

Report on	Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group
Date of Meeting	13 th February 2020
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Allison O'Keefe

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To present Minutes of Tourism Development Group meeting held on 20 November 2019.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Tourism Development Group (TDG) was established to create a working forum between Council and private sector businesses. The TDG will assist with policy development and support the implementation of Council's Tourism Strategy and associated work in order to create economic growth, increase visitor numbers and create employment.</p> <p>The group meet on a bi-monthly basis and as per the agreed Terms of Reference all business will be reported to Council through the Development Committee.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The ratified minutes of the most recent meeting of the Tourism Development Group dated 20 November 2019 are attached as Appendix 1 with Officers Cluster Reports, presented at the meeting, attached as Appendix 2.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u> Financial: NA Human: NA
4.2	<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> NA



4.3	<u>Risk Management Implications</u> NA
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	NA
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix 1 – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 20 November 2019. Appendix 2 – Tourism Cluster Reports

MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Wednesday 20 November 2019 at 10.00am in
Ranfurly House Arts & Visitor Centre, Dungannon

Present

Cllr Walter Cuddy	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Sean Clarke	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Francis Burton	Mid Ulster District Council
Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council

Norman Bell	Visitor Attractions (Chair)
Dermot Friel	Vintners Representative
Hugh McCloy	Tourism Services
Terry McCory	Craft Sector
Kieran Bradley / Cathy O'Neill	Hotel Sector

Hazel McDermott	Bed & Breakfast / Guesthouse
Mary Gervin	Events Sector
Damian Robinson	Coach Operators
Tanya Purvis	Education & Skills Sector

In Attendance

Joanne Robinson	Hill of The O'Neill & Ranfurly House
Mary McGee	Mid Ulster District Council
Charmain Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Genevieve Bell	Mid Ulster District Council
Graeme Major	Mid Ulster District Council
Sharon Arbuthnot	Mid Ulster District Council
Martha Beattie	Mid Ulster District Council
Allison O'Keefe	Mid Ulster District Council

Apologies

Cllr Martin Kearney	Mid Ulster District Council
Simon Wiggins	Education & Skills Sector
Michael Browne	Mid Ulster District Council
Mary McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION	ACTIONS
1.	<p>Welcome New Members Chair thanked members for their support over the previous year and welcomed new representatives to the Board.</p>	

2.	<p>Election of Chair/Vice Chair Committee sought nominations for position of Chair.</p> <p>Committee sought nominations for position of Vice Chair</p>	<p>Proposed by Cllr Cuddy, Seconded by Cllr Doris That Cllr Burton is elected Chair Proposed by T McCrory, Seconded by M Gervin That H McCloy be elected as Vice-Chair</p>
3.	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 4 September 2020 Having been circulated in advance of the meeting the minutes were taken as read and correct.</p> <p><i>Proposed:</i> Cllr N Doris <i>Seconded:</i> T McCrory</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising – None</p>	
5.	<p>Cluster Reports Cluster reports were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Each officer briefly delivered their report. The following was noted in addition to reports.</p> <p>5.1 Seamus Heaney Cluster</p> <p>5.1.1 <u>Trade Shows</u> M McGee informed that members who had attended the Irish Incoming Tour Operators event on 13.11.19 to promote their experiences, felt this was the most beneficial as it specifically targeted tour operators and group markets. It was suggested that members should follow up with sales calls targeted operators in Dublin.</p> <p>5.1.2 <u>Darina Allen Visit</u> It was reported that the high profile chef and proprietor of Ballymaloe House visited the region on 07.10.19. Mid Ulster Council hosted a networking event at Ballyscullion Park to provide local food producers the opportunity to showcase and network. The event was filmed and footage will be used in Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland’s Taste the Island marketing campaign.</p> <p>5.2 Archaeology, History & Heritage Cluster</p> <p>5.2.1 <u>Hidden Heritage Tours</u> G Bell reported that in response to positive evaluations, itineraries are currently being prepared for 2020 and will incorporate VE Day 75th Anniversary. Participants have requested longer tours rather than current half day.</p> <p>5.2.2 <u>OCN Level 2 Tour Guide Training</u> Cllr N Doris stated that she knew of a number of businesses who would be interested in participating on</p>	<p>T Purvis to progress with S Wiggins an evening</p>

