

Tourism End Of Year Report 2018 / 2019



Mid Ulster District Council

Tourism Overview 2017-2018

Tourism NI in its most recent figures estimate that during Jan-March 2018 just under one million overnight trips were taken in NI. Tourists stayed for 3.1 million nights, generating £180 million (£13 million or 8% more than in the same period in 2017). This equates to some £2.0 million spent by tourists every day during Jan-March 2018. The growth in spend, can be attributed to all markets, particularly ROI and the domestic market where growth was 11% and 16% respectively.

This growth has been reflected more locally across Mid Ulster also with our hotel bed nights increasing by 4% from 47,000 to 49,000 (2000 increase). The tourism industry supports 3,489 tourism jobs in Mid Ulster LGD in 2015 which is 7% of total employee jobs.

Our most visited site in Mid Ulster is Ballyronan Marina and it attracted 221,405 visitors in 2017 this was an increase of 15% on 2016 (this excludes country parks/parks/forests/gardens) We now have a total of 1.2 million visitors to our visitor attractions or a 30% increase in 2017 and hotel room occupancy is up 2% from 2016. Visiting Friends and Relatives makes up 66% of our visitors, Holiday/Pleasure/Leisure is 27% and Business Tourism 6%. The number of people visiting from Great Britain has increased by 6 %. People visiting from Mainland Europe has increased by 3% while the North America market has remained the same.

In 2018 tourism continued to develop and grow in the region, with the commencement of the new Dark Skies Observatory in Davagh plus exciting further phases in the development proposed, the future for tourism growth is optimistic. This project is complemented by an exciting ongoing events programme across the district including a celebration of the Summer Solstice as part of the Hidden Heritage tours, food events including the Cookstown Continental Market which continues to grow and flourish and support of local events including Clogher Valley Show in its centenary year.

Our industry representative Tourism Development Group and associated clusters continue to plan and deliver on the Mid Ulster Tourism Action Plan, with these groups benefitting from Invest NI Collaborative Growth and Tourism NI facilitation and support in 2018.

Tourism promotions, both consumer and industry facing continue to be a key aspect of delivery. For example this year staff and 6 industry representatives working with Tourism Ireland support attending World Travel Market, London to promote the region and our tourism businesses. This report outlines in full the work carried out across the district in 2018 by the tourism section with industry and partner support and gives an insight into that variety of tourism projects, promotions and events being delivered throughout the year.

Tourism Programme Introduction

The purpose of this report is to review tourism activity over 2018/19. The content of the Tourism Programme is determined by the natural progression, development and evaluation of projects delivered within the four key priorities and projects identified below:

- 1. Tourism development**
- 2. Key events**
- 3. Business engagement**
- 4. Visitor information centre & visitor servicing**

Tourism Development

Davagh Forest Dark Sky Project

On October 2015 the Council's Development Committee took the decision to scope out a potential new tourist attraction for the district at Davagh Forest adding to the existing trails, utilising the potential of the site and the uniqueness of both the built and natural heritage.

On November 2015 the Council appointed Outdoor Recreation and Cogent to work up a business plan and an economic appraisal which had to be prepared and submitted with the application to DAERA.

In March 2016 the ICT tender was awarded to Teague & Sally, Cookstown for the new visitor hub building, which will be located in Davagh Forest to facilitate an application to Rural Development Programme Tourism Measure.

The Mid Ulster Davagh Forest Dark Skies project team submitted the round one application along with Economic Appraisal and Business Plan to the DAERA Rural Tourism funding programme for £500k.

At the October 2017 meeting of the Council's Development Committee permission was granted to seek additional of £245k from the Landfill Tax Fund for additional funds for the interpretation offering inside the building to ensure that the visitor would enjoy a fully immersive visitor experience. Later that month the Council received notification that the application had been successful.

On 25th July 2017 notification was received from DAERA announcing that the Rural Tourism scheme open call for full applications will be made on 14th August, with a closing date of 27th October 2017 which was extended to February 2018. An application was submitted to the DAERA on the 14th December 2017

Planning permission was granted for the project at the November 2017 meeting of the planning committee.

At the January 2018 Development Committee permission was granted to seek additional funding from DAERA's Rural Tourism Programme for an outdoor element of the project.

Initially Council was lead to believe that the funding application process would open before the summer of 2016. Due to internal issues DAERA delayed the opening date for the Rural Tourism Programme until the summer of 2018. This delay would have a knock on effect on the progression of the project with the selected contractor withdrawing his original tendered price due to inflation. This would result in a project review and renewed procurement process.



Tandem Consultancy advised the project team that the allocated Dark Skies exhibition area within the original building design would prove to be restrictive and would likely inhibit the capacity to offer a quality experience worth an admission fee to visitors. This was acknowledged and a redesign of the interior space was carried-out.

Traffic management infrastructure has been factored into the current project with the introduction of automated barriers with the capability to collect revenue from visitors to the Davagh Centre and the mountain bike trails. These costs are included in table 1.

Proposed construction scheme designs have been provided by ICT team Teague & Sally to show layouts accommodating exhibition space and internal lay-out within the same footprint for the building.

Facilities inside the building include:

- Exhibition space
- Grab & Go food area has been introduced to cater for visitor attraction numbers
- Floor area has been increased by reducing external canopy area and omitting bike store from the main build scheme proposals.
- Multi-purpose room has been added i.e. meeting/community space
- Changing Places
- Toilets

The Observatory is scheduled to open in Spring 2020.

Table 1 Indicative cost for project delivery for Phase 1.

Construction tender amount- lowest tender received	£750,000
Potential Additional uplift in Costs (10%) due to inflation	£75,000
Changes to internal layout to accommodate Tandem layout and provision of "Grab & Go" refreshment facility	£30,000
Additional floor space created, ICT fit out and layout changes	£80,000
Average tenders reviewed and consideration required to allow for average adjustment	£35,000
Traffic Management Infrastructure	£30,000
Internal Interpretative Fit-Out (Tandem)	£245,000
Total Project Delivery Costs - Projected	£1,245,000

Table 1 – excludes ICT fees and statutory costs

Table 2 Funding Streams Analysis

DEARA Funding	£500,000
Landfill Community Funding	£250,000
MUDC funding	£495,000

Davagh Forest Outdoor Experience Phase 2

Mid Ulster District Council successfully submitted an Expression of Interest application to Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020 to develop Davagh Forest Outdoor Experience around the Dark Sky.

