employed

Access to cross-border health services

Access to cross-border child-care services

Access to cross-border education/training services

Cross-border Shopping / Retail

Cross-border Travel / Leisure

Good relations between communities

14. **Would you say that, on balance, you are more or less optimistic about the future post-Brexit than you were last year? (Scale: More, About the same, Less, Don't know)**

15. **15a. What particularly POSITIVE impacts or opportunities do you believe that BREXIT has given, or may give rise to?**

- 15b. What particularly **POSITIVE** impacts or opportunities do you believe that the **PROTOCOL** has given, or may give rise to?
16. Do you have any concerns that there still may be a hard Irish land border in the future?
(Yes, No, Don't know)

Section D: Cross-border cooperation

17. Cross-border co-operation is being challenged by issues such as Brexit, the pandemic, and climate change. How important is cross-border co-operation in managing issues such as these? [Scale: very important through to very unimportant]
18. Business development
19. Developing cross-border projects between local Councils
20. Relations between the NI Executive and Irish Government
21. Community Relations in the border region
22. To what extent have Covid restrictions impacted on your normal access to services on the other side of the border? (Scale from 1 to 5 where 1= Not at all and 5 = Have impacted on access profoundly)
23. Please add below any comments you may have on the impact of Covid-restrictions on your normal access to services across the border.

Section: Final

24. If you had to give a message to the powers that be (e.g. the EU, the UK government, the Irish government, the Northern Ireland Executive or cross-border development organisations), what would that message be and who would it be for?
25. Finally, are there any particular issues relating to the impact of Brexit and / or the Protocol that you feel are not currently being addressed and which you would consider important for your area?

Appendix Two: Focus group and Interview questions

Healthcare

- ▶ What has changed in effect, if anything in your access to any aspect of cross-border healthcare? (Probe for if the loss of the Cross-border Health Directive had any direct impact on people and if so, please give examples?)
- ▶ Difficulties experienced with supply of drugs/medications? Probe for expectations regarding supply in the future.
- ▶ Have you experienced/observed any actual changes in access to cross-border healthcare?
- ▶ Have you found ways of coping/alternatives? Probe for expectations.
- ▶ Have you been directly informed or otherwise made aware of how your access to cross-border healthcare may change (is changing)? Probe for where do people normally get informed of this from?
- ▶ Discuss examples of how Covid-related restrictions may have hidden/masked or openly compounded individual access to cross-border healthcare.

Education

- ▶ What has the past year (since the end of the transition period) changed with respect to the different aspects of your institutional relationship with students, e.g. probe separately for:
 - ▷ Recruitment (effects on students' ability/willingness to apply)
 - ▷ Enrollment (overall change in numbers?; changes in numbers of UK/ non-Irish EU students?)
 - ▷ Funding/fees
 - ▷ Administration (navigating your way through any new/complex requirements)
 - ▷ Teaching/Assessment

- ▶ To what extent are any of the above the result of Brexit (end of transition) and which aspects are affected more by Covid?
- ▶ Is any of the above specific to you being situated in the border region?
- ▶ What issues/ difficulties are you anticipating in the future?
- ▶ What impacts, if any, have you already observed/experienced and how have these differed to expectations, if at all, in:
 - ▷ Access to formal education.../probe for effects of Covid
 - ▷ Access to other training.../probe for effects of Covid
- ▶ Has the choice of where to study/train changed? How? Are there realistic alternatives and what are those?
- ▶ Have the conditions of education/training changed? Probe for
 - ▷ Any changes to do with availability/level of funding, travel, (future) recognition of qualifications, others?
- ▶ Any observations on the above from the perspective of delivery of education/training, rather than receiving?
- ▶ Discuss examples of how Covid-related restrictions may have hidden/masked or openly compounded individual access to cross-border healthcare.
- ▶ Again, where do people get their information from?

Other Services

- ▶ What effects (if any) have you already observed on either the availability, or accessibility and delivery of any other services? Probe for:
 - ▷ In your experience, what (kind of) service availability/accessibility/delivery has been impacted the most (probe for delays, price changes, supply chain effects, etc)?
 - ▷ Are there services you can no longer access at all and why? Difference between Brexit-related and Covid-related effects?
- ▶ What coping strategies/alternatives? Perhaps there are things that you can do/ access now but were not able to before...?
- ▶ Are there parts of the border region where any of the above might be more keenly felt or differently affected?

