



12 November 2020

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Development Committee to be held in The Chamber, Magherafelt and by virtual means Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, BT45 6EN on Thursday, 12 November 2020 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

In accordance with the spirit of the recent COVID restriction, Members are strongly encouraged to join virtually as the preferred option. Should you need to attend in person then provision will be made at the Council Offices, Magherafelt. Please notify Democratic Services in advance if this is the case.

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

Yours faithfully

Anthony Tohill  
Chief Executive

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## AGENDA

### OPEN BUSINESS

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

### Matters for Decision

- |     |   |          |
|-----|---|----------|
| 5.  | Mountain Bike NI Consortium                                   | 5 - 20   |
| 6.  | Conway Close, Cookstown - Lease Agreement                     | 21 - 26  |
| 7.  | DAERA: Environmental Challenge Fund 2020/2021                 | 27 - 44  |
| 8.  | Financial assistance offer from TNI for a new tourism website | 45 - 48  |
| 9.  | Community Development Report                                  | 49 - 52  |
| 10. | Economic Development - OBFD                                   | 53 - 134 |

#### Matters for Information

11	Minutes of Special Development Committee held on 1 October 2020	135 - 142
12	Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 October 2020	143 - 168
13	DfC Strategy for Sport Consultation	169 - 170
14	Potential Restructure of Intermediate Football	171 - 174
15	Lough Neagh Partnership Core Funding Progress Report	175 - 184
16	Ulster-Scots Funding, PHASE 2, US Grant Ancestral Homestead	185 - 188
17	Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group minutes of meeting of 5th October 2020	189 - 202
18	Economic Development - OBFi	203 - 272

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

#### Matters for Decision

19. Village Extension Programme – Maghera Leisure Centre
20. Update on Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21
21. Economic Development - CBFD
22. DFI Active Travel Options for Mid Ulster

#### Matters for Information

23. Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 15 October 2020
24. Leisure Month 6 Review – 2020/21
25. Economic Development - CBFi

## **Cross Departmental Actions for Vulnerable Children and Young People during the Covid-19 Pandemic Period**

Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the development of a Cross Departmental Action Plan for Vulnerable Children and Young People and wish to offer its support to the promotion of the safety and wellbeing of children and young people during the Covid-19 pandemic period **and beyond**.

Mid Ulster District Council have responsibility for the facilitation and delivery of Community Planning within the district of which they are a partner along with other agencies. The Mid Ulster Community Plan shares the aims of the Cross Departmental Action Plan, which also seeks to work with its partners from across the statutory and voluntary sector, to improve the wellbeing of our children and young people to deliver positive and long lasting outcomes.

Within the Cross Departmental Plan, there are a number of actions that Mid Ulster District Council is responsible for or are leading on in partnership and would like to specifically address, in relation to what is being developed and delivered within the district.

### **Increased Harm in the Home: Increased temporary accommodation places for victims of domestic violence**

Mid Ulster District Council are currently working with Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid regarding the lack of appropriate accommodation across the district for victims of domestic violence and their families. Whilst Mid Ulster District Council can appreciate the need for emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence, placing these families in accommodation far away from their support networks forces many to return to their perpetrator. Failing to also provide them with appropriate, longer term accommodation often leads to the same consequences. These issues must be addressed in order to ensure the safety of domestic violence victims and their families.

Council officers and Women's Aid staff recently met with the Minister for Communities to discuss a proposal to build a number of supported housing units in Cookstown to alleviate this need. Although this is a longer term action, Mid Ulster District Council would welcome the support of the cross departmental partners in ensuring its successful delivery in its efforts to meet the housing needs of vulnerable children and families.

### **Families facing financial hardship and/or in food poverty**

Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the number of programmes listed in the plan to alleviate financial hardship and food poverty. Mid Ulster District Council are currently developing an anti-poverty strategy for Mid Ulster and have commenced engagement with DfC regarding the development of a regional anti-poverty strategy. Mid Ulster District Council would welcome support from all the partners involved in this plan, to assist in the delivery of a Mid Ulster anti-poverty strategy, to address chronic issues of poverty experienced by our vulnerable children and families.

Mid Ulster District Council currently partners with DfC in the provision of support for emergency food poverty and some support for fuel poverty. Within this section, at item

1.4 it appears to read that DfC and Local Gov are partners in the delivery of the 'Discretionary Support COVID-19 short term living expenses grant'. This is not accurate. Local gov would only be partners on items vi and x. We ask this is amended.

Specifically regarding Free School Meals (FSM), Mid Ulster District Council would urge the Department for Education to consider reviewing the criteria for FSM to allow them to be extended to more families in financial hardship. Through our work in the COVID-19 response hubs, Mid Ulster District Council are aware of the significant number of families in food poverty, where one or both parents were in employment. This reality needs to be better reflected in the provision of FSM.

#### **Children facing educational disadvantage due to school closures**

Mid Ulster District Council supports all actions aimed at reducing educational disadvantages of vulnerable children. Within the draft Mid Ulster anti-poverty plan are a number of actions aimed to address these issues also and would be happy to work with partners in this plan, to develop them further.

Mid Ulster District Council notes a lack of educational actions of children with special needs or complex special needs. Mid Ulster District Council received considerable feedback from local residents and communities that these children and families were 'abandoned' during lockdown. Whilst some of the actions noted in the plan may cover support to these children, given that children with special needs are more likely to be educationally disadvantaged, Mid Ulster District Council feel that more specific actions needs to be included or developed in this plan.

#### **Children/families unable to access services due to reduced service provision and/or social distancing requirement**

With specific reference to CAMHS, through its work in Community Planning and anti-poverty, Mid Ulster District Council are acutely aware of the growing number of children & young people's suffering with poor mental health. Mid Ulster District Council are also aware of the growing demand on CAMHS, with long referral waiting times for young people in accessing the professional help they desperately require. As a result of the pandemic and lockdown, this demand will undoubtedly grow. Mid Ulster District Council welcomes a COVID-19 Mental Health Response Plan but is not entirely confident this plan clearly sets out how it will meet growing demand for a service that was oversubscribed before the pandemic. While capacity is built within the CAMHS system, actions are required to fill this gap.



<b>Report on</b>	Mountain Bike NI Consortium
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<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 report on and seek approval to commit to Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2020-21
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	As previously reported, by the Head of Leisure, over the past number of years Belfast CC (BCC), Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC), Newry, Mourne and Down DC (NMDC) and Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI) have been involved in a consortium to market Northern Ireland Mountain Bike facilities. This year Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (F&ODC) have also joined the consortium. There is a MountainBikeNI brand and website and a Mountain Biking Marketing Officer is employed by ORNI.
2.2	
2.3	The consortium tendered a sponsorship opportunity which was won by Chain Reaction Cycles (CRC) this financial year. CRC contributes £15,000 per annum. This historically, along with contributions from consortium Councils, has been used to employ the Mountain Biking Marketing Officer who works on behalf of all consortium Councils.
2.4	Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) are again requesting funding from all previous consortium Councils to continue marketing the NI Mountain Bike trails and various promotional campaigns. Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2020 – 2021 is attached in Appendix 1.  By continuing to contribute to the Mountain Bike NI Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:  <b>Solid Foundation:</b> Significant investment has already been made to establish a website, e-marketing and social media channels  <b>Engaged Visitors:</b> As indicated by 'Mountain Bike NI Key Stats' the website / brand has a strong engagement from the target market.

	<p><b>Combined Resources:</b> The small investments from a number of local authority partners can be combined to produce an outcome greater than the sum of its parts.</p> <p><b>Cross Sell:</b> There will be opportunities to cross sell between destinations ie, visitors to the Mourne Mountains will be able to learn about activities in Mid Ulster and vice versa.</p> <p><b>Website:</b> The website provides an enhanced user experience, be responsive across platforms (mobile, tablet, desktop) and can avail of the latest interactive mapping.</p>																																					
2.5	A further detailed report of ORNI’s work programme and reporting for 2019/20 is attached in Appendix 2.																																					
2.6	Within Mid Ulster District Council – <a href="http://MountainbikeNI.com">MountainbikeNI.com</a> incorporates detailed information on our 2 mountain bike trail centres, Davagh Forest and Blessingbourne Estate.																																					
3.0	<b>Main Report</b>																																					
3.1	ORNI delivers the key functions of the MountainBikeNI Consortium, in order to continue to promote Northern Ireland as a 'next must visit mountain bike destination' via website management, digital marketing, campaigns, experiential development and clustering, events and PR.																																					
3.2	ORNI ensures continuous liaison with local businesses and stakeholders to ensure market opportunities are capitalised upon and also provides ongoing liaison with consortium partners and sponsors to ensure a collaborative approach providing mutual benefits.																																					
3.3	<p>The cost to all consortium councils for 2020/21 including sponsorship is proposed as follows:</p> <p><b>Delivery of Outputs</b></p> <table><tr><th>Partner</th><th>MUDC / £</th><th>NMDDC / £</th><th>BCC / £</th><th>FODC / £</th></tr><tr><td>Partner Support</td><td>5,666</td><td>7,777</td><td>3,333</td><td>6,950</td></tr><tr><td>Sponsorship Contribution</td><td>5,000</td><td>10,000</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Partner Total</td><td>10,666</td><td>17,777</td><td>3,333</td><td>6,950</td></tr><tr><td>% of Delivery Capacity</td><td>28%</td><td>46%</td><td>9%</td><td>18%</td></tr></table> <p><b>Campaigns</b></p> <table><tr><th>Source</th><th>Amount / £</th><th>% of campaign delivery</th></tr><tr><td>Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</td><td>2,000</td><td>67%</td></tr><tr><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td><td>1,000</td><td>33%</td></tr><tr><td><b>TOTAL</b></td><td><b>3,000</b></td><td><b>100%</b></td></tr></table> <p>Total MUDC contribution for 2020/21 £6,666.00 (Pro-rata from 1 August 2020 – 31 March 2021)</p>	Partner	MUDC / £	NMDDC / £	BCC / £	FODC / £	Partner Support	5,666	7,777	3,333	6,950	Sponsorship Contribution	5,000	10,000	0	0	Partner Total	10,666	17,777	3,333	6,950	% of Delivery Capacity	28%	46%	9%	18%	Source	Amount / £	% of campaign delivery	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	2,000	67%	Mid Ulster District Council	1,000	33%	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
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<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p>Financial: Mid Ulster District Council would contribute £6,666.00 as a participating partner. Contribution is available in the 2020/21 Parks budget.</p> <p>This is approx 75% reduction in level of support required from 2019/20, £25,241. This reduction reflects the marketing now being conducted in-house by Marketing and Communications Team.</p>
	<p>Human: Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.</p>
	<p>Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	<p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Council approval is sought to participate partner in the Mountain Bike NI Consortium for 2020/21 at a cost of £6,666.00.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p>Appendix Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2020 – 2021 ORNI's work programme and reporting for 2019/20</p>



## **Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2020 – 2021**

### **August 2020**

Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) has prepared this proposal in order to request support from trail managing Councils for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

However, in light of the current impact of COVID-19 and social distancing measures, ORNI has proposed a reduced fee relating to activity from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

This proposal outlines:

1. Overview of Outputs
2. Added value gained from adopting a consortium approach
3. Proposal for 2020 / 2021

## 1. Overview of Outputs:

Outdoor Recreation NI will continue to assign staff resources to the MountainBikeNI Consortium in order to continue to promote Northern Ireland as a 'must visit mountain bike destination'.

Whilst promotion will take place under the MountainBikeNI umbrella brand each destination will be clearly differentiated within marketing activity.

The focus of marketing activity will be within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in order to deliver on key objectives:

- Increase number of visits within each trail centre
- Increase the engagement of mountain bikers with the local economy i.e. increase economic impact

Partner	MUDC	NMDDC	BCC	FODC
Partner Support	£5,666	£7,777	£3,333	£6,950
Sponsorship Contribution	£5,000	£10,000	0	£0
Partner Total	£10,666	£17,777	£3,333	£6,950
% of Delivery Capacity	28%	46%	9%	18%
<b>Fundamental Outputs</b>				
Mountain Bike NI Consortium	✓	✓	✓	✓
MountainBikeNI.com Website	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customer Interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Trail Centre Specific Outputs</b>				
Trail Cards E-commerce	✓	✓	x	x
Mountain Bike NI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sponsorship Liaison	✓	✓	x	x
<b>Marketing Outputs</b>				
NI Marketing via MTBNI Channels	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROI Marketing Campaigns	✓ (£1000)	✓ (£2000)	x	x
Destination Support / Business Upskilling	✓	✓	x	x

## **A. Fundamental Outputs**

### **A.1. MountainBikeNI Consortium**

- Act as the Secretariat for the MountainBikeNI Consortium - minimum of 2 meetings per annum
- Agree meeting dates, venue, agenda and circulate minutes
- Prepare and agree annual work programme and provide a progress report on a quarterly basis

### **A.2. MountainBikeNI.com Website**

- Manage and maintain the MountainBikeNI.com website including:
  - All Trail Centres
    - Manage Trail Centre Profile including event calendar in liaison with trail managers
    - Update of Trail Conditions (diversions, closures etc) as required in liaison with trail managers
  - National Trail Centres Only
    - Annual update of downloadable online destination guides
    - Proactive liaison with local tourism service providers (accommodation and eatery) to ensure their web profiles are targeted to the mountain bike market and offers are available in line with campaigns
- Continue to provide high quality and accurate information and content (as required) for Tourism Northern Ireland's consumer website DiscoverNorthernIreland.com
- Provide accurate information and content (as required) for councils' tourism websites
- Proactive Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to ensure competitive Google Ranking for key terms in both Great Britain (GB) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) markets

### **A.3. Customer Interaction**

- Deal with customer enquiries via telephone, email and social media in a timely manner

## **B. Trail Centre Specific Outputs**

### **B.1. Trail Cards**

- Manage and maintain the e-commerce platform within MountainBikeNI.com
- Proactively engage with tourism service providers and relevant retail outlets to encourage stocking and sale of trail cards
- Facilitate any reprint / redesign of trail cards<sup>1</sup>
- Provide quarterly report of trail card sales within overall work programme report

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<sup>1</sup> Additional budget will be required for trail card design and print costs

## **B.2. MountainBikeNI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme)<sup>2</sup>**

- Lead the recruitment of MTB volunteers and manage database
- Communicate dates of maintenance days and allocate volunteers
- Manage MountainBikeNI Trails Team Facebook Group
- Proactively publicise the work of the MountainBikeNI Trails Team
- Organise a training and reward programme in conjunction with the trail sponsor

## **B.3. Sponsorship Liaison**

- In partnership with National Trail Centre managing councils recruit a title sponsor for MountainBikeNI.com and the National Trail Centres
- Agree annual support programme with sponsors and act as key liaison to maximise benefits of both parties
- Manage the ongoing relationship with the sponsor

## **C. Marketing Outputs**

### **C.1. NI Marketing via MTBNI Channels**

- Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from NI based Mountain bikers via:
  - Design and implementation of the annual content, social media and e-marketing plan against key segments and trigger points
  - Create and circulate positive media stories to local and NI media re mountain biking and events, ensuring prominent destination / local authority message (as appropriate)

### **C.2. ROI Marketing Campaigns**

- Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from ROI based Mountain bikers via:
  - Delivery of a targeted campaign activity (within budget – proposed £4,000) to include editorial, advertorial, advertising (online / offline bundles), advocacy, PR FAM Trips

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<sup>2</sup> Council partners to deliver maintenance days including provision of lunch



### **C.3. Destination Support and Business Upskilling**

- Business Upskilling:
  - Support Council workshops for local tourism service providers
  - Proactive engagement with local tourism service providers (accommodation, eateries and activity providers) to ensure:
    - their offering is targeted to the mountain bike market i.e. 'MTB Friendly'
    - innovative offers are available in line with campaigns
    - increased awareness of MTB product offering within their destination
  - Deliver on-line toolkit for local tourism service providers including visitor profiles and requirements, product and service advice, marketing recommendations / opportunities and best practice benchmarking
  - Distribution of two e-newsletters to relevant stakeholders re marketing campaign updates, promotional opportunities and support
- Destination Support:
  - Provide support to Council Tourism teams to accurately incorporate the promotion of mountain biking within a wider tourism offering

## 2. Added value gained from adopting a consortium approach

Outdoor Recreation NI is able to provide the following added value to those councils supporting the MountainBikeNI Consortium:

### Consortium Approach

A consortium approach provides the following benefits:

- **Economies of scale** in campaign costs, project costs such as MTB Research
- The ability to **cross sell** between trail centres i.e. consumers interested in or visiting the Mourne based trails will learn about the Davagh Trails and vice versa
- A greater potential to attract (via tender) a **sponsor**
- **Improved brand, destination and product recognition**

### Marketing Foundation

The following marketing foundation is already in place – reducing the need for supporting councils to further invest elsewhere:

- MountainBikeNI.com website
- E-marketing Database of 12,807
- Social media following of 26,070 (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Strong relationship with MTB journalists demonstrated by generation of PR worth an equivalent advertising value of £1.3 million since April 2013

### Expertise & Knowledge

Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation whose role is to develop, manage and promote outdoor recreation across Northern Ireland therefore those councils supporting the consortium benefit from its significant expertise and knowledge.

- Product knowledge gained from:
  - proactive campaigning for 10+ years for the development of mountain biking in Northern Ireland
  - driving the development of Rostrevor, Castlewellan, Blessingbourne, Castle Ward and Barnett Demesne Mountain Bike Trails
- Visitor Safety knowledge gained from:
  - membership of Visitor Safety Group (VSG)
  - staff training investment including VSG and other relevant workshops
- Mountain bike market knowledge gained from proactive:
  - benchmarking from competitor destinations
  - engagement with UK and ROI wide industry experts
  - staff training investment including learning journeys and industry conferences
- Marketing expertise gained from:
  - 10+ years of proactively promoting outdoor recreation / activity tourism in Northern Ireland via Outdoor Recreation NI platforms such as OutdoorNI.com. WalkNI.com
  - 10+ years delivering activity tourism marketing outputs for Tourism Northern Ireland

### 3. Proposal 2020 / 2021

#### Delivery of Outputs

Partner	MUDC / £	NMDDC / £	BCC / £	FODC / £
Partner Support	5,666	7,777	3,333	6,950
Sponsorship Contribution	5,000	10,000	0	0
Partner Total	10,666	17,777	3,333	6,950
% of Delivery Capacity	28%	46%	9%	18%

#### Campaigns

Source	Amount / £	% of campaign delivery
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	2,000	67%
Mid Ulster District Council	1,000	33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

In 2020 / 2021, proactive promotion in Northern Ireland will be achieved via MTBNI's extensive web visitors, e-zine subscribers and social media followers.

A ROI focused campaign is proposed to encourage visits in Spring 2021.



**MOUNTAINBIKENI.COM MARKETING CONSORTIUM**

**WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTING**

**(APRIL 2019 – 2020)**

INCREASING AWARENESS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES		
*denotes where extra programme budget may be required on a case per case basis		
	WORK TO BE DELIVERED (2019-2020)	PROGRESS
MountainBikeNI Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act as the Secretariat for the MountainBikeNI Consortium - minimum of 2 meetings per annum</li> <li>Agree meeting dates, venue, agenda and circulate minutes</li> <li>Prepare and agree annual work programme and provide a progress report on a quarterly basis</li> </ul>	<p>Consortium meeting took place November 2019 to update consortium meeting on success of Spring Campaign, Summer Campaign and to preview autumn campaign.</p> <p>Worked with consortium to inform public following the Covid-19 outbreak.</p>
MountainBikeNI.com Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and maintain the MountainBikeNI.com website including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Trail Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage Trail Centre Profile including event calendar in liaison with trail managers</li> <li>Update of Trail Conditions (diversions, closures etc) as required in liaison with trail managers</li> </ul> </li> <li>National Trail Centres Only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual update of downloadable online destination guides</li> <li>Proactive liaison with local tourism service providers (accommodation and eatery) to ensure their web profiles are targeted to the mountain bike market and offers are available in line with campaigns</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Continue to provide high quality and accurate information and content (as required) for Tourism Northern Ireland's consumer website DiscoverNorthernIreland.com</li> <li>Provide accurate information and content (as required) for councils' tourism websites</li> <li>Proactive Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to ensure competitive Google Ranking for key terms in both Great Britain (GB) and Republic of Ireland (ROI) markets</li> </ul>	Complete
Customer Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deal with customer enquiries via telephone, email and social media in a timely manner</li> </ul>	Complete
Trail Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and maintain the e-commerce platform within MountainBikeNI.com</li> <li>Proactively engage with tourism service providers and relevant retail outlets to encourage stocking and sale of trail cards</li> <li>Facilitate any reprint / redesign of trail cards</li> <li>Provide quarterly report of trail card sales within overall work programme report</li> </ul>	Online Sales for 19-20 = 190

<b>Sponsorship Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with National Trail Centre managing councils recruit a title sponsor for MountainBikeNI.com and the National Trail Centres</li> <li>• Agree annual support programme with sponsors and act as key liaison to maximise benefits of both parties</li> <li>• Manage the ongoing relationship with the sponsor</li> </ul>	<p>Q1: Private sponsor recruited for 2019/2020. Monthly sponsorship plan being sent to Chain Reaction Cycles.</p> <p>Q2: Chain Reaction Cycles agreed to sponsorship plan for the year.</p> <p>Q3. Updated consortium on CRC sponsorship agreement.</p>
<b>NI Marketing via MTBNI Channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from NI based mountain bikers via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Design and implementation of the annual content, social media and e-marketing plan against key segments and trigger points</li> <li>○ Create and circulate positive media stories to local and NI media re mountain biking and events, ensuring prominent destination / local authority message (as appropriate)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Total number of e-newsletter subscribers on average = 11,237 Number of e-newsletters sent = 11</p> <p>Social media database: Facebook followers increased by 7% from 21,813 likes to 23,357 likes Instagram followers increased by 22% from 1,991 to 2,425 Twitter followers increased by 4% from 2,482 to 2,575</p> <p>Number of blogs created and disseminated = 10</p> <p>MountainBikeNI Awards – Over 700 votes cast. Press release printed in Newry Reporter.</p>
<b>NI Marketing Campaigns – MUDC Only</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from NI based Mountain bikers through the further enhancement of activities under C.1 via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Delivery of a targeted campaign activity (within budget – proposed £2075) to include editorial, advertorial, advertising (online / offline bundles), advocacy, PR FAM Trips</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Summer Campaign – Davagh &amp; Blessingbourne only</b> 2 FAM Trips secured with Mark O’Kane and Philip Mullan, both riders for Chain Reaction Cycles Belfast Store. Both riders continued to provide positive coverage of the Blessingbourne Estate and Davagh Forest Trail centres for some time.</p> <p>Previously developed video content from MountainBikeNI was also used in geo-targeted social media adverts to followers in Northern Ireland, resulting in 2,844 engagements.</p> <p>New users visiting MountainBikeNI from Northern Ireland increased by 33% from 3,414 to 4,542.</p> <p>Davagh Forest trail page activity increased by 78% and Blessingbourne Estate trail page activity increased by 35%.</p> <p>Facebook followers from NI increased by 5% Instagram followers from NI increased by 4.5%</p>

<b>ROI Marketing Campaigns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness levels, visitation and spend from ROI based Mountain bikers via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Delivery of a targeted campaign activity (within budget – proposed £13,000) to include editorial, advertorial, advertising (online / offline bundles), advocacy, PR FAM Trips</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Spring Campaign Outputs:</b> 85,000+ video views achieved across a range of specialist media (Dirt Magazine) and MountainBikeNI channels.</p> <p>The two videos produced followed an instructional ‘how to’ format which continually proves popular with online searches, carried out by one of Ireland’s rising stars in the mountain bike world, Dan Wolfe.</p> <p>It also resulted in a large amount of User Generated Content (UGC) for MountainBikeNI, in the form of over 120 submitted pictures. This was achieved by way of securing £700 in vouchers from Chain Reaction Cycles, which MountainBikeNI followers could win by sending in their own data.</p> <p>The campaign also resulted in:  RoI Instagram followers grew by 5.6%  RoI Facebook followers increased by 3%.  Average FB engagement rate was 5.5% (Industry average is 0.05%)  Number of RoI website sessions: 1,875 (-15% on previous year)</p> <p><b>Autumn Campaign Outputs:</b> 83,041 RoI video views across specialist media (Dirt Magazine) and MountainBikeNI channels.</p> <p>This campaign directly targeted the two most common segments; the ‘diehard’ mountain biker, and the ‘weekend warrior’. The video highlighted the way both types of riders enjoy trail centres and promoted a number of local businesses in doing so.</p> <p>Social influencer Glyn O’Brien was secured as the ‘die hard’ model and added significant coverage of the campaign to his own followers.</p> <p>The campaign also resulted in:   RoI Instagram followers grew by 10%  RoI Facebook followers increased by 4%</p>
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		Average FB engagement rate was 5.5%
		<b>Spring 2020 Campaign:</b> Temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 outbreak
<b>Destination Support and Business Upskilling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Upskilling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support Council workshops for local tourism service providers</li> <li>○ Proactive engagement with local tourism service providers (accommodation, eateries and activity providers) to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ their offering is targeted to the mountain bike market i.e. 'MTB Friendly'</li> <li>▪ innovative offers are available in line with campaigns</li> <li>▪ increased awareness of MTB product offering within their destination</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Deliver on-line toolkit for local tourism service providers including visitor profiles and requirements, product and service advice, marketing recommendations / opportunities and best practice benchmarking</li> <li>○ Distribution of two e-newsletters to relevant stakeholders re marketing campaign updates, promotional opportunities and support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Destination Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide support to Council Tourism teams to accurately incorporate the promotion of mountain biking within a wider tourism offering</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing.

## EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS


<b>MountainBikeNI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the recruitment of MTB volunteers and manage database</li> <li>• Communicate dates of maintenance days and allocate volunteers</li> <li>• Manage MountainBikeNI Trails Team Facebook Group</li> <li>• Proactively publicise the work of the MountainBikeNI Trails Team</li> <li>• Organise a training and reward programme in conjunction with the trail sponsor</li> </ul>	<p>135 MTBNI Volunteers.</p> <p>Maintenance Sessions for the year = 1 - Rostrevor, Sat 8<sup>th</sup> June, 5 volunteers attended</p> <p>MHT and Mid Ulster want to hold off for some time on trail maintenance days.</p> <p>Volunteer Day scheduled for Barnett Demesne postponed due to Covid-19.</p>
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<b>Report on</b>	Conway Close, Cookstown - Lease Agreement
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 12th November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Head of Parks
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Nigel Hill

<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	Council approval to formalise the current arrangement relating to land adjacent to 17 Conway Close Dunamore, Cookstown from Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the purpose of play provision.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The provision of structured play facilities at Conway Close, Dunamore have been in existence under legacy arrangements between Cookstown District Council and Northern Ireland Housing Executive. This arrangement, although progressed between the parties was not formalised with no transfer agreement completed. This arrangement has been operational for the past six-teen years 2004 - 2020. The current arrangement requires to be formalised in order to progress any potential future development proposals for public play provision at Dunamore.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Council are in receipt of a valuation from NIHE of £1,000 in relation to the parcel of land at Conway Close, Dunamore.
3.2	Approval is sought to purchase the Freehold of the land valued at £1,000 from Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) as out lined in Red (Appendix).
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial: One off payment £1,000 subject to contract. Both parties to bear their own legal costs.</p> <p>Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support.</p>

<b>4.2</b>	<b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b>  In line with Council policy and procedures
<b>4.3</b>	<b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b>  In line with Council policy and procedures
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Recommendation(s)</u></b>
5.1	Members approval to accept the valuation from NIHE of £1,000 to purchase the Freehold of the parcel of land at Conway Close, Dunamore.
5.2	Members approval is sought to purchase the Freehold of the land valued at £1,000 from Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) as out lined in Red (Appendix). Endorsement is sought to present Lease Agreements and associated LPS valuations on receipt, for P&R Committee approval.
<b>6.0</b>	<b><u>Documents Attached &amp; References</u></b>
6.1	Designated land at Conway Close, Dunamore location map (Appendix).
6.2	 <p>Conway Close Play Park, Dunamore Cookstown. Date of installation 2004</p>

FAO: Mr Nigel Hill  
Mid Ulster Council  
Cookstown Office  
Burn Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 8DT

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Our Ref: LE/7/3892

Dear Nigel,

**Re: Play Area at Conway Close, Cookstown**

With reference to the Council's application to purchase NIHE land I wish to inform you that the Executive is prepared, subject to Contract, to transfer the portion of land shown outlined red on the enclosed map.

The conditions of the transfer will be as follows:-

1. A premium of £1,000 based on the advice of the District Valuer of the Department of Finance and Personnel will be charged.
2. From the commencement of the transfer, all undeveloped land shall be kept in clean and tidy condition and all grass, hedges etc. shall be maintained in good order.
3. The transferee will obtain the necessary planning and Bye Law approvals in respect of the proposed use of the site and in respect of any building, fencing and screening to be constructed thereon.
4. No nuisance will be permitted to arise or continue upon the demised premises.
5. Each side will bear its own legal costs.
6. The consideration monies will be paid by guaranteed cheque or Bank Draft in favour of 'Northern Ireland Housing Executive'.

It is, of course, understood that a formal transfer will be prepared and that this will include such additional Clauses as are appropriate. I shall be pleased if you will confirm that the above conditions are acceptable to the Council and at the same time advise the name and address of the solicitor who will act on the Council's behalf.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "C. Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Clare Fitzpatrick**  
**Place Shaping South**

NIHE TO: MID Ulster Council

N.I.H.E.  
Place Shaping South  
Marlborough House  
Central Way  
CRAIGAVON  
BT64 1AD



ADDRESS: Conway Close  
Cookstown  
Co Tryone

REF. NO: LE/7/3892



ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP NO: I.G. 10715SW

APPROXIMATE SCALE: 1:1,250

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR CLIENT(S) IS/ARE SATISFIED THAT THE BOUNDARY AS  
OUTLINED IN RED ON THE MAPS ATTACHED IS CORRECT



<b>Report on</b>	DAERA: Environmental Challenge Fund 2020/2021
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<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 seek Council approval to accept Funding Offer from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs: Environment Challenge Competition 2020/21 successful application for the redevelopment of Ballyronan Wood.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Ballyronan Marina & Caravan Park is due to undergo extensive refurbishment this year. This has been made possible from funding secured from Rural Development Programme. These refurbishments will provide significant improvements to visitor reception and existing children's play facilities, public trails and walkways, vehicular access entrance and car parking on the site. The introduction of floating houseboat accommodation units and improvements to existing jetties and slipways will form part of the proposed refurbishment works at Ballyronan marina.
2.2	Further to this development there has been a requirement to develop Ballyronan Wood within the site. The woodland walk was first created in the early 1980s and since there has undergone minor repairs. The woodland walk is prone to seasonal closures due to flooding, given its close proximity to the Lough.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	In July 2020 an application was made to DAERA: Environment Challenge Competition 2020/21 to redevelop the woodland within Ballyronan as a quality off road multi-use 1km trail. The project plans has a long-term aim to link Ballyronan with Traad point, as land access and funding opportunities are identified.
3.2	Ballyronan Wood is Phase 1 in this long-term project. It is envisaged that at the start of the trail there will be an interpretation panel depicting the flora & fauna of the area. The trail will be way-marked, and eco-plastic boardwalk in sections where flooding is prevalent. The trail will have bench seating and art work throughout. The woodland will also contain bird and bat boxes.

3.3	The total cost of the project is £81,000.00. The application to DAREA has been successful and a letter of offer has been awarded to Council for £40,500. This is to cover 50% of the funding required to see the project to completion. The project must be completed by the 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021. The redevelopment of Ballyronan Wood will significantly enhance the current Ballyronan Development Project.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: DAERA: Environment Challenge Competition 2020/21 Secured funding £40,500 (50%) MUDC contribution £40,500 (Outdoor Recreation Strategy included in agreed capital programme)
	Human: Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members approval is sought to accept the DAERA Environmental Challenge Fund 2020/2021 funding opportunity as per the Letter of Offer.
5.2	That Council approve the allocation of match funding £40,500 to the Ballyronan Wood redevelopment from the Councils Outdoor Recreation Five year Strategic Plan capital programme allocation.
5.3	Members approval is sought for the appointment of suitably qualified ICT and IST for the delivery of associated consultancy and contract works services.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	DAERA Environmental Challenge Fund 2020/2021 funding opportunity as per the Letter of Offer.



**Applicant - by e-mail only**  
[anne.reid@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:anne.reid@midulstercouncil.org)

Our Ref: EFCC2020/44

Direct Tel: 07780 760910

29 October 2020

Dear Anne

**Re: Environmental Challenge Competition 2020/21 - Letter of Offer**

**Project: Ballyronan Wood**

**Project Code: EFCC2020/44**

**Grant offer: £40,500 @ 50% of eligible expenditure for:-**

**Redevelopment of the woodland within Ballyronan as a quality off road multi-use 1km trail. To link Ballyronan with Traad point. Installation of an interpretation panel depicting the flora & fauna of the area. Way-marking and bench seating and bird and bat boxes.**

I am pleased to inform you that your application to the Environmental Challenge Competition 2020/21 has been successful and you may commence your project with immediate effect. The Department is offering the level of grant set out above, subject to the Terms and Conditions that are contained in this letter of offer.

**Definition of Words and Expressions of Words used in this document**

“The Applicant” applies to the organisation listed in the letter of offer.

“The Project” means the Project as specified in the application for financial assistance under the provisions of DAERA grant aid and as approved by the Department.

“Financial Assistance” means the grant funding, or any part or parts thereof as the case may be, specified above.

**CONDITIONS OF OFFER**

The following is a list of the standard conditions of offer. Applicants who receive an offer of grant aid must adhere to the conditions listed. Project specific conditions may also be added.

## STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. **Appendix 1** issued with this letter of offer contains the grant claim form for electronic submission to the Department at [efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk) by **15 March 2021**. The grant award will not exceed the maximum amount allocated in this offer letter. If you wish the Department to consider re-profiling elements of the project costs set out in your application, you must submit this request as soon as possible to the Department for consideration prior to expenditure being committed.
2. The offer is a maximum for the agreed elements of work and will not be increased in the event of an increase in costs. The offer provides no guarantee of follow on funding for the same project once this offer expires.
3. The Department shall only provide financial assistance for eligible project expenditure incurred from the start date of the project.
4. The Department reserves the right to reduce or discontinue funding in the event that budgetary constraints arise or due to other unforeseen circumstances. Should the Department decide to reduce or discontinue funding, the Department will provide at least three months' notice.
5. The day to day management of the Project shall be the responsibility of the Applicant who will appoint a Project Manager to act as a contact point with the Department. The Department must be informed of the Project Manager before the project begins, if this is different than the Project Manager stated in the application.
6. All correspondence relating to this grant must also be sent to [efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk)
7. The Applicant must ensure that their constitution and other required information has been uploaded and is maintained up-to-date as required on the Government Funders Database (District Councils are exempt from this Condition).

8. This offer of financial assistance is not transferable to any other project or organisation without prior agreement of the Department.
9. This grant is being awarded on a no State Aid basis. However, if required to do so by a decision of the European Commission, the Department reserves the right to require that the Applicant repays any State Aid that the Commission deems to be incompatible. The following clauses in relation to State Aid may apply:

**De minimis clause:**

This grant is being awarded under the auspices of Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 (the de minimis Regulation) which entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 and will continue to apply until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. This grant is being awarded on the understanding that this grant will not result in a breach of the €200,000 de minimis aid ceiling. However, if required to do so by a decision of the European Commission, the Department reserves the right to require that the Applicant repays any State aid that the Commission deems to be incompatible.