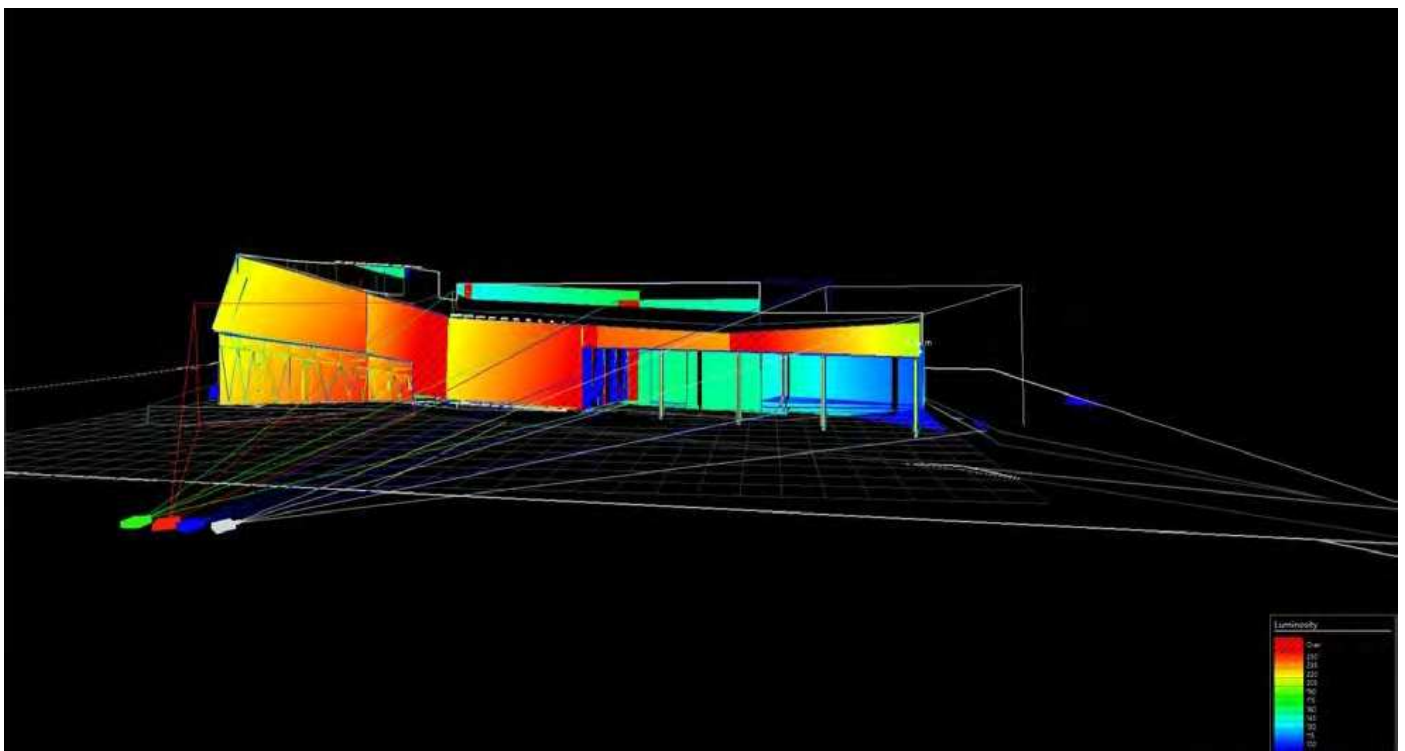
The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) invited Council to submit a capital application for this project on 14th February 2018 under the Rural Tourism funding scheme. To bring this project to a full application stage, DAERA offered Council a Technical Assistance grant to develop scoping study for the, Phase II Davagh Forest Outdoor Experience. Council received a Letter of Offer for the Technical Assistance on 11th May 2018. Tandem Design was the successful company appointed to develop a Scoping Study for Davagh Forest Observatory External Visitor.

A full application was prepared and submitted to DAERA on 31st January 2019. A Letter of Offer was received on 22nd February 2019.

Mid Ulster District Council has been successful in its submission to DAERA to attain funding to develop an outdoor experience at Davagh Forest linking it to the new Observatory and Dark Sky park.

Within the scoping study it was recommended to implement the following:-

- Outdoor Audio Visual show with regular programme of screenings projected onto the Observatory building and the surrounding environment. The projector hardware needs to be run on a regular basis for maintenance alone, so it was advised to have 3 content changes within a year (aligned to specific events in the astronomical calendar for example), but with multiple screenings factored into an ongoing programme of events. In the winter months when the nights are longer, there could be multiple screenings for groups of 30 per night if the demand was there and/or increases.



- A Riverside activity area, this area functions as a facility for use during daylight hours. From a messaging perspective, it works in tandem with the interpretative exhibition at the Visitor Centre, helping to deliver on the secondary interpretative objectives outlined in the Interpretative Strategy.

Mid Ulster District Council

Scoping Study for the external Visitor Experience at Davagh Forest Observatory

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- Scale 1:200 (Approx)
- 2m x 0.5m Bench
- Bollards or equivalent
- Railing with interpretative function
- Paving
- Wildlife Discovery Point

- Amphitheatre Viewing Area (structural frame timber surface, accommodates approx.



30 people) to view the Outdoor Audio Visual show.

Secondary objectives:-

- *Learning and behavioural:* Encourage visitors to compare their own experience in Davagh and the Mid Ulster region and those of our ancestors
- *Emotional:* Promote an appreciation of Davagh Forest's natural resources and outdoor recreation facilities (this objective will have particular emphasis in the Riverside area).

These objectives will be achieved through the provision of interpretative media featuring themes relating to Natural History, Archaeology and Dark Skies. This will allow the interpretative offer to be extended inwards and outwards between the Visitor Centre and River-side area. The area will consist of a hard-landscaped area to be inserted into a green space located between the car park and the Davagh River. For safety, it will feature a metal railing along the river bank and bollards along the portion that borders the car park. The landscaped area will contain a number of interesting features such as Climbing frame 'Play Planetarium', seating, landscaping and sculptural elements.

Table 3: Total project costs with Funding Streams

DEARA Funding	£500,000
MUDC Funding	£166,000
Total project cost	£666,000

Phase 3 Davagh Forest Solar Walk

The basis of this project is to provide a unique first of its kind in Ireland Davagh Solar Walk which will be a 4.25km walkable scale model of the solar system, between Davagh Forest Observatory and Beaghmore Stone Circles. The walk will be digitally immersive linking the surrounding heritage in the area into the experience. The walk will provide a dual offering. In the day time the walk will emphasize the landscape and heritage connection with the sky above, in the evening the solar will come alive with the Visitor Centre at Davagh being the Sun and Beaghmore Stone Circles becoming Neptune. The trail will comprise of both board walks to protect the ground, hard core trails and a small pedestrian bridge taking you over the Davagh River.

This unique solar walk will compliment the current development of the new Davagh Dark Sky Visitor Centre, this animated walk will be a digital guide of the solar system to explore space and planets in real time, linking the uniqueness of the sky to the uniqueness of our heritage.

To link our natural, archaeological and astronomical heritage of the area, the Davagh Solar Walk will embrace the magnitude of the sky and actually show just how big space is, by creating a scale model of the planets along the 4.25km scenic walk between Davagh Forest and Beaghmore Stone Circles. As there is no atlas big enough to contain an accurate scale drawing of the solar system, this will provide a fantastic learning tool. As you walk, each planet will have a marker providing clear information about the planet, along with the use of an Augmented Reality App, helping to make the walk a unique out of this world experience.

An Express of Interest was submitted to DAERA on 15th February 2019 to fund this project. Awaiting decision.