Cross-Border Workers

- ▶ What are the type of changes that you have already experienced or observed with respect to cross-border work? Examples? Probe for/clarify:
 - ▷ Are you a cross-border worker yourself or is this an observation on family, friends, colleagues/ stemming from your professional position?
 - ▷ Has anybody's status as a cross-border worker changed e.g. have people left jobs or have had to leave/lost jobs?
 - ▷ Are these changes around rights and admin/legal/immigration rules?
 - ▷ And/or perhaps indirect effects from other issues, such as: economic; (general effects on the economy but also uncertainty around changes to taxes/other charges, social security benefits, sick leave, insurance, and other entitlements); travel; safety considerations?
 - ▷ Issues with acquiring Frontier Worker Permits (for those living south of the border) – what effects of that?
 - ▷ Any issues already experienced around recognition of qualifications?
 - ▷ Observations around where in the border regions problems in any of the above are most keenly felt.
- ▶ Awareness of the forthcoming changes – where do you get information on that from?
- ▶ Examples of how Covid-related restrictions may have hidden/masked or openly compounded individual cross-border work situations
- ▶ What alternatives/coping strategies/remedial measures have you been able to take (or observe in others)?
- ▶ What expectations of change for the future/plans?

Businesses in rural community and border region

- ▶ What changes already for rural communities and are effects on rural communities different than those for others?
- ▶ What (and how) has changed in practice for businesses in the border region since the beginning of this year?
- ▶ How have they been experiencing the impact of the Protocol and how is this compared to expectations?
 - ▷ Positives
 - ▷ Negatives
- ▶ What coping strategies?
- ▶ What expectations of the future for their businesses?
- ▶ Concerns about a hard land border in the future?

EU Citizens

- ▶ What has Brexit changed in effect for non-Irish EU citizens living on either side of the border?
 - ▷ Are there issues specific to access to health, education, work or other services where EU citizens are differently affected?
 - ▷ What coping strategies/alternatives? Perhaps there are things that you can do/ access now but were not able to before...?
- ▶ What expectations of change in the future?
- ▶ Where do people get information from?

Community Relations

- ▶ Community Relations: are changes (tensions or otherwise) felt in any way? Can you give examples?
 - ▷ Probe for: are such changes perhaps related to Covid restrictions as well and how do you think?
- ▶ Are such changes different to previous expectations and why do you think? (probe for difference between Brexit and the Protocol)
- ▶ What are the expectations for the future?

THE BORDER AFTER BREXIT:

Experiences of Local
Communities in the Central
Border Region of Ireland
/ Northern Ireland

The eight Member Councils areas of the Central Border Region include Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Fermanagh and Omagh; Mid Ulster and the counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo.

Professor Katy Hayward
School of Social Sciences
Queen's University Belfast
6 College Park
Belfast, Northern Ireland
BT7 1LP

T: +44 (0) 28 9097 3189

E: k.hayward@qub.ac.uk

W: go.qub.ac.uk/hayward

🐦: [@hayward_katy](https://twitter.com/hayward_katy)

Mr Shane Campbell
ICBAN Ltd.
Enniskillen Business Centre
21 Lackaghboy Road
Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh
Northern Ireland
BT74 4RL

T: +44 (0) 28 6634 0710

E: info@icban.com

W: www.icban.com



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

**UK IN A
CHANGING
EUROPE**

This ICBAN initiative is part of the 'Border Catalyst' Project, working with Queen's University Belfast and enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund.

