

<b>Report on</b>	Forest Recreation Development Programme 2021-2030
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	N Hill Head of Parks
<b>Contact Officer</b>	A Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To present for Council approval completed Forest Recreation Scoping Studies for Drumcairne, Altmore and Dunmoyle Forests.
1.2	To seek Council approval to progress with the phased recommendations presented and to seek all necessary Licence and Lease Agreements with relevant stakeholders in order to progress development plan outcomes for Drumcairne, Altmore and Dunmoyle Forests, subject to available funding.
1.3	To further, progress the approved Action Plan of Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan, March 2020.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In June 2013, Outdoor Recreation NI were commissioned by Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council to complete a Forest Recreation Audit across the Council area.
2.2	With the merging of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Cookstown District Council and Magherafelt District Council to become Mid Ulster Council in April 2015, Mid Ulster District Council approved to extend the audit to include all those forests in the former Cookstown and Magherafelt District Council areas.
2.3	Mid Ulster District Council's Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan, approved in March 2020, identified a selection of forest projects for recreational development.
2.4	Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) were appointed to deliver Forest Scoping Studies for Drumcairne, Dunmoyle and Altmore/Cappagh in February 2021. The three scoping studies have been completed after six months of work undertaken by the ORNI consultancy team with support and contributions from council officers, elected members, public/private and voluntary sector stakeholders, local community groups and general public.

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<p><b>Altmore Forest</b></p> <p>The Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Altmore Forest as a 'local multi-activity hub'. In addition to Altmore Forest, the Scoping Study has been strongly influenced by the recreational opportunities associated with Northern Ireland Water lands. Therefore, the Study area of Altmore embraces all lands reaching as far east as Cappagh Village, rather than just the forested area.</p>
<b>3.2</b>	<p><b>The Need for Development</b></p> <p>Despite an abundance of publicly owned lands in Altmore there is no formal provision for outdoor recreation within the Study Area. Altmore Super Output Area falls within the top 10-20% band of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, and with such limited existing recreational opportunities, the public lands have the potential to be a valuable community asset for people from the nearby villages of Cappagh, Galbally, Carrickmore, Pomeroy, and Donaghmore. 92% of people who responded to a public survey (focused on the Forest area only at the early stages of the project) indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Altmore is 'very important' to the local community. Notably, much of the feedback within open survey comments emphasised the importance of looking at assets beyond just the forest, to include the reservoirs and NIW lands, and this has strongly influenced the direction of this Scoping Study.</p>
<b>3.3</b>	<p><b>Development Proposals</b></p> <p>Development proposals reflect Community sentiment, high-level technical feasibility, and assessment of need. They have been developed in consultation with key landowners including FSNi and NIW, and also FODC. These relationships must continue throughout all proposed stages of planning and development to ensure deliverability of proposals and alignment with each organisation's aims and objectives.</p> <p>Development proposals are presented across three Zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zone 1: The Lower Pond and Cappagh Village (<i>refer to Executive Summary Map 1 in appendix report</i>)</li> <li>- Zone 2: The Upper Pond (<i>refer to Executive Summary Map 2 in appendix report</i>)</li> <li>- Zone 3: Altmore 1 (<i>refer to executive Summary Map 3 in appendix report</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Further to this, opportunities for connectivity across the zones have been considered, as Connecting Links (<i>refer to Map 4 in appendix report</i>)</p> <p>Planning is proposed to start in late 2021, with visitor infrastructure delivered across three phases between 2023 -2030. Phasing is independent of Zones. Phasing of key actions is summarised as follows:</p> <p>An investment of £243,000 for the 'planning' element of works is a high-level estimate for external professional fees required to work up all phased of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that some of this could be delivered 'in-</p>

	<p>house' by MUDC staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single year budgets.</p> <p>Phase 1 2023-2025 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at £349,900  Phase 2 2025-2027 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at £401,000  Phase 3 2027-2030 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery Costs are estimated at £422,100</p>
3.4	<p><b>Social Return on Investment</b></p> <p>Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, and taking account of the population of the area, the estimated Social Return on Investment is estimated to be capped at £11M over 25 years.</p>
3.5	<p><b>Drumcairne Forest</b></p> <p>This Scoping Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Drumcairne Forest as a local multi-activity hub.</p>
3.6	<p><b>The Need for Development</b></p> <p>There is a renewed community interest in seeing Drumcairne's visitor assets restored and enhanced, no doubt amplified by recent demand for local access to outdoor spaces as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drumcairne has recently benefitted somewhat from the re-opening of the car parking area, and some limited trail works carried out by FSNi in response to increased use. The local Stewartstown Community Group has been pro-active in keeping historic trail corridors in use, cleared back, and informally waymarked. With Stewartstown village falling within the top 20-30% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, Drumcairne Forest is a valuable community asset. 84% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Drumcairne Forest is 'very important' to the local community.</p> <p>Five key development priorities for Drumcairne forest have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and summarised as follows:</p> <p>Development Proposals</p> <p>Development proposals resulting from the scoping study are focused around three key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration</li> <li>• Preservation</li> <li>• Enhancement</li> </ul> <p>These themes reflect community sentiment and the assessment of need, with planning proposed to start in 2021 and visitor infrastructure delivered across two phases between 2023 and 2026, as follows:</p> <p>By the end of proposed delivery Phase 1 in 2024, Drumcairne will be a welcoming space providing community trails and visitor servicing to a standard and scale such that a good level of its potential as a multi-use activity hub has been met. Community momentum after Phase 1 is likely to accelerate demand for Phase 2 delivery that would see the site's potential fully realised.</p> <p>Development Costs</p>