Heart of Ancient Ulster Landscape Partnership Scheme

The significance of the history and built heritage of Mid Ulster is recognised in the Heritage Lottery Fund approved project under “The Heart of Ancient Ulster” which is a joint project between Mid Ulster and Fermanagh and Omagh District Councils. This project aims to address the preparation of a Landscape Conservation Management Plan stretching from the Lower Sperrins to the Carrickmore Plateau to the Pomeroy Hills, acknowledging the density and the importance of the archaeological attributes of the area.

A Letter of Offer was issued by HLF totalling £115,000, including Council's contribution of £11,025, for the Development Phase, with a Stage Two application to be submitted on 30th November 2018. If the application is successful the Delivery Phase has the potential to draw down a total of £2,932,351 over the five year life span of the project.



Lough Neagh Partnership

Council contribute £22,000 funding toward Lough Neagh Partnership core running and marketing activities for 2018-19. Lough Neagh Partnership also receive funding from the other 4 Councils surrounding the Lough.

Lough Neagh Partnership is the main co-ordinating body for tourism, leisure, environmental, heritage and marketing activities on Lough Neagh. It delivers programmes on behalf of local and central government and provides continuous marketing that covers the whole of Lough Neagh. It has also developed the Lough Neagh and Its Waterways Destination Management Plan.

Lough Neagh Partnership co-ordinate a range of activities that will make significant impact on the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the Lough Neagh area.

Key Primary Activities:

- Marketing & Promotion
- Tourism Promotion
- Environmental Protection, Enhancement and Sustainability
- Heritage Conservation, Management and Promotion
- Leisure, Recreation and Safety
- Attracting Investment and Financial Sustainability

Lough Neagh Partnership HLF Landscape Partnership Programme

Lough Neagh Partnership secured a Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership project of over

£3.5 million to deliver 27 capital and revenue projects, with 3 being delivered in Mid Ulster. Council agreed to match funding of £99,059 over 5 years toward:

- Lough Heritage Signage
- Archaeology Project Goals 1, 2 and 3
- *Newferry Walk and Gort Moss Access Improvement Plan*

The access element of the project has transferred from Ardboe to Newferry as part of the wider Blueway development and due to issues with permissive path agreements. MUDC Capital Projects Team are delivering this part of the project as agreed by LNP and HLF. The proposed trail will open up access along the Lower Bann corridor between Lough Beg and Newferry for the purposes of heritage interpretation and recreation. It will also provide an opportunity for users to familiarise themselves with the heritage and importance of the New Ferry site and it's links to the Seamus Heaney literary heritage and his writings of the area. The Gort Moss improvement plan will provide a series of recommendations for upgrading the existing trail with actions funded through HLF.



Destination Marketing Plan

LNP have developed 3 new tours to promote Lough Neagh, Craic and Food Tour, Thatched Houses of Lough Neagh and Seamus Heaney Tour, as well as a 3 day itinerary to sell directly to tour operators and appeal to international markets. The Marketing Officer attended major trade shows regionally and nationally selling direct to tour operators.



Marketing and Promotions

LNP continue to co-ordinate a marketing programme for Lough Neagh which includes the provision of press releases, features and advertorials to Tourism NI, local and regional media, quarterly E-newsletters to stakeholders and consumers, promotion of events and information automatically updated from Tourism NI website. LNP also have a very strong digital presence through social media sites Facebook, Twitter and their website www.discoverloughneagh.com.

Joe Mahon's UTV series on Lough Neagh was originally scheduled for 8 episodes, however an additional 2 episode were commissioned due to the success.

- Total Brand Reach: 10,370,925
- Broadcast: 21
- UTV 'Lough Neagh': 10 episodes
- Print: 108
- Online: 66



Lough Neagh Cycle Trail

LNP continue to promote cycle trails around the Lough and the Lough the Lap event.

Lough Neagh Community Trust

LNP staff along with Destination Trust NI were unsuccessful in their application to HLF for assistance towards Lough Neagh Community Trust, however, continue working together to secure funding and provide advice.

Lough Neagh Co Operation Project

LNP along with have prepared a business plan for the whole of the Lough, as well as Washing Bay as part of the LAG Co-Operation project.

Lough Neagh Food Programme

LNP have secured £30,000 from DAERA towards development assistance in Phase 1 of a Lough Neagh Artisan Food Chain Business Plan which can then be submitted in a funding application for phase two. Nine artisan food producers from around the Lough are participating with 3 businesses from MUDC.

NIEA Shoreline Plan

LNP staff will help implement and administer funding of £43,000 which has been secured for a second year from NIEA towards the development and implementation of management for Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Part of this project will relate to the Mid Ulster District Council area.

New Group Farm Scheme

A Farming Co-Ordinator officer has been appointed to work with farmers under the DAERA Group Farm Scheme for Lough Neagh, focusing on western shores/Mid Ulster shoreline. To date over 11 farmers from MUDC have signed up to the scheme.

HLF Great Places Scheme

LNP in partnership with MUDC have secured funding of £394,000 with over £312,000 from HLF to develop a Great Place Project in Coalisland and the wider area.



Lower Bann Blueway

The official launch of the Phase One of the Lower Bann Blueway, linking Toome to Coleraine along the River Bann took place on Wednesday 9th January 2019.

In the joint venture between Mid Ulster District Council and Waterways Ireland, supported by Angling NI, The Honourable Irish Society, the National Coarse Fishing Federation of Ireland and the local land owner, Mr. William Chesney, a new multi-use public path along the riverbank was developed, accessing an additional 25 coarse angling stands installed as part of the phased works that complements the existing 89 angling stands and associated facilities already at the site.



This new site will host for the first time the European Coarse Angling Championships in June 2019. Since autumn 2018, the tourism team have been working with the Euro 25 event organisers providing detailed information on angling-friendly accommodation within a 15 mile radius of the fishing pegs. The Bridewell Visitor information Centre is being used as a main point of contact for teams booking accommodation, and providing additional visitor information.



Boyne Valley Learning Journey, September 2018

A trip to the Boyne Valley on Friday 28th September was a huge success. Slane Castle, Slane Distillery and Newgrange all formed part of the visit. Feedback was excellent with all in attendance finding it a very beneficial and a worthwhile learning journey. The trip generated useful ideas and built relationships amongst the industry.

The whole day demonstrated how effective collaboration amongst the tourism/hospitality industry has had a huge impact on developing the success of Boyne Valley region.

Expenditure for this Learning Journey was £2669 and income generated was £360 (£15 per head).



Mid Ulster Tourism Businesses and staff at Newgrange during the

U.S. Grant Homestead

Through the Ulster Scots Agency further funding of £30k has been secured for Phase 2 of the refurbishment work at U.S. Grant Homestead. This phase will enhance the interpretive treatment of the site including the introduction of welcome signage at the entrances and exits to the site; directional signage to help visitors to navigate the site and suitable interpretive displays within and around the buildings.



The beautifully restored U.S

The Agency will also include audio interpretation at the site, as well as upgrading the existing audio / visual offering.

It is envisaged Phase 2 will be completed by April/May 2019.