**GBER clause:**

This grant is being awarded under the auspices of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 (the General Block Exemption Regulation) which deems certain categories of State aid compatible with the internal market.

### **Procurement and Tendering**

10. The Applicant shall implement the procurement procedures as set out in the table below. The actions related in the table should be implemented by the Applicant based on the estimated value (excl. VAT) of each contract at pre-tender stage. Procurement decisions must demonstrate best value for money and the Applicant must keep records, which support its decisions.

<b>Estimated Value</b>	<b>Tender Action Required</b>
<b>Up to £5,000</b>	2 Oral quotations – with fax or email confirmation. Every attempt should be made to obtain more than one quotation.
<b>£5,001 - £30,000</b>	4 Selected Tenders
<b>&gt;£ 30,000 &lt; EU thresholds</b>	Contact Grant Team for detailed requirements

It may not always be possible to obtain the required number of quotations, although reasonable effort to do so must be demonstrated. For procurements over £5,000 where only one supplier is available Departmental approval for the procurement must be obtained in advance.

11. The Department shall be notified of the outcome of tendering exercises connected with the Project (above a threshold of £5,000). The Applicant shall forward copies of tender appraisal summary sheets relating to the evaluation and selection of tenders. A contract may only be awarded following appropriate competition. The Applicant shall comply with and, in the letting of any contract, implement the provisions of all enactments, regulations, statutory provisions and working rules related to legislation as it pertains in Northern Ireland, including that related to equal opportunities, fair employment, environmental protection and health and safety.
12. Organisations that are not financed or supervised by public sector bodies and commercial organisations in the private sector may not be covered by the European Union procurement rules but are nonetheless expected to use fair and open practices including competitive tendering when letting contracts.

### **Changes in the Project**

13. The grant shall only be used for the purposes of the project as defined in your Grant Application and approved for financial assistance by the Department under the terms and conditions detailed in this Letter of Offer.
14. Any proposed or anticipated changes over the lifetime of the project must be notified in writing at an early stage to the Department. Continuation of financial assistance will be subject to the written approval of the Department and formal amendment to this Letter of Offer, if required.
15. Failure to inform the Department of any changes may result in the termination of the grant and the Department may require the Applicant to repay any grant paid. Examples of significant changes, which must be notified and approved, include:
  - i. Change to the start or end date of the project;
  - ii. Change to the content of the project from that set out in the original approved application, for example changing the scope, delivery or aim;
  - iii. Change to the estimated expenditure or revenue; claims for extra items of expenditure.

The above list is not exhaustive and you must contact the Department if any doubt exists as to the need to report proposed changes.

### **Change in Funding**

16. The Applicant shall notify the Department in writing of any change in the source(s) or the amount(s) of funding from those listed in their grant application form. The Department shall be entitled to review and, if necessary, amend or withdraw this offer of Financial Assistance as a consequence of any such change.

### **Withdrawal of Grant/Withholding Payment**

17. The Department reserves the right to suspend, defer or withhold or clawback any payments and/or require the Applicant to repay part or all of the financial assistance if:
- i. The conditions of this offer are not met; or
  - ii. Any information given to the Department on behalf of the Applicant in connection with the application or claim for financial assistance is found to be false or misleading or there has been a failure to disclose any material fact which would have had a bearing on the Department's consideration of the application; or
  - iii. There is a substantial or material change in the nature, scale or timing of the project; if the project is used for purposes other than those specified in the application; if there is unsatisfactory progress towards completion of the project or if the project has in any other way not been implemented in accordance with these conditions of offer; or
  - iv. Any outcomes, such as pathway creation or extension, are not sustained and maintained after the funding period for a minimum of 3 years; or
  - v. Any environmental damage is caused as a result of the delivery of the project.
  - vi. The Applicant shall not, without the prior written consent of the Department, appropriate any land or any part of it for purposes other than nature conservation or passive recreational enjoyment or sell, lease or otherwise dispose of it, or any part of it, but shall if so required by the Department pay to the Department either:

- I a sum equal to the amount of grant paid to the Applicant; or
- II. (a) in the case of an appropriation, % of an amount equal to the prevailing market value of the land, such value to be determined by the District Valuer;
- (b) In the case of the sale, lease or other disposal % of the proceeds of such sale, lease or other disposal; whichever of I and II shall be the greater.
- vii. Any sum repayable to the Department under this condition shall be recoverable from the Applicant by the Department as a debt due to it.

### **Political Uses**

18. No aspect of the Project being funded shall be party political in intention, use or presentation; or be likely to be perceived as discriminatory on grounds of religion, colour, race, gender or disability.

### **Indemnity and Insurance**

19. The Applicant shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Department against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands and liabilities howsoever arising out of or resulting from the implementation of the Project.
20. The Applicant shall maintain such insurances as are necessary to cover all possible liabilities and will ensure that adequate appropriate insurance is obtained for any asset purchased and is maintained in force during its lifetime, and shall arrange to have the interest of the Department noted thereon. The Applicant should ensure it has appropriate employee liability insurance if applicable. The need for insurance cover should be fully justified and fully recorded. Satisfactory written evidence that all such insurance cover has been affected shall be supplied to the Department as and when required by the Department.

### **Statutory Approvals**

21. The Applicant must comply with the provisions of all enactments, statutory provisions and other laws operating in Northern Ireland including, but not only, those relating to planning, nature conservation, animal welfare, access, equal opportunities, fair employment and health and safety. European law, where applicable, must also be followed.

22. The Applicant shall obtain all necessary statutory and other approvals to the carrying out of the proposed work in connection with the Project in advance of carrying out any works for which they are required.
23. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining and complying with statutory approvals in advance of the conduct of any activities in designated sites

### **Project Inspection**

24. Projects delivered under this fund will be subject to a site inspection. At these inspections all details of expenditure incurred on the project should be made available to the official from the Department. The purpose of these inspections will be to establish that projects:
- accord with the description made in the project application;
  - are implemented with appropriate financial control;
  - receive financial assistance in accordance with documented eligible expenditure; and
  - deliver what they set out to do.
25. The Department and its agents, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, and accountable Departments and their agents, shall have the right to:
- i. Inspect the Project at any time; and
  - ii. Require such further information to be supplied as they think fit and to be provided with such documents or items as they shall require.
26. Without prejudice to the foregoing generality, the Applicant must keep and make available on request financial records relating to the project.

### **Provision of Information**

27. The Applicant shall comply within 7 days with any requests by or on behalf of the Department for financial or other information concerning the progress, administration, monitoring and evaluation of the project.
28. The Applicant shall on request by the Department, provide all information necessary to monitor the rate of implementation of the Project and to assess its effect in relation to its objectives.
29. The Applicant must meet the data standards and format required by the Department. In relation to spatial GIS data, the Applicant must make available



spatial data and associated metadata in an agreed consistent format, within the scope of EU INSPIRE Directive (2007). Full details of the EU INSPIRE Directive can be found at <http://inspire.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.cfm>.

26. There may be significant data produced as a result of the project, therefore the Applicant must have agreed a Data Sharing Agreement with the Department in 2019/20 and submitted data as detailed in the agreement. The Data Sharing Agreement will outline, *inter alia*, the intent of data sharing, data formats, data standards, those involved and the timing of delivery. The agreement includes the requirement for the Applicant to ensure that all relevant biological records collected are issued to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), and are clearly attributable to the Environment Fund. Data must be in digital formats agreed with the relevant DAERA data management teams.
30. In instances where a project defines a site specific action, such as a habitat management action plan or a route/access management plan, the Applicant is required to provide accurate digital mapping information in a GIS format, such as an ESRI shapefile. The exact mapping requirement must be agreed with the Department.

### **Retention of Documents**

31. The Applicant must retain all original documents relating to the implementation of the project and its financing for 7 years after the date of the project claim. The Department may periodically carry out grant verification visits to view the accounts for this project and verify original invoices and other records at this time. These visits will be carried out at a time and venue agreed by both parties. If, however, the contract under this Letter of Offer is terminated or closed for any reason or the Applicant ceases, either voluntarily or for any other reason, to carry on its business, then the full documentation associated with the Project shall be returned to the Department. In no circumstances should any documentation be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without the written permission of the Department.

### **Publications and Promotions**

32. The following conditions apply in regard to publications and promotions:
- i. The Department reserves the right to publish details of the project and financial assistance referred to in the Letter of Offer at any time.





- ii. Drafts of any materials to be printed or published (in paper, signage or web format) must be approved by the Department.
- iii. The funding role of the Department must be acknowledged on any promotional or interpretative material or signage associated with this project. The Department's logos must be used and are available on request from the DAERA Graphic Design Unit ([graphic.design@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:graphic.design@daera-ni.gov.uk)). The Applicant must seek approval and obtain the correct logo(s) and user guidelines, by contacting the Department, each time the logos are to be used.
- iv. The Applicant must notify the Department of any significant promotion or celebration of this project, where practicable, at least 2 months in advance of the event and co-ordinate publicity with the Department if requested to do so. The Department's support must be recognised when the project is promoted.
- v. Electronic copies, where available, or three complimentary copies of publications should be sent to the Department within 1 month of publication.
- vi. The Department requires shared ownership of all data produced. The Department reserves the right to use and publish any information collected, collated and produced through the Department's financial support of this project.
- vii. To ensure the long term availability and sustainability of data information products, in the event of the Applicant ceasing to exist; ceasing to maintain information or data which was funded by the department; or transferring responsibility for this project, the Department has the right to agree with any co-funders and take ownership of the information/data gathered or created during this project. Any additional payment would only be based on the cost of transferring the information. Data information products may include:
  - Databases and or data collected, both in the raw format and incorporated into reports;
  - GIS data and information;
  - Photographs;
  - Research and reports; and
  - Domain names.

33. DAERA must receive any information related to outdoor recreation product development including all maps, GIS information and text used for leaflets developed through this grant. Any information must also be sent to Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland to add to WalkNI.com and associated websites if relevant - [info@outdoorrecreationni.com](mailto:info@outdoorrecreationni.com).

### **Financial Management Systems**

34. The Applicant shall maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting codification of all transactions relating to this offer of financial assistance. The financial management system, established by the Applicant must demonstrate effective controls and present clear audit trails of all transactions of project expenditure.
35. If you find you cannot spend your grant within the timescale, or if there is an under spend, you are required to inform the Department as soon as possible so that the funds can be reallocated to another project.

### **Assignment**

36. The Applicant shall not, without the written consent of the Department, assign or in any way encumber any rights to receive financial assistance or other benefit or entitlement under this letter. The Applicant shall not without the prior written consent of the Department transfer any of its rights or obligations under this letter.

### **Employment of Staff**

37. The Applicant shall comply with the requirements of all EC Directives and legislation as amended from time to time in force relating to working conditions, health and safety at work etc. The Applicant shall comply with the requirements of the Sex Discrimination (NI) Orders 1976 and 1988, the Fair Employment (NI) Acts 1976 and 1989, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as modified by Schedule 8), the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, and any enactment amending, extending or replacing the same. Projects shall also demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Section 43 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989 provides that a Department may refuse to award financial assistance to any person unqualified under this Act. Where the Department has given or agreed to give assistance to any such unqualified person, it may refuse or cease to make any payments to the individual in pursuance of the assistance.

38. The Applicant is responsible for the legal implications of employing staff associated with delivery of the project, including those on short-term or fixed term contracts. In the event of the project terminating early, for whatever reason, the Applicant, and not the Department, will be responsible for any redundancy or contractual obligations.
39. The Applicant has the responsibility of meeting its own contractual obligations regarding salaries. In our award of grant aid, however, the Department will implement the same level of pay restraint as is implemented for the Public Sector. There will be no increase in the total level of grant aid offered.
40. Within one month of a post being filled, the Applicant must inform the Department of the post holder's name, start date and salary.
41. The Department must be notified immediately when any post funded under this grant becomes vacant for example sickness/maternity leave. Funding may cease if the agreed objectives and targets cannot be met as a result of staff absences.

### **Data Protection Legislation**

42. The Applicant is responsible for ensuring that information on applications for grant assistance is stored on computer and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. We will not retain any personal information that you may submit with a grant claim such as payslips, P11s etc.

### **Fraud**

43. The Applicant is required to act at all times with honesty and integrity and to safeguard the resources for which it is responsible. Effective controls must be developed and maintained to mitigate the risk of fraud occurring; and should it occur, to ensure that it will be detected promptly and appropriate disciplinary / legal action taken. In the event of the discovery of any acts of fraud the Department must be informed immediately.

### **Retention of Assets**

44. Fixed infrastructure assets which are financed or part-financed under this letter of offer must be retained in the ownership of the Applicant for a minimum period of 10 years. Other Project Assets which are similarly assisted must be

retained for periods which reflect their economic life.

### **Inventory of Assets**

45. The Applicant must establish and maintain an inventory of all fixed assets acquired, built, or improved wholly or partly using the financial assistance provided under this Letter of Offer, whether owned by the Applicant or third parties. An asset is defined as an item which will be used by the organisation for a period of more than 12 months (e.g. land, buildings, equipment, IT equipment) and which is not intended to be sold before the end of its useful life.

Assets below £500 can be excluded. The inventory should show the following:

- i. date of purchase;
- ii. Description of asset;
- iii. Price paid net recoverable VAT;
- iv. Location of the title deeds;
- v. Serial or identification numbers;
- vi. Location of the asset;
- vii. Date of disposal; and
- viii. Sale of proceeds net of VAT.

### **Disposal or Vesting of Assets**

46. The Applicant shall inform the Department of any proposal to sell, transfer or otherwise dispose of any Project Asset or if it is to be vested. If the Applicant considers disposal of any interest in or assets associated with the Project any such disposal shall be on terms and in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department. If a Project Asset is sold, transferred, vested or otherwise disposed of or ceases to be used for the purpose stated in the grant application form or if the Applicant ceases, either voluntarily or for any other reason, to carry on its business, the Department shall be entitled to require the Applicant to repay to the Department the payment of financial assistance made under this letter of offer or such lesser amount as the Department at its discretion may determine.

### **Default**

47. If the Applicant:

- i. Is in breach of any of its obligations under the Letter of Offer or these terms and conditions;
- ii. Fails to repay to the Department any sum due by it whether under these terms and conditions or otherwise;
- iii. Is for any reason no longer able to implement the Project;
- iv. Ceases to carry out its business;
- v. Is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of Article 103 of the Insolvency (NI) Order 1989;

then in any such event the Department may suspend or terminate the agreement made between the Department and the Applicant by the Letter of Offer and its acceptance and the Department shall be entitled to require the Applicant to repay to the Department the payment of financial assistance in relation to the project, or such lesser amount as the Department at its discretion may determine.

### **Post Project Reporting**

48. A final report including the outcomes of the project must be submitted to the Department within 1 month of the end of the project. The report must clearly describe quantitative progress in relation to the agreed project outcomes and targets set out in the application and also include:

- i. Digital photographs illustrating the achievements of the project and promotion events.
- ii. A map (or GIS layer) showing the location and extent of project work undertaken as a result of this funding.

### **Claims for Financial Assistance and Payments**

49. Financial assistance will only be paid in respect of actual eligible costs and provided that the outcomes stated in your application, and any agreed amendments, have been achieved. If outcomes have not been achieved, financial assistance may be reduced.

50. The claim must contain a detailed breakdown of costs and full evidence of expenditure incurred. This must take the form of receipted invoices or copy bank/BACS statements with the appropriate payments highlighted. A Claim Form is provided at **Appendix 1**. It may be possible to have all the documentary evidence for the project expenditure verified by way of a visit,

particularly for projects that involve a large amount of paperwork for evidence of expenditure. The Department may request this option for your project or, if you feel that your organisation might benefit from this option, please contact the Department.

51. The Applicant must disclose details of any other financial assistance or match funding (for example in the form of grant, payment for services, loan or gift, from whatever source, public or private) towards eligible project costs as these could affect the financial assistance offered in your Letter of Offer.
52. The Applicant must submit details of any other funding provided by the Department or any other body towards this project within one month of confirmation of the funding.
53. Where the Department provides support towards more than 1 post holder (including line management and support services time), a list of all of the staff supported across the organisation by the Department must be provided with the claim. This must identify the amount of support from the Department and detail the other financial assistance towards these posts.
54. All staff time must be vouched by timesheets demonstrating rates per hour supported by numbers of hours spent on the project. **Payment from this grant can only cover additional hours that are dedicated actively and specifically to this project, and that work must not overlap with other funding for these staff from any other source.**

## CONDITIONS SPECIFIC TO YOUR PROJECT

55. This offer is based on the standard Terms and Conditions contained in this letter and the following condition(s) specific to your project:-
56. Applicants must have spent sufficient monies to enable the full amount of funding offered to be claimed before the end of the 2020/21 Financial Year. Match funding may be committed after the end of March 2021, provided the full amount of the offer is spent before the end of March 2021.
57. For the purpose of information sharing policies, the data in this project (mapping and species data, except where this would contravene legislation such as that regarding privacy and sensitive protected species information) must be made freely available in order to develop and enhance a culture of digital capability. Fund recipients must provide the data on Open Data NI ([opendatani.gov.uk](http://opendatani.gov.uk)) which provides a framework to facilitate easy publication and access to Northern Ireland public sector

data for both reuse and redistribution. All data shared will be in accordance to the Open Government License for public sector information, information for which can be found at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

58. Current Position figures must be reported bi-annually for Q26 Statistical Reporting (from the Application Form) for 3 years following completion of the funding.
59. In awarding this grant DAERA, under the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002, permits that as an owner/occupier<sup>1</sup> of the protected site(s) named in the application form, or as a public body, you may carry out, cause or permit to be carried out, the operations(s) specified in the manner prescribed and outlined in your grant application and supplementary information.  
  
<sup>1</sup> You must have written permission of the owner.
60. You are required, however, to give additional written notice to the DAERA NED Grant Team if you propose to amend, or carry out additional operations, which are not yet permitted, or where the period identified in the proposal for the operation to take place has expired. Permission must be received prior to any works being carried out. Where any operations also require permission from a local planning or other regulatory authority, separate to a permission under the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002, you must ensure these permissions are obtained before any operations take place.
61. The Applicant is responsible for obtaining and complying with all other necessary statutory approvals, including those relating to planning permission in advance of carrying out any works for which they are required.
62. The applicant must demonstrate that the entire project falls under permitted development.
63. A Management plan for Himalayan balsam and other IAS must be provided, which may be present for the site. To include biosecurity plan for works to ensure machinery does not result in further spread off site.
64. No trees are to be removed for the creation of the walk - Reason: To prevent destruction of the wet woodland habitat feature of the ASSI.
65. All works to be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season - Reason: To prevent disturbance of any nesting birds.

## **ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER**

If the Applicant is prepared to accept the foregoing offer on the terms and conditions



stated, you must sign and return the attached Grant Acceptance Form attached at **Appendix 2**, by return e-mail by **29/11/2020**. This must be signed by 2 authorised representatives. You must also complete and return the Bank Details Form attached at **Appendix 3** along with the Grant Acceptance Form.

If you have any questions contact the Grant Team by email on [Efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



**Helen Anderson**  
**Director of Natural Environment Division**  
**Klondyke Building**  
**Gasworks Business Park**  
**Cromac Avenue**  
**Malone Lower**  
**Belfast**  
**BT7 2JA**

Cc [efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:efgrants@daera-ni.gov.uk)



<b>Report on</b>	Financial assistance offer from TNI for a new tourism website  Development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA)
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Mary McKeown

<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 seek approval from members to avail of 100% financial assistance from Tourism NI for a dedicated Mid Ulster Council tourism website and to seek permission to avail of 75% funding from The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the development of experience tourism and product development clusters to align to the Tourism NI 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' brand.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Tourism Northern Ireland contacted the local authority in each council area to offer 100% financial assistance for the development of a new destination tourism website.
2.2	Tourism NI's long-term aspiration is for a collaborative and synchronized online presentation of Northern Ireland tourism across the regions; an approach that puts the visitor first. Tourism NI are now in contract with a Destination Management System provider (Simpleview) and this contract includes the rollout of the DMS to their strategic partners.
2.3	As part of the Tourism NI Covid Recovery Plan, Tourism NI wish to support local authorities with a strategic investment which benefits the wider tourism sector, by offering financial assistance of £41,886 per partner for tourism websites.
2.4	Recently the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) announced a funding opportunity to support Tourism Recovery in the District. This funding is an Experience Development Programme aimed at supporting the development of experience tourism and product development clusters.
2.5	DEARA has made a call for applications from Councils across NI for projects with a maximum fund of £50k available to each Council. The indicative project funding rate is 75% and consideration is being given to Council in-kind costs being eligible.
2.6	Within the Tourism departments 2020/21 Service improvement plan it states that the tourism department would: -

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased the Mid Ulster tourism visitor's digital presence and increase the visitor's interactive immersive experience.</li> <li>2. To develop at least two new visitor experiences under the Tourism NI 'Embrace a Giant Sprit' brand with a specific focus developing the heritage pillar and Lough Neagh as outlined in the Mid Ulster Councils tourism strategy.</li> </ol>																
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>																
3.1	<p><u>Mid Ulster Council Destination Website</u></p> <p>As part of the Tourism NI Covid Recovery Plan, Tourism NI wish to support local authorities with a strategic investment which benefits the wider tourism sector, by offering financial assistance of £41,886 per partner for tourism websites. The first two years will have no cost to council but will incur annually costs of £11,305 +vat.</p>																
3.2	<p>Proposed Running costs</p> <p>Table 1 Annual Costs from year three onwards</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>DMS Licence x5</b></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Website Licence, Support and Bandwidth (up to 30GB)</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>SSL Certificate</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Blog Main Site</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Event Submission and Approval Module - Enhanced</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Trip Advisor Widget – Accommodation + 1 other product</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Live Availability from OTA's (polling) and PMS</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Total annual costs -</b></td><td><b>£11,305 + VAT</b></td></tr> </table>	<b>DMS Licence x5</b>		Website Licence, Support and Bandwidth (up to 30GB)		SSL Certificate		Blog Main Site		Event Submission and Approval Module - Enhanced		Trip Advisor Widget – Accommodation + 1 other product		Live Availability from OTA's (polling) and PMS		<b>Total annual costs -</b>	<b>£11,305 + VAT</b>
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3.3	<p>Table 2 Funding Streams Analysis</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>TNI Funding for Year 1 and Year 2</td><td><b>£41,886</b></td></tr> <tr> <td>MUDC year three</td><td><b>£11,305 +Vat</b></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	TNI Funding for Year 1 and Year 2	<b>£41,886</b>	MUDC year three	<b>£11,305 +Vat</b>												
TNI Funding for Year 1 and Year 2	<b>£41,886</b>																
MUDC year three	<b>£11,305 +Vat</b>																
3.4	<p><u>Tourism Experience Cluster Product Development</u></p> <p>The development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA) fund is intended to support rural businesses centred on a theme or cluster. The theme can be activity based, a key market segment or a geographical area. DAERA launched the scheme on 2nd Oct 2020, with applications being submitted no later than 21st October 2020. Councils will have approximately 18 months for delivery through to 31st March 2022 with the potential for match funding to be split across two financial years. The funding is entirely for revenue expenditure to be spent on services such as marketing, promotion, print and facilitation.</p>																

3.5	<p>Officers are exploring the option to partner with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council on a collaborative project for greater impact specifically focusing on Lough Neagh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Loughs: The promotion of activities and experiences centred around Lough Neagh.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>Secondly the officers are proposing to develop experiences with a very clear focus on the Councils rich History and Heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid Ulster's history and heritage: A series of trails and self-service itinerary of unique sites and attractions across the area under this theme utilising such sites and attractions as Hill of the O'Neill and Tullaghoge Fort.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>Based on the proposed approach to administer the funding the minimum project budget is £66,666 per Council with 75% grant and a match funding contribution and / or in-kind contribution at a value of £16,666 (25%) with a proposed even allocation of £33,333 to each thematic experience.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial: No financial assistance required until year three annual charges £11,305 thereafter for the Tourism Website</p> <p>Match funding contribution for Development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA) £16,666.</p> <p>Human: Current staff structure sufficient to manage the project.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>The project will be managed in accordance with MUDC policies and procedures.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	<p>Approval is sought to progress with the development of a new destination tourism website.</p>
5.2	<p>If successful Council development two experiential tourism and product development clusters with a maximum match funding contribution of £16,666. Opportunities to develop a collaborative project with Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey under the themes of 'Living Loughs' and 'Mid Ulster's history and heritage'.</p>

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	N/A

<b>Report on</b>	Community Development
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Claire Linney, Head of Community Development
<b>Contact Officers</b>	Philip Clarke - Community Services Manager, Oliver Morgan – Good Relations Manager, Michael McCrory - PCSP Manager

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Grants – to agree the rolling good relations grants & Decade of Anniversaries Grant
1.2	Peace IV – to agree the Peace IV Proposal
1.3	Community Development – to note the update report
2.0	Background
2.1	Community Grants – Council annually delivers two rolling community grants programmes; Good Relations and Local Community Festivals. Local Community Festivals is on hold due to Covid 19. Good Relations grants are to continue, where possible, using innovative methods of delivery. Decade of Anniversaries is a rolling programme funded through Good Relations.
2.2	Peace IV – Council delivers on the Peace IV Action Plan through guidance and engagement with the Peace IV Partnership.
2.3	Community Development includes the following areas: Community Support, Good Relations, PCSP, Connecting Pomeroy and facilitation of Community Planning.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Grants - Rolling Good Relations – 2 applications are recommended for award totalling £1,629 Decade of Anniversaries – 1 application recommended for award totalling £625 - <b>Please refer to Appendix 1.</b>
3.2.	<b>Peace IV</b>  At the last Peace IV Partnership, officers were asked to consider potential projects that could address some of the under spend in the programme, which arose due to

3.3	<p>grants not progressing. Through liaison with SEUPB an expression of interest for potential funding underspend was required by 31<sup>st</sup> October. The Creative Outdoor Spaces project for our main towns has been submitted for consideration. As developed and previously updated by Economic Development -</p> <p>Dungannon – civic space in front of Hill of The O'Neill and Ranfurly House</p> <p>Cookstown – civic space at the side of Burnavon Arts Theatre</p> <p>Magherafelt – civic space in the Diamond linked to the two alleyways</p> <p>Coalisland – civic space beside the Canal Tow Path.</p> <p>(provision of outdoor seating and tables, canopies, heating, planting, PA/Tannoy)</p> <p>Approval is required to seek funding from Peace IV underspend for delivery of the projects. The project will also go to the next Peace IV Partnership. The total project cost is £377,438 and the confirmed underspend currently is £330,000. Final underspend will be known following the tender for the shared space projects.</p> <p><b>Community Development</b></p> <p>Community Support – The Community Support team is supporting groups both to access funding and to maximise Council grant awards.</p> <p>Good Relations – Good Relations continues to deliver the updated Plan through innovative and flexible models in line with social distancing requirements.</p> <p>The teams are continuing to support in the development and delivery of Mid Ulster poverty initiatives.</p> <p>The PCSP team has commenced delivery of the action plan in alternative formats as agreed by DOJ and NIPB.</p> <p>All of the partnership meetings are continuing via Zoom to accommodate members and external partners.</p>
4.0	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Good Relations awards £1,629 Decade of Anniversaries £629</p> <p><b><u>Professional Support</u></b> None</p>
4.2	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b> None</p>
4.3	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b> None</p>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Grants - To agree the grant award recommendation for Good Relations & Decade of Anniversaries
5.2	Peace IV – To agree the Peace IV Proposal
5.3	Community Development – to note the update report
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 Grant Award Recommendations

## Appendix 1

### Good Relations November 2020 (Maximum £1,200)

No	Organisation Name	Organisation Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Requested	Awarded
1	Donaghmore Horticultural Society	Community	Winter in Bloom	3	£1,200	£960.00
2	St John's Church of Ireland, Moneymore	Community	Drive in Carols	1	£669	£669.00
						<b>£1,629.00</b>

### Decade of Anniversaries November 2020 (50% Grant to a Maximum of £2,000)

#### Decade of Anniversaries Grant-

No	Organisation Name	Organisation Aim	Title Of Event/project	Band	Requested	Awarded
1	Desertcreatives	Community	Christmas in Dark Places	1	£625.00	£625.00
						<b>£625.00</b>

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



<b>Report on</b>	1) TEDx (Cookstown) Event 2020 2) Women in Business – Yes You Can Programme - Year 3 3) DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 4) LEADER Contract Variations 5) ICBAN Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

<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 provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>TEDx (Cookstown) Event 2020</b>  At the Development Committee on 12 March 2020, Members recommended to Council to approve to Gold Level sponsorship of £2,000 towards the event which had been scheduled for June 2020. However, due to Covid, the event will now take place virtually (but filmed in the Tullylagan Hotel) on 27 November 2020. It is the first time that a TEDx event will take place in Mid Ulster.</p>
2.2	<p><b>Women in Business 'Yes You Can' Collaboration Programme – Year 3</b>  In March 2018, Council approved a proposal from Women in Business to all 11 Councils for the delivery of a three-year collaborative regional programme entitled 'Yes You Can' between Women in Business, Invest NI and the 11 Councils to increase and support levels of female entrepreneurship. The initiative is a collaboration resulting from a unique situation: An American entrepreneur originally from NI, impressed with the efforts of Women in Business to encourage new female entrepreneurs, made a financial commitment (£200,000) towards the development of other support initiatives, the 11 Councils and Invest NI are each contributing £200,000 (Mid Ulster District Council's contribution is approximately £6,060 for each of the 3 years). Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council are acting as Lead Council on behalf of the 11 Councils.</p>
2.3	<p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b>  The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is funded by DAERA through the TRPSI (Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation) Programme. It focuses on existing rural micro businesses employing less than 10 employees, offering 50% in</p>

	<p>grant aid against eligible costs up to £4,999 to support actions aimed at improving business sustainability and growth.</p> <p>The Scheme opened for applications on 3rd August 2020 and closed on 11th September 2020 at 12 noon. A total of 315 complete applications were received by the closing date. A further 15 were received after the closing deadline and deemed ineligible.</p> <p>The value of applications received far exceeds the level of grant aid allocated to Mid Ulster District Council of £62,000. DAERA has indicated but not confirmed that additional funding may be provided following completion of assessments.</p> <p>The Contract for delivery of this Scheme sets out specific progress milestones with 30th November 2020 identified as the date by which applications are to be assessed and letters of offer issued to successful applicants.</p>
2.4	<p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b></p> <p>The governance framework for delivery of the current Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 by Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership (the LAG) includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Contract between Council and the LAG for administration support provided by Council; and</li> <li>2. A Service Level Agreement between DAERA and Council outlining the administration services to be provided by Council to the LAG.</li> </ol> <p>Both the contract and SLA are due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.</p>
2.5	<p><b>ICBAN Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027</b></p> <p>The <i>Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021/2027</i> (FRP) is a strategic initiative for the advancement of our regional economy. This is motivated by, and seeks to give effect to, ICBAN's Vision of a region <i>with a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy</i>, that will be strengthened and sustained through a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising our environmental assets respectfully and responsibly;</li> <li>• Encouraging investment in value-added industries and promoting innovation;</li> <li>• Enhancing quality of life;</li> <li>• Embracing new technologies and enhancing remote working; and</li> <li>• Promoting our strengths in tourism.</li> </ul> <p>The new Framework document builds on the earlier 2013 'Regional Strategic Framework' and is complementary with all key local, regional and national strategies and plans.</p>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>TEDx Cookstown Event</b></p> <p>Claire O'Hanlon (TEDxCookstown licensee and curator) is the organiser. The event will be on 27 November 2020 and will be a live event that will run over 2 sessions. It will be held virtually and speakers will include people from a wide range of backgrounds with varied talk ideas as per TED guidelines (5 of whom are from Mid Ulster).</p> <p>The event will be hosted by Denise Murtagh, with a welcome from the Council Chair, and speakers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gary Doherty - Curator of TEDx Derry/Londonderry &amp; founder of THINK Network</li> <li>• Leeann Monk-Ozgul - Co-founder of Elemental Software</li> <li>• Stephen Brown - Founder of Fire walking International &amp; Compassionate Enquiry Practitioner</li> <li>• Claire Hackett - Doula and maternal rights &amp; support advocate</li> <li>• Jill Robb - Owner of Origin Digital</li> <li>• Philip Bain - Owner of ShredBank</li> <li>• Dr. Shane McKee - Geneticist &amp; NI lead on the 100,000 genomes project</li> <li>• Michaela Hollywood - Disability advocate</li> <li>• David Gibson OBE - Entrepreneurship education</li> <li>• Claire Hughes - former bank manager and owner of Soiree Society</li> <li>• Deiric McCann - Head of International at Genos Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>• Johann Muldoon, MBE – Owner, Manor Architects.</li> </ul> <p>Four complimentary tickets have been allocated to Council as a Gold Level Sponsor. Since the event is running over 2 sessions ticket holders can attend 2 of the morning sessions and 2 in the afternoon or they can all attend the same session. The audience watching live is restricted (both physically or virtually) as per TEDx licensing rules. TEDx talks are all available after the event when the videos are posted on the TEDx YouTube channel.</p> <p>Due to the event occurring on 27 November 2020 (the day immediately after the Council meeting on 26 November), Members are requested to approve Delegated Authority to the Director of Business &amp; Communities/Chief Executive to manage the allocation of tickets in accordance with Council procedures.</p> <p><b>Women in Business 'Yes You Can' Collaboration Programme – Year 3</b></p> <p>Year 2 of the programme will complete in December 2020 and Women in Business will provide Council with an update on the second year's activity at that time. Due to Covid, Women in Business had to re-package the delivery of events to an online platform, and the programme did experience a decline in participant numbers from Year 1.</p>
3.2	

## **DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020**

### **3.3 Delivery timescales**

Indicative timescales for the roll out of this Scheme have been agreed with DAERA, which necessitates the completion of individual projects by successful applicants by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

To meet this timescale all of the participating Councils are working simultaneously to the key date of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 for completion of project assessment and the issue of letters of offer.

#### **Assessment arrangements**

Council staff will be responsible for the following:

- Opening the call for applications
- Initial eligibility checks
- Liaison with DAERA / Invest NI on applications received
- Assessment and scoring of eligible applications
- Preparation of letters of offer
- Collation of grant claims from successful project promoters for submission to DAERA for payment
- Post project evaluation on individual funded projects

Projects achieving a score of 65% and over will be awarded funding. In the event that the number of projects approved exceeds the budget available, funding will be awarded to the highest-ranking scores until the budget is exhausted.

An overall Post Project Evaluation at scheme level will be carried out to ascertain the achievement of scheme objectives and identify lessons learnt for future similar initiatives.

Mid Ulster District Council has received by far (along with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council) the highest intake of applications across all of the 11 Council areas participating in this scheme. Assessment of applications is well underway but due to the volume received, will not be complete in time to include in a list of approved projects for the November 2020 Development Committee papers.

### **3.4 LEADER Contract Variations**

DAERA has issued variations to both the Contract for administration support between Council and LAG and the SLA between Council and DAERA to extend the original term of both to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

These extensions are necessary to complete the delivery of the NI LEADER Programme. Signed variations are to be returned to DAERA by **30<sup>th</sup> November 2020**.