	<p>the Tour Guide training. G Bell informed that the training could accommodate a maximum of 16 people.</p> <p>5.2.3 <u>US Grants Homestead</u> Brack Tours brought 2 tour operators to the site in order to scope putting Us Grants on itineraries for future visits. Dalriada Kingdom Tours have also requested to visit the site.</p> <p>G Bell reported that following Ulster Scots £30,000 funding in 2017, to revamp visitor interpretation and audio equipment, monitoring of visitor numbers has been recorded much higher than anticipated.</p> <p>G Bell added that work is progressing with Tourism NI on a US Presidential Trail from Bellaghy through Mid Ulster to Omagh.</p> <p>Cllr W Cuddy referred to the General Grant National Memorial, New York and requested that an invitation to visit the Homestead be issued on behalf of the Chair. M Beattie stated that contact has been made previously.</p> <p>5.2.4 <u>Strong Man Games</u> Cllr N Doris requested that officers explore hosting Strong Man Games in Mid Ulster.</p> <p>5.2.5 <u>175th Anniversary of Irish Famine</u> D Friel stated that he was looking to run an event to mark the 175th Anniversary of the Irish Famine in connection with Donegal. He added that he is currently working with Maghera local historical group. Cllr W Cuddy suggested linking with Tourism Ireland as most of the West of Ireland was affected. He added that there are many great stories locally to share from that period. G Bell commented that one of the Hidden Heritage Tours could focus on the anniversary.</p> <p>5.3 Hoteliers Cluster</p> <p>5.3.1 <u>Armchair Fam</u> C Bell reminded members of the benefits of Armchair Fams in upskilling frontline and supervisory level staff. It provides staff with product knowledge of the region and assists in promoting tourism in mid ulster. Members were informed that officers will deliver a fam at any hotel premises on request.</p>	<p>Tour Guide Training Course in South West College.</p> <p>M Beattie to contact the General Grant National Memorial to extend an invitation to visit US Grant Homestead and report response at next meeting.</p> <p>G Bell to bring details of the event to the next meeting.</p>
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<p>5.3.2</p>	<p><u><i>Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF)</i></u> NIHF launch their training programmes. The first to be held on 29/01/20 is Hotel Costing Workshop. Discussion around VAT, rates relief took place, with K Bradley informing that rates have been slightly reduced for smaller rooms which has helped. C Bell commented that NIHF do have the subject of VAT on their agenda, however, Brexit was holding things up.</p> <p>Cllr W Cuddy asked how many bed spaces there are in Mid Ulster. G Major agreed to circulate figures, however, it was raised that the figures do not include Air B&B. D Friel stated that the TDG should lobby Invest NI to support private sector investment through financial assistance.</p> <p>M McGee advised that having discussed NISRA stats and method of collation at past meetings, the figures are not indicative of the area due to under-reporting. She commented that when speaking to tour operators they are unable to get occupancy and rates from accommodation providers. Cllr S Clarke added that DAERA's RDP Programme 2014-20 ends and will no longer support tourism businesses as they feel this if the role of Invest NI.</p> <p>Chair requested that funding issues be put on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>	<p>G Major to circulate the number of bed spaces in Mid Ulster.</p> <p>Chair requested that Funding be put on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>
<p>A6.</p>	<p>District Wide Monitoring Results G Major reported that overall VIC enquiry figures are down due to more visitors using the internet to research. He noted that Magherafelt figures had increased due to the footfall at SHHP and Dungannon had reduced due to the electronic eye being out of operation.</p> <p>Cllr W Cuddy requested that officers bring reports of other officers unable to attend.</p> <p>G Major reported that TNI have a draft proposal for a new 5 tier structure which would allow businesses to have a lower level information point on their premises subject to TNI approval. He proposed Friel's Bar & Restaurant and Walsh's Hotel.</p> <p>Following a discussion about brown signage, G Bell stated that Transport NI have a very strict policy which was revised back in 2014 and won't be reviewed again until 2024. C Doherty added that signage is not seen as a marketing tool only traffic management. G Bell gave a</p>	<p>Chair requested that Signage be put on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>