U.S. Grant Homestead Grading

An application was made in April 2018 to TourismNI for grading U.S. Grant Homestead. A visit to the site took place at the beginning of June 2018. Following the report from the Assessor, U.S.G. was successfully awarded a “3 star” grading under the category “Historic Attractions”. Following the visit and subsequent report there are a number of points that can be improved upon in order to achieve a 4 star grading for 2019. As part of our Corporate objective we will be looking at this within the next 12 month period.



U.S. Consulate General visit to U.S. Grant Homestead

MUDC welcomed U.S. Consul General Daniel Lawton to U.S. Grant Homestead on Friday 27th April 2018 as part of the “Five Presidents in Five Days” initiative. As well as celebrating the birthday of Ulysses Grant on that day, Consul General Lawton was also given a tour of the Homestead which has recently been refurbished and restored to its original state in the 19th Century when the Simpsons lived there.



U.S. Consul General Daniel Lawton, Ulysses S Grant and Chair of MUDC, Cllr. Kim Ashton

Key Events

Hidden Heritage Programme

Discover Whats On Your Doorstep

On completion of the success of the 2017 Hidden Heritage programme the Tourism department agreed to host a further Hidden Heritage Programme throughout 2018 based around the key heritage in Mid Ulster such as Tullaghoge Fort, Hill of the O'Neill, Beaghmore Stone Circles, Maghera Hidden Heritage and Blessingbourne Estate.

Hidden Heritage Programme Summer 2018

Events were delivered in association with the Department for Communities, Craic Theatre which included living history, storytelling and entertainment on site.

Maximum Capacity per session on the coach was 35 persons but this figure was exceeded to cope with demand.

Transport was provided from Burnavon and Dungannon Park.

Admission £8

- The O'Neill's Story, Tullaghoge Fort & Hill of the O'Neill
Saturday 12th May 2018
- Summer Solstice at Beaghmore Stone Circles
Thursday 21st June 2018
- Discover Maghera's Hidden Heritage
Saturday 7th July 2018
- Who lives in a house like this? Blessingbourne Estate
Saturday 5th September 2018
-

Attendance: 265

Income: £2,120



Corporate Events

Cookstown Continental Market

Cookstown turned continental when the food and flavors, sights and sounds of Europe and beyond returned to the town centre for two days on 2 – 3 June! Organised in partnership with Cookstown Town Centre Forum, the continental market was part of Market Place Europe's spring tour, and featured over 40 traders from as far afield as Morocco, India, Belgium, France, Russia, Holland, Spain and China, who set up stalls alongside local traders from the weekly street market.

As well as mouth-watering dishes, from freshly made Paella to delicious Bratwurst Sausages, visitors to the market over the two day event were kept entertained with a variety of street entertainment and music.

An added feature to this year's market was 'The Brickx Club' which provided an opportunity for both children and adults to utilise LEGO through creative brick building, at the two hour session in the Burnavon over the Continental Market weekend.



Coalisland Summer Bash



A new signature event was developed this year at Lineside Coalisland. The Summer Bash was organised in conjunction with Keep 'Er Lit Running Clubs annual Newell 10K and 5K run.

Nearly 4000 people recently enjoyed a fantastic evening of free family fun and entertainment which was organised during and after the run.

Live music was provided by Brian Mills and Declan McGrath of Reverb, as well as Coalisland Silver Band; and a host of children's entertainment including dance workshops and demonstrations, face painting, balloon modelling, arts and crafts and other activities were enjoyed by kids.

Lumarina

Thousands of people attended this year's Lumarina which took place at Ballyronan at the weekend.

The free 2-day event, took place at Ballyronan Marina on Friday 17 August from 6pm-10pm and Saturday 18 August from 2pm-6pm.

The Friday night saw the Council 'Light Up the Lough' with stunning fire performances and a spectacular fireworks display. As well as this there was plenty of entertainment for the whole family including a fun fair, live music from The Bellas, a



climbing wall, vortex tunnel and food stalls.

The fun continued on Saturday afternoon with a Pirate and Princess Party offering a selection of fun, free activities including face painting, balloon modelling, an inflatable jungle playground and arts and crafts. DJ Glackin provided the live music for the afternoon. Approximately 4000 attended this event.

The caravan site was almost at capacity, enhancing the overnight visitor number to the Marina and the Mid Ulster Area. These events continue to develop, attracting both repeat visitors and new visitors to the event.

Talfeta Festival



The first ever Talfeta Festival took place in Magherafelt Town Centre from 10 – 12 August. The 2-day music and entertainment event was organised by Mid Ulster District Council in partnership with Magherafelt Town Centre Forum and local hospitality businesses.

From Monday 6 – Friday 10 August, Beyond Skin delivered an Orchestra of Change Makers Project in the Bridewell where young people learned about performing, producing and choreographing a musical piece that was showcased in the Bridewell on Saturday 11 August.

On Saturday 11 August free family entertainment took place in the town centre including face painting, balloon

modelling, street entertainment and a street art workshop where children participated with graffiti and chalk art. Drop in arts and craft workshops will also take place during the same time in Bank of Ireland.

Meadowlane Shopping Centre was the focus of family entertainment on Sunday 12 August including face painting, balloon modelling and walkabout characters.

A number of Hospitality businesses also took part in the festival putting on various promotions and entertainment over the weekend.

The event was very well received by the local community and provides an opportunity to build on and develop more entertainment and activities for next year.

Tales and Trails

On Saturday 8th September, Peter the playful rabbit and friends took over Maghera Walled Garden for an afternoon of fun and mischief at Peter's Tales and Trails!

Over 3000 people attended the event. Lots of entertainment and activities were free to enjoy including, a programme of entertainment has been arranged around this year's theme, to include 10 interactive stations around the garden an outdoor cinema, theatre show, potting your own vegetables, real furry animals and an interactive treasure trail. Food and tasty treats were on offer. A fantastic day was had by all who stopped by.



Dungannon Halloween

The Hill of The O'Neill was packed to capacity on Friday 26 October, as just under 4,000 people braved the cold to enjoy the fun and fireworks.

The fun kicked off with free Halloween Freaky Tales and art workshop sessions taking place at Dungannon Library and Ranfurly House from early afternoon, as children created some spooky art work, and the drop-in Make Your Own Halloween Bats and Spiders workshop certainly got the little terrors into the Halloween spirit before the frighteningly fang-tastic fun started on the Hill. Halloween party goers enjoyed ghastly games, mystifying music, freaky face painting, brilliant balloon modelling, and dance along with some scary characters, as stilt walkers and fire jugglers helped to set the freaky, Halloween mood. The evening finished with the highly anticipated spectacular fireworks display, which lit up the night sky above the town.

Mid Ulster Sports Arena Halloween

Approximately 5,000 people turned out in Cookstown for Mid Ulster Sports Arena's Halloween Fun, Food and Fireworks Display on Saturday 27 October 2018.

The arena played host to spooky shenanigans with lots of fun had by little monsters and a fantastic firework display courtesy of Mid Ulster District Council

There were lots of free activities to enjoy including a climbing wall, crazy karts, amusements, fire jugglers, spooky train, Vortex tunnel, arts and crafts and face painters. The evening rounded off with a fantastic 15 minute firework display.