An investment of £96,500 for the 'planning' element of works reflects external professional fees required to work up all phases of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that much of this could be delivered 'in-house' by Mid Ulster District Council staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single-year budgets. Notably, the cost includes professional fees for conducting a Heritage Feasibility Study to assess the social value of a full restoration the Italian terraced Gardens.

Phase 1 2023-2024 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at £126,650. Phase 2 2024-2026 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at £190,700, increasing to £340,700 if full heritage restoration of the former gardens is implemented.

### 3.7 **Social Return on Investment**

Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, the Estimated Social Return on Investment for Drumcairne development is estimated at £10.4M over 25 yrs.

### 3.8 **Dunmoyle Forest**

This Scoping Study provides an indication of proposed works, including timeframe, next steps, and estimated costs required to fully develop Dunmoyle Forest as a local multi-activity hub.

Initial scoping has proposed one of the five blocks for viable development as a local multi-activity hub. Referred to as Dunmoyle 1 throughout the study, this forest block covers an area of 160Ha and sits wholly within MUDC area. It is a hilly site, offering elevated views, and with some steep-sided terrain and ravine-like site drainage. There is established infrastructure associated with forestry activity including a well-maintained stone access lane with a steel forestry gate and entrance at Todd's Leap Road, and similar access at Greenhill Road from the direction of Ballygawley.

### 3.9 **The Need for Development**

There is clear community interest in developments at Dunmoyle from residents within surrounding areas, including the nearby village of Ballygawley. There is also interest from local third-party experience providers who recognise the added-value forest developments could bring to economic operations within the area. Largely, however, developments at Dunmoyle will focus on community provision to provide improved local access to outdoor spaces, particularly in light of recent increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ballygawley is ranked in the 10-20% bracket of most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. Dunmoyle has the potential to be a valuable community asset in helping overcome deprivation issues. 82% of survey respondents indicated that the development of recreation facilities at Dunmoyle Forest is 'very important' to the local community. Several development priorities for Dunmoyle Forest have been identified from the public/community perspective, extrapolated from the public survey results, and are summarised as follows:

3.10	<p><b>Development proposals</b></p> <p>Development proposals reflect community sentiment, high-level technical feasibility, and assessment of need, with planning proposed to start in 2021 and visitor infrastructure delivered across two phases between 2023 and 2026. These are shown in Map 1 and summarised as follows:</p> <p>Development Costs</p> <p>An investment of £70,000 for the ‘planning’ element of works reflects external professional fees required to work up all phases of proposals to a shovel-ready stage. It is plausible that much of this could be delivered ‘in-house’ by Mid Ulster District Council staff, and that the full investment will not be required within single-year budgets.</p> <p>Phase 1 2023-2024 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at £157,300. Phase 2 2024-2026 Visitor Infrastructure Delivery costs are estimated at £249,200</p>
3.11	<p><b>Social Return on Investment</b></p> <p>Using an evaluation methodology that considers sustainability, health and wellbeing, and social benefits, the Estimated Social Return on Investment for Dunmoyle development is estimated at £11M over 25 yrs.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: Subject to funding under MUDC Capital Programme 2021-2030 and external funding streams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drumcairne Forest Two Phase Development 2021-2027 <b>Estimated Project Cost £563,850</b></li> <li>• Dunmoyle Forest Two Phase Development 2021-2026. <b>Estimated Project cost £476,500</b></li> <li>• Altmore Forest Three Phase Development 2021-2030. <b>Estimated Project Cost £1,416,000</b></li> </ul> <p>Refer to appendix for detailed breakdown.</p> <p>Human: The appointment of suitably qualified Integrated Consultancy and Supply Teams (ICT and IST) will be required to support current council staff resources.</p> <p>Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>

	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Council approval is sought to adopt the broad recommendations presented in the scoping studies for Drumcairne, Dunmoyle and Altmore Forests and to progress a phased approach to the devolvment objectives subject to stakeholder approvals, partnership agreements and successful sourcing of capital match funding streams.
5.2	Council approval is sought procure and appoint suitably qualified Integrated Consultancy and Supply Teams (ICT and IST) to develop all necessary designs, specifications, procurement documentation and project manage agreed schemes associated to Drumcairne, Altmore and Dunmoyle Forests, subject to available funding.
5.3	To seek P&R committee approval for all identified capital expenditure associated to the Drumcairne, Altmore and Dunmoyle Forest development proposals , subject to sourcing available match funding.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendices Scoping Study – Drumcairne Forest Scoping Study – Dunmoyle Forest Scoping Study – Altmore Forest Summary Capital Cost/Delivery Matrix