Copies of the correspondence from DAERA and Contract / SLA variations are included in Appendix 1.

3.5	<p><b>ICBAN Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027</b></p> <p>The key ambitions of ICBAN's Framework of Regional Priorities reflect the current and evolving challenges and opportunities at local, regional, national and international levels. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop as a sustainable region, characterised by increased employment, improved economic activity, social progress and ecological sustainability;</li> <li>• To redress economic and social inequalities between the Central Border Region and other areas of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the inequalities which persist within the region itself;</li> <li>• To influence and work with the Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland on their investment priorities for the region, by providing an evidence base to justify investments; and</li> <li>• To identify opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders to work together to realise opportunities and to respond to the challenges facing the region.</li> </ul> <p>The strategic priorities and deliverables detailed in the Framework are presented under five interlocking and complementary pillars namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic development;</li> <li>• Infrastructure and connectivity;</li> <li>• Human capital – education and training;</li> <li>• Liveable communities; and</li> <li>• Greening the region.</li> </ul> <p>ICBAN has expressed its thanks to Council Members who serve on ICBAN, and the Senior Officers Team, comprising Directors and Heads of Service from Member Councils, who helped drive the project in tandem with the Management Board of ICBAN.</p> <p>In completing the final version of the Framework, the pandemic's developing impacts have been incorporated, as well as the challenges of Brexit and climate change on our border region.</p> <p>As the Framework has now been finalised, ICBAN seeks support for the document from each Member Council by 18 November 2020, in advance of moving towards implementation stage.</p> <p>Mr Shane Campbell, CEO of ICBAN indicated he is happy to meet with Council Members and/or Officers at any stage to discuss the Framework in more detail, if required.</p> <p>The new '<i>Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region, 2021-2027</i>' strategic document is enclosed on Appendix 2A and a Synopsis of the main document is enclosed on Appendix 2B.</p>
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<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p>Financial:</p> <p><b>TEDx (Cookstown) Event 2020</b> Council sponsorship of £2,000 previously agreed in March 2020.</p> <p><b>Women in Business ‘Yes You Can’ Collaboration Programme – Year 3</b> £6,060 for each of the 3 years</p> <p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b> None – all grant aid approved to project promoters will be paid by DAERA.</p> <p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b> None – all administration costs are recouped at full cost recovery through the LAG’s programme administration budget. Sufficient budget remains within this allocation to extend administration support to March 2022.</p>
	<p>Human:</p> <p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b> Staff time. An administrative budget of £9,300 will be paid to Council by DAERA for associated administrative duties on completion of the scheme.</p> <p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b> The RDP administration unit will continue to provide admin support to the LAG.</p>
	<p>Risk Management:</p> <p><b>TEDx Cookstown Event</b> Now a virtual event</p> <p><b>Women in Business ‘Yes You Can’ Collaboration Programme – Year 3</b> Now a virtual event</p> <p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b> None</p> <p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b> None</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	<p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</p> <p><b>DAERA Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b> None</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b> This scheme is specifically targeted at rural areas (defined as all areas outside of settlements with over 5000 residents).</p>

	<p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b></p> <p>The LEADER programme is specifically targeted at rural areas (defined as all areas outside of settlements with over 5000 residents).</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p>
<b>5.1</b>	<p><b>TEDx (Mid Ulster) 2020</b></p> <p><b>Approve</b> delegated authority to be granted to the Director of Business &amp; Communities/Chief Executive to manage the allocation of the 4 Tedx tickets in line with Council procedures, ahead of Council Meeting on 26 November 2020.</p>
<b>5.2</b>	<p><b>Women in Business ‘Yes You Can’ Collaboration Programme – Year 3</b></p> <p><b>Approve</b> provision of up to £6,060 towards the third and final year of delivery of the ‘Yes You Can’ Programme, subject to Women in Business providing Council with an Activity Plan for 2021 outlining how they propose to promote the Initiative to achieve a higher level of participant engagement.</p>
<b>5.3</b>	<p><b>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020</b></p> <p>(i) <b>Note</b> update on the Rural Business Development Grants Scheme 2020 and pressure on delivery timescales.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Approve</b> delegated authority be granted to the Director of Business &amp; Communities/Chief Executive that once project applications are assessed, scored and ranked, the Director/Chief Executive can approve letters of offer in ranked order, up to the maximum grant funding available for issue by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. A report will be brought to the Development Committee immediately afterwards to update Members on the outcome of assessment and scoring to note approved projects.</p>
<b>5.4</b>	<p><b>LEADER Contract Variations</b></p> <p>(i) <b>Approve</b> Contract variation for signature between Council and the LAG for administration support provided by Council to 31 March 2022.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Approve</b> Service Level Agreement variation for signature between DAERA and Council outlining the administration services to be provided by Council to the LAG to 31 March 2022.</p>

5.5	<b>ICBAN Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027</b> <b>Approve</b> Council write to ICBAN to offer support towards the Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland 2021/2027.
6.0	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> – Correspondence from DAERA and Contract / SLA Variations relating to LEADER delivery.</p> <p><b>Appendix 2A</b> - ICBAN's Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027  <i>(Full Framework)</i></p> <p><b>Appendix 2B</b> - ICBAN's Framework of Regional Priorities 2021-2027  <i>(Synopsis of Framework)</i></p>





Mr Anthony Tohill  
Chief Executive  
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Tel: 028 8225 3501  
E-mail: [paul.donnelly@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:paul.donnelly@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Date: 14 Oct 2020

Dear Anthony

**Priority 6 Promoting social Inclusion, poverty Reduction and Economic Development in Rural Areas**

As you will be aware LEADER, which is the delivery mechanism for Priority 6, has proved very successful and has benefitted rural areas across NI. To date over 600 rural businesses have received Letters of Offer worth £21.3m leveraging in over £23.1m of private sector funding and creating over 800 FTE Jobs to date. Many Community and Voluntary Sector organisations have benefited to the value of £16.4m for new or improved community facilities and the Village Renewal Scheme has provided Councils with in excess of £18m funding for village enhancement and facilities for use by rural communities. A further £4m has been allocated to Co-Operation projects.

Although outputs have been good, we have some way to go to ensure that the funding available is fully invested and no funds are lost. As of September 2020 there is still almost £25m to be drawn down of which over 70% is Council led projects under the Village Renewal and Co-Operation Schemes. The COVID19 pandemic has led to the Department providing a number of easements to assist both the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Councils to continue to deliver LEADER and make payments. The lockdown has delayed delivery of LEADER and in order to provide sufficient time to complete the programme I am writing to confirm that the end date for drawing down all project and administration funding has been extended to 31 March 2022. There may need to be retention monies drawn down on some capital projects beyond that date which can be managed between the Council and the Department.

We now also need to review the existing LEADER contracts which have been in place since 2016 for the delivery of the current LEADER programme. The 3 LEADER legal documents are:

- Contract between the Department and the LAG,

***Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.***



- Contract between the Council and the LAG, and
- Service Level Agreement between the Department and the Council.

### **Contract between DARD (now DAERA) and the LAG**

The Contract between the Department and the LAG does not have an end date (cessation date) and therefore runs until the LEADER programme has been successfully delivered and all National and EU funding has been drawn down in each of the Council areas. These existing Contracts with the 10 LAGs will therefore remain in place until the programme is successfully delivered in each Council area.

### **Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and the Department**

The SLA, which ensures the delivery of administrative and advisory support services by Council to the LAG, commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and ceases on 31 December 2020. In order for the Department to continue to make payments to the Council beyond the 31 December 2020 the SLA now needs to be extended to 31 March 2022, in line with the new end date for drawing down all project and administration funding - 'Variation to the SLA' document is attached.

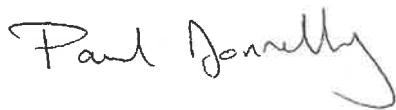
The original admin allocations provided to Councils was £12.3m within the overall LEADER budget of £70m and there is no additional resource available to Councils within the current LEADER programme.

### **Contract between the Council and the LAG**

This contract sets out the Agreement for Councils to provide administrative support to the LAG. This contract also now needs to be extended to 31 March 2022, in line with the new end date for drawing down all project and administration funding - 'Variation to the Contract' document is attached.

I would be grateful if you would sign the SLA and the Variation to the Contract between the Council and the LAG (ensuring that the LAG Chair has also signed the Variation to Contract) and return them electronically to Gerard O'Neill (gerard.o'neill@daera-ni.gov.uk) LEADER Manager by 30 November 2020.

Yours sincerely,



**PAUL DONNELLY**  
Director of Rural Affairs

Cc LAG Chair

**Sustainability** at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can  
contact the Department via the Next Generation Text  
Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

## VARIATION TO CONTRACT

For the purpose of administering Priority 6 LEADER schemes of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme in the Council area.

The Contract made between Mid Ulster District Council and Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership Local Action Group (LAG) under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020 is varied as follows:

1. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is replaced on every occurrence within the Contract with 'The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)'.

### 2 SCHEDULE : The Agreement

Point 4. Replace:

'This contract shall commence from 1st April 2016 and shall remain in force until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, unless otherwise terminated by mutual consent, or by some act of Force Majeure.'

With:

'This contract shall commence from 1st April 2016 and shall remain in force until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 unless otherwise terminated by mutual consent, or by some act of Force Majeure.'

### 3 SCHEDULE IV: Miscellaneous Issues

Replace:

'This contract is effective until 31st December 2020, but may be extended for a further period, subject to agreement between both parties'.

With:

'This contract is effective until 31st March 2022, but may be extended for a further period, subject to agreement between both parties'.

- 4 Words and expressions in this Variation to Contract shall have the meanings given to them in the original Contract.

5. The original Contract shall remain effective and unaltered except as amended by this Variation.

Signed

Date:

Full Name: .....

Clerk and Chief Executive  
on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council

Signed

Date:

Full Name: .....

Position on Board .....  
on behalf of Mid Ulster Rural Development  
Partnership Local Action Group (LAG)

## VARIATION TO CONTRACT

### LEADER IMPLEMENTATION SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Service Level Agreement made between the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Mid Ulster District Council under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020 is varied as follows:

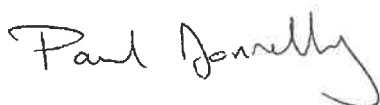
1. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is replaced on every occurrence within the Agreement with 'The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)'.
2. Page 4 of the Agreement replace the section.

'The SLA will commence on 1 April 2016 and cease on 31 December 2020 (the contract period), subject to any mutually agreed extension between DARD and the Council by written procedure'

With,

'The SLA will commence on 1 April 2016 and cease on 31 March 2022 (the contract period), subject to any mutually agreed extension between DAERA and the Council by written procedure'

3. Words and expressions in this Variation shall have the meanings given to them in the original Contract of 1 April 2016.
3. The Contract of 1 April 2016 shall remain effective and unaltered except as amended by this variation.



SIGNED:

DATE: 14 October 2020

For the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)

Full Name: Paul Donnelly  
Director of Rural Affairs  
on behalf of the Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs

Signed: .....  
For: Mid Ulster District Council

DATE.....

Full Name: .....  
Chief Executive  
Clerk and Chief Executive on behalf of  
Mid Ulster District Council



**The Framework of  
Regional Priorities for  
the Central Border  
Region of Ireland /  
Northern Ireland,  
2021–2027**



**OCTOBER 2020**

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## List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CCBS	Centre for Cross Border Studies
CP	Community Plan
CSO	Council Senior Officers
EU	European Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
FRP	Framework for Regional Priorities
ICBAN	Irish Central Border Area Network
ICLRD	International Centre for Local and Regional Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LCDC	Local and Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
NI	Northern Ireland
NDP	National Development Plan
NPF	National Planning Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RSES	Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy
RSF	Regional Strategic Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UUEPC	Ulster University Economic Policy Centre
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Foreword

The Irish border region is meeting some of its greatest challenges for a generation: the Covid-19 pandemic, climate disruption, and the exit of the UK from the European Union. As a result, for the first time in 50 years, the border corridor area, including the Central Border Region, is preparing for the advent where one component jurisdiction (Northern Ireland) will leave the EU while the adjacent area (Ireland) remains within the EU.

An impending Brexit has given rise to a developing conversation across the border region about how this might impact on future joint working. Amid current uncertainties and political differences, there remains a widely held commitment across local authorities, border communities and other community/voluntary groups within our region to continue working together, to preserve the gains already achieved and to realise potential benefits for future generations.

Cross-border cooperation takes on a new symbolic and practical significance in this new geo-political environment. It is important therefore to think in terms of mutual benefit and collaboration, rather than competition and divergence. Stakeholders in the Central Border Region can do this by building on existing relationships, and helping realise the ambitions which are set out within this Framework document for the period 2021-2027.

This Framework presents a strategic response that is both unique and tailored to the assets and characteristics of this particular region. In working together to advance the strategic priorities, we can develop the Central Border Region as a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy. This can be achieved through delivering on our key regional priorities; in utilising our regional strengths and assets, in supporting economic development, in enhancing citizens' quality of life, in making greater use of connections and remote working, and in developing our tourism offering. In doing so we can deliver benefits for all areas within the region: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid-Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

Finally, we wish to pass on our thanks to the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) for all their guidance and work on the project. We also wish to acknowledge all those who have inputted, including from our eight member Councils, their contributions have been very much appreciated. It is very important to also acknowledge the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund which has provided assistance in supporting the 'Border Navigator' and 'Border Animator' projects, and which have enabled the development of this Framework.

**Councillor Pat Treanor, ICBAN Chair, 2019-2020**

**Councillor Eamon Mc Neill, ICBAN Chair, 2020-2021**



# Executive Summary

## Background

This *Framework for Regional Priorities* (FRP) (2021 – 2027), for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland (FRP), provides a timely and important refresh of the *Regional Strategic Framework* (RSF) (2013 – 2027)<sup>1</sup>. Recognising the geopolitical, economic and social changes that have occurred since the publication of the RSF, initially due to Brexit, and subsequently due to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd., in early 2020, put in train a consultative and research process. Working in collaboration with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), ICBAN sought to take stock of regional assets, challenges and opportunities, and, at the mid-way point in the timeframe of the RSF, to identify new and emerging strategic priorities for the Central Border Region.

The resultant FRP has been informed by consultations with the Council Senior Officers (CSO) Forum, a survey of ICBAN Board members and of the senior executives in the eight affiliated local authorities<sup>1</sup>, and secondary research undertaken by ICBAN and ICLRD. This purposive process needs to be ongoing and systematic, so that all eight councils are enabled, empowered and supported to actively engage with, and contribute to the implementation of the FRP.

## Our Regional Priorities

This FRP is motivated by, and seeks to give effect to, ICBAN's Vision of a region *with a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy* that will be strengthened and sustained through delivering these inter-connected and mutually re-enforcing strategic regional priorities:

- **Exploiting new opportunities based on regional strengths and assets** (including latent assets), in the bioeconomy, food production and sustainable landscape management;
- **Supporting economic development** through providing adequate industrial spaces, nurturing inter-firm collaboration and innovation and strengthening linkages with education / training providers;
- **Enhancing citizens' quality of life**, through improved and more innovative modes of service delivery, life-long progression opportunities, enhanced community amenities and independent living environments;
- **Enabling greater connected/remote working**, through enhancing infrastructure and developing a network of digital hubs (in town centres), as part of the rejuvenation of towns and villages; and
- **Developing the region's tourism offering** and quality-of-life infrastructure through connected greenway and blueway networks (including inter-regional) – linked to complementary services and underpinned by increased active travel and improved regional connectivity.

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<sup>1</sup> The member local authority areas are: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid-Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo

## The Strategic Policy Context

The FRP takes its strategic frame of reference from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). This set of complementary economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives provides an overarching supranational framework for the attainment of sustainable development, and the advancement of greater equality, including spatial equalities. Ireland and the UK endorse the UNSDGs, and both countries monitor their application in domestic policy and in their transnational and global interactions. The actions set out in this FRP are also situated within the framework of EU policy, and specifically the strategic objectives for the attainment of a Sustainable Europe by 2030. Notwithstanding the UK's departure from the EU, the European framework provides a value-driven set of pointers that enable sub-national actors to generate synergies between regional policy objectives and sustainable development goals.

In addition to reflecting and giving effect to supranational and EU policy frameworks and objectives, this FRP takes due cognisance of, and advances domestic and regional policy objectives in both the UK and Ireland, and in particular the *Framework for Cooperation – Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* (DRD and DoEHLG, 2013)<sup>ii</sup>. It also complements the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy produced by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly<sup>iii</sup>. The growth and productivity ambitions of the three NI member Councils are reflected through their aspirations as part of a City Growth Deal Strategy and bid to the UK Exchequer<sup>iv</sup>.

Thus, the RSF and the FRP are:

- Regional;
- Cross-border; and
- Based on non-statutory, multi-stakeholder and collaborative approaches.

In advancing this framework, ICBAN has taken a regional approach, and the actions presented herein are regional in scale and effect; they apply across all eight local authority areas and in both jurisdictions. The deliverables articulated in this document relate primarily to the remit of local government and the added value that can be derived through inter-local authority collaboration. In addition, they relate to the remits and objectives of several statutory bodies, thus accentuating the importance of partnership between local government and other agencies. Cross-border and stakeholder collaborations are integral to sustaining the delivery of this FRP.

## Building on and Respecting our Territorial Assets

The territorial assets of the Central Border Region are many and diverse:

- It is an area of **high-quality food and non-food production**;
- Through stewardship and sympathetic development of its **natural resources and landscape**, the Central Border Region is playing a key role in:
  - promoting **sustainable development**,
  - nurturing **well-being**,
  - enabling the transition to a **green economy** and mitigating the effects of climate change; and
- The region provides opportunities to promote **alternatives to fossil fuels** and to develop a circular economy.

The **growth in connected / remote working**, largely driven by COVID-19 and associated public health responses, coupled with the emerging demand / need for basic services, have the potential to rejuvenate rural towns and villages. These factors are also driving further demand for green spaces and investments in community amenities and **green infrastructure**.

The strategic actions advanced here and the approach underpinning this FRP are rooted in place making; the central essence of which is its ties to experiential and local knowledge, its sense of attachment to place and identity. Thus, they are based on these local, regional assets and they relate specifically to needs, priorities and potential within the Central Border Region. In practice, this implies capitalising on the region's rural identity and significant stock of rural assets, while promoting urban-rural partnerships.

### **The Five Interlocking Strategic Pillars**

The strategic priorities and deliverables are presented under five inter-locking and complementary pillars namely:

- Economic development;
- Infrastructure and connectivity;
- Human capital – education and training;
- Liveable communities; and
- Greening the region.

### **The Emergent Catalyst Projects**

Within this Framework ICBA identifies a shortlist of regional catalyst projects, that can complement and promote the aforementioned five thematic pillars, and which would further enable the region to add value to its territorial assets.

#### **The Emergent Catalyst projects are:**

**Catalyst 1: Farm to Fork** – strengthening the region's agriculture sector, food processing industry, catering firms and hospitality providers to collaboratively avail of new and emerging opportunities and sectoral trends;

**Catalyst 2: Greenways and Blueways** – growing and connecting these vital pieces of infrastructure – to promote tourism and active travel;

**Catalyst 3: River Catchments Sustainability** – working with all stakeholders across river catchments – from source to sea, to enhance water quality and to drive cross-sectoral projects that will strengthen the region's economic base;

**Catalyst 4: A Thriving Regional Bioeconomy** – to build on Councils' work in this field through advancing research and development (R&D), upping regional skills capacity and enabling greater industrial and spatial collaboration; and

**Catalyst 5: International Mountain Biking Destination** – to develop a connected / networked set of mountain-biking trails – capitalising on the region’s typography and adding value to the existing suite of visitor attractions, while providing local communities with new amenities.

### **Moving Towards Implementation**

ICBAN has a core role to play in unleashing the potential of these territorial assets, not least in the context of the key challenges of this time: namely, Brexit, climate change and COVID-19. It is incumbent on ICBAN to:

- Bring its member local authorities together to address these challenges and harness these assets;
- Provide leadership and continue its advocacy for the sustainable growth and development of the Central Border Region; and
- Act as the intermediary for the region with both the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive – not least in progressing the identified catalyst projects.

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION, AMBITIONS AND VISION

### 1.1 The Purpose of the Framework of Regional Priorities

#### Statement of Ambition

ICBAN aspires to having a region *with a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy* that will be strengthened and sustained through a focus on:

- Utilising our environmental assets respectfully and responsibly;
- Encouraging investment in value-added industries and promoting innovation;
- Enhancing quality of life;
- Embracing new technologies and enhancing remote working; and
- Promoting our strengths in tourism.

Through concerted investments by the EU and both governments, supported by local vision, commitment, action and collaboration, the Central Border Region can more fully realise its development potential. The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd. seeks to identify and promote opportunities that capitalise on the region's strong work ethic and entrepreneurial drive, among other assets, and to meet any challenges arising from Brexit and the current Coronavirus pandemic. As the local authority-led cross-border development organisation for the area, ICBAN commits to harnessing and valorising these assets and to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to promote the Central Border Region's sustainable development.

The *Regional Strategic Framework* (RSF) which ICBAN published in 2013, presented a road map for the development of the Central Border Region, for the period up to 2027. Much has happened in the last seven years, including, *inter alia*, the reform of local government in both jurisdictions, the collapse and return of devolved government at Stormont and the resulting stasis in delivering on policy agendas. The region has also been affected by changing global agendas and heightening geo-political tensions, and by the decision of the UK to leave the EU. It is therefore timely to reflect on, and build on the RSF and to put forward this *Framework of Regional Priorities*, which reflects on the key priorities of the RSF while updating these in the context of the aforementioned changes, the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the emerging new funding programmes.

The economic, social and familial disruptions, the loss of life, the threats to public health and the undermining of livelihoods caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have been far-reaching, and have obliged governments, policy makers, public bodies and the wider civil society to re-calibrate, take stock and devise appropriate strategic responses. As societies have grappled with, and responded to, the pandemic, it has become increasingly evident that collaborative approaches – at all tiers from the local to the inter-governmental, not least in public health, are more effective than traditional sectoral or silo approaches.

COVID-19 has exposed the limited resilience of cities, towns and villages around the world – from high street retail to mobility/transport systems, from education to healthcare, and from food security to medical supply chains. As argued by ARUP, resilience planning requires “an integrated response” that must be informed by strong place-based leadership, together with “shared responsibility and financial accountability, transparent use of data, strong ethics, public participation, and maintenance of natural capital”<sup>v</sup>. The pandemic, above all else, has motivated ICBAN to advance this integrated framework document, at this particular point in time.

The *Framework of Regional Priorities* complements the RSF, and should be read in conjunction with it. Both the RSF and *Framework of Regional Priorities* adopt an integrated approach to regional development within the Central Border Region. What sets these documents apart from other strategies is:

- They are regional;
- They are cross-border; and
- They are non-statutory, multi-stakeholder and collaborative approaches.

This document has been driven by the cross-border partnership, the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd., working on behalf of its eight member Councils in the area known as the Central Border Region. The local authority areas are:

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon;
- Cavan;
- Donegal;
- Fermanagh and Omagh;
- Leitrim;
- Mid-Ulster;
- Monaghan; and
- Sligo.

## 1.2 The Key Ambitions and Aims

The key ambitions of the *Framework of Regional Priorities* reflect current and evolving challenges and opportunities at local, regional, national and international levels. They are:

- To develop as a sustainable region, characterised by increased employment, improved economic activity, social progress and ecological sustainability;
- To redress economic and social inequalities between the Central Border Region and other areas of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the inequalities which persist within the region itself;
- To influence and work with the Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland on their investment priorities for the region, by providing an evidence base to justify investments; and
- To identify opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders to work together to realise opportunities and to respond to the challenges facing the region.

### ***Defining Place-making***

The simplest definition is as follows: “Place-making is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.” Place-making is a process. It is a means to an end - the creation of Quality Places (CNU, 2014).

This cross-border area has many strengths and assets. It has an outstanding natural environment and a strong cultural heritage. The area offers a high quality of life, which both residents and visitors greatly value. It has many entrepreneurial and internationally competitive businesses distributed right across the area. There is a network of county and market towns complemented by smaller villages and hamlets, which give the region much of its distinctiveness. It also has excellent and committed educational institutions, which are active in training and retraining and are engaging with local industry.

The region has the potential to develop further its unique tourism offering of coastline, lakes, inland waterways and hills, to the benefit of both residents and visitors. The area has a real potential and desire to become more competitive economically and socially, not just with other regions on the island, but also internationally. This Framework document identifies ways in which the region can capitalise on all of these strengths.

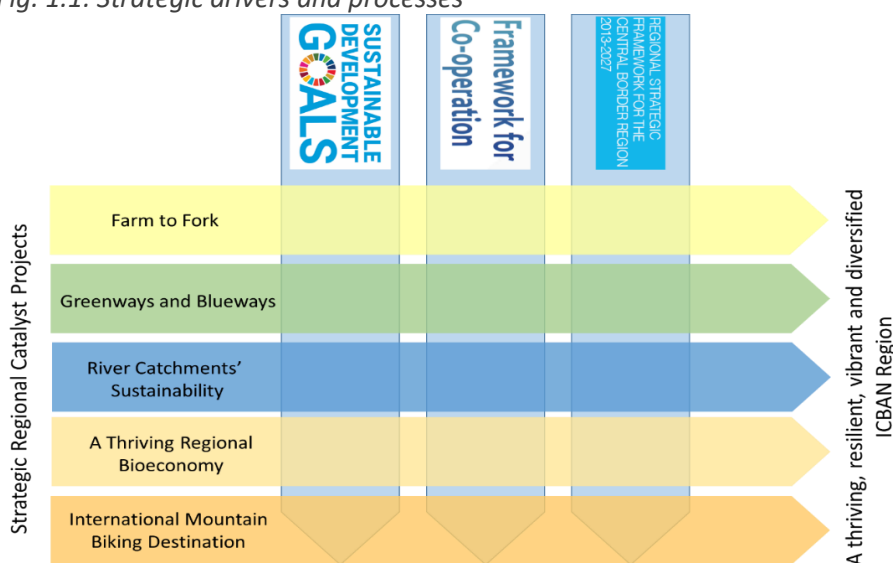
By working together with a joint Framework and agenda, the region can stimulate and realise new opportunities. Through collaborative working, it can, for example:

- Promote the critical mass - by working together and sharing resources on a cross-border basis, for example, in providing innovation support to local businesses or by encouraging joint purchasing and trade between businesses in the area;
- Tackle issues arising from the presence of the Border, such as connectivity deficits; and
- Work collaboratively with the two governments, the EU and others, including the private sector, to support investment in the region.

The implementation of the Framework will require positive cooperation between the local authorities, statutory bodies, service providers and other stakeholders in the Central Border Region. Moreover, its implementation will require support from policy and decision makers in both governments. The implementation of the Framework is considered in more detail in Chapter 9.

As a result of obtaining the financial and other resources, including government support, necessary to turn the vision into a reality, the Central Border Region will become more prosperous and offer a better future to its citizens / communities, as illustrated in the following diagram:

Fig. 1.1: Strategic drivers and processes



### 1.3 The Vision and Themes for the Central Border Region

The *Framework of Regional Priorities* sets out a series of opportunities and priorities for the region over the period to 2027 which, taken together and if well implemented, will lead to the area becoming more confident in itself and in its future. The Vision for the Central Border Region, as set out in the RSF, is of:

**‘A sustainable region that delivers the best quality of life for its people and makes a distinctive contribution to economic and social renewal and growth on the island’.**

It is proposed to organise the work to realise the Vision under the five thematic pillars of:

1. Economic development,
2. Infrastructure and connectivity,
3. Human Capital – education, training and skills
4. Liveable communities, and
5. Greening the region.

These five pillars are referenced against the internationally recognised principles of sustainable development through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to promote regional development without undermining or eroding the natural and built assets of the region to the detriment of future generations. As a result, each of the pillars is related to a particular type of asset / set of assets in the region, as shown in Figure 1.2.

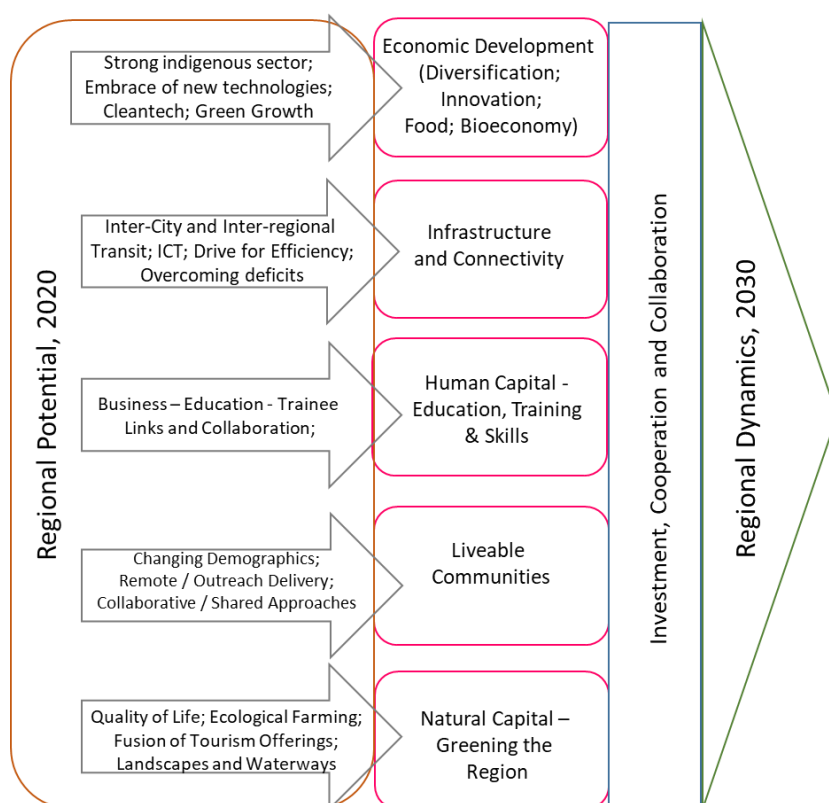


The Framework must adopt a flexible approach to development, and should be updated as new opportunities and challenges arise. In addition, the Framework is strategic in nature and does not set rigid targets; instead and similar to the RSF, it provides a context or skeleton upon which more detailed operational plans and project pipelines can be developed.

The objectives and the strategic actions, presented under each of these inter-locking pillars, build on the pre-existing government commitments to regional investments, including the Ulster Canal, the A5/N2 and Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway. These government commitments are considered as ring-fenced, and the ICBAN vision and proposals, including the catalyst projects specified in Chapter Nine, represent strategic added value. Their attainment will require strong civic leadership at local and regional levels, as well as inter-agency and cross-border collaboration.



Fig. 1.2: Regional Assets underpinning the Thematic Foci and Strategic Pillars



The delivery of the priority interventions, outlined here, seek to redress the structural weaknesses, which have delimited economic growth, and thereby enable the region to realise its potential to become a strategic space for economic growth for both jurisdictions. The under-exploited potential of this region has the capacity to contribute more to all-island sustainable growth.

**This Framework of Regional Priorities highlights opportunities – economic, socio-cultural, and environmental – to maximise the potential of its latent asset-base for the benefit of its citizens / communities and the all-island economy.**

*Economic:* The local authorities of the Central Border Region have been vocal and proactive in championing digital connectivity (fibre broadband and mobile) and opportunities to develop knowledge / human capital, which will enable businesses, young people and communities to seize advantages arising from the fourth industrial revolution and the move towards more connected / remote-working.

*Environmental:* This environmentally rich and largely unspoilt eco-region is ideally positioned to deliver on global, regional and local needs and imperatives relating to climate change and sustainable management and enhancement of the natural, built and cultural landscapes. The region needs to strive for a just transition to a post-carbon scenario.

*Socio-Cultural:* The Central Border Region has a strong cultural identity – expressed in various traditional and contemporary forms. Communities have a sense of place, as evidenced by an impressive range of creative output and artistic endeavour. Civil society organisations are strong and have clear capacity to play a greater role in place-making and collaborative planning. Like other regions, the Central Border area is becoming increasingly diverse, and harnessing the talents and abilities of newcomers will stand the region in good stead.

***To realise this, the region will require central governments, North and South, working with and supporting the local authorities and their partner stakeholders.***

## **1.4. Setting the Context – the Urgency and Timing of this Framework**

Regional and local authorities are continuously required to be innovative, creative and adaptive. The *Regional Strategic Framework* (RSF) for the Central Border Region (2013 – 2027) sets out a range of innovations and strategic actions that promote the Central Border Region’s competitiveness and sustainability. As we approach the mid-point in that Framework’s timeframe, it is appropriate to take stock of where the region is at and how it can respond to current and anticipated challenges and potential. The need for a stocktake and refresh of the RSF has been accentuated by the advent of Brexit and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Brexit**

The advent of Brexit has clearly altered relations between the UK and the EU – including the Republic of Ireland. While the UK was always one of the EU’s more reluctant members, few had anticipated, prior to 2016, that it would become the first country to leave the EU (Cardwell, 2016<sup>vi</sup>). The referendum result presents particular problems for Northern Ireland. Since the UK entered into withdrawal negotiations, almost four years ago, the Ireland – Northern Ireland border has proven to be the greatest sticking point in respect of core issues including trade, freedom of movement and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (O’ Rourke, 2019<sup>vii</sup>; O’Keeffe and Creamer, 2019<sup>viii</sup>). While governments and EU negotiators have been dealing with macro-level issues, they have also been cognisant of the micro-level implications of Brexit, not least the effects on the Central Border Region. EU, UK and Irish government representatives have, over the past four years, visited the region, and spoken with public officials, the private sector, the farming community and civil society. Across all stakeholders and at all tiers, there is an overarching desire to avoid any return to a hard border or to jeopardise the peace process, in any way. The protracted nature of the withdrawal negotiations, the associated political machinations and uncertainties regarding Brexit’s local economic and social impacts, raise significant concerns among businesses and civil society in the Central Border Region.

In 2017, ICBAN produced a policy paper and initiated local stakeholder consultations on Brexit in collaboration with Queen’s University, Belfast. These capture the perspectives of over 1,500 people, and are documented in three reports namely: *The Border into Brexit*<sup>ix</sup>; *Brexit at the Border*<sup>x</sup>; and *Bordering on Brexit*<sup>xi</sup>, as well as in a [research video](#). ICBAN also undertook specific consultations with young people, and these are captured in a short digital film: [Youthful Voices](#). These outputs, which were derived from the [Border Compass and Border Navigator Projects](#) (supported by Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs’ Reconciliation Fund), further enable the refresh of the RSF and provide evidence to underpin the strategic direction and catalyst projects presented here.

### **Climate Change**

Climate disruption and its manifestations, including increased flooding, further underscore the drive towards advancing this FRP. There is an urgent need for investment in preventative and mitigating measures. Infrastructural investments need to be proofed against climate change, while the strategic framework (presented in Chapters 4 to 9) notes the importance of attitudinal, behavioural and institutional change.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

This year (2020) marks a watershed in several respects. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about seismic socio-economic changes, and these changes have affected all demographics and all geographies. Regional and local authorities have found themselves delivering an increased range of frontline services and are working intensely with statutory bodies, service providers and civil society organisations to provide supports to those most affected by the pandemic (Local Authority Times, 2020<sup>xii</sup>). Central government has conferred local government with increased responsibilities in respect of re-booting regional economies and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). At the same time, local authorities are coming under significant financial strain, as income from rates and amenities has reduced – here and internationally (Maher *et al.*, 2020<sup>xiii</sup>). The island of Ireland and most of Europe have been plunged into recession, and many businesses have been forced to close or, at least, to downsize. All local authority areas in the Central Border Region, as elsewhere on the island, have experienced an increase in unemployment and a significant contraction in economic activity. A survey<sup>xiv</sup> by Ireland's Central Statistics Office, taken since the most severe 'lockdown' restrictions were lifted, found that:

- Over half (54%) of businesses have a lower than normal turnover;
- Almost half (47%) stated that COVID-19 would have a stronger negative impact than Brexit; and
- Approximately one-third of employees were either not working or working from home.

The Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry has reported (2020)<sup>xv</sup> that:

- The immediate impact of COVID-19 is having a greater impact than the 2008/09 financial crash;
- Over three-quarters (77%) of firms have already furloughed employees and 12% have made staff redundant;
- Half the Chamber's members (52%) intend to reduce staff levels post COVID-19; and
- Almost one-fifth imply that the business might not survive.

Ways of working have changed, as social distancing and remote working have become the norm, in several sectors. Where employees have returned to their usual workplaces, employers have incurred additional costs, and engagement with customers/ clients has been severely curtailed. The increase in remote working and the shift towards online delivery of public services, point towards accelerating the rollout of reliable and affordable broadband connectivity across the island of Ireland in order to enable economies and public services to function effectively.

In addition to the economic challenges associated with the pandemic, there have been significant social and cultural effects. Civil society activity has all but ceased, and that which has been maintained, has moved to online platforms. Thus, there are reduced opportunities for citizen engagement, inter-agency dialogue and mutual learning. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become a substitute for human contact, rather than adding value to social engagement. Older people, who for several weeks, were obliged to cocoon / shield, continue to experience considerable vulnerability. Young people have been severely discommoded by the closure of schools and colleges, and by the loss of social outlets. Youth are also increasingly fearful about the future (Loades *et al.*, 2020<sup>xvi</sup>).

Community-based, localised solutions and bespoke interventions are required to respond to the current and emerging needs of vulnerable cohorts and communities.

The economic and social impacts of the pandemic manifest themselves globally, and in respect of the Central Border Region, a number of observations can be made:

- There has been a considerable decrease in cross-border traffic; research by the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) indicates a 66% decline in cross-border caravan traffic between Easter 2020 and Easter 2019 (CCBS, 2020<sup>xvii</sup>);
- Core sectors in the regional economy, most notably agriculture and tourism, have been among the sectors most adversely affected (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2020<sup>xviii</sup>); and
- Particular parts of the Central Border Region have among the highest (socio-economic) vulnerabilities. Of the counties in the Republic of Ireland, Donegal and Cavan have the third and fourth highest exposure ratios. Of the 199 Irish towns analysed (by the Regional Assemblies<sup>xix</sup>), Bundoran in County Donegal and Strandhill in County Sligo are the most and second-most exposed to significant economic disruption.

While the pandemic is global, its effects are uneven (Karatzias, *et al.*, 2020<sup>xx</sup>), and citizens in advanced economies and well-developed welfare states are best shielded from it. On this island, the pandemic has, in terms of the number of infections and fatalities adversely affected older people, those living / working in crowded settings and migrants<sup>xxi</sup>. Lessons point towards the need for increased synergies between social inclusion, local development and integration and a renewed focus on wellbeing (Carnegie UK Trust, 2020<sup>xxii</sup>).

Geography is also a determinant of impacts. Rates have generally been lower in rural areas with low population densities, and while rural communities may feel physically safer, they are adversely affected by socialisation restrictions imposed, and they tend to have more digital connectivity deficits than do urban areas. Rural regions, including the Leitrim Glens, South Donegal, the Fermanagh Lakelands, Sligo and the Sperrins, in which tourism is a major economic driver, are suffering income losses due to business closures and the absence of overseas visitors. While the July-August 2020 'staycations' provided a welcome boost, this has been short term, and it is evident that the rural parts of the Central Border Region need renewed focus and attention. In the medium to long-term, rural tourism providers in the region are likely to face renewed competition from urban centres, as city-based hoteliers seek new markets to compensate for the loss of corporate business. Research identifies Dublin as among the cities most affected by COVID-19 related economic disruption (Hesse and Rafferty, 2020<sup>xxiii</sup>). Sustained disruptions to the Dublin economy will most adversely affect the southeast of the Central Border Region, but there are also likely to be consequences for areas along the Dublin-Belfast Corridor. Thus, ongoing support for the SME sector and the promotion of economic diversification are integral to sustaining regional competitiveness. At the same time, there are opportunities for rural communities, associated with the increased demand for outdoor recreational spaces ([NDP Group](#), 2020; Weeden, 2020<sup>xxiv</sup>). Academic research shows that outdoor green spaces are increasingly prized (Day, 2020<sup>xxv</sup>; Kleinschroth and Kowarik, 2020<sup>xxvi</sup>). For local government and other planning stakeholders, the pointers are towards accentuating their promotion of an accessible countryside, active travel and liveable communities.

The pandemic has accelerated the pre-existing trend towards online retailing, and this is having negative impacts on high street retailers (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation,

2020b<sup>xxvii</sup>). The current trends add an urgency to the efforts of national and local authorities to rejuvenate town centres. Indeed, across Ireland and the UK, local authorities are currently working to Covid-proof town centres and other public spaces. As remote working becomes more established, digital hubs will become increasingly significant for rurally isolated communities as part of our economic infrastructure and urban fabric. Urban green spaces and parklands, which have long been integral to best practices in planning, will be important in preventing reverse commuting and in ensuring healthy places. As evidenced by the WHO (2016), modern life style “is associated with chronic stress, insufficient physical activity and exposure to anthropogenic environmental hazards. Urban green spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and residential greenery, promote mental and physical health, support physical activity, stimulate social cohesion and reduce morbidity and mortality”<sup>xxviii</sup>.

## The Regional Response

ICBAN is cognisant of the impacts the pandemic is having and is likely to continue to have over the coming years. The organisation, therefore, advances this Framework document to provide a steer to the region in terms of dealing with current realities, anticipating future strains and ensuring effective local and regional responses. ICBAN notes that the challenges, potential opportunities and obligations associated with COVID-19 come at a time when the region is dealing with the consequences of Brexit. Research undertaken as part of the [Border Compass and Border Navigator](#) projects indicates persistent uncertainties in the region, and these uncertainties can inhibit business confidence and agencies’ abilities to plan effectively. Thus, in these contexts, ICBAN advances a set of responses that emphasise and enable:

- **Economic development:** supporting key established sectors, while simultaneously promoting diversification and enabling all sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, professional services, tourism, etc., to embrace opportunities associated with ICT and artificial intelligence (AI);
- **Infrastructure and connectivity:** enabling businesses to function effectively and grow, by ensuring they can access improved infrastructure and be assured of reliable and affordable access to broadband and ensuring that citizens can effectively access enhanced public services through ICT and social media;
- **Human capital: education, training and skills:** developing the region’s skills base to sustain economic competitiveness, promote social progress and stimulate new opportunities;
- **Liveable communities:** promoting wellbeing and improving quality of life; and
- **Natural capital - Greening the region:** including harnessing and protecting the region’s natural assets and biodiversity – for economic development, community benefit and ecological sustainability.

## 1.5. The Structure of this Document

This document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 is concerned with the strategic context of the Framework;
- Section 3 provides a short profile of the region, identifies its key characteristics and the actions required to further its development;
- Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 deal in turn with the five key pillars of the Framework; and
- Section 9 deals with the implementation and monitoring of the Framework, and it outlines the emergent regional catalyst projects.

## 2.0 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR THE CENTRAL BORDER REGION

The *Framework of Regional Priorities* provides a timely regional response to a myriad of issues. These include, among others:

- The challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Globalisation/ internationalisation;
- The need to further embrace and embed sustainable development; and
- Political changes on the island, and the impending implications of Brexit.

ICBAN acknowledges the strategic priorities of the North West Regional Development Group and East Border Region Ltd., and strives to promote complementarity with these. This Framework is therefore a peer-level document to the strategies of the North West and East Border regions.

This chapter sets out a summary review of the strategic context for the region. Fuller and more expansive details are included in Annex 1.

### 2.1 Key Statutory and Planning Frameworks

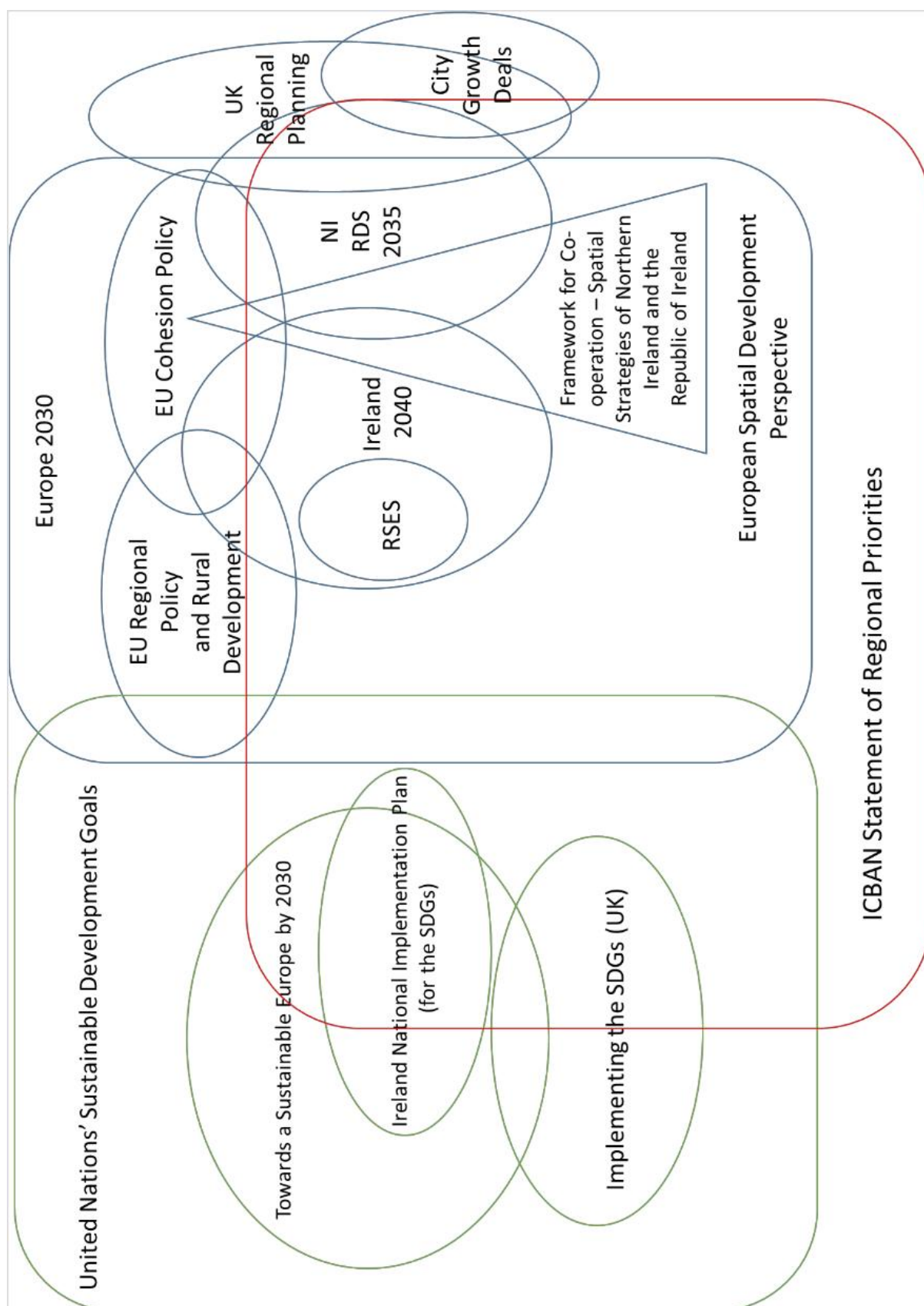
The *Framework* is informed by a number of key plans and strategies – national, regional and local. As a regional approach to development, it fits within the context of the spatial development plans of the two governments on the island of Ireland; i.e. *Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF)*<sup>xxix</sup> and associated National Development Plan (NDP), and the Northern Ireland *Regional Development Strategy (RDS)*<sup>xxx</sup> (to 2035). It also complements the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) produced by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly<sup>xxxi</sup>. The growth and productivity ambitions of the three Northern Ireland member Councils are reflected through their aspirations as part of a Growth Deal Strategy and bid to the UK Exchequer. This FRP offers a sub-regional context to the *Framework for Co-operation – Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland*, which was agreed between the two governments in 2013. It takes cognisance of the ‘United Nations Sustainable Development Goals’ as a planning framework, and by extension to the EU-wide framework for the application of the SDGs, *Towards a Sustainable Europe for 2030*, and the key principles of EU Cohesion Policy.

The existing plans, strategies and priorities of the local authorities in the area are of critical importance, including the local economic and community plans (LECPs) of the Irish County Council areas, and the community plans (CPs) for the District Council areas of Northern Ireland. These have been augmented through a review of the various local authority development plans, corporate plans and strategies, and other statutory documents. The key strategic priorities for the area have also been endorsed in a report published by the Oireachtas Joint Committee for the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement<sup>xxxii</sup>.

The implementation of these various high level national and regional strategies, in tandem, and across economic development, spatial planning, environmental management and infrastructure provision, will help to more confidently meet the challenges facing the Central Border Region. Figure 2.1 maps the relationships between this Framework and the key statutory policies, strategies and planning frameworks, which are impacting on the area.



Fig. 2.1: Nested Arrangements – Environmental and Planning Policy Frameworks



## 2.2 Our Rural Identity

While the Central Border Region occupies a strategic geographical position in respect of inter-urban connectivity and enabling networking between cities and towns, the region's core and its identity are essentially rural. Therefore, rural considerations need to be to the fore among stakeholders who are involved in promoting the region's development. The region's primary assets, including its landscape, countryside and waterways underpin the agriculture and tourism sectors, and their sustained growth is integral to the region's wider economic development. These are essentially rural assets and their conservation and sustainable development will enable the rural economy to diversify – generating local employment opportunities, enhancing quality of life and responding to needs that emerge in towns and cities. Addressing the region's current infrastructure and connectivity deficits will enhance inter-urban and urban-rural interfaces, and will contribute to enabling rural areas to avail of development opportunities at varying spatial scales.

In 2016, the European Commission convened a major rural development conference in Cork. This took place on the twentieth anniversary of the [Cork Declaration](#) 'A Living Countryside'. Delegates from all EU member states took stock of the trends, challenges and opportunities in the rural milieu. While acknowledging areas of decline, environmental challenges and structural weaknesses in several contexts, delegates resolved to advocate, support and advance approaches to rural development that are inclusive of all stakeholders (vertical and horizontal governance), attentive to the diversity of rural area types (not a one-size-fits all), and focused on the development of assets and resources – actual, latent and potential. The agreed Cork Declaration fits with long-standing best practices that emphasise cooperation and collaboration, rather than competition between spaces. In this context, inter-council and inter-jurisdictional collaboration are essential for the progressive and sustained development of the Central Border Region.

The current EU thinking, as derived from assessments of experiences over the past three decades, tallies with OECD observations and recommendations. [Rural 3.0](#)<sup>xxxiii</sup>, the framework document that emerged from the 2018 OECD rural development conference in Edinburgh stated that, "Rural regions will play a central role in meeting the major global opportunities and challenges of the 21st century". The OECD cites opportunities in respect of energy generation, trends in food production, digital connectivity, renewed emphasis on quality of life, wellbeing and economic development. It notes that regions that make strategic investments – in hard and soft infrastructure and in governance capacity – stand to capitalise on new and emerging opportunities, while regions that fail to make structural adjustments will become increasingly peripheral.

Across the UK, the impacts of Brexit on rural communities will be significant (Shucksmith, 2019<sup>xxxiv</sup>). The 2019 House of Lords report, [Time for a strategy for the rural economy](#), further recognises the increasingly diverse, dynamic and vibrant nature of the UK's rural economies. While acknowledging that there are opportunities via the digital revolution, the report notes that rural areas are at a major point of transition – the result of the inter-play between a multitude of factors ranging from Brexit, farm profitability, an ageing population, climate change and pressure from piecemeal developments. The House of Lords calls for the development of a coherent rural strategy – ideally in advance of Brexit, that will be centred on re-energised rural proofing and a place-based approach which reflects the diversity of the countryside and the capabilities and knowledge of those who live and work there.

The sentiments expressed by the House of Lords, the OECD and the [2016 Cork Declaration](#) are clearly and strongly articulated by NGOs and rural communities – as well as by policy makers and researchers. These find expression, in endogenous fora, as reflected in the [Candás Declaration](#) of the European Rural Parliament (2019) and the [Venhorst Declaration](#) (2017). These point to the importance and



merits of enhanced connectivity, stronger local economies, inclusive / welcoming communities and a particular focus on young people.

## 2.3 Relationships to International Principles and Objectives

This document builds on, reflects and incorporates the seventeen key strategic priorities identified by ICBAN and its member Councils, and presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in February 2019. These priorities, which were identified and articulated through bottom-up processes across the region, and are underpinned by robust needs analysis, are integral to ensuring the region’s sustained competitiveness. The priorities have been further refined through engagements with public bodies and government departments in both jurisdictions. They transcend economic, socio-cultural and environmental spheres, and are mutually re-enforcing. This document emphasises their inter-connectedness – not just to one another, but to significant international and EU frameworks. Specifically, it takes the seventeen strategic priorities, and it situates and presents them in respect of their operationalisation and delivery of:

- The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#); and
- [Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030](#).

There are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and these were ratified by all 193 UN member states in 2015. The Goals are part of the [United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). They seek to tackle a wide range of issues facing both developed and developing countries. These issues include poverty, inequality, climate change, inclusive societies and access to health and education. The preamble to the UN resolution adopting the SDGs states, “all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan”. The following diagram presents the seventeen SDGs.

*Fig. 2.2: United Nations’ 17 Development Goals (SDGs), 2015 – 2030*



The SDGs build on and draw lessons from countries' experiences of the Millennium Development Goals (2000 – 2015), and they reaffirm and strengthen commitments to solidarity and ecological conservation.

The [UK review](#) (2019), of its progress on the SDGs, highlights the role of local government in Northern Ireland in operationalising and delivering the SDGs. It refers specifically to the planning system and to the importance of community participation, good design and positive place-making in furthering sustainable development. [Ireland's review](#) (2018) of its progress on delivering the SDG agenda is explicit in respect of ecological conservation – particularly water resources and sustainable agriculture. Authorities in both jurisdictions, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, emphasise that climate change imperatives require reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and that planning authorities must be increasingly active in promoting whole-of-society adaptations. Authorities north and south emphasise, with reference to the SDGs, the need for an increased commitment to social inclusion and community development.

'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' is the EU-wide framework for the application of the SDGs. It emphasises the urgency of an ecological transition, coupled with social protection. It envisions the policy foundations for a sustainable future as: moving from a linear to a circular economy; ensuring sustainability from farm to fork; future-proofing energy, buildings and mobility; and ensuring a socially fair transition. The EU calls on all sectors and on all tiers of government to play their respective and collective parts in ensuring a Sustainable Europe, and it outlines the importance of policy coherence and partnership approaches. In response to COVID-19, the UK Government's recovery plan is aligned to the SDGs, with a commitment to "build back better and build back greener".

ICBAN has also considered current EU Cohesion Policy. Reference to this is somewhat tempered until such time as the new European Commission members take full command of their briefs and set the specifics of cohesion policy for the forthcoming programme period. The Commission has however articulated cohesion policy priorities as follows: a Smarter Europe; a Greener, carbon free Europe; a more Connected Europe; a more Social Europe; and a Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development.

### 3.0 A PROFILE OF THE CENTRAL BORDER REGION

The Census of Population 2021, scheduled to take place contemporaneously in both jurisdictions, will provide a valuable source of data for ICBAN, local authorities and all those involved in service delivery. The alignment of statistical indicators and datasets is conducive to cross-border working, and it ensures a stronger evidence base to support informed decision-making. ICBAN is committed to updating and renewing its regional profile, as new data is released. [\*The Atlas of the Island of Ireland – mapping social and economic patterns\*](#) provides a useful visualisation of demographic and socio-economic variables across the island and at various spatial tiers (Gleeson *et al.*, 2015<sup>xxxv</sup>).

This census atlas, as well as other research undertaken by the ICLRD, among others, highlight persistent connectivity deficits in the Central Border Region and in the northwest of the island. The severing of rail links and the absence of motorway / dual carriageway connections to key urban centres (Derry/Londonderry, Sligo and Enniskillen) place the region at a relative competitive disadvantage. Gleeson *et al.* (2015) also identify the border counties, and areas along the border corridor as having above-average levels of deprivation.

Thus, the baseline data point to the need to invest in improving intra- and inter-regional connectivity and to promoting social inclusion and community development.

#### 3.1 Key Demographic and Economic Statistics

The local authorities that comprise the Central Border Region<sup>xxxvi</sup> have a total combined population of 872,633<sup>xxxvii</sup>. The population of the five Irish county council areas grew by 0.6% between 2011 and 2016, which is below the corresponding Republic of Ireland rate of 3.8%, whilst the population in the three NI Council areas has grown by 6%. The region is predominantly rural; over seventy percent of the region's population lives outside the main urban centres. The population density, based on information available for 2016 and 2018 (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively), is 50.3 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, which is significantly lower than the equivalents in Ireland (70.0) and Northern Ireland (133.2). The urban areas with populations of greater than 10,000 include the Craigavon Urban Area (Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan), Omagh, Sligo, Banbridge, Armagh, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Cookstown, and Cavan Town. Annex 2 presents the population of each local authority area (2001 – 2018).

##### Economic Features

The region's business profile is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Over ninety percent of firms employ fewer than ten persons. Annex 2 presents the number of employees by firm size in each local authority area. The most significant employment bases in the region are agriculture, advanced manufacturing, food processing, retail/wholesale and hospitality. While these are predominantly traditional sectors, the region is characterised by a high-level of entrepreneurship, and the promotion of innovation in micro-enterprises will be integral to future economic development.

Over recent decades, economies on both sides of the border have become increasingly aligned and integrated. Thus, particularly in the context of Brexit, the maintenance of cross-border flows – of people, goods and services – is essential to sustaining existing firms. Research by the Centre for Cross Border Studies estimates that between 23,000 and 30,000 people cross the border to work (O'Kane, 2016<sup>xxxviii</sup>). InterTradelreland (2018<sup>xxxix</sup>) reports that a significant share of cross-border trade is associated with businesses trading in both directions (almost one in five firms). According to InterTradelreland, the total value of cross-border trade, for 2017, was £6.10bn /€6.7bn. Cross-border

economic interdependencies are more significant among firms in border areas than elsewhere on the island.

### Educational Attainment

Census data also show that despite strong outputs in terms of educational attainment in local schools, many of the region's young people leave to study and work elsewhere. The recent formation of the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (new technological university) and ongoing and renewed collaborations between higher-education institutes (HEIs) in both jurisdictions, present opportunities in respect of upskilling and enabling local firms to enhance their research and design (R&D) capacity.

## 3.2 Ecology and Environment

The Central Border Region has a strong stock of ecological resources. Some of these, including Sliabh Beagh, Upper Lough Erne and many of the Cavan – Fermanagh – Leitrim – Sligo Uplands enjoy Natura 2000 protection<sup>xi</sup>. The region's uplands are the birthplaces of some of Ireland's most significant river systems, including The Shannon. The Erne Rivers' Trust – a cross-border entity - represents one of the largest catchments on the island<sup>xli</sup>. These environmental resources are generally in rude health, but their future sustainability relies on responsible human behaviour.

Some jurisdictions have legislative frameworks to ensure that public bodies and decision makers sustain ecological resources. In Wales, for example, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires all decision-makers to consider not just the immediate impacts of policies and approaches, but to take account of the longer-term impacts on sustainable development. The United Nations' maxim 'think global, act local' has a particular resonance for regional and local authorities, and in border regions collaborative approaches recognise the transboundary realities of ecosystems and enable regions to acknowledge ecosystem services and harness common resources. The 2019 [profile of Ireland's uplands](#) (O'Keeffe and Crowley, 2019<sup>xlii</sup>) identifies the distinctive features of uplands in the Central Border area, among others, and refers to the merits of cross-border collaboration, involving uplands communities.

## 3.3 Implications of the Regional Profile

The following table sets out some key characteristics of the region, along with associated responses and actions:

Characteristic of the Region	Recommended Response / Action
<b>Demography</b>	
Low rate of urbanisation and low population density	More integrated service provision and effective public transport solutions. Enabling citizens to better access public services and engage with public bodies, through e-solutions, enhanced collaborative planning and bespoke interventions in peripheral areas.
Significantly increased proportion of older people	Development of e-health infrastructure. Support for social economy initiatives, including social housing and the promotion of independent living. Walkable neighbourhoods and healthy places.
Youth out-migration	Increase collaboration between education providers – across the region, and at all tiers. Provide incentives for diaspora to return to the area and start a business. Foster a sense of regional identity and pride, which encourage people to locate in the Central Border Region.

Economic Activity	
Dependence on manufacturing and traditional sectors	Enhance intra- and inter-regional connectivity to ensure efficient access to markets; Ensure reliable broadband connectivity. Translate agricultural sector's strengths into higher value-added opportunities. Promote a 'Manufacturing Corridor', as the basis for inter-firm collaboration and regional branding. Enhance innovation activities to develop and maintain competitive advantages.
The development of the Tertiary (Service) Sector lags behind the aggregate in both jurisdictions	Promote inter-firm collaboration. Ensure an adequate supply of high-quality business spaces and the strengthening of digital infrastructure. Strengthen linkages between industry and education. Introduce new products that are based on regional identity and assets.
Decline of towns and villages (particularly cores)	Identify key regional strengths / assets, and enable towns / villages to capitalise on these, while collaborating with adjoining towns / villages. Incentivise vibrant town and village centres, and work with local authorities and communities to strengthen town cores through collaborative place-making.
Relatively high levels of deprivation	Support social inclusion, community development, integration and inter-cultural initiatives, and work with education providers to enhance access and progression.

### 3.4 Actions to Develop the Central Border Region

From the list of characteristics set out above and from other information provided it is possible to identify the actions required to further the development of the area. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, there is a strong alignment between the various economic aims. Combining those insights with the analysis of this chapter suggests that the priorities include actions in the following key areas, each of which is considered in a separate chapter to follow:

- Build new economic strengths for the region based on innovation, its tradition of entrepreneurship and endowment of strong internationally competitive businesses (Chapter 4);
- Improving the ability of the Central Border Region to connect with other regions and its internal connections. These can be summarised as actions to develop new sources of competitive advantage for the Central Border Region and as a result to make a major contribution to the realisation of national policies and priorities (Chapter 5);
- Develop dynamic linkages between the education sector and the needs of industry, as well as those with the entrepreneurial drive to seize new emerging opportunities (Chapter 6);
- Ensure that the growth of the region is inclusive in its character, enabling access for everyone to key services and opportunities, particularly older people and the youth, and in turn addressing inequalities and recognising the unique challenges of a rural cross-border area (Chapter 7), and;
- Build on environmental strengths by investing in and developing expertise in renewable energy, energy conservation and sustainable development (Chapter 8).

## 4.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 The Rationale for this Objective

The Central Border Region has a strong entrepreneurial profile, and indigenous industries form the backbone of the regional economy. Agriculture and the agri-food sector is a significant employer, and will continue to be an important industry in its own right, while also supporting several ancillary and related activities. The region's small and medium sized enterprise base actively trades on a cross-border basis, and many SMEs are already feeling the effects of Brexit.

The Mid South West Councils' Regional Economic Strategy, with its focus on Advanced Manufacturing, creates opportunities for new industrial investments in the region; this includes growing the existing manufacturing and engineering base. Advances in digital technologies, the development of a network of digital innovation hubs and the commitment to broadband infrastructure in both jurisdictions are key elements of the infrastructure required to enable sustainable growth.

The region has invested in creating a distinctive set of tourism products, and cross-border attractions such as the Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark, the Cuilcagh Way, the Seamus Heaney HomePlace and Ballinamore-Ballyconnell Canal and, more generally a network of greenways and blueways. These represent important components of the region's tourism infrastructure. Enhanced linkages between the tourism and farming sectors will ensure a sustained focus on environmental assets, while mutually re-enforcing both sectors.

Thus, the region has a demonstrable set of endogenous and place-based strengths, but it faces challenges, not just from Brexit, but from the agglomeration of economic activities in core urban regions, which is leading to out-migration of young people. The region's potential can be maximised by, *inter alia*, upskilling of the population, retaining and attracting workers – to underpin the expansion of indigenous firms, further investment in tourism – particularly ecological tourism, enhanced connectivity (including park-and-ride and public transport) and the accelerated rollout of broadband. ICBAN also notes the need to address legacy issues and current deficits. These relate to the level of Foreign Direct Investment in the region and the provision of suitable enterprise spaces. These strategic priorities are reinforced in subsequent sections of this document.

### 4.2 Relationship to the 'United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals'

Stakeholders in the Central Border Region are committed to inclusive growth, in line with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. While regional-level investments will generate a level of rising tide, there will be a need, in giving effect to the SDGs, to promote sector-bespoke and community-level projects. Investments will also need to target women, ethnic minorities and other cohorts who are distant from the labour market – in order to develop their capacity to derive maximum benefits from regional economic development.

### 4.3 Relationship to 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'

Building on and investing in the region's entrepreneurial heritage (e.g. furniture making, manufacturing, engineering and textiles) and enabling enterprises to diversify will position it to

become a centre for excellence in environmentally friendly technologies, including insulation material, renewable energy and smart devices.

Engagement with the agriculture sector will enable the region to capitalise on its excellence in local food production. Artisan products, ecological farming and smart technologies will complement the region's tourism infrastructure and will enhance its competitiveness – as a destination in its own right and as a bridge between the east coast (Dublin-Belfast Corridor) and the North West.

The [UK's Industrial Strategy](#) (2017) places a strong emphasis on growth in AI and the data economy, the future of mobility and, of specific interest to the Central Border Region, clean growth and ageing society. The Strategy strongly advocates for economic development and industrial growth that is place-based and which results in dividends for both people and place.

#### Our five foundations align to our vision for a transformed economy



(Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2017)

#### 4.4 Opportunities for Development

The region's attractive environment, robust cultural capital and strong quality of life have attracted retirees from more urbanised parts of Ireland. Their knowledge and expertise – as business mentors and as drivers of community development can be further harnessed. The region's assets and identity have also attracted urban dwellers – initially as visitors, but increasingly as commuters and remote workers. This has been supported by a growing network of digital innovation hubs across the region. Strengthening their commitment to the region and enabling them to base themselves locally – at least for extended periods– would add to the region's skills base and enable growth in ancillary service industries.



The UK and Irish governments, along with the EU, are committed to supporting the bioeconomy, and the Central Border Region's assets stand it in good stead to leverage such investments. Local firms are open and primed to embrace opportunities associated with the knowledge economy, artificial intelligence, robotics and cobotics<sup>xliii</sup>. Advances in these regards ought to enable increased productivity, while spawning new R&D activities locally. As outlined in Chapter 9, there is potential for specific catalyst projects in this regard.

The provision of additional enterprise space ought to cater for manufacturing as well as R&D.

Collaboration between industry and colleges of further / higher education is important in ensuring more added-value activities in manufacturing, new product development, patenting and joint marketing. It is also critical to ensuring the skills need of existing and emerging industries (and product lines) are serviced.

Working with other regions, particularly the North West City Region and with stakeholders on Ireland's north coast, would enable an expansion of the tourism offering and ensure extended visitor stays locally. The region's waterways represent significant ecological and tourism resources, and further capitalisation on the region's association with the island's waterways offers potential for enterprise development on both sides of the border – based on a collective strategic infrastructure that promotes conservation and accessibility, in line with SDGs 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land). Developments on this front will represent complementarity between economic development and 'greening the region' (Chapter 8).



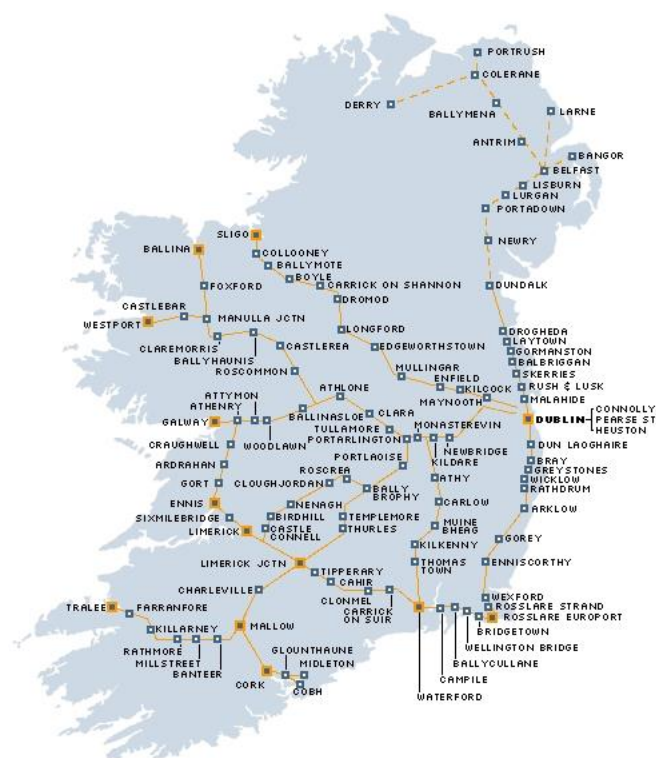
## 5.0 INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

### 5.1 The Rationale for this Objective

The region has a distinctive profile in respect of cross-border infrastructure, connectivity and transit. Unlike the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and the North-West Gateway, both of which have a respective predominant transport axis, the Central Border Region has a more dispersed set of routes, which connect several nodes and which collectively account for the single largest set of cross-border flows. Investment in the region's cross-border connectivity is, therefore, of strategic all-island importance. In addition to enhancing intra-regional connectivity, it is necessary to ensure greater connectivity between the Central Border Region, the North-West Gateway, Greater Dublin and Greater Belfast. ICBAN's proposals do not replicate, but build on and add value to those outlined by the [Department for Infrastructure](#) and [Transport Infrastructure Ireland](#). ICBAN contends that the various elements of transport infrastructure advocated, in this FRP, are complementary and mutually re-enforcing; investments in conventional road infrastructure are designed to ensure greater safety, economic development, enhanced access to services and the opening-up of active travel networks.

The severing of rail links to the region, and within it, has created an infrastructural deficit, relative to the rest of the island, and it is imperative to mitigate this. In addition to investing in more sustainable modes of transport / transit, it is necessary to strengthen the region's digital connectivity, to support entrepreneurship and to encourage greater external investment.

Fig. 5.1: The current rail network on the island of Ireland



(Source: <https://www.discoveringireland.com/trains-in-ireland/>)

At present, there are a number of broadband blackspots and digital divides – in social and geographical terms – that need to be eliminated. Meanwhile, there are opportunities associated with [Project Stratum NI](#)<sup>2</sup> and the [Irish National Broadband Plan](#) and Councils' work in ensuring fibre connectivity to public buildings. The development of town centre and rurally-based digital hubs and co-working spaces complements Councils' objectives in respect of rejuvenating rural towns and ensuring sequential development (and the avoidance of sprawl).