Coalisland Halloween

Over 2000 people attended Coalisland's spooktacular programme of fun and fireworks on Halloween night, Wednesday 31 October.

The Halloween activities begun at 6pm with an evening of entertainment with funfair rides at Gortgonis Park. The night was brought to a close with a spectacular 15 minute fireworks display.

Maghera Hooley and Fireworks Display

Just under 3,000 people attended Maghera's Halloween Hooley and Fireworks Display on Wednesday 31 October 2018, Halloween Night.

Maghera Leisure Centre played host to an afternoon with lots of fun had by families who had attended. The finale of the evening was the fire juggling and the 15 minute Firework Display which took place at St Patrick's college pitch, O'Hara Drive



Cookstown Christmas Lights Switch On

Huge crowds wrapped up warm in Cookstown on Friday 23rd November to kick off the Christmas Light Switch On celebrations in the Mid Ulster District Council area. Nearly 4,000 people enjoyed



the free family entertainment, Art Cart, Gaming bus, face painting and balloon modelling as well as a host of cartoon characters as they waited for Santa to arrive.

Local band, Crafty Crows were on stage to liven up the festivities, and with their renditions of classic Christmas tunes, they had the crowd in the seasonal spirit of things very quickly. The musical entertainment continued with Tullylagan Pipe Band piping and drumming a number of tunes, with a highlight being a haunting rendition of 'Hallelujah'.

The cast of Stewartstown Amateur Dramatic Society also gave a sneak peek from their pantomime 'Alice in Wonderland'.

Followed by a magical street parade by Bardic Theatre's Showstoppers, which made its way through the town performing

musical hits from a family favourite movie.

The highlight of the evening and moment everyone was waiting for was the arrival of Santa Claus himself, and the switch on of the renowned Christmas lights with the Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Sean McPeake.

Dungannon Magical Christmas Kingdom

Record crowds attended Dungannon Magical Christmas Kingdom and Christmas Lights Switch On on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 November.

The Hill of The O'Neill was transformed into a Magical Christmas Grotto experience. Activities included, toasting marshmallows on an open fire, letter writing to Santa Claus, a naughty or nice machine, a giant selfie teddy bear, Fun Fair amusements and much more.

Children could also visit 'Santa's Christmas Stables' where they will come face-to-face with Santa's reindeers and other friendly animals before travelling through the magical realms on their journey to meet the man himself, Santa, in his cosy grotto.



The Christmas Lights Switch On took place on the evening of Saturday 24 November in the town centre, which saw the arrival of Santa by horse and carriage.

Over 14,000 people attended the activities over the weekend!

Magherafelt Christmas Market and Christmas Lights Switch On

The streets of Magherafelt were filled with festive shoppers, with over 20,000 people having attended this year's Magherafelt Christmas Market and Christmas Lights Switch On event on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 November 2018.



A fantastic array of artisan food and craft stalls selling local high quality products was the centrepiece of the 2018 market. Those who attended enjoyed browsing and sampling the locally produced food and drink, and took time to unwind in the lounge, where they could choose a craft beer, hot mulled wine or even just sit and relax. This year the format and layout were changed to make the environment friendlier. This proved very popular.

There were lots of hints and tips for Christmas feasts on

offer and local bands and school children, including the troop from Groogan Creative Dance, Caitriona Lagan Music, and pupils from St Mary's Grammar School and Magherafelt High School performed on stage over the weekend, with lots of family entertainment across the stages from local acts, including Sollus Highland Dancers Mid Ulster and Mid Ulster School of Music. Children also visited Santa and enjoyed storytelling from Mrs Claus at the Bridewell on Saturday. Sunday was a relaxing afternoon as the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra and the Ireland String Quartet provided soothing sounds for the shoppers as the market ended. The Lights Switch On and spectacular fireworks display which was undoubtedly the highlight of the weekend took place on Saturday evening where a record crowd gathered for the Magherafelt Christmas Street Party on Broad Street before Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Sean McPeake and Santa himself hit the button to switch on the lights with much applause. A dazzling firework display then followed as the Market and festivities continued into the night as Anna's Number rocked the night away under the Christmas tree.

Maghera Christmas Lights Switch On

Maghera was full of festive cheer on Saturday 01 December as Santa took up residence in Maghera Walled Garden for the afternoon, before turning on the Christmas lights in the town in front of a capacity crowd. Approximately 2,000 people attended the activities and the Lights Switch On.

The day began in the Lurach Centre with lantern making, face painting, balloon modelling and letter writing to Santa, before crowds moved to the Walled Garden. Mrs Claus was on hand to help post all the children's letters back to the North Pole, along with festive Elves that lit up the Garden with a spectacular LED display.



Coalisland Christmas Lights Switch On

Almost 2,000 people attended the Christmas Lights Switch On in Coalisland which took place on Sunday 02 December.



The day had something for everyone with the Na Fianna Craft Fayre at the Parochial Centre, and free family entertainment outside the Cornmill Centre including face painting, balloon modelling and walkabout characters, including the Dame from Craic Theatre's pantomime Aladdin.

DJ Marty Lowe, local artists Brian Mills and Declan McGrath and a performance from CRAIC Theatre ensured the crowds were musically entertained throughout the day and Santa in his cosy corner was a big hit with children.

In accordance with our service improvement plan, we exceed our action to deliver 20 Corporate Strategic Events per annum through 2017 - 2019 attracting an increase of 5% attendance figures of 2016-2017

Training associated with corporate events:

Corporate Events Training



Corporate Risk and Health and Safety organised an Event Management Course which took place on Tuesday 21 August 2018.

A number of Lead officers from corporate events attended this training. Officers were taken through the process of Event Management and reminded of the legal Health and Safety obligations and Risks involved with events.

This course will enhance officer's current knowledge to ensure the interests and reputation of the Council are protected at front facing events.

Steward Training

The Corporate Learning & Development Manager organised Steward Training on Monday 8th October Tower Room, Ranfurly Arts & Visitors centre. This training was for staff who require refresher training and/or other staff who are now stewarding at events.



Teddy Bears Picnic 2018

Approximately 400 nursery and primary school children attended the annual Teddy Bears Picnic event at USG Ancestral Homestead from 4th- 8th June 2016. The event was extremely successful and with positive feedback from both teachers and children. The programme consisted of a magic show provided by Colin Walker and interactive dance for fun and exercise with Jump, Jiggle and Jive.

Expenditure for this event was £2.5k and income generated was £1287. The event is scheduled to take place from 3rd- 7th June 2019 .



(Jump, Jiggle & Jive)



(Colin Walker Magic)

Santa's Grotto

Project Details

The Tourism Department once again hosts Santa in his Magical Grotto from 6th December until the 19th December. During their visit children will have the opportunity to write and post their special letter, meet and chat with Santa and receive a special gift and a photograph of their visit. The older children got the opportunity to throw snowballs at Santa's elves through Virtual Reality. Admission to the grotto is £8.00 per child, adults go free

2018 / 19 Outputs

Designed and built with support from Signworks, the Grotto was located in the Burnavon and opened to the public from 6th until 19th December 2018.