	<p>brief description of the process to apply for brown signage and informed that Transport NI make the final decision on how many signs and the cost. Members raised that the TDG could be used to lobby and change the system. Chair asked that signage is placed on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>	
7.	<p>Mid Ulster Skills Forum M McGee gave a brief background to the Mid Ulster Skills Forum and invited nominations for a representative from the TDG to sit on the forum.</p> <p>Proposed by K Bradley Seconded by D Friel</p> <p>That C O'Neill would represent TDG and feedback to the forum</p>	
8.	<p>Tourism Ireland Update C Doherty, Stakeholder Liaison Manager, was welcomed to the meeting at 12.45pm and gave a brief presentation on the Tourism Ireland, their activities and his role within the organisation looking after all NI business.</p> <p>Members commented on how pleased they were to see TIL branching out to other destinations. The group discussed world recognised icons and opportunities, such as, Game of Thrones. C Doherty encouraged trade to engage with TIL social media and digital content. He added that TIL brought a publicity fam to Glenshane Country Farm Experience in Mid Ulster.</p>	
9.	<p>Industry Update Chair asked members around the room to give a brief update on their business.</p>	
10.	<p>AOB <u>Key Dates</u> 15.01.20 – TDG Meeting Rosehill House 26.02.20 – Great Days Out</p> <p>M McGee invited members, in particular, new ones to host a meeting at their business.</p>	<p>A O'Keefe to forward date for Great Days Out to trade.</p>

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP – CLUSTER REPORT

1. HOTEL CLUSTER

The Hotel Cluster meeting took place on Wednesday 16th October in Cookstown Council Offices, followed by a joint cluster meeting. Guest speaker Andrew Horne from Invest NI Tourism Team, explained the way in which the Invest NI Tourism Team works and how they collaborate with Tourism NI and Northern Ireland Hotel Federation, and what mechanisms they have to support the development of hotels within NI.

Discussion took place around the possible Invest NI funding programmes, such as Selective Financial Assistance, Tourism Development Scheme, Skills Growth, and the eligibility requirements for each. Invest NI are currently developing a Hospitality Collaborative Growth Cluster Programme, with Janice Gault, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation. Once established it will co-ordinate all activity looking at sharing of information, knowledge & programmes. There will also be some groups set up to help deliver the objectives of the network.

Corporate Packages are continuing to be developed within the sector, and engagement is on-going with the local companies. Officers met with Maria Curran the project officer from MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering, Growth & Advancement) Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme on the 29th October, to strengthen communication with the local engineering companies.

An armchair FAM was delivered to 10 members of staff in Walsh's Hotel, Maghera on Monday 9th September. It proved to be beneficial to Walsh's, who have since been issued with a copy of the presentation for supervisory staff to use to induct new/seasonal/part-time staff. Armchair fams will continue to be delivered as and when requested by the trade.

It was suggested to invite Colin Neill, CEO of Hospitality Ulster to attend the next cluster meeting, scheduled for January 2020. Date will be dependent on the availability of Colin Neill.

2. ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & HERITAGE CLUSTER

Four *Hidden Heritage tours* are organised annually across the District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites on their doorstep which often go unnoticed. 3 tours departed from The Burnavon and 1 from Dungannon Park. The cost to attend the tours was £10 per person, which included the coach, tour guide, entry into the attraction (if applicable) and refreshments.

Four Hidden Heritage tours review 2019:

- **The 3 Sisters Tour: Killymoon Castle, Lissan House and Springhill**, Friday 14th May. 40 people took part in this tour.
- **Summer Solstice, Beaghmore Stone Circles**, Friday 21st June. Over 100 people attended this event

- **The Georgian Village of Caledon and US Grant Homestead**, Saturday 6th July. 37 people took part in this tour.
- **The Eel Fishery in Toome and Seamus Heaney HomePlace**, Friday 13th September. 38 people took part in this tour.

Overall feedback on the 4 tours for 2019 was excellent from all participants. These hidden heritage trips continue to prove very successful year on year. Tourist Development Officers have now begun to work on itineraries for 2020 with preparations already in place to organise a tour in May 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

OCN Level 2 Training in Tour Guiding has now finished in North Regional College, Magherafelt. 16 tourism businesses within the District completed the course. The qualification is designed to provide the learner with the skills in the Travel and Tourism industry to enable them to develop a tour commentary and lead groups on a guided tour. Unfortunately, Dungannon did not get the same response but it is envisaged to run the same course in South West College in the New Year as a few further business have expressed an interest.

A group of *US Tour Operators* who specialise in the North American markets (USA & Canada) visited US Grant Homestead on Tuesday 24th September. The operators were welcomed on site by MUDC Chairperson Martin Kearney. Ted Sharkey guided the group around the Homestead and living history provided by Craic Theatre brought the site to life. This fam trip to the site proved to be very successful amongst the operators and since this visit Cara Travel Group have booked in a group of University students to visit HomePlace and US Grant Homestead in January 2020. This is a huge boost for the site and MUDC.