The region already has a number of leaders in green technologies, and supporting these entrepreneurs and linking them more with researchers and with policymakers should enable greater synergies, in line with governments' recommendations for more integrated approaches to energy production and the adoption of clean technologies. The aforementioned drive towards economic diversification is contingent on enhanced connectivity, not least in ensuring a fusion of, and crossover between, the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and complementary tourism destination offerings in Northern Ireland, including Embrace a Giant Spirit.

## **5.2 Relationship to the 'United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals'**

SDG 9 refers to the building of resilient infrastructure, the promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and the fostering of innovation, and ICBAN has identified specific projects in this regard. The coming on stream of electric vehicles and other sustainable modes of transport implies that road construction does not have to be associated with greenhouse gas emissions to the same extent as it has been to date. Road construction and upgrading works need to happen in tandem with giving commuters real incentives for carbon-neutral travel. Moreover, road improvements, can, in the immediate term, reduce congestion and journey times, thus delivering environmental gains. The N2/A5 and A4/N16 corridors, along with the A29 (NI), and the M3 (RoI), are significant cross-border routes in that regard.

Local consultations emphasise the merits of park and ride schemes, the promotion of car-pooling, the provision of parking spaces at transport intersections and the rollout of infrastructure to enable efficient charging of electric vehicles. The development of feeder services to Translink and Bus Éireann routes, and greater alignment with Local Link operators, would facilitate greater use of public transportation.

SDG 7 notes the benefits associated with sustainable energy production. The Central Border Region's topography places limitations on it in respect of large-scale energy-generation projects, but the region is well placed to ensure local-level solutions and technological adaptations. Although not in itself a renewable form of energy, the extension of the gas network into the region will, in addition, assist with the necessary transition from fossil fuels.

## **5.3 Relationship to 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'**

The policies of the EU and both governments place considerable emphasis on digital connectivity. The accelerated rollout of respective high-speed broadband infrastructure programmes into each jurisdiction, will be integral to improving the economic competitiveness of the region. Broadband

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<sup>2</sup> Project Stratum aims to improve broadband connectivity by extending Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband infrastructure to approximately 79,000 premises across Northern Ireland that cannot yet access NGA broadband services. £150m has been allocated to the project as a result of the Confidence and Supply Agreement, along with additional funding of £15m secured through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

connectivity will also reduce the need for travel, thus delivering environmental gain. The need for remote access across society, along with Governments' emphasis on inclusive growth, implies that the digital infrastructure and e-government services need to be accompanied by investments in enabling the population to be digitally competent. Thus, ICBAN has been actively advocating for parallel development of hard and soft infrastructure. Inclusive growth also implies that sustainable transport and associated transitional arrangements be affordable.

#### 5.4 Opportunities for Development

As planning authorities, the member Councils of ICBAN have important roles to play in encouraging and facilitating infrastructure provision and settlement patterns that are conducive to the use of sustainable modes of transport and more sustainable consumption, in line with SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The consolidation of villages, the strengthening and revitalising of rural towns and the prevention of urban sprawl will, in addition to promoting economic efficiencies, ensure more effective use of infrastructure. The provision of walkways and cycleways is enabling of active travel – contributing to both SDGs, in addition to delivering health gains. The rollout of greenway and blueway infrastructure on an inter-regional basis will complement active travel and public health objectives, while allowing the region to derive increased economic benefits.

With the government programmes committing to support remote working, there are heightened opportunities to invest in the further development of digital innovation hubs and hot-desking facilities across the Central Border Region. Remote working provides workers with the opportunity to revisit their work-life balances and to relocate to areas which offer a better quality of life.

The *Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland* (paragraph 2.1) states that areas beyond the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and North-West Gateway are the focus of transportation networks and will be the optimum locations for potential job creation, economic development, health and education services. The ongoing adherence to this framework, including in the context of *Ireland 2040*, ought to present leverage-opportunities to the Central Border Region.

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) developed by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and which encapsulates much of the Central Border Area, envisages the growth of the region as a 'Smart Region' that embraces the overwhelming digital trends underway globally. This will be enabled by investment in strategic road and rail infrastructure, public transport services and broadband. The RSES notes, "National road infrastructure is a key infrastructure in facilitating the flow of economic activity within a region, particularly with respect to freight traffic. In light of the region's poor economic performance, such results suggest that there is capacity for central government to increase funding in this area, with the view of enhancing the Northern & Western region's infrastructure and its productive capacity"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Northern and Western Regional Assembly: A Region in Transition, The Way Forward, January 2020, Page 33

## **6.0 HUMAN CAPITAL – EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILLS**

### **6.1 The Rationale for this Objective**

The all-island *Framework for Cooperation* (2013) in respect of spatial planning identifies education as one of the areas in which cross-border collaboration ought to be strengthened. The FRP refers specifically to third-level education in this regard. The Central Border Region has a number of very successful, but relatively small-scale, deliverers of third-level, adult and continuing education. Their further development will enhance the region's economic competitiveness and will afford young people (in particular) the opportunity to study locally, rather than having to leave the region. Indeed, the expansion of the education sector within the region ought to attract learners. The region has the capacity to promote strong linkages between the education sector and industry, and there is scope to do so in sectors such as farming and agri-environment, energy, green technologies, tourism and environmental conservation. Education and training delivery – through a variety of pathways and across multiple campuses and in open settings, in partnership with industry and civil society – in the Central Border Region has the potential to bring a new and dynamic offering to the education landscape on the island of Ireland. Thus, ICBAN advocates for greater regional third-level provision.

Collaboration between education and training providers and industry will be important in enabling the region to expand its productive capacity and avail of new and emerging opportunities in research, design and new technologies. Regional stakeholders (including local authorities) already have valuable experience in the delivery of training programmes, and further investments in these initiatives will enhance the regional skills-pool, thereby supporting existing industries and enabling the emergence of new opportunities in the creative industries and in activities that capitalise on the region's ecological, heritage and cultural resources.

### **6.2 Relationship to the 'United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals'**

SDG 4 envisions education as lifelong and life wide. The United Nations stresses the need for education to be inclusive and equitable. Therefore, the rollout of enhanced third-level offerings, in the region, needs to be accompanied with appropriate feeder and support programmes, including from second-level schools and from adult education centres. It also implies ensuring that learners have appropriate scaffolds to enable progression, and the Central Border Region has the potential to offer modules and learning experiences that are based in industry and community settings.

The promotion of equity in education implies specific supports to ensure greater participation by cohorts who are currently underrepresented in third level, including members of the Travelling community, urban residents of a loyalist background and males in general.

### **6.3 Relationship to 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'**

The European Commission identifies education and industry as 'important horizontal enablers' of sustainability and our ecological transition. It notes the significance of research and design in enabling the innovations that will ensure a just and equitable transition. While specialisations in education, research and industry will be enablers of sustainable production and consumption, there is, as the Commission acknowledges, a need to ensure life-long education of citizens / consumers in general about best practices in respect of sustainability. The model of university-level education, envisaged by

ICBAN, offers mechanisms for ongoing engagement in education, the dissemination of information and research outputs to a wider public than has been the case heretofore, and linkages to local infrastructure and assets, including the development of centres of innovation and digital hubs etc.

#### **6.4 Opportunities for Development**

Engaging the region's farmers and agri-processors, together with those in new and emerging sectors (the bioeconomy and creative industries) in life-long and university-level education, expanded training and apprenticeship offerings, will better equip them to promote sustainable practices – including embracing, piloting and developing new technologies and modes of production. A regionalised focus on lifelong and life-wide education with strengthened linkages between primary, secondary and third level would assist the region in addressing some of the geographical pockets of educational under-achievement and social exclusion that persist. A regionally based third-level institution, with strong links to industry and local government, and supported by Regional Skills Fora, would ensure greater profiling of the region – thus contributing to stakeholders' and policy-makers' greater understanding of regional issues, needs, dynamics and potential. In this regard, the reporting in Dáil Eireann in September 2020 that the application for Technological University status by the Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA) is to be submitted by the end of 2020 is to be welcomed.

Investment in education within the region will spawn and sustain creative industries. Anchoring those, among other enterprises, within the region will require the provision of adequate industrial / enterprise space. Local authorities can play an enabling role in that regard – in an independent capacity and / or in collaboration with enterprise bodies.

Opportunities exist to grow the training and apprenticeship programmes in response to the needs of existing and emerging advanced manufacturing clusters in the region, particularly in forward planning for the Mid South West Growth Deal dividend. This will require close collaboration with industry and business to ensure their future needs are catered for. In many instances, this will require investment in micro-credentials rather than multi-annual Degree or Masters programmes. COVID-19 will also, undoubtedly, create an upswing in the already emerging need for upskilling and reskilling in response to the digital transformation underway.

## 7.0 LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

### 7.1 The Rationale for this Objective

While service delivery, particularly for ICBAN member Councils among other public bodies, implies universality, stakeholder consultations have identified the need for bespoke and targeted services for two population cohorts in particular, namely, older people and youth. Consultations also emphasise the importance of growing and sustaining ease of access to public and community services on a cross-border basis. This is particularly the case in health – especially mental health - and education, where several good practices and solid frameworks are already in place – some deriving from the [EU Cross-Border Healthcare Directive](#). The need for comprehensive and seamless service provision is accentuated by demographic variables. The region's population, especially in rural areas, has been ageing and will continue to age more rapidly than in most other parts of the island of Ireland, with the exception of peripheral areas on the west coast. Consequently, needs are emerging and growing in respect of healthcare, respite, social inclusion and transport.

The region's demographic profile is also affected by youth out-migration, as young people have tended to seek third-level education and employment opportunities in the cities. Thus, the delivery of enhanced education services and the rollout of infrastructure (see Chapter 5) to enable more young people to work and study in the region are integral to enabling the Central Border Region to be more demographically sustainable.

Innovations in new technologies and the priorities in respect of infrastructure and economic development, as expressed elsewhere in this document, offer tools and enablers to allow public bodies and commercial entities to provide better services, especially in rural communities. In addition, further investment in the social economy will enable civil society organisations to play an increasingly active role on this front.

### 7.2 Relationship to the 'United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals'

SDG 3 places particular emphasis on youth and older people. It advocates healthy lives and the promotion of wellbeing for all at all ages. Its principles, and the standards advocated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), are reflected in the policies that pertain in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, although their full implementation has been hampered by resource and systemic constraints. Community-based interventions and preventive measures are important in alleviating systemic pressures and in ensuring more effective and targeted service delivery.

SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities, places a strong emphasis on building resilient societies and economies through, for example, creating career and business opportunities, providing safe and affordable housing, ensuring access to safe and sustainable transport systems, delivering universal access to inclusive and accessible green and public spaces and strengthening national and regional development planning. It involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in participatory and inclusive ways.

SDG 16 has a particular, but not exclusive, relevance in Northern Ireland and in border communities. It refers to peaceful and inclusive societies, justice and inclusive institutions. Community development, place-based approaches and civil society engagement in decision-making, service

delivery and governance contribute to inclusion and sustainability. Thus, Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) in Ireland and Community Plans in Northern Ireland, along with the participatory planning being pursued by ICBAN member Councils, should continue to provide frameworks for citizen / community engagement.

### **7.3 Relationship to ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030’**

The European Commission, in this strategy, cites the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and specifically its advocacy of social fairness, equal opportunities, social dialogue, and access to good quality care services, including affordable quality healthcare for all, child and long-term care, housing assistance and other essential services. The Commission also encourages regulators (including local authorities) to work with business and civil society to ensure that sustainable modes of service delivery are the most affordable and effective ones.

### **7.4 Opportunities for Development**

Quality of life and the promotion of citizen / community wellbeing are very much to the fore of local plans across the Central Border Region. Collaborative and inter-agency approaches, including on a cross-border basis, offer service providers new and greater possibilities in terms of sharing information, equipment and resources, as well as co-delivering services.

Government funding mechanisms for sheltered housing and support services for older people are in place, and there is a growing range of assistive technologies to enable independent living. Local authorities from both jurisdictions are engaging with the WHO’s age friendly programme, with Ireland becoming the first country in the world in December 2019, where all local authorities became members of the WHO’s Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities. The Governments are increasingly cognisant of the productive capacity of the social economy sector, and both jurisdictions have formulated policy frameworks and have provided for increased funding to enable community businesses and social economy activities to develop.

Both jurisdictions have policy frameworks in place to support the development of the community and voluntary sector – as a partner in service delivery (in conjunction with public bodies) and / or as an independent deliverer of community-based services. Collaborative structures, such as the Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in Ireland and Community Planning Partnerships in Northern Ireland provide mechanisms to enable reviews / evaluations of service delivery models. These can offer useful feedback and feedforward mechanisms in respect of the optimisation of services.

The aligned functions of local authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in respect of spatial planning can support opportunities for intra-regional approaches to enabling the delivery of accessible and bespoke services.



## 8.0 NATURAL CAPITAL - GREENING THE REGION

### 8.1 The Rationale for this Objective

Green principles and values are manifest throughout this document, and they inform and underpin the priorities that are articulated herein. Like all regions on the island of Ireland and across these islands, there is an ecological, and indeed moral imperative to transition to carbon neutrality and to sustainable modes of production and consumption.

In addition, sustainability implies social solidarity and inclusion – hence the ICBAN emphasis on human resource development and capacity-building, in addition to hard infrastructure. The economic case for sustainability was clearly articulated in the [\*Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change\*<sup>xliv</sup>](#), authored by Sir Nicholas Stern, and published by the UK government (in 2007), this report detailed the economic costs associated with failing to ameliorate climate change. Since then, grassroots movements, particularly by young people have underscored the importance of the green agenda.

Despite failings to ensure a global consensus, the UK and Ireland are among the countries that remain committed to achieving carbon neutrality. In line with the UN maxim ‘Think Global – Act Local’, it behoves the Central Border Region to embrace the green agenda and to promote sustainability in all spheres.

The Central Border area is rich in natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. The value of this natural capital has never been more evident than during the COVID-19 crisis, when it provided the benefits of recreation and well-being. Other benefits, frequently referred to as ecosystem services, include the provision of food, materials, clean water, clean air, climate regulation, flood prevention, and pollination.

### 8.2 Relationship to the ‘United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals’

Carbon neutrality and ecological equilibrium represent the underpinnings of the SDGs. They place a particular onus and responsibility on us, in the West, to change our ways, as our actions are already having severe consequences for populations in developing countries. Thus, the SDGs represent a call and a framework for the promotion of global solidarity. The growing attention being given to the SDGs is ushering in new ways of thinking, including systemic change in industry, education and government. Local government needs to be part of that change.

### 8.3 Relationship to ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030’

Cognisant of the West’s association with the excesses of consumption, the European Commission seeks to be radical in advocating that the EU become a ‘trailblazer’ in sustainability. The forthcoming EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 recognises that nature and, related to this biodiversity, are in crisis – yet these are our biggest ally in addressing climate change. Nature-based solutions such as protecting and restoring wetlands peatlands or reforestation, and the sustainable management of grasslands and agricultural lands, will be essential to reduce harmful emissions and climate adaptation.

In the UK, Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services<sup>xlv</sup>, outlines how international commitments to biodiversity recovery will be delivered, with the core objective of



halting “overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people” (2020: 4)

#### **8.4 Opportunities for Development**

Young people in the Central Border Region, and throughout these islands, have a particular consciousness and an informed scientific knowledge in relation to green issues. They have the capacity to ‘teach’ the rest of society about the changes that need to be made. Thus, by engaging young people more formally in decision-making, regional stakeholders can tap into their energies, insights and commitment. Engagement with young people can also offer mechanisms to future-proof strategies.

The green and circular economy offers opportunities for economic development and the diversification of the regional economic base, and firms across the region can, with appropriate supports, strengthen their capacity to expand along sustainable trajectories. The region’s asset base, and in particular its landscapes and waterways, lends itself to a renewed focus on sustainability, which through Community-Led Local Development and creativity (as exhibited in initiatives such as the Dark Skies Reserve) offers tremendous potential in respect of ecological tourism and farming.

The renewal of towns and villages as innovative centres will represent a significant contribution towards enhancing public realm, thereby improving quality of life and reducing carbon emissions, as citizens are in closer proximity to places of work, commerce, recreation and social engagement. Linked to this is investment in living communities – grounded in sustainable practices (such as Farm to Fork, a proposed catalyst project in Chapter 9) – and natural capital for the range of benefits as outlined above, not least recreation and well-being.

Investing in the region’s green infrastructure, including a network of connected greenways and blueways (as specified in the catalyst projects outlined in Chapter 9) will contribute to local economic development and advance active travel / transport. It is essential that these elements of infrastructure be inter-connected – within the Central Border Region – and complement existing environmental resources, including its heritage and built environment. Among the region’s notable built environment assets are Armagh’s Georgian City, Navan Fort and various *Game of Thrones* sites. Inter-regional green connectivity to Lough Neagh and the Shannon will consolidate the appeal and value of the region’s landscape.

## 9.0 MANAGING AND DELIVERING THE FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES

### 9.1 Implementation Framework and Principles

The next stage, implementation, will necessitate prioritisation of the key ambitions and opportunities. This should be completed through an Action Plan, setting out the targets and resources involved.

The Framework is an initiative for the region. It is not a framework for delivery by ICBAN or by its member local authorities exclusively. To be effective implementation will require a multi-sectoral partnership approach, drawing on a range of expertise, experience and capacities. Those involved are to work to the common purpose and have a sense of real involvement. Their full buy-in and participation is critical to success.

Through such a 'mixed economy' approach, there will be initiatives that are to be led by local authorities, others might be delivered by government development agencies, others by the third level educational institutions, the community and voluntary sectors and some by the private sector. The principles of partnership working, embracing change and adopting creative approaches to complex challenges will be the keys to success.

Whether new structures will be needed to deliver on the ambitions will be the subject of further consideration. In the first instance advocacy and monitoring will be driven by the ICBAN Management Board, working closely with senior officials in member local authorities. Further engagement is welcomed with the governments on advancing these aims and objectives.

If the Framework is to be effective and to make a difference it must:

- Be driven by key stakeholders who embrace the spirit of combined actions and who will provide a leadership thrust as agents of change;
- Enable the Central Border Region to speak with a single strategic 'voice' on the priorities for the area;
- Form the core of an evidence informed lobbying approach to the Governments of ROI, NI, UK and to the EU, and other authorities who can allocate funds to the area;
- Link into and complement the spatial, economic, social and community planning of the local authorities involved;
- Be the subject of rigorous and timely monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the Framework; and
- Help to integrate and make more effective public and private investment across the region.

### 9.2 Anticipated Outcomes

The following table presents the anticipated outcomes by 2027, in respect of each of thematic foci. These represent the headline evaluation indicators that ICBAN can use to monitor its progress in delivering the associated actions.

Pillars	2027 Outcomes
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded provision of industrial and R&amp;D Space</li> <li>• Enhanced linkages between industry and education / training providers</li> <li>• Greater supports for new product development, firm diversification, the embracing of AI / new technologies and the bioeconomy</li> </ul>
Infrastructure and Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider and swifter broadband rollout and uptake – enabling rural economic development</li> <li>• Enhanced inter-regional and intra-regional connectivity</li> <li>• More sustainable and efficient transport / transit options – for commuters, industry and visitors</li> </ul>
Human Capital – Education, Training and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skill levels in the region’s population</li> <li>• Attraction, retention and inter-cultural integration of migrant workers</li> </ul>
Liveable Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater efficiencies and more innovations in service delivery</li> <li>• Increased complementarity and alignment between all tiers in planning from local / community to the RDS and RSES</li> <li>• Wider adoption of new technologies in the delivery of services and the promotion of more user-friendly service delivery models</li> <li>• Strengthened youth participation in decision-making and regional governance</li> </ul>
Greening the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced carbon / ecological footprint</li> <li>• More vibrant town and village centres with mixed uses and enhanced public realm</li> <li>• Trailblazer and show case projects – symbolising the region’s just transition</li> <li>• Expanded tourist offering and greater complementarity and synergies between tourism brands, and between tourism, farming and ecology</li> </ul>

### 9.3 Regional Priorities and Catalyst Projects

The aforementioned imperatives associated with the production of this framework document had a mobilising effect on regional actors, and all agencies / organisations have been obliged to review their strategic approaches and to consider their trajectories for the coming years. At the same time, however, actors, and in particular those in local government have been intensely preoccupied by the effective delivery of frontline services in 2020, and have been obliged to do so in an unprecedented and challenging context. In formulating this document, ICBAN sought to consult with stakeholders and it is essential that all local authorities and other strategic partners be enabled to actively contribute

to ensuring that this framework remains relevant and applicable – underpinned by local ownership and a shared regional vision.

ICBAN's Management Board played an important leadership role in the process. In summer 2020, ICBAN Board members and staff, along with senior local authority staff participated in a bespoke training and capacity-building programme, called Border Animator. This was delivered by the ICLRD, and it represents a significant investment in the professional development and capacity of the cross-border organisation. The interactive training programme afforded a forum in which to discuss regional issues and priorities, and these are reflected in this document. This document also reflects the deliberations of Council Senior Officers (CSO Forum members), as articulated at regularly convened workshops through 2019 and 2020.

While acknowledging the frontline pressures on local authorities, ICBAN, through the ICLRD, issued a survey questionnaire to local authorities to enable them to identify specific regional priorities and flagship projects. The decision to do so arose from the training programme, which, while noting the merits of the various proposals in the first draft of the Framework for Regional Priorities, recommended prioritising and streamlining strategic actions. Given the timing of this survey-based consultation, and the contemporaneous competing pressures on the sector, the ICLRD recommends further and ongoing systemic dialogue and engagement with all local authority stakeholders, particularly senior staff, to ensure regional embeddedness and buy-in.

The following tables present, in sequence, the strategic priorities under each of the Framework's thematic areas:

### **Economic Development**

<b>Priorities</b>
Enable greater remote working within the region - excellent infrastructure, including hubs
Expand the regional tourist offering – in partnership with the north coast, north-west and inland waterways – focusing particularly on eco-tourism and landscapes
Work with local authorities, statutory bodies and the private sector to increase the provision of additional industrial spaces (for manufacturing and other economic activities)
Support collaboration between industry and higher / further education (especially in engineering and food businesses)
Stimulate and support the development and expansion of the bioeconomy – to increase industrial output and promote research & development (R&D)
Increase business support infrastructure – including mentoring
Promote energy efficiency among businesses and enable the region to exploit opportunities in renewables and sustainable building techniques

### **Infrastructure and Connectivity**

<b>Priorities</b>
Improve broadband connectivity
Work to ensure enhanced inter-regional road infrastructure (A5 / N2 and N16 / A4 etc.)
Support and encourage the roll out, maintenance and promotion of blueway and greenway infrastructure (Ulster Canal, Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway) on a regional scale
Promote active travel - walking and cycling

## Human Capital – education, training and skills

Priorities
Promote innovations in the bioeconomy
Capitalise on the forthcoming technological university (Connacht-Ulster)
Enhance linkages between all tiers in the education system

## Liveable Communities

Priorities
Promote the application of Smart Villages across the region, and enable towns and villages to leverage support
Advocate and promote the consolidation of town centres / cores
Expand rural transport services (e.g., Rural Lift)
Independent living and community-based housing for older persons
Advocate and promote walkable neighbourhoods

## Natural Capital – greening the region

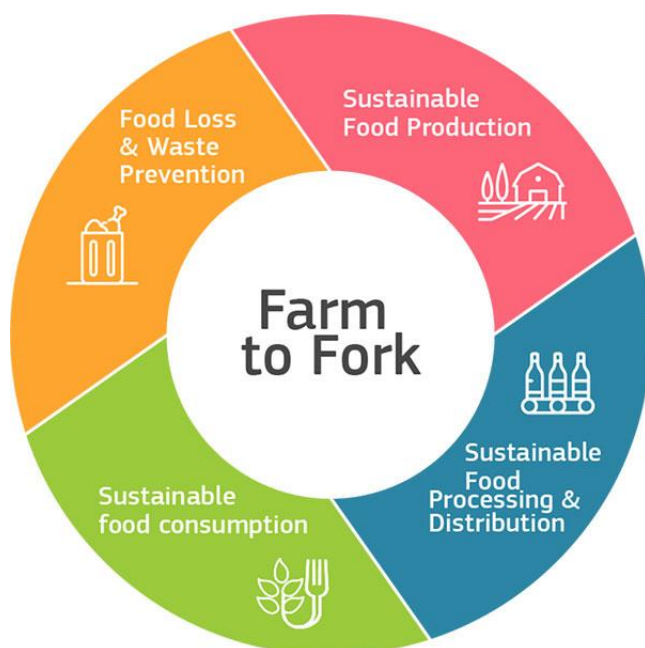
Priorities
Promote opportunities in the green economy and circular economy
Support the development of regional / cross—border landscape conservation initiatives e.g., Sliabh Beagh Geopark / Conservation Area
Lead cross-boundary River Catchment Management Plans – to improve water quality and stimulate rural economic diversification
Increase the region’s biodiversity in collaboration with communities, landowners, agencies and local government

While these priorities align with the five pillars under which the *Framework for Regional Priorities* is organised, they are cross-cutting and their realisation will require inter-sectoral collaboration. By the same token, their impacts will be manifest across the dimensions of sustainable development – economic, socio-cultural and environmental. As noted during the training and capacity-building programme (summer 2020), ICBAN Board members advocated the advancement of a select number of catalyst projects, initially, that would deliver cross-cutting outputs and have impacts across the five thematic areas, and which would stimulate new projects – by the statutory, private and community / voluntary sectors. The following are the proposed catalyst projects.

## Catalyst 1: Farm to Fork

The [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) is at the heart of the European Green Deal<sup>4</sup>, aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly. It recognises the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet (European Commission, 2020). The EU Biodiversity Strategy, published alongside Farm to Fork, includes an ambitious action plan to halt biodiversity loss in Europe which is key to a resilient food system. The importance of a robust and resilient food system and food security – that includes access to affordable food – has been brought to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic; there is increasing evidence that our current food system accounts for “nearly one-third of global GHG emissions, consumes large amounts of natural resources, results in biodiversity loss and negative health impacts (due to both under- and over-nutrition) and does not allow fair economic returns and livelihoods for all actors, in particular for primary producers” ([https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en)). The [UK Agriculture Bill](#) (2019-21) contains similar provisions.

In response, and in building on the experiences in rural communities, not least those enabled under Pillar II measures of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), the EU has proposed and is advocating an integrated policy and practice model as illustrated below. This approach recognises the importance of collaboration between all stakeholders in the food industry – farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, the hospitality sector and consumers. There are pre-existing food networks in the Central Border Region, and there is scope, over the coming years, to strengthen these and to improve inter-stakeholder collaboration and to promote regional food initiatives.



As noted by the European Commission, “putting our food systems on a sustainable path requires new opportunities for operators in the food value chain”. Within the Central Border Region, there is already a strong base on which to develop and market ‘place’, based on quality food production,

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2020) *A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 20.5.2020, COM(2020) 381 final.

preparation and presentation; this base includes a number of organic farms, major food producers, centres of further education and internationally-renowned restaurants and bistros. [Taste of Cavan](#), for example, started in 2012 as a showcase for local produce in the Cavan area. Over the years the festival has become a platform for producers to showcase their wares to tens of thousands of local consumers, and has proved to be a fertile ground for doing business. Other food-based festivals celebrating the region's offerings include Flavour of Tyrone, Armagh's Food and Cider Festival, and the Donegal Food Festival.

A value added feature of Farm to Fork is that it goes beyond creating a robust and resilient food system and ensuring food security, it also contributes to climate adaptation, supports the bioeconomy and circular economy and halts biodiversity decline. It leads to investments in knowledge and innovation centres to facilitate new thinking in the agri-food sector. It builds partnerships between farmers, fisherman, and scientists. It creates opportunities for new businesses in the area of agri-tourism, gourmet trails and nutrition and healthy living.

## Catalyst 2: Greenways and Blueways

Across the island of Ireland, and internationally, outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector. The provision of greenways is an integral component of that sector, playing a key role in not only reinvigorating underused and historic transport infrastructure, such as canal towpaths and old railways, but also in safeguarding important habitats, and providing corridors for wildlife and people (McClelland, 2016)<sup>5</sup>. Research by Fáilte Ireland (2013)<sup>6</sup> on adventure tourism highlighted that, for cycling / walking routes, key issues were:

- Beautiful scenery and landscape (a top priority for the overseas and domestic markets);
- Preference for traffic free and safe cycling routes (reflecting the large proportion of the market that travels with children);
- Access to towns and villages and attractive cities and towns, offering a range of things to see and do; and
- As 41% of the potential domestic market and 38% of the potential overseas market for cycling in Ireland travel with children, the importance of delivering trails which cater to the needs of a family.

In addition, international evidence suggests that a higher demand for cycle tourism occurs where good cycling networks are already in place, such as in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Quite apart from its social, environmental, and health benefits, there is an increasing recognition of its economic potential. As noted in the ICLRD Report, *Cross-Border Greenways and Cycle Routes on the Island of Ireland: A review of policies and future opportunities in the development of a regional network*, “the creation of long-distance greenway and cycle routes, particularly in rural areas, not only enhances the visitor attractions and existing tourist facilities within the vicinity of the route, but they also become destinations and reasons to visit in their own right” (McClelland, 2014: 20)<sup>7</sup>.

Of significance to the Central Border Region is the signal of both governments – via the new Programme for Government (2020) and *New Decade, New Approach* (2020) – of future investment in greenways, specifically the Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway (subject to feasibility). Investment in this Greenway, as part of a wider vision for a regional greenway network centred on the Central Border Region, with spurs into the North West and Eastern Corridors, has the potential to be a catalyst for sustainable regional growth and development, and synergies will be maximised where the infrastructure intersects with and complements existing and new blueway offerings and other elements of outdoor recreation. As demonstrated by other greenway projects, it is essential that such infrastructure be part of a web of developments, rather than a transit corridor.

The Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway centres on 72km of the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties (SLNCR) railway. Envisaged as a multi-use trail for cyclists, walkers and the mobility challenged, the project is

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<sup>5</sup> McClelland, A. (2016) ‘Every Turn of the Wheel is a Revolution’: Towards the Development of a Cross-Border Greenways and Cycle-Route Network in the Irish Border Region. *Borderlands: The Journal of Spatial Planning in Ireland*, 5: 20-33. ISSN 9781906879167

<sup>6</sup> This research report can be accessed at:

<https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/In%20Your%20Sector/Cycling-Market-Research-2013.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> McClelland, A. (2014) *Cross-Border Greenways and Cycle Routes on the Island of Ireland: A review of policies and future opportunities in the development of a regional network*. Armagh: ICLRD.



currently costed in the region of Stg£11million. In July 2020, the Irish Government announced €500,000 funding to take a section of the greenway, Sligo Town to Blacklion, to statutory process.



(Source: <https://www.impartialreporter.com/news/14430218.greenway-cycle-route-from-sligo-to-enniskillen-pedals-on-to-second-stage/>, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016)

Research on greenways clearly demonstrates that the length of a greenway directly impacts on the time and money spent in the locale. On its own, the Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway has the potential to be a positive sub-regional catalyst project. The benefit to the wider Central Border Region comes from building an inter-connected network of greenways. There are, for example, a number of greenways currently underway – or in development stage – that could intersect with the Sligo-Enniskillen Greenway:

- Enniskillen to Clones Greenway: a 35km route from Enniskillen to Clones via Maguiresbridge and Lisnaskea;
- Omagh to Enniskillen Greenway: a 43km route from Omagh to Enniskillen via Fintona and Ballinamallard;
- Lough Erne Greenway: a 24km route from a junction between Trillick and Ballinamallard to Pettigo and Belleek, and from here on into Donegal and the towns of Ballyshannon and Bundoran on the Atlantic coast;
- Ulster Canal Greenway: incl. a 22km section from Smithboro to Middletown and a 14km section from Clones to Smithboro (at various stages in their development);
- Sligo Greenway: a 35.5km stretch of the Collonee to Bellaghy, County Sligo /Charlestown, County Mayo;
- Cavan Railway Greenway: a 26km section from the Ulster Canal Greenway north of Castle Saunderson, and with a link to the Cavan-Leitrim Greenway; and
- Cavan-Leitrim Greenway: a 41km route between Mohill and Belturbet; with work already commenced on a 16km stretch between Ballinamore – Aughawillan – Ballyconnell.

Building on work commenced by the NWRA (previously the Border Regional Authority) in 2011/12, there is a role for ICBAN to support the local authorities in the development of a connected greenway network across the Central Border area, with the necessary services and attractions in place to ensure the sustainability of this multi-faceted asset.

### Catalyst 3: River Catchments Sustainability

The Central Border Region contains several significant river catchments and sub-catchments, many of which straddle the border. The Erne is the largest of these, and it includes parts of Cavan, Fermanagh & Omagh and Donegal.

Catchment geographies are increasingly advocated in promoting collaborative and multi-stakeholder engagements. Catchments generally extend from upland rural areas to lowland urban and coastal communities, and they represent a shared space in which diverse stakeholders have a common interest in a mutual resource that is integral to human health and sustainable development. Catchment-based approaches allow for alliance building and partnership working, and catchment management approaches deliver ecological and economic gains. Farmer participation in agri-environmental programmes at catchment level incentivises conservation and benefits rural economies. Lowland and urban communities come to recognise and appreciate the conservation efforts of upland communities and inter-community collaboration is engendered. In many instances, the solutions to lowland problems, including flooding, are found upstream. Catchment-based initiatives have spawned the emergence of lakes and rivers trusts, including in the Erne Catchment. Moreover, inter-local authority collaborations are already underway to improve and safeguard water quality in the region. Thus, there are institutional and community-led efforts in place, which ICBAN can support in advancing the rollout of its natural capital initiatives.

The formulation of a Catchment Sustainability Plan to imagine a shared vision for the Upper Erne would provide a coalescing framework for the mobilisation of stakeholders, the leveraging of resources and the delivery of complementary greenway and blueway infrastructure. The formulation of any catchment sustainability plan for the Upper Erne should form part of a broader natural capital framework. Given the rich diversity of the region's landscape (lakelands, mountains/uplands, boglands, heathlands, coast/marine) and flora and fauna, such a framework would provide the region with a baseline of existing and potential environmental or 'ecosystem' services. Adopting such an approach is "about thinking of nature as an asset, or set of assets that benefit people. The ability of natural capital assets to provide goods and services is determined by their quality, quantity and location" (DEFRA, 2020<sup>8</sup>). The value of an area's natural capital was never being more evident as now - having been brought more fully to light during the pandemic.

In the context of local and regional development and regeneration, natural capital forms an integral part of the infrastructure that underpins desirable, liveable places. Establishing a natural capital framework for the Central Border Region would benefit all local authorities in the area by providing a key evidence-base on the value added that natural capital can bring to the policy environment (see Annex 3).

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<sup>8</sup> Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (2020) *Enabling a Natural Capital Approach: Guidance for policy and decision makers to help them consider the value of a natural capital approach*. London: Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Catalyst 4: A Thriving Regional Bioeconomy

Harnessing the natural bioeconomy to its full potential, in a sustainable way, can contribute significantly to rural development objectives. As noted by Teagasc, the bioeconomy is fundamentally a strategy for sustainable growth. It includes activities such as producing food, fuel, feed, fibre and fertiliser (the 5Fs), creating jobs - particularly in rural areas, and doing this in a way that enhances the soil, protects biodiversity and supports climate action.