Report on	Pitch and Recreational Spaces Strategy Update
Date of Meeting	11 th November 2021
Reporting Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
Contact Officer	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing

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	Previously in February 2021, it was noted to Members that Officers were continuing with work to develop a Mid Ulster District Council Pitch Strategy (which is an action reflective of a recommendation from the previously approved 2018 Sports Facility Strategy).
1.2	A report was brought to Development Committee in May 2021 with information on what the project entails and key milestones to be achieved.
1.3	A workshop was arranged for Members and took place on Monday 25 th October 2021.
1.4	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to date.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>As highlighted previously in May 2021, following a procurement process, Otium Leisure Consultancy were commissioned to undertake the work associated with this strategy development, broken down into a two part study:</p> <p>(1) Part one should focus on an audit into the current design, distribution, demand/supply information and condition of each Mid Ulster District Council site that hosts Council owned and leased outdoor 'pitches' and associated changing facilities in the District. This should also include consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.</p> <p>(2) Part 2 should then build upon the part one audit and use that as a framework to create a strategy that could be used to further develop the pitch infrastructure in the District in a way that is affordable, sustainable, inclusive, high quality and consistent with current best practice in public pitch provision.</p>

2.2	It is envisaged that the final reports will provide a practical working tool to which Council can refer to whenever decisions relating to pitch provision are made in the future and this should reference indicative capital and ongoing annual revenue cost estimates.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>To date, the project team have carried out detailed visits and assessments on all Council operated sites relating to association football, bowls, gaelic games, hockey and rugby and have focused on current condition/quality, location, size, usage profile, accessibility and ancillary facilities (ie. changing provision).</p> <p>3.2 A full detailed report is currently being drafted and will be presented to Members. It will provide analysis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 sites; 55 pitches (35 grass, 17 Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP's), 3 shale) • 16 Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) • 4 Bowling Greens <p>3.3 Four public focus groups were scheduled and promoted via social media, website along with targeted invitation emails to relevant Council distribution lists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magherafelt, 7th June (25 attendees) • Cookstown, 8th June (8 attendees) • Dungannon, 9th June (25 attendees) • Cookstown, 27th September (19 attendees) <p>The focus groups sought to establish the attendees views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of council's pitches / changing accommodation • Need for Council pitches • Sports development aspirations • Future need for facilities • Open discussion <p>3.4 During this period, a comprehensive survey was commissioned and promoted via social media, website along with targeted emails to relevant Council distribution lists. A number of stakeholder interviews also took place to include the Education Authority. The survey sought to establish clubs/groups and schools views on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and match facilities • Membership and usage profile • Teams profile • Leagues/competitions • Match and training venues • Demand, pitch quality, leases • Attitude to synthetic surfaces • Development plans

As of 26th October, the following survey returns have been received:

Sport/School	No. in Mid Ulster District Area	No. of Completed Surveys	% Completed
Association Football	30	29	97%
Bowls	7	6	86%
Gaelic Games	47	47	100%
Hockey	3	3	100%
Rugby	3	3	100%
Post Primary School	20	18	90%

3.5 Remaining clubs/schools are being actively contacted to encourage them to submit their returns and a full detailed report will be presented to Members once compiled. It is anticipated that this will be considered against the inspection reports on the current assets in the Council to then shape the final strategy development and recommendations.

3.6 It is anticipated that the final strategy should set out a 5 year plan on a priority basis (with outline recommendations to 10 years) and make area specific recommendations (with cost estimates) in relation to a range of options including:

- Refurbishments/extensions to assets
- New provision based on need
- Obsolete pitch provision and new identified shared space community need
- Partnership provision/shared
- Opportunities for long term leases
- High level specifications to accommodate the likely use pattern, sporting code and standard of competition
- Opportunities for multi-use of facilities including formalised sports and informal recreational use to support community engagement and health and wellbeing

3.7 It is anticipated that a further Member workshop(s) will be coordinated in the coming weeks to reflect on the detailed analysis to date and to begin discussing emerging recommendations.

Officers will continue to provide updates on progress and options for any decisions required via future Development Committee's when available.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial:
Costs for strategy development within existing revenue budgets.

Human: Officer time.

	<p>Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant Council policies and procedures and will continue to ensure a more robust and standardised approach across Leisure services and facilities.</p>
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: To be considered in line with relevant policies and procedures and full screening will be carried out and considered prior final part of the strategy development.</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications: To be considered in line with relevant policies and procedures and full screening will be carried out and considered prior final part of the strategy development.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	To note the contents of this report on the progress to date on the development of a Mid Ulster District Council Pitch and Recreational Spaces Strategy.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A