Admission to the grotto was £8 per child.

Visits included:

- Opportunity to write letter
- Meet Santa
- VR
- Receive gift & picture

Budget: £3000

Income : £3168

2019/ 20 Objectives

To build on the 2018 programme by delivering a series of co-ordinated Christmas events/ activities commencing late November and December 2019. Exact times and opening hours yet to be considered.

Budget: £3000



Business Engagement

Tourism Development Group

Mid Ulster District Council approved The Mid Ulster Tourism Strategy 2016-2021 document in July 2016 and one of its recommendations was to establish a Tourism Development Group to oversee and advise on the delivery of the strategy document and to provide tourism representation from across sectors and the region. The group continue to meet once every two months in venues across the region and have gone from strength to strength.

Role

The main roles of the Group are to:

- Help set the tourism priorities for the area.
- Comment on and contribute to the thinking behind the branding, marketing, annual marketing plans and product development opportunities across the area.
- Help generate operator contributions to such thinking and marketing delivery, including generating collateral for campaigns.
- Support partnership arrangements locally (within Mid Ulster and NI) and with Tourism Ireland and the travel trade.
- Act as ambassadors for the area in all matters relating to tourism.

Mid Ulster District Council, Development Committee

Membership of the Tourism Development Group also includes 5 Council members drawn from the membership of the Councils Development Committee and be 2 Sinn Fein, 1 DUP, 1 UUP and 1 SDLP.

Members are as follows:

Kieran Bradley/ Cathy O'Neill - Walsh's Hotel, Maghera
Colleen Lowry – Blessingbourne, Fivemiletown
Hazel McDermott – Ashbrook House Bed & Breakfast, Carnteel
Hugh McCloy - Jungle NI (Vice Chairman)
Norman Bell - Lissan House, Cookstown
Neil Somerville - Horses Welcome, Clogher
Anna Marie McFerran - The Old Thatch Inn, Castledawson
Terry McCrory – Heraldic Craft
Allastar McGarry – North West Regional College, Magherafelt
Grainne Mulholland/Simon Wiggins– South West College, Dungannon
Bobby Bell/Mark McGeehan – J&K Coaches
Councillor Martin Kearney
Councillor Walter Cuddy
Councillor Niamh Doris
Councillor Sean Clarke (Chairman)
Councillor Frances Burton

Review

Members commenced a review of the Tourism Development Group and its workings in February 2018 and published a final report on this in April 2018.

The objectives of the review were:

- a) to consider the main roles of the Development Group and Clusters;
- b) to identify progress on fulfilling each of the main roles;
- c) to assess the practical working of the Development Group and Clusters;
- d) to propose recommendations for action and/or change.

A questionnaire was issued to all members in order to elicit feedback on the workings of the Tourism Development Group and the clusters. Workshops were also held with members to get one to one feedback in a structured discussion session.

Recommendations on the review included:

(1) Development Group

The Group should retain its strategic focus and:

- a) Encourage and facilitate greater partnership working between tourism providers within the district;
- b) Disseminate and build on learning from the Heaney Cluster;
- c) Work with MUDC and others to maximise linkages and spin-off benefits for tourism providers from the: Heart of Ancient Ulster; Dark Skies; and Coalisland International Motor Sport Centre – Lake Torrent projects;
- d) Develop social media platforms and seek consultancy advice on market branding;
- e) Support the Clusters to develop their marketing and packaging ideas and to promote tourism activities and facilities locally; and
- f) Influence the plans and strategies of tourism agencies for the benefit of the district.

(2) Clusters

- a) The Events and Outdoor Activities Clusters should merge and prioritise strategic marketing and “packaging” and local promotion.
- b) The Heritage and History Cluster should meet more regularly and build on the focus provided by the Heart of Ancient Ulster initiative.

(3) Roles

The roles of the Development Group and Clusters and their members should be to:

- a) Help set the tourism priorities for the area.
- b) Contribute to marketing and branding plans and product development opportunities.
- c) Support partnership arrangements locally, regionally and with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and the travel trade.
- d) Act as tourism ambassadors for the area.



Seamus Heaney Cluster

Seamus Heaney Cluster – Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme/ NI Industry Support programme – Tourism NI

On the 6th February 2018, Lough Beg Mews – Ballyscullion Park, were awarded funding to conduct an Industry Led Scoping Study as part of the INI Collaborative Growth Programme. On appointment of the facilitator's the program began in May 2018 under the working title Seamus Heaney Collaborative Growth Cluster.



The essence of the program was to develop new and existing synergies, networks, models of best practice and partnerships that can help sell the Seamus Heaney cluster proposition and enhance business opportunities and competitiveness.

Over the subsequent months the cluster established a strong working group who have invested their time to attend meetings with an average 83% turnout. Each of the 6 meetings have been structured to provide guest insight and discussion which is aligned to the overall objectives of the study.

This has included Justin Albert, National Trust Director for Wales and Hay Festival, TNI colleagues, Dr Peter Bolan from University of Ulster Hospitality Faculty, Esther Dobbin Community Engagement Director at NT Giants Causeway and Mark Rodgers, Dalriada Kingdom Tours. The group have also displayed their experiential offer to the GB Tourism Ireland team on their visit to Seamus Heaney HomePlace in November 18 and members attended World Travel market to promote the cluster and their businesses.

During the Scoping Study the members have worked collaboratively to develop new experiential offers through the TNI Industry Support Program which is running in parallel. The aim of the of TNI activity is to have Market Ready tourism product for Meet the Buyer in April'19 and the network has 7 businesses booked to attend.

As part of the Scoping Study the members have the opportunity to partake in best practice learning journeys. Early in the program Hay Festival and Cork/Kinsale were identified as potential visits and 9 members of the network have recently returned from a successful trip to Yeo Valley Farm to learn about farm diversification and tourism, and onto Hay-on-Wye to meet members of Hay Festival, Hay Castle and local business people.



The second learning journey to Cork / Kinsale will take place 24th – 26th March and is being co-ordinated in collaboration

with Enterprise Europe Network. To date 18 members have expressed an interest in travelling to Jameson Distillery, Ballymaloe House, Cork Chamber to meet peers from Pure Cork, Ring of Cork, Munster Literary Festival, Words by Water and Kinsale Food Circle.

The completion of the Scoping Study accumulates in a report detailing a summary of outcomes/ impact of project for both Network Members and Stakeholders.

The Scoping Study final report will be available at the beginning of May 2019.

Hotel Cluster

The inaugural hotel cluster meeting took place on Friday 16th November 2018 at the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown. The nine hotels from across the district were invited to attend with the aim of collectively working together, and establishing better collection of statistics.

In attendance at the first meeting was:

- Cohannon Inn, Dungannon
- The Terrace, Magherafelt
- Walsh's Hotel, Maghera
- Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown
- Corick House Hotel & Spa, Clogher
-

With council officers, Mary McGee, Charmain Bell and Allison O'Keefe.