While the transition to a bioeconomy across the island of Ireland is at a very early stage, the [Action Plan for Rural Development 2017](#) considers how it can contribute to growing (inter)national imperatives such as decarbonisation, sustainable growth and job creation in the agricultural, industrial and technological sectors in rural areas. Growing the bioeconomy is also integral to delivery of SDG 12, ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns. The UK's [Bioeconomy Strategy, 2018-2030](#), building on the already 5.2m jobs supported by the sector (est. in 2014), addresses key challenges in food, chemicals, materials, energy production, health and the environment. Aligned to the UK's Industrial Strategy to maximise the opportunities for UK industry from the global shift to a low carbon resource efficient economy, the strategy's vision is to ensure the UK becomes a global leader in developing, manufacturing, using and exporting bio-based solutions that improve lives, strengthen the UK economy and move the UK towards a low carbon future.

Growing the bioeconomy of the island of Ireland, particularly in the agri-food sector, is identified across a range of government strategies, North and South, as playing a key role in rural economic diversification. Drawing on key sectors of the Central Border Region's economy, the higher and further education expertise there, and the diverse industrial base, key elements of the bioeconomy that could be progressed include:

- Sustainability and the Future of Food; recognising that “the agri-food sector in both Northern Ireland and Ireland serves as a vital component of the domestic economy and is the largest cross-border trading sector on the island of Ireland” (Centre for Cross Border Studies, 2016: 3); and
- Innovations in food technology; building on the potential of the Bioconnect Innovation Centre and MBio in Monaghan, which are leading the creation of an active biotechnology cluster in the Border Region<sup>9</sup>.

In advancing the bioeconomy, opportunities also exist in the development of biofuels/bioenergy and in the promotion of low carbon construction materials across residential, commercial and industrial buildings designed to release little or no carbon over their lifetimes. In relation to the latter, and the significance of construction firms in the Central Border area, there are opportunities to contribute to the growth of the green economy by bringing all stakeholders in the lifecycle of a building (from conception to build, to fit-out and retrofitting) to the table, to consider opportunities for more sustainable building practices.

There are key roles for ICBAN in documenting international innovations in the bioeconomy, and working with all local authorities to identify how the region can become a leader in progressing those strands of the bioeconomy, where the area has the relevant natural assets.

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<sup>9</sup> Centre for Cross Border Studies (2016), *A Study of Cross-Border Flows Within the Agri-Food Sector*, Armagh: CCBS.

## Catalyst 5: International Mountain Biking Destination

As part of the growth in outdoor tourism and activities, the island of Ireland has witnessed a growth in mountain bike trails of varying length and difficulty. The growth in mountain biking is recognised as bringing many benefits – in terms of health, economy and environment; ranging from promotion of a healthy lifestyle (for both physical and mental health), increasing tourism in an area and the associated economic benefits that go with that, enhanced awareness of environmental assets and the threats they face, and diversification of land-use.

The potential for a regionally and nationally significant project of scale in the Central Border Region is made attractive by the learning stemming from the ambitions of the ‘Destination Borderlands’ initiative in the border region between England and Scotland, where a state of the art mountain biking centre is being planned. Other examples of mountain biking initiatives, some crossing borders, of note include:

- [Borderlands Mountain Bike Project](#) across Québec, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont (Canada/USA), involving eight destinations across three states, a province, and two jurisdictions;
- The [Ballyhoura Mountain Bike](#) trails offer 92km of trails that traverses the Cork – Limerick border. This local development project has spawned other rural tourism projects locally;
- [BikePark Wales](#) is home to the UK's greatest and most diverse selection of all weather mountain bike trails; with on-site services including a vehicular uplift service to transport users / visitors to the top of the trails, bike and equipment hire, coaching, guiding and an on-site café; and
- Within the Czech Republic, the [Bohemian Tour](#) is situated in northern and eastern Bohemia and includes several trail centres as well as picturesque valleys with sandstone rocks and remarkable natural trails. The ‘Singltrek pod Smrkem’ is one of the well-known single-trail destinations on the Czech-Polish border, and is one of the Czech mountain trail biking jewels.

The development of a regionally significant mountain biking trail(s) in the Central Border Region is already aided by the existence of both well-established and newer trails, for example:

- [Davagh Forest](#), located close to Cookstown and managed by Mid-Ulster District Council with a range of trails including a 16km ‘red trail’;
- [Gortin Mountain Bike Trail](#) located close to Omagh, which in its current phase involves the development of 12km of both ‘blue’ and red’ trails to complement existing trails incl. a downhill course;
- [Blessingbourne Mountain Bike Trail](#) located on a private estate in the picturesque Clogher Valley, which caters for mountain bikers of all ages and abilities with a range of wide flowing blue trails and more technical red trails packed full of exciting trail features such as berms, log rides and rock drops;
- and [Coolaney Mountain Bike Trail](#) located in Sligo which as part of its Phase 1 build includes a 16.5km trail broken down into a mix of ‘blue’, ‘red’ and ‘black’ tracks that eventually will range from 3km to 22km.

This is a rich resource upon which the Central Border Region has the opportunity to build upon; with increasing evidence that where there is a sufficient offering (package) in place, mountain bikers will travel internationally for new experiences and thrills.

## **ANNEXES**

## ANNEX 1: THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR THE CENTRAL BORDER REGION

This section, compiled specifically by ICBAN, sets out the strategic context for the Central Border Region and how actors intend to work together to achieve the vision. It is built on:

- An understanding of the relationships between the RSF, the *Framework of Regional Priorities* and key strategies and policies at international, national, regional and local levels; and
- A consideration of the potential impact of Brexit.

### The Framework of Regional Priorities and the Policies and Strategies of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The *Framework of Regional Priorities* is a follow-up to the 'Regional Strategic Framework for the Central Border Region' (RSF), which was published in 2013. The original RSF project was funded by the INTERREG IVA Programme, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, and was the first concerted attempt to develop a sub-regional border plan, which married high-level and local ambitions in a cross-border environment.

In recent years, the challenges of globalisation, the need to embrace sustainable development more proactively, political changes on the island and the advent of Brexit require that these strategic ambitions be reflected upon. This Framework is a response to this need.

There are two important high-level intervention policies, which must be considered for the region. In Ireland, the 'Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework' (NPF) will guide high-level strategic planning and development for the country over the next 20+ years, so that growth is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms. In Northern Ireland, the Regional Development Strategy (to 2035) considers spatial development implications. The principles of these documents, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and related EU frameworks and policies, together with the identified needs of the Central Border Region, have been among the principal building blocks of this Framework document.

The history of collaboration and joint-working in the Central Border Region means that the local authorities and stakeholders, in the area, can confidently step up to deliver on the three key areas of focus for cross-border working as set out in the NPF chapter on 'Working with our Neighbours' (2018):

- Regional co-operation arrangements;
- Joint initiatives; and
- Co-ordinated spatial planning.

As previously mentioned, in 2013, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (now Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government) in Ireland and the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland (now Department for Infrastructure) agreed a 'Framework for Co-operation - Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland'. The [Framework for Co-operation](#) examines the key planning challenges faced in the two jurisdictions and identifies the potential for non-statutory collaboration in spatial planning to mutual benefit. The *Framework for Co-operation* described this (regional level) form of working together as Level 2 Co-operation, where local authorities North and South are 'responsible for achieving national

and regional spatial planning objectives through the delivery of local plans, programmes and projects that are well integrated in a cross-border context'.<sup>10</sup>

In February 2019, a delegation from ICBAN and the member Councils of the Region gave evidence to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. This focused on seventeen Strategic Regional Priorities, which underpin development needs for the area. Subsequently the Irish Government Committee have endorsed these priorities by setting these out in the Report recommendations, 'Communities and Cross-Border Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities'<sup>11</sup>. This report stated, "The Committee endorses the role of local authorities along the border in developing a bottom-up needs-based strategy for the Border Corridor to offset the challenges and identify any opportunities associated with Brexit".<sup>12</sup> In addition, alignments with the NI draft Industrial Strategy and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's 'Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy' are important.

### **The Framework of Regional Priorities and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

The aforementioned Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy published by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, entitled 'Region in Transition – The Way Forward', highlights inequalities (for the area encompassing the five county councils), in comparison to national investments in health, education, infrastructure and transport. The 'In Transition' title refers to the new EU designation for the assembly area.

Key findings note that the region has received just €87,240 per km investment in national roads, compared to a national average of €116,054. Investment in third-level infrastructure per student stood at €141, compared to the national average of €197.

The NWRA calls for an official policy of positive discrimination in regional investments and it highlights eleven recommendations, not dissimilar to those noted in this cross-border framework. The ambitions are for a region that is more urban, networked, digitally smart and vibrant.

The implementation of these various high-level national and regional strategies, in tandem, and across economic development, spatial planning, environmental management and infrastructure provision, will help to more confidently meet the challenges facing the island.

### **The Framework of Regional Priorities and International Sustainable Development Goals**

There are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and these were ratified by all 193 United Nations (UN) member states in 2015. The Goals are part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They seek to tackle a wide range of issues facing both developed and developing countries. These issues include poverty, inequality, climate change, inclusive societies and access to health and education. This document emphasises their inter-connectedness – not just to

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<sup>10</sup> Framework for Co-operation: Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland (Page 29)

<sup>11</sup> The Committee's report can be accessed at:

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_the\\_good\\_friday\\_agreement/reports/2019/2019-10-24\\_report-on-communities-and-cross-border-cooperation-challenges-and-opportunities\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_the_implementation_of_the_good_friday_agreement/reports/2019/2019-10-24_report-on-communities-and-cross-border-cooperation-challenges-and-opportunities_en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement: Communities and Cross-Border Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities, August 2019 (Page 7)



one another, but to significant international and EU frameworks, including ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe for 2030’. This EU framework emphasises the urgency of an ecological transition, coupled with social protection. It envisions the policy foundations for a sustainable future, within which the Region can develop.

### **The Framework of Regional Priorities and EU Cohesion Policy**

ICBAN has also considered current EU Cohesion Policy. In exiting the European Union, the UK will be working to develop a new relationship with the 27 member states. Brexit presents NI with a unique perspective in what has been termed ‘a place between’ the UK and EU, in having membership of both UK and EU Customs Unions (subject to full application of the UK withdrawal agreement). The ambitions of this Framework must therefore be closely aligned with the policy priorities of EU Cohesion Policy: a Smarter Europe; a Greener and Carbon-free Europe; a more Connected Europe; a more Social Europe; and a Europe closer to citizens - by supporting locally led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

### **The Framework of Regional Priorities and Local Strategies**

Local development plans, strategies and priorities are an important input to the *Framework of Regional Priorities*, providing a bottom-up complement to the top-down perspectives, which arise from EU and Governmental strategies and priorities.

The development of the *Framework of Regional Priorities* will enable local authorities, on both sides of the border, to enhance opportunities for joint working, given that, in recent years, there has been a greater convergence of functions and roles. Local authorities are now expected to play a more proactive role in supporting economic development and job creation in their areas and wider regions. This is done in a number of ways, including through local capital investments, economic and community planning, and the provision of goods, services and community infrastructure. However, it is acknowledged that many of the major issues affecting local area development are contingent on national policy and government funding.

In the course of this project, key local strategies for each of the member Council areas have been reviewed and analysed, including, Local Economic and Community Plans (RoI), Community Plans (NI), Council Corporate Plans, Economic Development Strategies and County Development Plans.

All of the Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs) / Community Plans (CPs), across the ICBAN Region, present a range of proposals to help achieve a number of Government priorities and address inherent structural regional weaknesses. The common strands, namely, economic, socio-cultural and environmental, are brought together in an integrated way. Community planning powers granted to local authorities and their partner stakeholders harness unique geographical perspectives that provide an enhanced facilitative role to guide local delivery.

In 2018, ICBAN completed a detailed mapping exercise of the LECPs and CPs across the region. The findings demonstrate that there are many similarities across the pillars referenced therein. The findings also provide reassurance that the respective areas are all coming from a common basis and sets of objectives, albeit with bespoke responses to local conditions. In both jurisdictions, this *Framework of Regional Priorities* can represent an important input and complement to the community planning processes.

## **The Framework of Regional Priorities and UK City Growth Deal Ambitions**

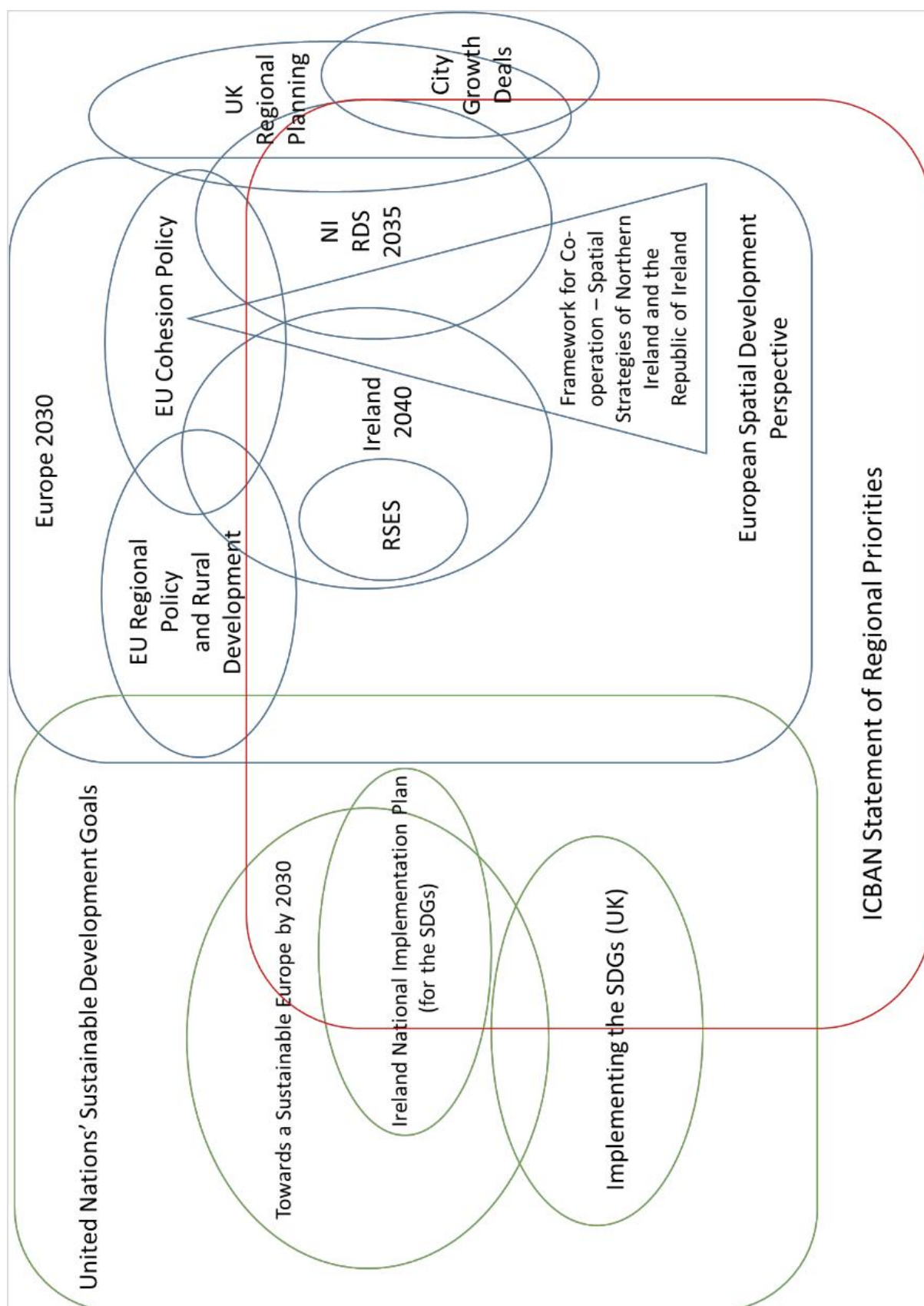
The ambitions being promoted by the Mid Southern and West Councils Group (which includes the Councils of Mid Ulster; Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon; and Fermanagh & Omagh) as part of a City Growth Deal bid to the UK Exchequer, have been considered. In October 2018, work began towards a Growth Deal bid to boost economic growth and deliver a step change to the future prospects of the three councils' area. This highlights the importance of enhancing productivity, innovation and exporting - through the utilisation of a smart specialisation approach i.e. focusing on key clusters/sectors, based on the region's strengths.

During the period of this *Framework of Regional Priorities*, Councils in the Central Border Region will have the opportunity to learn from each other's approaches and to share strategic and operational perspectives around an enhanced range of issues and functions, including the potential for joint initiatives. These include the following: emergency services; arts, heritage and culture; recreation services; tourism; and environmental and technical services.

The *Framework of Regional Priorities*, together with the RSF, provides an agenda for the development of such shared perspectives and the development of joint strategies and initiatives. The convergence of functions in relation to economic development enables the councils in the Region to deliver many of the actions highlighted in the Framework. However, further detailed work is required to identify the full potential of joint working by Councils to realise cross-border development opportunities and priorities.

The implementation of these various high level national and regional strategies, in tandem, and across economic development, spatial planning, environmental management and infrastructure provision, will help to more confidently meet the challenges facing the Central Border Region. Figure 2.1 below maps the relationships between this Framework and the key statutory policies, strategies and planning frameworks, which are impacting on the area.

Fig. 2.1: Nested Arrangements – Environmental and Planning Policy Frameworks



## Meeting the Challenges and Opportunities of Brexit

Research conducted by ICBAN, working with Queen's University Belfast during each of the past three years, has identified how sensitive businesses and citizens of the Region feel about the advent of Brexit and the ways in which the UK Government handled the border issue<sup>13</sup>. Concerns have been widely expressed about delivering Brexit against the backdrop of political instability. Research by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) on the Border Corridor examined the regional weaknesses and vulnerabilities, whereby small numbers of entrepreneurial firms are strongly reliant on the island economy and access to the Single Market and Customs Union, and are those, which a poorly-managed UK exit from the EU could turn a spotlight upon.

The economic outlook is uncertain due, in part, to Brexit. A best-case scenario presented by UUEPC is one in which smooth border management ensures continued free cross-border movement for residents, goods and services, and any opportunities arising can be realised through investment in areas such as infrastructural connectivity, increased supports for small businesses and the continuation of various funding streams.

It is incumbent on both governments that they must put in place adequate measures and actions that will both mitigate the challenges and exploit the opportunities that Brexit will bring to this Region.

At the time of writing, the UK government has formally adopted the Withdrawal Agreement to exit the EU. A challenging one-year timeframe has been set to conclude a new free trade agreement between the EU and the UK. There are still many unknowns affecting the Region's future in relation to Brexit and further insight and detail are required to fully determine the extent of such challenges and opportunities.

Pre-existing infrastructural weaknesses must be addressed through a range of interventions, to ensure the region is best placed to confidently meet the challenges of Brexit. Doing so will help transform the economic context within which this area operates.

To better enable the region to rise to the challenges the following Brexit specific recommendations are made:

- Regional and sub-regional structures should be utilised so that the challenges and opportunities stemming from Brexit are identified and addressed in a timely, collaborative and effective manner;
- A specific territorial policy framework is required to support co-ordinated growth in the existing functional relationships across the border region;
- The appropriate supports must be provided to broaden what is a solid but relatively narrow economic base, and to attend to obstacles and opportunities that will be presented in areas of trade, retail and tourism. One such high priority must be the creation of higher skilled jobs to help stem the flow of young educated people out of the area;
- The requisite investments must be made into the pre-existing connectivity infrastructure weaknesses, to help manage the consequences of the United Kingdom leaving the European

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<sup>13</sup> <http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Bordering-On-Brexit-FINAL-Nov-17.pdf>;  
<http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Brexit-at-the-Border-FINAL-Jun-18.pdf>;  
[http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TheBorderIntoBrexit\\_Report-Dec-2019.pdf](http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TheBorderIntoBrexit_Report-Dec-2019.pdf)

Union, and ensure strong links along the border are maintained. These will help maintain a seamless border arrangement, lessen journey times for freight and commuters, and to take advantage of digital developments opportunities arising from the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution;

- Continuing availability of EU (or alternative UK/Irish government) structural funding and investments for key sectors including agriculture, are seen as critical by communities across the border region;
- Further research into how the border region and its businesses can take advantage of the opportunities being presented through NI becoming what has been termed as ‘a place between’ UK and EU and having in effect dual Customs Union memberships (EU and UK), whilst being the connecting point between the UK and EU/Irish land border. Managing and maintaining important established North-South and East-West linkages and ensuring against any new arising back-to-back developments will also be key factors that need to be considered and articulated accordingly by the cross-border partnership and its member Councils; and
- Partnership between various stakeholders along the border must be utilised on issues including the delivery of spatial plans to drive developments affecting both sides of the border.

### **Working with Other Areas and Partnerships**

The Central Border Region is an outward-looking region, and ICBAN seeks to embrace and enhance its connections across the border region, on the island of Ireland, in an East-West context with Britain, and internationally, in delivering on these strategic ambitions.

The Central Border Region is one of three sub-regions, which make up the Ireland / Northern Ireland border corridor area, along with the North West and Eastern border regions. As and when necessary the three cross-border networks have worked together and delivered results for the wider border area. ICBAN is committed to delivering for the Central Border Region area, which is the organisation’s primary remit, but will also work strategically in the interests of the entire border area, along with fellow networks, the East Border Region and the North West Strategic Growth Partnership. This Framework is a peer-level document to the strategies of the North West and East Border regions.

ICBAN has engaged, and will continue to engage, in partnership working and joint ventures with organisations and businesses outside of our region and beyond our shores, where there are similar interests and opportunities to be realised in pooling strengths and resources, for the benefit of the Central Border Region.

## ANNEX 2: DEMOGRAPHIC AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

### 2.1: Total Populations in the local authority areas that form the ICBAN Region

Area	Population 2001/2002	Population 2011	Population 2016	Population 2018	Population Change 2011 -2016/2018	Population Densities/person per km <sup>2</sup> 2016/2018
Cavan	56,546	73,183	76,176		4.1	41.4
Donegal	137,575	161,137	159,192		-1.2	33.6
Leitrim	25,799	31,798	32,044		0.8	21.5
Monaghan	52,593	60,483	61,386		1.5	48.7
Sligo	58,200	65,393	65,535		0.2	36.9
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon	176,326	200,298		214,100	6.9	149.2
Fermanagh & Omagh	105,480	113,501		116,800	2.9	41.3
Mid Ulster	120,092	139,011		147,400	6.0	74.5
Region	732,611	844,804		872,633	3.2	50.3
Rol	3,917,203	4,588,252	4,761,865		3.8	70.0
Northern Ireland	1,685,267	1,810,863		1,881,700	3.9	133.2

### 2.2: Number of employees by firm size in each local authority area

Area	Number of Employees				Total number of firms
	0-9	10-49	50-249	250+	
Cavan	3,739	252	51	5	4,047
Donegal	7,467	580	83	5	8,135
Leitrim	1,862	33	11	0	1,906
Monaghan	3,015	250	49	3	3,317
Sligo	3,102	192	32	5	3,331
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon	7,890	665	130	30	8,715
Fermanagh & Omagh	7,715	415	60	10	8,200
Mid Ulster	8,325	585	130	15	9,055
Region	43,115	2,972	546	73	46,706
Rol	249,690	17,713	3,154	609	271,166
NI	67,285	6,535	1,370	305	75,485



### ANNEX 3: HOW NATURE-BASED APPROACHES CAN SUPPORT POLICY GOALS

Policy area / goal	How natural capital can contribute
Supporting physical health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-based recreation (various habitats)</li> <li>• Settings for walking and cycling routes</li> <li>• Removal of air pollution</li> </ul>
Improving mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-based recreation for different ages</li> <li>• Mitigation of road traffic noise</li> <li>• Incorporating views of greenspace from schools, hospitals, workplaces</li> <li>• Nature volunteering and green prescriptions</li> </ul>
Productivity and industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature-based tourism and outdoor leisure</li> <li>• Greenspace amenity in workplaces</li> <li>• Cooling effect of urban green and blue space during extreme temperatures (mitigating output loss)</li> </ul>
Housing and place-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of recreation and amenity</li> <li>• Contribution to sense of place</li> <li>• Mitigation of pollution pressures from new development</li> <li>• Streamlined approaches to compensating for biodiversity loss</li> </ul>
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland creation</li> <li>• Saltmarsh creation</li> <li>• Peatland restoration</li> </ul>
Climate resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural flood management approaches</li> <li>• Sustainable urban drainage schemes</li> <li>• Cooling effect of vegetation in cities</li> <li>• Habitat restoration</li> </ul>
Improving education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settings for outdoor learning</li> <li>• Support for ecological knowledge and qualifications</li> </ul>
Social cohesion and loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good quality green space provides opportunities for community events and interaction</li> <li>• Safer more welcoming outdoor environments</li> <li>• Nature-based volunteering</li> </ul>
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many aspects of cultural heritage (for example, historic landscapes, ancient monuments), are underpinning or surrounded by natural capital</li> </ul>

(Source: DEFRA, 2020: 30-31)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>ii</sup> <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/spatial-strategy-framework.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2020) *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly*. Ballaghaderreen: Northern and Western Regional Assembly.
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- <sup>x</sup> ICBAN / QUB, 'Brexit at the Border' (2018). Available at: <http://icban.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Brexit-at-the-Border-FINAL-Jun-18.pdf>
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- <sup>xii</sup> See Summer 2020 issue of *Local Authority Times* (various articles)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Maher, C.S.; Hoang, T. and Hindery, A. (2020) 'Fiscal Responses to COVID-19: Evidence from Local Governments and Nonprofits' *Public Administration Review* 80(4): 644–650
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- <sup>xv</sup> Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2020) *Quarterly Economic Survey, 2 July 2020*. Belfast: NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Loades, M.E. *et al.* (2020) 'Rapid Systematic Review: The Impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness on the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in the Context of COVID-19' *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* (2020), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2020.05.009>
- <sup>xvii</sup> CCBS (2020) *Briefing Paper - The impacts of COVID-19 on cross-border tourism on the island of Ireland: A snapshot*. Armagh: CCBS.
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- See, for example: *Special Committee on COVID-19 Response debate* - Friday, 10 July, 2020
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<sup>xxviii</sup> <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/urban-health/publications/2016/urban-green-spaces-and-health-a-review-of-evidence-2016>

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> OECD (2019) *Rural 3.0 – people-centred rural policy*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Mark Shucksmith (2019) Rural policy after Brexit, *Contemporary Social Science*, 14:2, 312-326, DOI: 10.1080/21582041.2018.1558279

<sup>xxxv</sup> Gleeson, J. et al., (2015) *The Atlas of the Island of Ireland – mapping social and economic patterns*. Maynooth & Armagh: All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Since the publication of the *Regional Strategic Framework* in 2013, there has been a geographical reconfiguration of local government in NI. The most significant impact on the Central Border Region and the work of ICBAN is that the former Council areas of Banbridge and Craigavon have now become included, through the establishment of the new Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, the second largest Local Government District in NI.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Data relate to the Census of Population (Ireland) 2016 and NISRA Mid-Year Population Estimates (2018) for NI.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> O’Kane, A.M. (2016) *Border People Briefing - The Referendum on UK Membership of the EU: Freedom of Movement of People. No. 5, May 2016*. Armagh: Centre for Cross-Border Studies. Available at: <http://borderpeople.info/site/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-5-revision15June2016.pdf>

<sup>xxxix</sup> InterTrade Ireland (2018) *Cross-Border Trade & Supply Chain Linkages*. Newry: InterTrade Ireland. Available at: <https://intertradeireland.com/news/cross-border-trade-supply-chain-linkages>

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<sup>xli</sup> Details of river catchments can be accessed on: <https://www.catchments.ie/the-growth-of-the-rivers-trust-movement-on-the-island-of-ireland/>

<sup>xlii</sup> O’Keeffe, B., and Crowley C. (2019) *A profile of Ireland’s Uplands – an all-island study highlighting their strategic importance*. Dublin: Irish Uplands Forum

<sup>xliii</sup> Cobotics refers to collaboration between a person and a robot. The objective of these cobots is to automate a large range of tasks and perform work in closer collaboration with people.

<sup>xliiv</sup> Stern, N. (2007) *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>xliiv</sup> DEFRA (2020), *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services*, see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf)



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
agus Trádála  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
and Trade

This ICBAN initiative is part of the 'Border Navigator' project, working with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) and enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund.

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**The Framework of  
Regional Priorities for  
the Central Border  
Region of Ireland /  
Northern Ireland,  
2021–2027**

**- A Synopsis**



**OCTOBER 2020**

## Foreword

The Irish border region is meeting some of its greatest challenges for a generation: the Covid-19 pandemic, climate disruption, and the exit of the UK from the European Union. As a result, for the first time in 50 years, the border corridor area, including the Central Border Region, is preparing for the advent where one component jurisdiction (Northern Ireland) will leave the EU while the adjacent area (Ireland) remains within the EU.

An impending Brexit has given rise to a developing conversation across the border region about how this might impact on future joint working. Amid current uncertainties and political differences, there remains a widely held commitment across local authorities, border communities and other community/voluntary groups within our region to continue working together, to preserve the gains already achieved and to realise potential benefits for future generations.

Cross-border cooperation takes on a new symbolic and practical significance in this new geo-political environment. It is important therefore to think in terms of mutual benefit and collaboration, rather than competition and divergence. Stakeholders in the Central Border Region can do this by building on existing relationships, and helping realise the ambitions which are set out within this Framework document for the period 2021-2027.

This Framework presents a strategic response that is both unique and tailored to the assets and characteristics of this particular region. In working together to advance the strategic priorities, we can develop the Central Border Region as a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy. This can be achieved through delivering on our key regional priorities; in utilising our regional strengths and assets, in supporting economic development, in enhancing citizens' quality of life, in making greater use of connections and remote working, and in developing our tourism offering. In doing so we can deliver benefits for all areas within the region: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid-Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

Finally, we wish to pass on our thanks to the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) for all their guidance and work on the project. We also wish to acknowledge all those who have inputted, including from our eight member Councils, their contributions have been very much appreciated. It is very important to also acknowledge the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund which has provided assistance in supporting the 'Border Navigator' and 'Border Animator' projects, and which have enabled the development of this Framework.

**Councillor Pat Treanor, ICBAN Chair, 2019-2020**  
**Councillor Eamon Mc Neill, ICBAN Chair, 2020-2021**

## Background and Context

This *Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021/2027* (FRP) is a strategic initiative for the advancement of our regional economy. This is motivated by, and seeks to give effect to, ICBAN's Vision of a region *with a thriving, resilient, vibrant and diversified economy*, that will be strengthened and sustained through a focus on:

- Utilising our environmental assets respectfully and responsibly;
- Encouraging investment in value-added industries and promoting innovation;
- Enhancing quality of life;
- Embracing new technologies and enhancing remote working; and
- Promoting our strengths in tourism.

This document has been driven by the cross-border partnership, the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd., working on behalf of its eight member Councils in the area known as the Central Border Region. The local authority areas are:

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon;
- Cavan;
- Donegal;
- Fermanagh and Omagh;
- Leitrim;
- Mid-Ulster;
- Monaghan; and
- Sligo.

This FRP takes its strategic frame of reference from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). This set of complementary economic, socio-cultural and environmental objectives provides an overarching supranational framework for the attainment of sustainable development, and the advancement of greater equality, including spatial equalities. The FRP has also been mapped against the key statutory policies, strategies and planning frameworks, which are impacting on the area

The FRP, complements, adds value to and refreshes the Regional Strategic Framework published by ICBAN in 2013. Both strategic initiatives are:

- Regional;
- Cross-border; and
- Based on non-statutory, multi-stakeholder and collaborative approaches.

In advancing the FRP, ICBAN has taken a regional approach, and the actions presented herein are regional in scale and effect; they apply across all eight local authority areas and in both jurisdictions. The deliverables articulated in this document relate primarily to the remit of local government and the added value that can be derived through inter-local authority collaboration. In addition, they relate to the remits and objectives of several statutory bodies, thus accentuating the importance of partnership between local government and other agencies. Cross-border and stakeholder collaborations are integral to sustaining the delivery of this FRP.

## Responding to the Challenges of our Time

ICBAN has developed this initiative to respond to three key challenges of these times, impacting on our border region:

1. The challenges, potential opportunities and obligations associated with the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which are likely to impact for many years;
2. The consequences of **Brexit** and its impact on the economy and trading patterns, stability, and cross-border cooperation, including the work of local government; and
3. The need to mitigate the threats of **climate change**, and to therefore embrace and promote sustainable development and care for the environment.

In response, the organisation advances this Framework to provide a steer to the region in terms of dealing with current realities, anticipating future strains and ensuring effective local and regional responses.

## The Key Ambitions and Aims

The key ambitions of the Framework of Regional Priorities reflect these current and evolving challenges and opportunities at local, regional, national and international levels. They are:

- To develop as a sustainable region, characterised by increased employment, improved economic activity, social progress and ecological sustainability;
- To redress economic and social inequalities between the Central Border Region and other areas of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the inequalities which persist within the region itself;
- To influence and work with the Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland on their investment priorities for the region, by providing an evidence base to justify investments; and
- To identify opportunities for local authorities and other stakeholders to work together to realise opportunities and to respond to the challenges facing the region.

## Realising the Area's Potential

The under-exploited potential of this region has the capacity to contribute more to all-island sustainable growth. There is a real opportunity to redress the structural weaknesses, which have delimited economic growth, and thereby enable the region to realise its potential to become a strategic space for economic growth for both jurisdictions.

**This Framework of Regional Priorities highlights opportunities – economic, environmental and socio-cultural – to maximise the potential of its latent asset-base for the benefit of its citizens / communities and the all-island economy.**

**Economic:** The local authorities of the Central Border Region have been vocal and proactive in championing digital connectivity (fibre broadband and mobile) and opportunities to develop knowledge / human capital, which will enable businesses, young people and communities to seize advantages arising from the fourth industrial revolution and the move towards more connected / remote-working.

**Environmental:** This environmentally rich and largely unspoilt eco-region is ideally positioned to deliver on global, regional and local needs and imperatives relating to climate change and sustainable management and enhancement of the natural, built and cultural landscapes. The region needs to strive for a just transition to a post-carbon scenario.

**Socio-Cultural:** The Central Border Region has a strong cultural identity – expressed in various traditional and contemporary forms. Communities have a sense of place, as evidenced by an impressive range of creative output and artistic endeavour. Civil society organisations are strong and have clear capacity to play a greater role in place-making and collaborative planning. Like other regions, the Central Border area is becoming increasingly diverse, and harnessing the talents and abilities of newcomers will stand the region in good stead.

## Promoting and Respecting our Territorial Assets

To help deliver on these opportunities we will draw on our own territorial assets, which are many and diverse:

- It is an area of **high-quality food and non-food production**;
- Through stewardship and sympathetic development of its **natural resources and landscape**, the Central Border Region is playing a key role in:
  - promoting **sustainable development**,
  - nurturing **well-being**,
  - enabling the transition to a **green economy** and mitigating the effects of climate change; and
- The region provides opportunities to promote **alternatives to fossil fuels** and to develop a circular economy.