The *Learning Journey* took place on 26 September 2019. 21 tourism trade members and staff travelled to Causey Farm, Navan and Virginia Park Lodge, Virginia. The Learning Journey proved to be very successful and provided an excellent opportunity for networking, sharing tips and ideas. Feedback was very positive from all who attended.

The Tourism Manager travelled to the *Stone Mountain Highland Games, Atlanta, Georgia*. Celebrating its 47th year, the Stone Mountain Highland Games is a consumer show that takes place annually in Stone Mountain Park. The show attracted up to 80,000 individuals of Scots and Scots-Irish descent, which ran over a two-day weekend cultural festival featuring music, entertainment, educational and sporting events. MUDC participated on the Tourism Ireland stand along with Tourism NI and promoted the US Presidential trail, which includes US Grants Presidential Homestead.

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), known as the Heritage Lottery Fund until the end of January, has published its five-year Strategic Funding Framework (2019-24) which includes its new funding programme, which is currently open for applications. Over the next five years, NLHF plans to distribute more than £1 billion. A UK central pot will be available representing 20% of overall budget. NLHF will have in the region of £5.5m per year in NI to support projects.

6 new objectives of the new 5-year funding framework 2019-24

1. Continue to bring heritage into better condition

2. Inspire people to value heritage more
3. Ensure that heritage is inclusive
4. Giving support to organisations
5. Clearly demonstrating encouraging heritage to thrive
6. Take steps to grow heritage's economic contribution

NLHF's grant portfolio now open:

- National Lottery Grants for Heritage - an open programme for any type of heritage project from £3,000–£5million
- Heritage funding campaigns designed to fulfil strategic needs or funding gaps. The first two campaigns will launch in 2019, focusing on helping:
 - organisations build their capacity and organisational resilience
 - to build digital capabilities
- Joint funds to deliver strategic initiatives in partnership with other organisations, such as the Future Parks Accelerator partnership with the National Trust
- Social investments such as impact funds and loans
- Two rounds of major grants of over £5m in 2020–21 and 2022–23

Applications will be considered from:

- Non-profits and partnerships led by non-profit organisations for grants of £3,000 to £5 million.
- Private owners of heritage for grants of up to £100,000.
- Partnerships led by commercial organisations (for the purposes of achieving economic growth) for grants of £250,000 to £5 million.

Applications can be made at any time for grants of between £3,000 and £100,000. Decisions will be made within eight weeks.

Applications for grants exceeding £100,000 have quarterly deadlines. **The 2019 deadlines 5 March, 28 May, 20 August and 19 November 2019.**

Details on other new funding areas will be provided later in 2019.

Three concluding messages about the changes:-

1. Simplified portfolio
2. Streamlined decision making – greater devolved decision making
3. More scope for greater innovation, imagination and leadership

3. SEAMUS HEANEY CLUSTER

Invest NI Collaborative Growth

This programme is concluding with final report pending. The group will then have to decide on progressing to a Phase 2 application with invest NI.

Trade Shows

A least 5 of the members are planning to attend *ITOA (Irish Incoming Tour Operators)* event on 13 November in Belfast, to promote experiences to incoming operators.

World Travel Market, Embrace A Giant Spirit

Seamus Heaney HomePlace and Glenshane Sheepdogs all feature as experiences within the new TNI brand and have travelled to WTM to promote the region at this event. Joined by Eimear from Lough Neagh tours, the J&K Coaches team and River Bann Boats.

Heaney Film released on social media and receiving great traction to date. Took in HomePlace and cluster members as part of a journey through the district. As of Friday 15th November 7,500 views and 89 shares on Facebook alone.

Darina Allen Visit

Cluster members have hosted Darina Allen in the region, she stayed in Ballyscullion Park, visited Lough Neagh Eel fishery, Bakehouse NI and Seamus Heaney HomePlace as part of her stay. MUDC also hosted a networking event at Ballyscullion Park where food producers from across Mid Ulster showcased their produce and networked with fellow producers.

Member Updates

The group all gave an update on their own business to date and this is very positive with Tour Operators fams scheduled from WTM and ITOA, Visit Britain fam and TIL publicity team fam.