As a result of the initial meeting, a training needs analysis was issued to the hotel cluster to ascertain the skills shortage within the sector. The aim to deliver a Hospitality Mentor Programme for the cluster addressing the individual training needs of each establishment. A specification to tender for the delivery of the Mentor Programme was issued on Tuesday 12th February, closing on Tuesday 19th February.

Guest Speakers

Janice Gault CEO of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation attended the second hotel cluster meeting at Corick House Hotel & Spa on Thursday 10th January. Janice provided an update on the hotel industry and collection of statistics.

Sarah Duignan Director of Client Relationships with STR Global, is attending the third cluster meeting on Thursday 7th March at Cohannon Inn. STR is a worldwide hotel data and benchmarking company providing a reliable source of premium global data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights. Already used by many hotels across Northern Ireland to obtain accurate, up-to-date statistics, Sarah will be advising if we can establish a specific Mid-Ulster hotel data collection report.



Business to Business (B2B) Events

Tourism NI Tour Guides programme

This programme funded by Tourism NI (£10,000) was targeted at future foreign language guides and 10 people who speak a range of languages completed. The programme gave them an immersive Seamus Heaney day and a visit to HomePlace, all planned to introduce them to HomePlace with a view to encouraging return visits with groups and reciprocal cross marketing benefits.

Meet the Buyer

Meet the Buyer on 19 April in St Georges Market, Belfast, staff attended this B2B event and had interviews with 22 incoming tour operators plus positive contacts made with Geraldine Egan, Tourism Ireland. This resulted in Council getting Northern Ireland Industry Co Operation funding for international promotions. 10 tour Operators are now actively featuring Seamus Heaney Homeplace and Hill of The O'Neill in itineraries and this is being developed on an ongoing basis.

Meet the Buyer Site visit on 21st April the meet the Buyer B2B event was followed by a familiarisation trip when 15 incoming tour operators on the People, Place & Politics fam trip visited Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Ballyscullion Park and had lunch at The Old Thatch Inn.

GB/ROI Coach & Tour Operators



The GB Coach & Tour Operators workshop was held in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast on 13th September. Staff had meetings with 20 incoming GB and ROI operators bring groups from all over the world to visit Ireland. There is a growing demand for Northern Ireland from these operators and the challenge for us is to divert them off the honeypot routes and into this region.

World Travel Market, WTM London

This was Mid Ulster Council's second visit to WTM, the event took place at Excel, London from the **5th – 7th November**. Following on from last year's event and contacts made with Tourism Ireland, we were successful in receiving TIL funding and this allowed us to bring 5 industry representatives to the show. Staff from J&K Coaches, Walsh's Hotel, Lough Neagh Eels, Lough Neagh Tours and Quinn's coaches attended and got the opportunity to network and sell their businesses on the Tourism Ireland stand.



To date over £300,000 of businesses has been achieved from the show with seven site visits planned to the region. Tourism staff had 22 meetings and follow up on these is ongoing.

Digital Mentor Programme

The Digital Mentor Programme for Tourism Businesses in Mid Ulster provided 10 businesses with 10 hours of specialist one to one mentoring support, a digital baseline audit and digital action plan to help achieve the following:

- 1) Develop IT skills sets of the client
- 2) Develop usage of Online media
- 3) Facilitate usage of Social media
- 4) Explore the benefits of E Commerce with businesses
- 5) Provide website consultation, optimisation and recommendations.

This programme provided exceptional value for money by exceeding the key target outputs and delivering the following results:

- Delivering 10 baseline audits and skills assessments
- Delivering 10 IT Improvement Plans
- 10 hours of tailored mentoring support to each business
- Increasing the use of social media and technology of each business by an average of 30.34% and at least 11.72%
-

Additionally, Facebook Advertising, Google My Business and Website development / utilization were the most in demand areas for support for the businesses who applied.

Tourism Promotions

Staff have participated in a number of tourism promotions throughout the year showcasing Mid Ulster, these included:

Balmoral Show from 16-19 May

Tourism businesses from across the region including: Walsh's Hotel, Tour Guide Brendan Adams, Island Turf Craft, Seamus Heaney HomePlace Hotel with tourism staff worked over the

three days to sell the region. Over 800 pieces of literature including the Mid Ulster Guide, special offers brochure and individual attractions literature were distributed.

Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh 21-24 June

This is Scotland's largest consumer show, where staff worked alongside Tourism Ireland staff and trade from across Ireland promoting the Mid Ulster region.

Attendance at the show was funded by Tourism Ireland NI Industry Cooperation programme.



Clogher Valley Show

The 100th Clogher Valley Agricultural Show was held on 25 July 2019.

This event is one of the largest one day agricultural show's in N Ireland with visitor's attending the event from all over the island of Ireland and in their centenary year proved to be a great success. Mid Ulster District Council tourism department hired 80ft by 20ft of promotional space in a very prominent location within the main field and provided gazebos/tables for up to 10 local tourism SME's, to take opportunity to promote and sell at the show.

Antrim Garden Show

Staff worked on this promotion at Antrim Garden Show, from 4 – 6 May 2018. Antim is the largest gardening and outdoor show in Northern Ireland and attracts over 30,000 visitors every year.

Trade representatives from the region also attended, these included Killymoon Castle, Linen Green and the Jungle.

Holiday World, Belfast & Dublin

Mid Ulster Council have exhibited at both shows in January past with business representatives. The shows were busy with over 800 pieces of literature being distributed. Dublin is certainly busier and perhaps is the one to focus on going forward. Staff are currently following up on 5 group tour requests generated in Dublin plus other media enquiries and completed a radio interview with Sunshine FM on the stand.



Tourism Promotions

Photography

During the summer of 2018 Brian Morrison Photography was appointed to develop and produce a suite of creative and innovative illustrative images for use in Mid Ulster promotional literature, advertising, marketing material, online and social media, as well as international platforms, within the likes of Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland to enhance the success of Mid Ulster's tourism product.

Brian Morrison has worked with Tourism Ireland and Tourism N Ireland over many years and brought to the project not only his skills and expertise but also knowledge in what both tourism organisations will capture to use in their marketing and promotional campaigns. The project cost £8,000 and captured key product under the Strategic Tourism themes—Seamus Heaney.



World Host Training

Licenced Trainers, Charmain Bell and Genevieve Bell have delivered the following WorldHost Workshops during the period of 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.



Date of Training	Location	Number of Participants	Income
10 April 2018	Corick House Hotel	15	
12 September 2018	The Burnavon	11	£231
4 October 2018	Lake Torrent – Ambassador Training	12	£120
16 January 2019	The Valley Hotel	7	£140
	Total	45	£491

In May 2018 funding was secured from Tourism NI to deliver the Lake Torrent WorldHost Ambassador training in Coalisland. This was a co-funded model, whereby Tourism NI paid the external trainer fees (approximately £3,000) and provided the training materials for each training session (approximately £3,600). Mid Ulster Council provided the venue, hospitality, marketing of the workshops, and coach for the familiarisation trips.