The **growth in connected/remote working**, largely driven by COVID-19 and associated public health responses, coupled with the emerging demand/need for basic services, have the potential to rejuvenate rural towns and villages. These factors are also driving further demand for green spaces and investments in community amenities and **green infrastructure**.

## The Five Interlocking Strategic Pillars

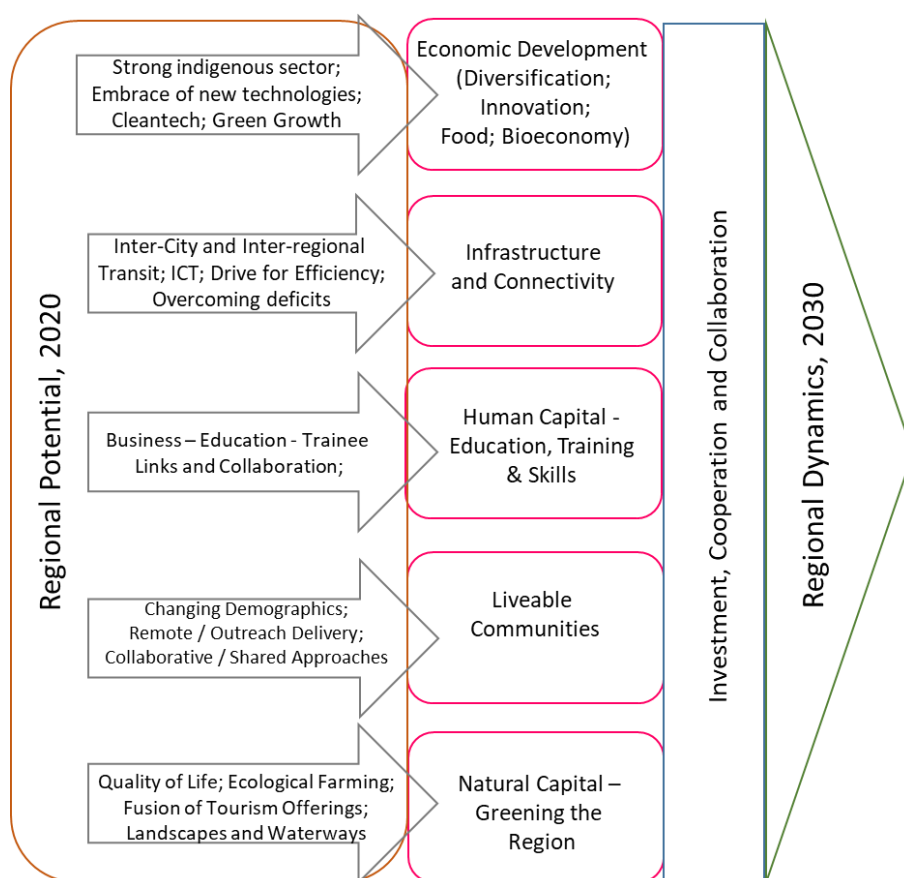
The strategic actions advanced here and the approach underpinning this FRP are rooted in place-making. Thus, they are based on local and regional assets, and they relate specifically to needs, priorities and potential within the Central Border Region. In practice, this implies capitalising on the region's rural identity and significant stock of rural assets, while promoting urban-rural partnerships.

The region is also characterised by significant cross-border movements and connectivity - physical, economic, cultural and social, and investment in sustaining connectivity is of strategic regional importance. The strategic priorities and deliverables are presented here under five interlocking and complementary pillars namely:

- Economic development;
- Infrastructure and connectivity;
- Human capital – education and training;
- Liveable communities; and
- Greening the region.

Each of these themes is related to a particular type of asset / set of assets in the region, as shown in the following figure.

*Regional Assets underpinning the Thematic Foci and Strategic Pillars*



## Our Regional Priorities

The consultation process with member councils and other stakeholders identified a number of inter-connected and mutually re-enforcing strategic regional priorities. These centre on:

- **Exploiting new opportunities based on regional strengths and assets** (including latent assets), in the bioeconomy, food production and sustainable landscape management;
- **Supporting economic development** through providing adequate industrial spaces, nurturing inter-firm collaboration and innovation and strengthening linkages with education / training providers;
- **Enhancing citizens' quality of life**, through improved and more innovative modes of service delivery, life-long progression opportunities, enhanced community amenities and independent living environments;



- **Enabling greater connected / remote working**, through enhancing infrastructure and developing a network of digital hubs (in town centres), as part of the rejuvenation of towns and villages; and
- **Developing the region's tourism offering** and quality-of-life infrastructure through connected greenway and blueway networks (including inter-regional) – linked to complementary services and underpinned by increased active travel and improved regional connectivity.

These priorities are cross-cutting and their realisation will require inter-sectoral collaboration. By the same token, their impacts will be manifest across the dimensions of sustainable development – economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

### The Emergent Catalyst Projects

The cross-border partnership has emphasised the merits of creating a shortlist of strategic regional catalyst projects, that can complement and promote the aforementioned five thematic areas.

The importance of innovation, inter-project complementarity and focusing on the regional dimension have all been considered in the development of these catalysts.

#### The Emergent Catalyst projects are:

**Catalyst 1: Farm to Fork** – strengthening the region's agriculture sector, food processing industry, catering firms and hospitality providers to collaboratively avail of new and emerging opportunities and sectoral trends;

**Catalyst 2: Greenways and Blueways** – growing and connecting these vital pieces of infrastructure – to promote tourism and active travel;

**Catalyst 3: River Catchments Sustainability** – working with all stakeholders across river catchments – from source to sea, to enhance water quality and to drive cross-sectoral projects that will strengthen the region's economic base;

**Catalyst 4: A Thriving Regional Bioeconomy** – to build on Councils' work in this field through advancing research and development (R&D), upping regional skills capacity and enabling greater industrial and spatial collaboration; and

**Catalyst 5: International Mountain Biking Destination** – to develop a connected / networked set of mountain-biking trails – capitalising on the region's topography and adding value to the existing suite of visitor attractions, while providing local communities with new amenities.

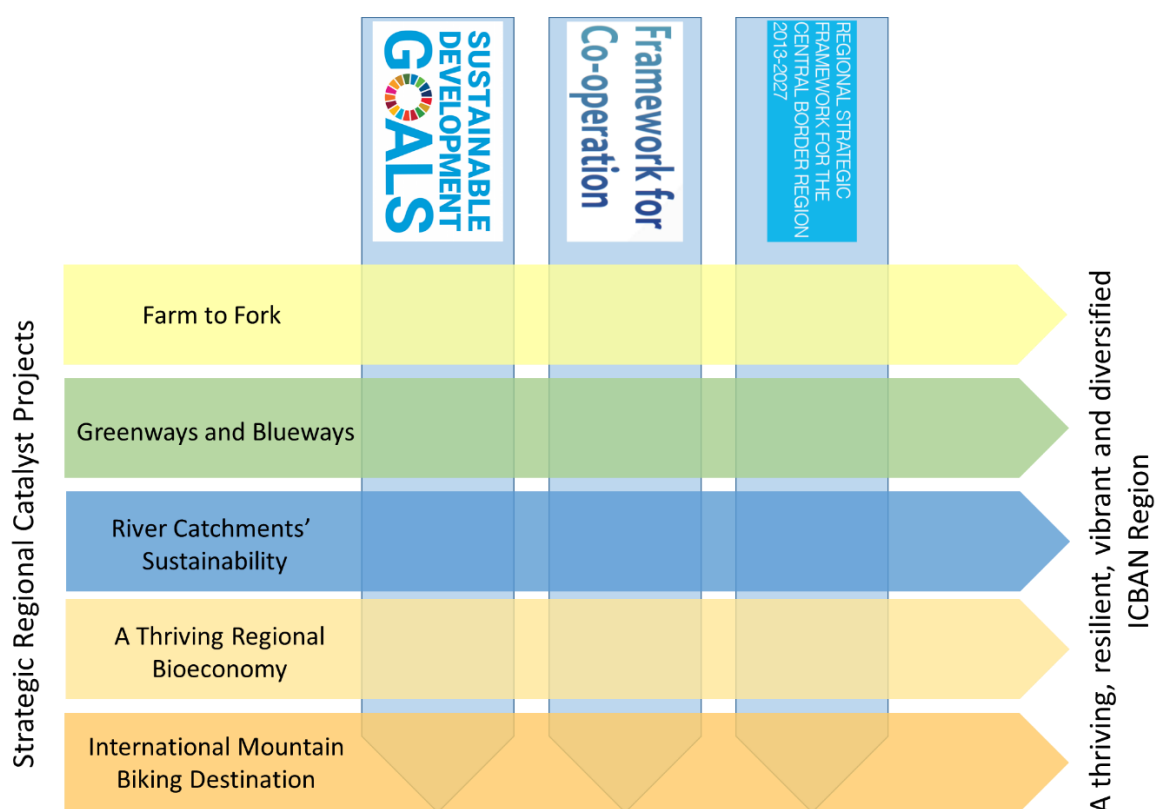
## Moving Towards Implementation

ICBAN has a core leadership and facilitation role to play in working with a range of key stakeholders, including member local authorities, in unleashing the potential of these territorial assets, not least in the context of the key challenges of this time: namely, Brexit, climate change and COVID-19. It is incumbent on ICBAN to:

- bring its member local authorities together to address these challenges and harness these assets;
- provide leadership and continue its advocacy for the sustainable growth and development of the Central Border Region and;
- act as the intermediary for the region with both the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive – not least in progressing the identified catalyst projects.

As a result of obtaining the financial and other resources, including government support, necessary to turn the vision into a reality, the Central Border Region will become more prosperous and offer a better future to its citizens / communities, as illustrated in the following diagram:

*Strategic drivers and processes*



For further details, please refer to the full document version of the FRP, complete with Annexes.

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 1 October 2020 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means**

**Members Present**

Councillor McNamee

Councillors Black, Burton, Clarke\*, Corry\*, Doris, Elattar\*, Kerr, Hughes, Kearney, Milne\*, Monteith, Wilson\*

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities  
Mr M Browne, Head of Tourism\*\*  
Ms Linney, Head of Community Development\*\*  
Mr Kennedy, ICT Support  
Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

**Others in Attendance**

Councillor S McGuigan\*

**Deputations**

Magherafelt Volunteer Centre\*\*\*  
North West Mountain Rescue Team\*\*\*  
Lough Neagh Partnership School Land's Project\*\*\*  
Cookstown and Western Shores

\* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

\*\* Denotes Officers present by remote means

\*\*\* Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

**D139/20 Apologies**

Councillors Ashton and Cuddy.

**D140/20 Declarations of Interest**

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

**D141/20 Chair's Business**

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

## **D142/20      Magherafelt Volunteer Centre**

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Michele McKeown, Ms Barbara Kennedy and Ms Mairead Devine from Mid Ulster Volunteer Centre and invited them to make their presentation.

The representatives thanked members for allowing them the opportunity to address the committee and advised that Mid Ulster Volunteer Centre had celebrated 20 years in business. They advised that their vision was to fully recognise the need for an effective and efficient service; to have local presence and experience, local offices which understand and reflect local needs; Person Centred Approach – to provide a sufficiently flexible service to meet local and individual needs; A volunteer centre which is able to work in partnership with others and to support sustainability. (Appendix 1).

The Chair thanked for representatives and asked for any members comments.

Councillor Kearney commended the organisation and the work they carry out and stated that during his term as Chair of the Council he had been invited to the prize giving and witnessed first-hand the excellent job they do. He said that the group had adapted greatly during the pandemic by delivering meals and praised the work that they do with disabled learners and post primary pupils and wanted to formally acknowledge the good work they carry out. He stated that former Councillor George Shiels had been a great advocate of the organisation and had always championed their cause.

The Chair stated that Covid-19 had brought the focus of volunteering to the fore from groups like Magherafelt Volunteer Centre and other groups across the North of Ireland and wished the group all the best for the future and asked them to keep up the great work for the future as the community depended on it.

The Chair advised that there would be a change to the running order of the Agenda and that North West Mountain Rescue Team presentation would now follow Lough Neagh Partnership School Land's Project presentation.

## **D143/20      Lough Neagh Partnership School Land's Project Located in Derrylaughan**

The Chair welcomed Mr Gerry Darby and Dr William Burke representatives of Lough Neagh Partnership School Land's Project and invited them to make their presentation.

The representatives advised that the group's aim was to co-ordinate a range of activities that can make a significant impact on the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the Lough Neagh Area. Work involved five strategic thematic area: Tourism promotion; Environmental protection, enhancement and sustainability; Heritage conversation, management and promotion; Leisure, recreation and safety; Attracting investment and financial sustainability; £14 million+ secured since 2014. (Appendix 2).

The Chair thanked for representatives for their presentation and asked for any members comments.

Councillor Doris thanked the group for their informative presentation which was very detailed and goes to the heart of the issue. She said that she had grown up in the area her whole life and was well aware of the change in landscape and to the wildlife surroundings and especially over lockdown it was evident to see the increase in walking activities and felt that this was now an opportunity to open this up.

She raised the ongoing issue with the Education Authority for the past 15 years and advised that Linda Dillion MLA had issued a question to the Education Minister which he has to be reply to this month. She said that she was pretty positive that this will be eventually moving forward which was a positive thing.

Councillor Doris referred to local extraction in the area and said that there was no issues within the local community with those extracting the peat as it provided employment and once this was transferred over from the Education Authority then it can be moved forward.

She advised that she had raised the issue of the burning of the moss at a previous committee meeting. She said that years ago that an official burning of the moss had taken place around February time which left the ground not as prone to catch fire as quick and not as much harm to wildlife. She asked if there was any plans to bring such an action forward so as to protect the area and wildlife.

Dr Burke advised that in terms of controlled burning and overall management, currently work was being carried out on a 10 year management plan on the examination of methodology and issues which are there. He stated that within that 10 year management plan there would be series of actions taken into consideration on how fires can be controlled through controlled burns working in conjunction with Northern Ireland Fire Service, committee partners and others around Derrylaughan, Derrytresk and Washingbay. He said that it was an appropriate methodology but there needed to be an appropriate management plan approach agreed in advance to take it forward on the controlling of fires in that area.

Councillor Clarke thanked Mr Darby and Dr Burke on their impressive presentation and concurred with the previous Councillor's comments. He said that he had an interest in the burning of historical heather and that burning patches of the mountain on a yearly basis meant that there were different stages of growth of heather which was vital for the Grouse. He said that because it was burned on a rotation basis this meant that nothing got out of control if something did spark it. He said that there was an issue with DAERA as they were against controlled burning, but felt that this was not correct as this kept things under control and was better for the wildlife and cut out the risk of a massive outbreak of uncontrolled fires.

Mr Darby said that he agreed with Councillor Clarke's comment regarding DAERA's stance on the banning of controlled burning but stated that speaking to the people of that area and feedback received, it wasn't farmers or landowners which were starting the fires but more carried out maliciously. Fire starting was more the fundamental

issue, but he took Councillor Clarke's point about controlled burning as this can have a positive impact if carried out continuously within certain perimeters and limits.

Councillor Kerr said that he had spoken to members of Lough Neagh Partnership and others around the illegal extraction in the area and from previous engagement with members with the group, there had been issues around Planning. He said that Planning Department needed to take a real firm attitude towards this illegal extraction as it was a huge inconvenience whenever there is fire brigades being diverted to an area which could be required for different areas. He also raised concern regarding residents having to keep their windows closed due to smoke.

He referred to the Beekeeping Group at Lough Neagh and said that they were interested in a conservation area for the native Irish Bee and stated that he was aware of other species being mentioned but said that local residents would be keen to set an area up.

Mr Darby concurred with member's comments regarding the bees and also tree planting carried out by football clubs in an appropriate way and also agreed that beekeepers and Irish Bees was of a fundamental importance. In relation to the Planning, he felt that this was a catch 22 situation as they have indicated that the Education Department was not interested in the management of the land as it was a historical hangover from the past and back to the plantation of Ulster era. Planners have suggested that Lough Neagh Partnership seek ownership or long term lease on the project, then this would allow them to work more closely with them in trying to address this as this was having a serious impact on the habitat within that area. He felt that it may an opportunity for Councillors to lobby the Education Department and hoped by November that the lease would be transferred over to the Lough Neagh Partnership and then work can be done more closely with the Planning Department.

The Director of Business and Communities stated that in relation to land and property, officers would be happy to engage with Mr Darby and Lough Neagh Partnership. He said that officers were currently engaging with the Partnership in relation to the Derrytresk, Derrylaughan issue and the input from Lough Neagh has been very positive and very constructive to date and offered his thanks for that. He said as an officer team right across the organisation which includes planning were happy to engage with Lough Neagh Partnership as the body that is recognised as the voice of Lough Neagh. He said across 3 decades Lough Neagh as one of the largest inland waterways in Europe did not have no collective voice, no strategy, no direction, no government department taking ownership, taking responsibility or providing leadership and said that he personally welcomed where Lough Neagh is now and what they are bringing to the table.

The Director advised that Lough Neagh Partnership was supported by all the parties in a structure which allows the community right across the Lough to have a voice. He said that in the past communities in and around Lough Neagh built away and with their back to the Lough, but this was now changing and the community were now seeing what a fantastic resource it is and embracing it again. The community are now beginning to see it beyond fishing and sand extraction and more of a value from both an environmental flora and fauna but in the future as an economic resource, particularly if there was an opportunity to get to the point where it could be linked

through the Ulster Canal with the Shannon as this would be the ultimate prize. He said that the work that was ongoing at the lower Bann, from Portglenone, Bellaghy and Maghera linking into Lough Neagh, this could be implemented with Clones and Shannon that everyone should all strive for.

The Director of Business and Communities concluded by saying that the officer team would be very happy to work with Lough Neagh Partnership as the management structure had the best interests for Lough Neagh. He said that he had previously advised Mr Darby that post Covid that a meeting be convened with every Council around the Lough, elected leaders and those in authority to get Council commitment because collectively, there was an opportunity to make good things happen.

*Councillor Black referred to the issue of peat extraction and declared an interest in this matter due to being a member of the Planning Committee.*

*Councillor Kearney also declared an interest as he also was a member of the Planning Committee.*

Councillor Kearney stated that there was a course of action envisaged by the Planning Department currently taking place.

The Chair commended Lough Neagh Partnership for the work they do, and the numerous projects they do each year especially around the curlew and asked that the good work continue.

#### **D144/20      North West Mountain Rescue Team**

The Chair welcomed Mr Graeme Stanbridge and Mr Andrew Kelly representatives of North West Mountain Rescue Team and invited them to make their presentation.

The representatives advised that North West Mountain Rescue Team provides a 24/365 call out service on behalf of the PSNI, NIFRS, NIAS and/or Coastguard. They asked for consideration from the Council for a new base within Mid Ulster area. (Appendix 3).

The Chair thanked for representatives and asked for any members comments.

Councillor Kerr enquired if Council should provide a facility and try and waiver the charge of £10 per hour as this could go towards front line services.

Councillor Molloy referred to the interland of Cookstown, Magherafelt and the Sperrins and all the natural areas Mid Ulster had to promote for walking tourism and leisure he felt that a base should be identified as walking tourism was anticipated to grow within the area. He stated that it would be beneficial for this Council to identify a base and suggested that Officers put their heads together to see if anything can be sourced or even signpost the group in the right direction to somewhere it can be of benefit to them.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Molloy and said that last month the Council's walking schedule was being promoted and anticipated when post Covid, walking will

be greatly enhanced especially around Davagh. He said that he was made aware of people becoming lost in Davagh and that the experience would be terrifying if it was getting dark and cold at night and feels that the Council should do what they can to help.

Proposed by Councillor Black

That officers reach out directly with the organisation on this particular point and discuss it further to see what assistance can be provided to see what opportunities there might be.

Seconded by Councillor Molloy

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to agree that Officers liaise directly with North West Mountain Rescue Team to discuss the matter further to see what assistance can be provided and what opportunities there might be sourcing a base going forward.

Councillor Clarke advised that one of the biggest target areas was from the Sperrins down to Newtownstewart, but referred to Draperstown, Maghera area and enquired if this could be a possibility. He stated that a new site in Maghera within an industrial estate should be investigated as a possibility.

Mr Kelly stated that this would be a prime site as it was very central to the community.

Councillor Clarke stated that it would be 20 miles nearer to the centre of the action.

Mr Stanbridge concurred with Councillor Clarke's comments and said that as long as it was close to a main road as much time was wasted getting members to the rescue base and to activate the vehicle to get it onto the road, but were fortunate that there was a strong link with many members living and around the town and a strong membership in the area. He said that it was found that when a base was identified, there was greater recruitment around that area so members were able to activate the vehicle quickly.

Councillor Clarke said that it may be something that could be looked at in Maghera and Draperstown areas as well as Magherafelt to give further options.

The Chair thanked the representatives and asked them to keep up the good work in saving lives.

*Councillor Burton left the meeting at 8.02 pm.*

## **D145/20      Cookstown and Western Shores**

The Chair welcomed Mr Conor Corr and Ms Clare Henry representatives of North West Mountain Rescue Team and invited them to make their presentation.



Mr Corr provided members with an update on where Cookstown and Western Shores were currently regarding community development and service to the community development support within the rural areas of Mid Ulster. He referred to SPRING Social Prescribing which was a partnership between Healthy Living Centre Members – which includes CWSAN, Bogside and Brandywell Health Forum, the Healthy Living Centre Alliance and Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing. This pilot is operational across 5 Trust areas, with a team of 38 Social Prescribers in Northern Ireland and Scotland and over 100 GP practices making referrals. (Appendix 4).

The Chair said that the Social Prescribing Programme sounds to be an excellent and sought clarification on where it was currently available.

Mr Corr advised that it was a pilot project was essentially in the old Magherafelt and Cookstown areas but not operational yet in the Dungannon area. He said that it operated on GP referral, so basically all of the GP's throughout Cookstown and Magherafelt could make referrals into this programme and was fortunate enough to have a good working relationship with GP's in places like Coagh, Cookstown and Maghera, Stewartstown.

The Chair referred to the online programme and issues around limited Broadband in some areas and asked if this affected the service.

Mr Corr agreed that this could be the case, not only broadband and access to IT, but there were clients/patients in the countryside and urban areas which don't have access to adequate equipment. He also advised that others were not savvy with IT and not able to operate emails or social media as some clients were quite older.

The Chair thanked for representatives and asked for any members comments.

Councillor Kerr said that he wanted to personally thank Mr Corr and his team for the presentation and for all the help with the Coalisland Food Bank in the early stages of the pandemic. He said that several issues had been identified with the governance and the signposting towards community grants etc.

Councillor Black thanked the representatives for their presentation and said that it was very positive to see such availability of a service which contributed to a holistic approach to an individual's health. He raised the issue of different referral points for example the good working relationship with GP's and enquired overall how the response has been and whether it has been a positive uptake or has there been any particular barriers in building relationships in referrals coming the group's way.

Mr Corr advised that there wasn't necessarily any barriers, but most or all GP's were extremely busy and some see the Social Prescribed Programme as a way of getting clients/patients of their books and into the community which helps their overall health and wellbeing. In stated that they have not come across any negativity in relation to the Social Prescribed project, but some GP's were more au fait with the outcomes as it is seen as a new phenomenon in the area within the past few years and may take some other GP's a little longer to see how it works, but the group would work with them to provide reassurance going forward.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their impressive presentation and stated that the group provided outstanding work and wished them well in the future. The live broadcast ended at 8.25 pm

**D146/20      Duration of Meeting**

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.28 pm.

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council  
held on Thursday 15 October 2020 in the Council Offices, Circular Road,  
Dungannon and by Virtual Means**

**Members Present**

Councillor McNamee

Councillors Ashton, Black\*, Burton, Clarke\*, Corry\*, Cuddy\*,  
Doris, Elattar\*, Kerr\*, Hughes\*, Kearney\*, Molloy\*,  
Monteith\*, Wilson\*

**Officers in  
Attendance**

Mrs Campbell, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation  
Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities  
Mr M Browne, Head of Tourism\*\*  
Mr Gordon, Head of Leisure\*\*  
Mr Hill, Head of Parks\*\*  
Ms Linney, Head of Community Development\*\*  
Mr McCance, Head of Culture and Arts\*\*  
Ms McKeown, Head of Economic Development \*\*  
Mr Brown, ICT Support  
Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

**Others in  
Attendance**

Councillors Bell and McFlynn

\* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

\*\* Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

**D147/20      Apologies**

None.

**D148/20      Declarations of Interest**

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

*Councillor Kerr declared an interest in Coalisland Food Bank.*

**D149/20      Chair's Business**

Councillor Kerr advised that he had been approached by representatives from the Ladies Gaelic Governing body seeking assistance from Council and he proposed that they be invited to a future meeting to make a presentation and to see what support Council Officers can provide them.

The Chair agreed that an invite be issued to Tyrone Ladies GAA to make a presentation to a future meeting.

Councillor Doris requested an urgent meeting with Council representatives, Roads Service, Planners, Clonoe Community Centre and all the elected representatives in the area in relation to a much needed footpath just outside Community Centre as DfI are expecting the football club to pay for it which is completely unacceptable. She stated that she was aware of the Director of Business & Communities having an onsite meeting with Francie Molloy MP, Councillor Joe O'Neill and the community group where everyone could see for themselves the danger and the necessity for a much needed footpath and felt that things would get worse as there was a proposal to implement a playpark in Clonoe. As well as a meeting with all the stakeholders she requested that a letter be sent to Nichola Mallon, Minister for Infrastructure on the urgent need for a footpath at this site.

Proposed by Councillor Doris

Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council that an urgent meeting be organised with Council representatives, Roads Service, Planners, Clonoe Community Centre and all the elected representatives on much needed footpath outside Clonoe Community Centre. Also a letter be issued to Nichola Mallon, Minister for Infrastructure on concerns regarding the footpath and the urgency for it.

Councillor Cuddy referred to recent events and said that his party had raised concerns about remote meetings back in June regarding the lack of good broadband and the Council's ICT not be adequate to deliver and the risk for members and staff being in the meeting room with meetings going on a lot longer than normal. He said that things had reverted back to the beginning of the pandemic with the 15 people max rule now in place, with most members having to access into meetings remotely. He stated that the UUP fully support the 4 week restrictions to act as a circuit breaker to control this terrible virus with ever increasing new infections, but however his party wanted the opportunity to revert back to attending actual meetings as soon as it's safe to do so and felt that staff shouldn't be expected to attend meetings when members were not expected to attend, with Councillors being in a position to provide leadership during this difficult period. He said if Council were going to provide virtual meetings under these new restrictions during this new 4 week circuit breaker that meetings should only be called to deal with matters which are deemed critically important and time sensitive. He concluded by saying that his party were happy with the system for the next 4 weeks and hoped that it would work.

Councillor Doris said that there were a lot of problems with IT at the beginning but felt that this had got a lot better this last few weeks and advised that during this pandemic

members must show leadership and if anyone can virtually remote in that this should be supported.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Doris and said that it had improved.

Councillor Monteith concurred with some of the issues raised by Councillor Cuddy regarding inadequate IT and said that he was late linking in remotely tonight due to these issues. He said that although IT had become better there was still a lot of issues which needed addressing and would be off the opinion if a person can't appear at a meeting in person, then consideration should be given to going back to the situation we had in March and April where the Acting Chief Executive had the authority to make operational decisions as this committee system was not fit for purpose as Covid-19 had exposed this time and time again. He said that the IT was not fast enough and does not give this organisation the speed and flexibility which to act and would be really exposed within the coming days as Officers needed to move fast and would reiterate his opinion that if a member cannot appear in person, then the committee should be suspended as during the lock down and full Council meeting facilitated if there was Corporate Governance needed. He said that Planning would still need to go ahead but other than that, he did not foresee how these committees could function under the current IT systems and would accept the emergency situation tonight but would be in favor of people being unable to appear in person at meetings. He said that he had raised the issue of Dungannon Leisure Centre being utilised as an alternate venue for meetings as people could be spaced out 4 to 5 metres apart if need be as the facilities are there and if other elected chambers can operate with 30 to 40 people present, he could see no reason why we can't have the proper environment also.

*Councillor Bell entered the meeting at 7.07 pm.*

## **Matters for Decision**

### **D150/20      UNESCO World Heritage Site – Davagh & Beaghmore Stone Circles**

The Head of Tourism presented previously circulated report to inform Council about the progress of the Notice of Motion at the Development Committee meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 – “That Mid Ulster District Council resolves to explore the necessary steps to have Davagh Dark Sky Park officially designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site”.

Councillor Clarke advised that he fully supported what was taking place and could see that there was a lot of good work being carried out and wasn't surprised at this as Officers always deliver. He said as a point of clarification, Davagh Dark Skies Park was a definitive area which can be identified over a large area and said that he had the same idea over the years, but while development was ongoing he held back as he didn't want to get into the mix with the designation of the Dark Skies Park. He said that he was fully supportive of what was being done but enquired who the Council anticipated becoming members of the stakeholders group. He said that a person had identified themselves to possibly being of use to the Council in working on the World Heritage Project and was confident that this person would have an intimate knowledge of what's involved. He said that he would be happy to propose to progress as suggested.

Councillor Corry concurred with Councillor Clarke and passed her thanks to Drs Campbell and Burke and the Council team on all the work they have done on the spoken paper. She stated that Councillor Clarke and herself had spoken to a person who previously worked for UNESCO and they suggested that the Council go down the route of Biodiversity and look at the possibility of a Global Geopark under UNESCO. She said that it was also suggested that an attentive list under the Department of Education or a joint bid be looked at, which was previously done under the Marble Arch Caves and asked if this could be taken into consideration and would be happy to second the proposal for the working group.

The Head of Tourism in reply to query about stakeholder group, he said that it was envisaged that the local community would play an important role in the project. He said that another group he would be recommending would be Sperrins Future Search group and was pleased to say that a new manager had been appointed this week and would welcome both suggestions from both Councillor Clarke and Corry in terms of experts or other people who would help out. He stated that both Dr Burke and Dr Campbell would be also very interested in taking the initiative forward.

Councillor Ashton enquired about costs being brought forward for the project and referred to page 12 of the report where it clearly states by UNESCO that Dark Skies cannot be nominated for the World Heritage list within the existing framework and wondered where we were at and how this can be progressed.

The Head of Tourism advised that costs were not known yet and really depended on what way it was to be approached on whether to go for a biosphere or accreditation and this would have to be brought back as a future report.

In response to query regarding the Dark Skies accreditation, he said it wasn't enough to bring this forward but would be a cocktail of many things like natural heritage and the built heritage which would be rich enough to take this forward and would be a combination of 3 items in which he would be proposing.

Councillor Cuddy stated that it was a very interesting exercise and commended Councillor Clarke. He said that Dungannon people were very proud of the Castlehill and the Hill of The O'Neill due to what happened there during the early 1600's and at the time it was European news as it brought both the Gael and Planter together. He agreed with Councillor Ashton's comments about being careful regarding money and felt that the same principles should be applied in line with Castlehill and where it fitted into the scheme. He said that it was a great facility which wasn't being used as well as it could be.

Councillor Wilson advised that his concern had previously been raised by Councillor Ashton but said that another issue he had was that these UNESCO sites take up a lot of ground as was the case with the Giant's Causeway and the golf course which was going to be built there and would err on the side of caution as it was alright going for these kind of things but the ramifications might outstrip that. In referring to Councillor Cuddy's comments about the Hill of The O'Neill, he advised that there were a lot of these sites like Tullyhoge Fort and felt that there was a need to come together to start a programme or some idea of what can be achieved. He referred to previous comments in the past about Councillor Monteith's suggestion of a linkup between the three sites

and rather than rush ahead there was a need to sit down and have a look at what we have and what better chance we have of getting them.

The Chair said that it would be useful if costings could be brought to a future meeting and when the group is developed and put together then emphasis should be on how this can be progressed and brought forward.

The Head of Tourism agreed and stated that the first piece of work would be generic in terms of costs and what it would take to do it which could also be applied to other sites. He said that a report would be brought back to a future meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Clarke  
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to:

- i) Proceed and work towards seeking UNESCO World Heritage accreditation.
- ii) Establish a working group including all stakeholders.

#### **D151/20      Autumn Corporate Events Update**

The Head of Tourism presented previously circulated report to provide Members with an update on Autumn Corporate Events and identify savings to be reallocated to the COVID-19 Response Fund. He added that whilst £110,000 savings had been identified from Halloween and Christmas events this year, that £24,000 had already been transferred to assist with Covid19 Business Support Grants, which left an underspend balance of £86,000.

Councillor Doris said that she was happy to propose the recommendations but stated that she was sad to see no Halloween festivities this year in Coalisland as everyone always worked so hard to make it special.

She stated that there had been very advantageous thinking in terms of Neighbourhood Renewal who were looking at innovative ways of interacting with teenagers and young adults without bringing them together over the Halloween period and wanted this noted. She said that the Ogras Youth Club and the Fianna were anticipating running an online FIFA tournament over the 2 weeks before Halloween to keep youth entertained over this crucial time.

In referring to update from the Head of Tourism she stated that some good points were made in terms of tourism and hospitality as it was going to suffer dramatically over this difficult time.

Councillor Ashton said that she would be happy to second the recommendation and in referring to the £110,000 for the Covid Response asked if there were any indications from the businesses which had to close over the 4 weeks and was there any way of targeting these into our Covid fund.

*Councillor Doris left the meeting at 7.22 pm.*

The Head of Tourism advised that no information had been received at present but anticipated that this would be made known over the next few days. Councillor Wilson stated that there were a number of businesses falling through the cracks i.e. hairdressers, barbers and rent-a-chair and said that these type of businesses would need to be also taken into consideration.

Councillor Cuddy advised that he had been approached by some people with a view to Christmas and concerns around the current circuit breaker. He said that if the number of covid cases can be reduced then there may be some sort of Christmas festivities. He said that these individuals had indicated that they would like to work with the Council on "Save Christmas in Dungannon" campaign with the possibility of having moving advertising displays around areas like Dungannon Park, Castlehill and other places, where people would move around in their cars. These individuals have asked that this be brought forward and now at this current time it's very important compared to last week. He said that it would be beneficial if a meeting could be arranged with the Head of Tourism to explore some ideas as it would be something for the people to look forward to after all the doom and gloom and hopefully if this works there would be something at Christmas which would have a low value and high impact around the town.

*Councillor Doris returned to the meeting at 7.25 pm.*

Councillor Burton said she totally agreed with comments and as Chair of the Tourism Forum she could see a lot of concern in today's latest announcements with a lot of businesses welcoming the clarity that came this evening. She referred to the Nolan Show where it showed that some people were falling through the cracks in terms of furlough as well and premises that may have taken on new staff and not within the boundary of getting any financial support. She would like this money which was being ringfenced for the community's benefit and events to go towards something people would look forward to.

She said that there was an onus on Council to consider widely the whole Covid fund as there was a lot of stress out in the community as there are numerous venues the council support and a lot of business council is linked into getting it very tough at the minute to stay afloat and would be really helpful to have something in place to try and provide support at this difficult time.

The Chair agreed and stated that we were in difficult times with events being cancelled causing a huge disappointment as they brought a lot of smiles and cheer to our communities. He said that the Christmas Lights would still go ahead and was sure that the Head of Tourism would take on board comments raised and Officers take on board concerns around issues relating to community groups etc.

Proposed by Councillor Doris  
Seconded by Councillor Ashton and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council:

- i) That Council do not organise any formal or planned events that will bring people together in numbers and may potentially encourage none



adherence to the current Government guidance and measures across all towns for both Halloween and Christmas.