The Ambassador programme was tailored specifically to Lake Torrent and Coalisland, and included a familiarisation trip highlighting the local area.

Eight training sessions were scheduled to run from September 2018 to June 2019 with a minimum of 25 participants per session. Unfortunately these had to be cancelled due to the Lake Torrent owners going into receivership in October 2018.

Engagement work is ongoing with our tourism trade to deliver the WorldHost Principles of Customer Service Training specifically tailored to each establishment.

WorldHost Business Recognition

The Burnavaon having successfully trained over 50% of their staff and have submitted an application to obtain their WorldHost Business Recognition.

Visitor Information Centre & Visitor Servicing

Visitor Information Centres

The three VIC's continues to support the tourism service provided by Council. Three of thirty one Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) networked centres, all of which have excellent facilities providing a wide array of services to the local community and visitors to the area. Cookstown VIC has been assessed as a **Destination Visitor Information Centre** by TNI with Magherafelt and Dungannon VIC holding **Local** Status

VIC Services:

- Free information on Northern Ireland's tourist attractions, events and accommodation
- Reference material on Republic of Ireland
- Local and National Accommodation Booking Service
- Sale of Fishing Licences
- Retail outlet providing a range of literature and crafts
- Tour Guide Service
- Box Office for Burnavon and Square Box events
- Free WIFI

Opening Hours

The centres are open on an average of 65 hours per week including nights & Weekends.

Staffing

Head of Tourism: Michael Browne

Tourism Manager: Mary McKeown

Tourism Officers: Charmain Bell, Genevieve Bell, Mary McGee and Graeme Major

Full Time Tourism / Box Office Advisors: 5

Part-time Tourism / Box Office Advisor: 2

Casual Tourism / Box Office Advisors: 20

Craft Sales

VISITOR FIGURES 2018/19	ORIGIN OF VISITORS 2018/19	ORIGIN OF VISITORS 2018/19
Total Visitors: 201,082 Counter: 16,989 Phone: 3,609 Post / Email: 850 Browsers: 184,093	82% Northern Ireland 18% Out of State	87% Northern Ireland 13% Out of State
VIC INCOME		
Total Sales: £26,172.28 Crafts: £18,386.28 Fishing licences: £3234 (10% commission to VIC) Events: £4552		

Targeted development of the craft shop within Cookstown VIC and Magherafelt VIC has yielded a very positive growth this year. Target buying and continual rotation of stock and lines carried has resulted in a much more attractive visual merchandising look for the shop which has encouraged additional purchase.



Development of The Bridewell and Magherafelt VIC

Formerly the Court House and jail, The Bridewell based in the centre of town now contains Magherafelt VIC and library. A listed building with enchanting history the structure and exterior of the building remain largely unchanged. It is anticipated that Mid Ulster Tourism will be successful with our application to Council as we pursue funds to modernise the toilets and complete work to the premises.

Finance

The Cookstown craft shop made a healthy profit last year (2018). The total income for the year was **£21,620.28**. **£13,855** Cookstown, **£3,888.80** Magherafelt's and **£3,876.48** Dungannon.

Seamus Heaney HomePlace

Although not formally recognised as part of Visitor Information Centre network, Seamus Heaney HomePlace sees a large number of visitors and tourism related queries. **51,971** visitors during 2018 from the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and much of Europe have attended the exhibition, The Helicon and events.

Tourism Digital Strategy

Still to evaluate considerations from TNI its anticipated that the Digital Strategy will compliment the functions of the VIC network and play a key role in connecting a visitor to our area and the accommodation, attractions and activities contained within.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Tourism NI as part of their commitment to ensuring high standards of service, commission an independent consultant to carry out 'Mystery Shopper' (MS) exercises on all the centres on an ongoing annual basis. The assessment consists of a site visit, where they replicate an authentic visitor's interaction covering a range of information and posing several questions about the local area and wider Northern Ireland Tourism product. The format on the 'Mystery Visit' sees the visitor or group of visitors stay in a local accommodation and visit an array of tourism sites to fully experience what the area has to offer with regards to tourist attractions, activities and services.

It is the overriding objective that all visitors and the local community receive the best possible standard of service with the key aim of meeting and exceeding customer needs. Network Centres have minimum standards to adhere to. These assessments allow Tourism NI and Mid Ulster District Council to monitor how staff perform and influence staff training requirements. In addition to this the reports also enable MUDC Tourism to measure and benchmark operational standards across the wider tourism & hospitality industry.

Dungannon and Cookstown VIC recorded 100% during the last round of mystery visits to the centres.

The VIC is scored on Customer Experience in VIC and graded against criteria as below;

- Physical features of VIC
- Welcome received
- Accessibility, formats and quality of visitor information
- Retail offering
- VIC staff – attitude, appearance, empathy, professionalism, knowledge and promotion of internal services and the local area

Above all else, the member of staff at Dungannon VIC offered a thorough and tailored solution for the visitor "Ranfurly House had an excellent VIC. The building itself is very impressive. My experience was very positive. The staff were both very helpful, friendly and knowledgeable. They went out of their way to ensure I had all the information I needed."

Cookstown VIC also received fantastic feedback "I had a terrific experience in the VIC. I walked into the VIC and walked towards the literature wall. I had hardly started to browse when I was offered assistance. I said I was gathering some ideas of things to do with children over Easter. I was asked age of children; where we lived; did I want to stay locally. I thought my needs were very well identified. I was given local suggestions plus ideas for further afield. Both ladies worked together to give me a really good solution. They both spoke passionately about the animation courses and if this was a genuine enquiry I would have signed my children up to it there and then!"

DISTRICT WIDE MONITORING RESULTS 2018

Pedestrian Counters unless otherwise stated	Jan-March	April-June	July-Sep	Oct - Dec	TOTAL
Beaghmore Stone Circles	1,437	4,000*	4,000*	2,180*	11,617
Tullaghoge Fort	1,400*	5,000*	2,551	2,262	11,213
Davagh Car Park (car)	2,679	4,293	5,498	5,267	17,737
Davagh Pump Track	814	1,594	2,912	1,595	6,915
Davagh Forest	1,707	3,132	3,528	2,128	10,495
	1,687*	2,457	2,700	2,233	9,077
Ballyronan Marina (car)	45,578	66,121	66,653	42,304	220,656
Springhill House (car)	6,893	13,432	11,840	7,486	39,651
Wellbrook Beetling Mill (car)	468	1,350	1,453	256	3,527
Maghera Walled Garden	1,452	7,000*	7,921	3,481	19,854
Lough Fea Pedestrian	8,703	20,373	31,480	10,322	70,878
Main Car Park	8,955	18,168	16,966	8,636	52,725
Dungannon Park Car Park (car)	59,247	118,789	112,695	91,782	382,603
Roundlake Fivemiletown	3,107	5,994	6,682	19,893	35,676
Seamus Heaney	11,195	14,723	14,610	11,443	51,971
Lissan House	2,500*	5,000*	6,367	3,048	16,915
Grants Ancestral Home	750*	1,500*	1,572	1,283	5,105

* Estimate figures