- ii) To reallocate the remaining savings of £86,000 from town centre and events budgets to the Council's COVID-19 Response Fund.

Councillor Monteith stated that he would fully support the comments made by Councillor Cuddy regarding Dungannon and if it was a proposal he would have no difficulty seconding it as it was important that the views of the community were taken into account.

## **D152/20      Decade of Anniversaries – Commemorations 2021/22**

The Head of Culture and Arts presented previously circulated report and sought approval for the Decade of Anniversaries Commemoration activities for 2021-2022 financial year, subject to budget approvals and subject to COVID-19 restrictions that may apply.

Councillor Corry asked that events be balanced and considerate of sensitivities when something is being celebrated as to others this could be seen as something immediate and terrible events like the signing of the Anglo Irish Treaty and to many it could be seen as blatant sectarianism and discrimination as of which was used to maintain power.

She proposed that a workshop be set up to discuss any events before any decisions are made on what the events are.

Councillor Monteith in referring to Councillor Corry's concerns enquired if there were any events this year as there were significant centenaries this year, with major centenaries coming up in the coming weeks, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Terence McSweeney, the death of Kevin Barry, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bloody Sunday which is to be remembered at Croke Park in November. He said these were all significant events, especially Kevin Barry who had significant links to the Dungannon area and enquired if there was anything arranged for this year and if not why was this not the case and whether consideration was being given to organising something next year.

Councillor Ashton said that she was disappointed in the tone of where the discussion was going and felt that the paper was very balanced and inclusive but did understand that some people within the community may not want to take part, but they were certainly open and some of the events allowed for discussions and a party colleague had raised that it may allow for other people to engage with. She said that this was about showing respect to each other and actually being able to mark different anniversaries in a mature manner and to demonstrate that this district can be a community for everybody. She felt that in the past members have engaged with the Decade of Anniversaries scheme and were being continuously told by colleagues across the way to bring forward proposals to allow people from her community to mark different events and to mark them in a way which were inclusive for everybody and felt that the paper was fair and balanced on proposals being brought forward and not a big ask and would be happy to propose the paper as it's presented. She asked that people with concerns over the events to read the paper as it was very detailed and to engage

as she had a very much open door policy as things in the paper in front of members were not about rubbing other peoples noses in it and felt the paper presented was for the whole community and if people want to be involved in it, they can, and if they don't, they don't, as there were things passed in years gone by that her community didn't want to be engaged with but these were passed in the Council and this had to be acknowledged. She said that this was an event that her community would want to be a part of and an opportunity for this Council to actually show that they were going to be inclusive for the whole community and not send out a message that we are not going to allow proposals and different events under the Decades of Anniversaries because it was not being likened by certain quarters of the Council and would be happy to propose the paper as it is.

Councillor Doris stated that discussions taken place with the previous speakers had shown the need for a workshop, but didn't agree with Councillor Ashton's comments as the details within the paper were extremely vague and seconded Councillor Corry's proposal.

Councillor Black seconded Councillor Ashton's proposal and would agree wholeheartedly what she had said and felt that there were some people from political parties around the table that talk about inclusivity, respect and tolerance and all of those buzz words sounds fantastic but felt that this was the perfect opportunity to show that they actually mean what they say and whilst they may not agree with the substance of the report and what was being commemorated. If they are true to the words they say, they must create a space for other sections of the community to celebrate part of their culture and their heritage.

Councillor Wilson concurred with comments by his DUP colleagues and was not surprised that Sinn Fein had adopted this attitude as they talk about equality and respect but don't show any at all when it doesn't reflect on their community and felt that this was an opportunity to promote with everybody as there was nothing threatening within the programme that he could see and would support Councillors Ashton and Black's proposal.

Councillor Elattar stated that she would agree with Councillor Corry and Councillor Doris as some of the detail was a bit vague and in order to answer Councillors Ashton, Black and Wilson's question if it was a truly inclusive process, then a workshop would be a good idea as it would make it inclusive for everyone.

Councillor Corry agreed with Councillor Elattar's comments about everyone trying to come together and getting some sort of a programme to suit everyone. She said there were sensitivities around partitions and some people may not see this and members should be mindful of that.

Councillor Monteith suggested rather than voting that both should be done as he had no difficulty with people having discussions and stated that within the 2016 period there were a series of issues resolved maturely by Council and not as he would like to have seen, but felt that it was balanced and only raised the issue of this year because he felt there may have been a miss, but would have no issues with people coming forward with analysis for next year. He suggested adopting the paper and then arrange a workshop for working through on what we may and may not do going forward.

He referred to Councillor Cuddy's comments earlier regarding what the former Dungannon Council achieved in and around 2007, the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Flight of the Earls and the events which took place during and after the event including drama and other things which was included in the paper presented tonight with a lot of people attending events which they may not have thought would be of interest to them. He felt that the Council had got it right and would have confidence in the Officers of this organisation that this can be achieved here. He said that rather than a vote tonight, adopt the paper as it doesn't tie into any specific events at this stage but going forward organise a workshop to allow Councillors to put forward ideas and suggestions on how to proceed.

Councillor Ashton advised that she would have no problem talking to anyone within the Chamber and felt that a workshop should not be organised just for the sake of having one for members just to vote this proposal down. She reiterated her support for the proposal in front of the committee tonight as she felt that it could be inclusive for all sections of the committee who wish to take part in it but felt if it was being put down the line for a vote of a workshop just for the sake of trying to delay her community from marking events which they deem important to them in the district, she stated that her party wouldn't be up for that and didn't think it was a huge ask.

Councillor Molloy agreed with Councillor Monteith's comments about setting up a workshop for oncoming events and especially around events due to take place this year. He said that there were events in terms of discussions with Professors deliberating three or four different issues, but unfortunately these seemed to fall on a Thursday night when there was a Council meeting which excluded Councillors from attending.

In referring to the Decade of Anniversaries, Councillor Molloy said that it was his knowledge that these events run from 1912 to 1922 and felt that discussions were needed around how and what kind of events were going to be run to close out the Decade of Anniversaries. He stated that there was an onus on members to sit down and have discussions on a way forward and he was not denying anybody the right to celebrate their heritage and what was dear to them.

Councillor Kearney advised that he had experience of attending these workshops and found them very useful over the years. He said that he had attended workshops in Benburb, Dungannon and elsewhere and would have no difficulty in celebrating the Decade of Anniversaries and agreed that a workshop would be useful and would ask Councillor Ashton to reconsider her proposal and that his party would be happy to agree the paper but if there was a need to have a workshop that this should be encouraged and would support Councillor Monteith's suggestion.

Councillor Cuddy felt that a good debate had ensued tonight and supported Councillor Monteith's proposal of agreeing to the proposal presented with a workshop being arranged for members in the not too distant future. In referring to the Return of the Earls event in 2007, he said that this showed great maturity amongst the former Dungannon Council members as each community had been shown respect. He said that he wouldn't want to see a vote taking place tonight but rather agree the paper and agree to have a workshop going forward as he wanted this to be seen as a good news story of £72,000 being allocated to celebrate events.

Councillor Doris felt that tonight's debate had been encouraging and stated that on a point of clarification Councillor Corry wasn't against the funding going ahead but asked that a workshop be arranged going forward to have discussions.

The Director of Business and Communities advised that he was providing an Officer view on the paper, content and discussion. He said that the paper was presented as requested in relation to the Decade of Anniversaries and as an Officer team he felt it was fair and accruable and agreed with members that it could be seen as broad based, inoffensive and open to interpretation but nothing fundamentally wrong with it. He stated that there was a proposal not to defer the paper and to convene a workshop, there was an alternative proposal to approve the paper with no workshop and then there was a proposal somewhere in between which was to approve the paper and do a workshop and felt that in terms of a corporate prospective the latter proposal was by far the most appropriate. He said if members were minded in the interests of relations, to adopt what was presented subject to a workshop or anything else or additional issues for other commemorations which can be addressed and developed thereafter.

Councillor Corry said that she just wanted to clarify that she was happy for the funding to go ahead but felt that a workshop would be useful going forward.

The Chair said that there were a few proposals brought forward but there was clearly a demand for a workshop as well as adopting the paper and if members agree then this can be progressed.

Councillor Ashton said that she has an open door policy and would be quite happy to go to a workshop going forward, but would be more than happy for the paper to be adopted here tonight. She stated that she would be happy to engage with any member afterwards but advised that her proposal stands to adopt the paper and if there was a need for a workshop going forward she would be happy to participate in that as long as people were willing to come to the table and have an open discussion. Just to clarify she said that she would like to propose adopting the paper in front of members tonight and have a workshop added on.

The Chair said that it was his understanding to add on the workshop to the recommendation tonight as part of the Decade of Anniversaries.

The Chair advised that there were two proposals being put before the committee tonight.

Councillor Ashton's proposal to proceed with the recommendation.

Councillor Corry's proposal to proceed with the recommendation with a workshop attached to it.

Councillor Ashton said that she wanted to clarify that she would be happy for a workshop to be added on to her proposal if this was being adopted tonight.

All members agreed with that they would be happy with Councillor Ashton's proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton  
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve the Decade of Anniversary Commemoration 2021-2022 programme as outlined under section 3 of this report and the funding commitment required, across the services detailed, totaling £72,000 from 2021/22 service budget allocations. Also recommended that a workshop be organised for members to discuss options going forward.

## **D153/20 Community Development**

The Head of Community Development presented previously circulated report to update members on the following:

- Grants – approval sought for rolling good relations grants & small community, arts and heritage grant appeal
- Emergency Support Funding: DFC funding
- Peace IV – to note the Peace IV update
- Community Development – to note the recommendation regarding Good Relations Leadership group and Community Development update

Councillor Elattar referred to information within the report on funding towards community debt management support and mental health support as it really was needed at the minute. She said that there were different amounts set down for the main towns and different organisations listed and sought clarification on whether this referred to STEPS in Draperstown and whether Magherafelt took into Draperstown as STEPS do a lot for mental health within those areas.

The Head of Community Development confirmed that it was STEPS in Draperstown and that Officers had identified social enterprises which was carrying out mental health support and was conscious that not all these organisations may have been identified at the moment but looking into this. She said that no funding had been agreed yet with any community group as no engagement has taken place until it was brought to the attention of members first to get approval but it was anticipated to have conversations on what areas can be provided for and on outcomes and targets on those areas and an indicative has been set for town based on the areas of coverage and population at the moment and then allocation can be made accordingly on who can cover what areas and outcomes achieved across the district.

Councillor Elattar said that she was very encouraged by this and would be happy to support the recommendation. She said that she had been speaking to a board member of STEPS last night who advised that there was a huge demand for counselling in both rural and urban areas and was good to see funding going towards that.

Councillor Molloy referred to the Food Partnership Fund and said it was good to see funding coming into the various food banks as this was very welcome. He enquired if there was any intention to provide any kind of funding for the other community groups who would have distributed parcels on an ad hoc basis as the one he was involved in

are seeing a rise in requests for ad hoc support from a range of people like the young, single parents, elderly and others across the board and enquired if there was any intention to set a fund in place to help community groups to avail of it as Christmas was around the corner and there was going to be a huge demand.

The Head of Community Development advised that £25,000 had been set aside to look at funding for community groups and see how it was best targeted and to try and get an indication of the pressures and engagement with community and best target that. In relation to the food and fuel element this was trying to be done through the food bank and linked into the FareShare and the Trust to maximise the resources and a process to refer people on so it becomes a wider integrated service within emergency support. She said that the community was being investigated at the moment for £25,000 and hoped that something can be brought very quickly.

Councillor Kerr referred to item 3.21 of the report and said that he welcomed the funding for the counselling services as there was going to be an increase in mental health issues relating to the pandemic and was good to see Council Officers being very proactive and supporting the various organisations as he was aware of them carrying out great work in the Coalisland and Mid Ulster area.

Councillor Burton referred to the Food Partnership Fund and said that she was aware of the amount of funding being calculated but enquired if a group could apply or had the group to be part of a partnership to reap the benefits of getting funding. She said that she was aware of a group in the Clogher Valley area, based in Clogher called Hope for You which provides counselling and they have really been proactive in provided mental health support, distribution of food parcels and helping the community during this very difficult time.

She also wanted to raise an issue relating to the community aspect and apologised as she had only received the email after Chair's business had taken place. The matter involved an educational provider within the Clogher Valley area being confused in relation to staff and the furlough scheme which has left the provider in dire straits as this was a fantastic resource for the Clogher Valley area and asked that following this meeting that Council Officers write to the Education Authority around clarity on issues relating to the furlough scheme as the facility cannot proceed without the adequate staff.

The Chair advised that Officers would follow up Councillor Burton's request.

*Councillor Monteith declared and interest in St. Vincent De Paul and the Vineyard Church in Dungannon in relation to doing voluntary work for these groups in the past.*

Proposed by Councillor Burton  
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve:

- i) Grant award recommendations for Good Relations & Grant Appeal Award for the small community, arts & heritage grant totaling £1,100.
- ii) Emergency Support Funding – proposed delivery and allocation.

- iii) Peace IV – Peace IV Partnership and Peace IV update.
- iv) Community Development – Discuss the recommendations for a Good Relations Leadership Group and to note the update report.

## **D154/20      Railway Park Action Plan**

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report to update and seek approval on planned actions associated to addressing issues in relation to anti-social behavior in Railway Park, Dungannon.

Councillor Molloy said that he was aware of a business on the Ballygawley Road carrying out extensive work in clearing up the debris in their own business and felt there was a need to reinstall the connecting fence between the two to protect the businesses from the constant access between the bushes and shrubbery which needs urgently looked at. He said that although money had been spent on it, this should be part & parcel of the project as an ongoing thing regardless. He referred to the issue of SEUPB funding and was he right in saying that within that project Wardens were to be put on that circuitous route that would be based in the building at Railway Park and enquired why this hasn't happened.

The Head of Community Development advised that this was to be part of the Earl's Project which was under Peace 3 Programme and was identified as part of the maintenance programme as part of a number of revenue conditions for the Park and for the Hill of the O'Neill. She said at that stage we were transitioning into the new Council and two resources were identified and put forward to Policy & Resources Committee, but at the time in a more generic role because of pressures along other routes in terms of the Parks development. There was to be one Warden for the Earls Pathway which included Railway Park element and one more generic at that stage during the time of the legacy Councils coming together.

The Head of Parks said as a result of the investment in Railway Park, under the Earl's Trails there were two new posts developed which were Town Parks staff. These are 2 x 20hr posts which were still operational in providing an inspection service for Railway Park on a daily basis, seven days a week, it's not a full time service and they cover other areas also. He said what Officers would be suggesting complementing what staff was already there as it wasn't enough, as sometimes their whole day was based at Railway Park because of its size and demands. They also had other duties around the Earl's Trails. He stated that these members of staff would be greatly missed if they weren't in post and the Council needed to look at complementing these staff due to the increased work load.

Councillor Monteith concurred with Councillor Molloy and said that he was 100% right, in the meetings running up the Earls Project, it was made clear to the community that there would be wardens in place as the community were giving up a formidable asset and a significant amount of open space. He said that when the building was built and the commitment given, there was a reassurance given to the Community that on the back of that there would be a permanent Council staffing presence on the park and this was made perfectly clear that staff would be based in the new building when Councillors went into the community asking people to back the proposal. He said that there was a need to get back to this point where staff are based at the building at

Railway Park where they go to first thing in the morning and operate from there and if they have other duties they can carry these out from their base and also be given more than an inspection role and more of an authority role to come up with proposals rather than looking after the place. He agreed what Councillor Molloy had previously said about waiting for a fence to collapse, instead look at ways at how this can be fixed or replaced as this was always the attitude shown towards Railway Park, let it fall or break before something is done.

He referred to a number of things within the Action Plan like lighting, where continuous requests for extra lighting at the Lisnahull side had been made and asked that a column be included to have this looked at as Wardens were key to the development of relationships with the community.

Councillor Monteith stressed that Railway Park never recovered after works were carried out in relation to the Gas to the West scheme as the local community went elsewhere that summer and to be fair to the Head of Parks and his team they tried to make it more welcoming by planting wild flower beds etc. He stated that there was a need to get the community to use the park again but felt that ongoing anti-social behaviour was the biggest deterrent and said that what was needed included in the Action Plan was the community back using the park again as this would be the biggest deterrent to anti-social behaviour. He advised that there was a need for encouraging people to utilise the park again through positive activities like walking and running from one park to another.

He said that to get the Earls project over the line there had been DEA meetings with Officers every month/six week basis to get this progressed and felt that this should revert back to this to iron out any issues to deliver the one million pounds project. He suggested having one DEA meeting per month to get into the habit and moving things forward.

He also referred to community concern regarding the open water proposal and felt that this would be a dangerous proposal for Council to be making unless there was a fully resourced presence at the Park with staff being there all of the time and this whole side of the park being looked at to facilitate it into a positive thing in a more structured way. He said that he was aware of a proposal from some of the local community to the Council and felt that a second 4g should be investigated for the town from that area which would encourage people not from that part of the town to come in and use it in a positive manner and agreed that this was an issue for the DEA meetings going forward. He asked that DEA meeting be held once a month and not just crisis meetings but to try and get a quality project over the line so it be something that the Council and the community can be proud of as it had a massive potential for the area.

Councillor Ashton thanked officers for presenting the paper tonight as she had asked that this be progressed at a previous Council meeting and would be happy to second Councillor Molloy's proposal. She asked that a completion column be included to show if targets are being met or not.

Councillor Cuddy concurred with all members comments and said that the Earls Project amounted to £7m, funded 100% for the town and was a terrific project and now the Council's vision was to have a circular park so people can walk around the town in a



circular fashion. He also agreed with Councillors Molloy and Monteith regarding being approached by some business owners raising concerns about anti-social behaviour at Railway Park in the evening and causing a deterrent for community usage and didn't want to see the park turning into a no-go area as it has a lot of potential. He stated that it was important that this be investigated as one whole project as there was a need to address community concerns in relation to walking from one park to another.

The Chair stated that he was glad to see the plan on paper and going forward it would be beneficial if DEA meetings be arranged to progress the matter.

The Head of Parks said that engagement had taken place with local businesses which Councillors had referred to with some costings being drawn up for fencing and was aware of the acute issue at the moment regarding people getting into business properties which they shouldn't be getting into. He was working on that at the moment and getting some costs with regards to incorporating them into the Action Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy  
Seconded by Councillor Ashton and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve:

- i) Proposed actions associated to combating anti-social behavior in Railway Park.
- ii) Report be presented to Policy and Resources Committee to request the additional budget required.
- iii) Organise a series of DEA meetings to further discuss the additional actions that have yet to be fully determined.

#### **D155/20 Relocation of a Changing Cabin**

The Head of Leisure presented previously circulated report and sought approval for the relocation of a changing cabin at Knockloughrim Playing Fields to Pomeroy and establishment of a license agreement with Pomeroy District Sports and Cultural Association.

Proposed by Councillor Black  
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve in principle the relocation of the changing cabin currently situated at Knockloughrim Playing Fields to Pomeroy in addition to the approval to proceed with entering into a license agreement with Pomeroy District Sports and Cultural Association.

Councillor Burton thanked officers and contractors on the Aughnacloy relocation which was being very well received by all within the community. She said that she had visited the site and wanted to commend the Contractors on how they have finished off the project with fantastic walkways and railings and a job very much appreciated by all backgrounds within the community.

## **D156/20      Tamnamore Close Play Park Lease Agreement**

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report and sought approval to progress lease proposals in relation to a parcel of land adjacent to 1 and 4 Tamnamore Close, Dungannon from Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

*Councillor Bell left the meeting at 8.24 pm.*

Councillor Doris said that she would be happy to propose the report but wanted to raise a separate issue relating to Stewartstown which has a similar set up to Tamnamore. She said that there was a proposal brought for a playpark at Henderson's Park in Stewartstown but originally the community thought it was on a certain piece of land. She wanted to apologise in advance if she was wrong but she was of the opinion that the Council had messed this up as the community believed that this piece of land was owned by the Council. When the plans and money came through it became apparent that the land was owned by the Housing Executive and not the Council. She asked for a letter to be written and sent to the Housing Executive asking them if the land could be transferred to Council to put the park at the proposed site instead of the second location as it wasn't really suitable. She said that it would be useful to write to the Housing Executive and Contractor to explain the situation, even to exhaust the option to find out for definite if the park cannot go where the community originally believed it was going to go and wished to make that proposal.

*Councillor Bell returned to the meeting at 8.27 pm.*

The Chair enquired if this was part of a legacy Council issue as it was something that could have been discussed with Stewartstown and would ask Officers to follow the issue up.

The Head of Parks advised that to his knowledge there would have been negotiations taken place regarding development at Henderson's Park. As far as he was aware in discussions with colleagues in Communities in relation to funding there was full consultation with the community with regards to the current location at Henderson's Park. He stated that the project at Henderson's Park was at an advanced stage with regard to the funding window and with award of contract and any deviation with the award would mean the project would have to be pulled completely from the funding package that it's part of at the moment. He said that he was unaware of the other piece of land that Councillor Doris had referred to but Henderson's Park does offer a reasonably central location in Ard Stewart and Henderson's Park. Within Stewartstown access to play is quite central which isn't always the case in some areas.

The Chair said that the Stewartstown scheme seemed to be at an advanced stage and any deviation away from that would result in delays or the possibility of not having any play facilities.

Councillor Doris advised that this was the last thing that she would want for the park to not proceed but was only looking to see if there was a possibility to see if the project could go elsewhere after speaking to the community they were of the opinion the playpark was going to be elsewhere and during consultations they had expressed their

desire to have it at the alternative location. She felt if Officers were indicating that this cannot be done then it was fair enough but just wanted to exhaust that option. The Chair said that he was sure that the Head of Parks would follow it up and what the potential threat and delay would be if the scheme was to be pulled at this stage.

The Head of Parks advised that there would be no problem providing more information if Councillor Doris requires it.

Councillor Monteith said that he would be happy to second the recommendation.

Councillor Ashton said that it would be good to get the project of the ground as this issue was going on for quite some time.

Councillor Cuddy agreed with the Head of Parks and said that this was an ideal location as there were a number of new houses developed and central for all and great to see a bit of ground being utilised for good use.

Proposed by Councillor Doris  
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve:

- i) The establishment of Lease Agreement from Northern Ireland Housing Executive in relation to the proposed 25 year lease for the designated land at Tamnamore Close, Dungannon for the provision of public play facilities.
- ii) Upon receipt, all associated LPS valuations and Lease Agreement Documentation to P&R Committee and Council Meeting for approval and Seal.

## **D157/20      Economic Development Report**

The Head of Economic Development presented previously circulated report to provide an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

### **i)      Covid-19 Revitalisation Project (Tranche 2)**

- *Department for Communities (DfC) and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Funding – Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme (Tranche 2) -*

Previously under the Covid-19 Revitalisation Project funding in Tranche 1, Council delivered a Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme to assist urban and rural businesses make adaptations and implement social distancing measures to protect staff and customers in line with government guidance. In Tranche 1, Council received £281,000 funding from DfC and £148,000 from DAERA and Council also redirected £133,000 from its Economic Development budget towards

the scheme. This provided a maximum budget of £562,000 to be split equally between urban and rural areas with £281,000 for each.

A new Tranche 2 application to deliver a further Covid-19 Business Grants Scheme was submitted to DfC on 24 September 2020.

- *Department for Infrastructure (DFI) / Department for Communities (DfC) Funding - Covid-19 Town Centre Works Scheme (Tranche 2)*

Members were briefed at the September 2020 Committee Meeting that DfC advised Council on 2 September 2020, that DfI would provide £464,659 capital funding to Mid Ulster Council in Tranche 2. The focus of their funding must be concentrated on pavement widening to allow for social distancing, active travel, promoting connectivity, access to services, enhancing green/blue spaces, etc. Furthermore, on 30 September 2020, DfC advised they will also provide a further £34,000 revenue funding to Mid Ulster Council.

Councillor Kerr referred to Coalisland Canal Towpath and said he welcomed the excitement for funding which may be available and was aware of previous Councillors before him raising issues relating to recreation and lighting and would welcome the report and would be happy to propose.

Councillor Doris said that she would be happy to second the proposal as it was very welcome funding which demonstrated very exciting projects. She advised that today Councillors O'Neill, M Quinn and herself had an on site meeting at the entrance to the Canal walkway where it was extremely dangerous at the crossings due to it being a very well used site and hoped that this would improve as the project progresses.

She proposed that the Council write another letter to the DfI Minister about making it a priority for access routes and having the matter resolved as quickly as possible as this was an accident waiting to happen.

The Chair advised that Officers would take request on board.

Councillor Kearney said that he wished to acknowledge the good work carried out by Council officials on the Maghera project as it provided safety for people using the Park & Ride facility at night as sometimes people were afraid of going out to the main bus stop on the Glenshane Pass because of the lack of lights and a very special treat for the people of Maghera to get that.

Councillor Monteith referred to significant projects within Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt which were not over the line and asked if there were any specific reasons being given by DfI and asked if it was too late to have a "plan b" as we have separate parties in Dungannon and whether these priorities are able to be moved up and would be interested to know what DfI problem was with them.

The Head of Economic Development advised that DfI/DFC originally outlined a number of criteria that Council's application should focus on. These included supporting active travel, promoting connectivity, access to services, and creating/enhancing green/blue

spaces. DfI provided examples of projects such as development of cycle tracks, cycle parking/charging points, pavement or footway widening to account for social distancing, tree planting, sustainable drainage schemes etc. Further to Council submitting a detailed application to DfI/DFC, further correspondence was issued to all Councils by the Department, asking them to make a second application as additional criteria had been added. She said that whilst the thrust of the scheme remained the same there were new criteria to meet. The Head of Economic Development said Council's application focused on improving connectivity in town centres and by so doing would encourage people to actively travel back into towns to use them during and post Covid19, thus supporting trade in local businesses. She added that the proposals, previously agreed by Council and the Town Centre Forums for the 3 larger towns of Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt as detailed in Appendix 1 include provision of outdoor covered seating/rest areas for the public to use whilst in town shopping, where they could meet with family and friends in a safe environment whilst adhering to social distancing protocols. She said that DfI/DFC have communicated they will have difficulty funding the projects in these 3 towns as in their opinion, they do not adequately meet the 'active travel' agenda.

The Chair enquired if there was any indication when DfI would issue a response.

The Head of Economic Development felt that it would be fairly imminent.

The Director of Business and Communities said to answer Councillor Monteith's query and build upon what the Head of Economic Development had stated, he had a meeting tomorrow at 3.30 pm with a Director from DfC/DFI on concerns regarding not meeting criteria of DfI and he wanted members to know that he agreed entirely with the Head of Economic Development as the Council had considered this in great detail and went to great expense in devising, developing and designing these schemes for civic spaces across our main towns. He added Council was told that this was part of the Covid-19 Recovery Programme and we didn't differ from that for one moment. He said DfI had amended their criteria, and it would seem apparent to Officers that DfI was looking the Council to spend the money on DfI projects which were their responsibility and noted they are likely to fund the Coalisland Canal Scheme and the lighting scheme in Maghera but for some reason the three civic spaces which this Council along with DfC have spent millions of pounds creating cannot be funded to put awnings/tables/chairs etc on to allow people to sit down in our town centres like they do all over the world. He advised members this was how he sees it and that he was being open and honest and this would be his line back to DfC/DFI tomorrow as the Council was very clear in its direction and he didn't see an economic reason to change this. He said that this was the Council's view on the matter and when Council open a grant scheme, we don't change our criteria after the documentation is sent out. He referred to funding being spent on implementing cycle lanes going through towns like Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt and reducing parking spaces to widen footpaths which aren't feasible as the Council doesn't want to engage with traders on these issues.

The Chair asked that the Director of Business and Communities keep members informed on the outcome of tomorrow's meeting with DfC/DFI.

Councillor Burton said that her question was previously answered but advised that through NILGA she found out the Mid Ulster was in the top 10 out of 382 regions in the

UK to do with Covid, we were the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in terms of numbers in Northern Ireland and was confident that the Director of Business and Communities would do his best tomorrow but felt that if they have changed the goalposts, surely this would need to be addressed as we as a Council could not get away with that so as a Department you would think they wouldn't be allowed to get away with it either.

The Director of Business and Communities said that it would be his view that he would meet DFC/Dfl and listen to concerns and if need be he would invite them back to meet the members and as he had pointed out to one of the officials yesterday, he didn't make these decisions and that the Council follow a democratic mandate and when a decision is made, it was followed through and not overturned. He said if need be he would invite Dfl to meet members remotely at the next Development Committee as it was an important issue and genuinely didn't want to lose this funding.

Councillor Black said he wanted to support what Councillor Kearney had said earlier regarding the Maghera project and said that he also welcomed it as it was a worthwhile project especially for people using the Park & Ride facility in the evening which would elevate safety concerns.

Councillor Wilson said that he wanted to add to what the Director of Business and Communities had stated and say that a lot of time and effort had been invested by Officers bringing these projects to fruition and it was concerning that the goalposts have been moved half way through, but these awnings which were to be put up were there to try and encourage people to use town centres and sit outside and that's exactly what that money was supposed to be used for. In referring to proposed cycle lanes, he said that he could not envisage a cycle lane being erected through Cookstown main street with all those traffic islands and just didn't make sense.

Councillor Wilson proposed to invite Dfl representatives to the next meeting of the Development Committee remotely, so members can address concerns around these significant projects being put on hold.

Councillor Corry said that she was happy to second the proposal and concurred with Councillor Kearney and Councillor Black's comments on successful scheme at Maghera and wished to thank the Council as she was aware of how busy staff are.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

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

**1) Covid-19 Revitalisation Project (Tranche 2)**

- i) Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive and/or Director of Business & Communities to sign and accept any letters of offer/contracts received by Council offering funding for the Covid-19 Revitalisation Project.
- ii) Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive/Director of Business & Communities to develop and roll out a business grants scheme to urban and rural businesses, as soon as funding is

confirmed to Council by the Department for Communities (for urban businesses) and Department for Agriculture and Rural Affairs (for rural businesses), along with Council funding of £133,000 (previously approved).

- iii) Authority be given to the Chief Executive/Director of Business & Communities to sign off on letters of offer to successful participants on a business grants scheme, with the list of approved projects to be brought to Committee for noting.
- iv) Additional revenue funding from DfC of £34,000 be used to cover key revenue expenditure costs within the Covid-19 Towns Centre Works Scheme, to match fund the DfI capital budget assigned to Mid Ulster Council of £464,659.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council that an invite be issued to DfI to attend the next Development Committee remotely to address concerns regarding significant projects being put on hold in Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt

## **2) Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce Funding Request**

- Funding request from Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce seeking £5,000 support to assist them in the following activities:
  - Promoting the growth of Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce
  - Networking events
  - Promotional content for website and social media channels
  - Training/Workshops for businesses
  - Administration
  - Celebrating achievements of businesses
  - Campaign to promote shopping in Magherafelt

Councillor Burton said that she would like Fivemiletown Chamber of Commerce to be included in the Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce meeting and would like to see all the business forums coming together to work on projects and on information on what businesses may be entitled to and ask if this could be a possibility.

The Chair said as Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce request was brought forward tonight that this would have to be dealt with separately but going forward Councillor Burton's request would be considered.

Councillor Black said that he would be happy to propose that Officers meet with Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce as it sounded a sensible way forward as it could be picked up under the Council's programmes.

Proposed by Councillor Black  
Seconded by Councillor Kearney and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council that Council Officers meet with Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce to deliver a presentation on the range of business programmes and marketing activities currently provided by Council and Magherafelt Town Centre Forum that businesses in Magherafelt can avail of to assist their growth and development.

### **3) Social Enterprise NI: Council Membership**

Consideration for Councils to sign up to SENI: Council Membership at a cost of £500 per annum. Benefits for Council for joining the scheme include:

- SENI will promote any Council events for social SENI will promote any Council events for social enterprises in their e-zine and social media
- SENI offer free members to any new social enterprise in the area for the first year if they are not already members of SENI.
- Host joint events with the Council including Pitching Events, Buy Social Events, Entrepreneurship Week support etc
- Free training on topics such as “What is Social Value” with any Council staff or members at any time should you feel that appropriate, or any other relevant training required, in order to better understand the business model.
- Listing as a Corporate Member on SENI’s new website (coming soon)
- Access to discounted events for members including Awards and Conferences
- Access to free bursaries that SENI offers to members

Proposed by Councillor Doris  
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to approve that Mid Ulster District Council subscribe to become a member of Social Enterprise NI at an annual cost of £500.

### **4) Committee for the Executive Office – Brexit Stakeholder Event**

Invitation received by Council from the Committee for the Executive Office to attend a Brexit Stakeholder Event on Wednesday 4 November 2020. Two attendees from each Council are invited to attend; one political representative and one senior official. Each Council to have a 30 minute time slot to meet and brief Committee Members and this will be followed by 20 minutes for questions and answers

Proposed by Councillor Doris

That Councillor Mallaghan, Chair of the Council, attend or another representative if he is unable to attend the event.

Seconded by Councillor Ashton



**Resolved** That it be recommend to the Council that Councillor Mallaghan, Chair of the Council attend and in the event he can't attend another representative to take his place.

## **Matters for Information**

### **D158/20 Minutes of Development Committee held on 10 September 2020**

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 10 September 2020.

Councillor Monteith referred to item D118/20 – Social Housing and asked if there was any update on the pilot scheme for social housing and asked if there was any date set yet for the first meeting. He also referred to proposed funding which was agreed at last month's meeting to take forward the action plan which was co-funded by the Housing Executive and asked if there was going to be discussion or a meeting around the scope of the document and how it was going to be brought forward before it's all put together. He said that by speaking to local management within the Housing Executive they were unaware and not on the radar at all, except this relates to area management that would be doing a lot of this, but felt it wasn't a great start when the local Housing Executive management weren't even aware and feels that the blame may lay with an internal issue within the Housing Executive. He said that all he was looking to know was there a date for a first meeting of DEA's and whether the Council were going to be involved in setting the perimeter for the scoping study.

The Head of Community Development advised that the Director of Business and Communities and Officers were due to have a meeting with the Area Planning team on planning out the structure on how it was going to work. She said that one of the things that the Area Planning team were going to bring to the table was in terms of what was the putting together of an average cost to put a spec together, to get the right people and specialists in to support this and as soon as this was received, it's hoped that this would be in place next week or the following week, with the meeting being set up with DEA members, Housing Executive, Officers of Council and the linking in of Planning. She stated that officers were working on spec at the moment to prepare a paper. She concluded by saying that local managers would be involved through the Housing Executive, but they will have to link in, but would be the Area Plan team in Craigavon which would take the lead.

Councillor Doris referred to item D114/20 Outdoor Recreation Master Plan Programme – Cappagh/Altmore Forest and Drumcairn Forest and enquired where they were within the process. She said that she had requested this information months ago and also asked at the last Council meeting that a tidy be done to Drumcairn carpark and to her knowledge this was never done. She stated that she had also made contact with Council regarding signage to the entrance which was disgraceful and felt that these priorities were being overlooked and asked what the situation was regarding this and whether this was going to be addressed.

The Head of Parks said that in regards to the development of Altmore Forest it was agreed by Council to develop a masterplan for three locations and one of those locations was Altmore Forest. He said that currently the Terms of Reference was being

put together. He had been consulting with Forest Service today, and like anything a process has to be followed. He said that a plan was being developed with the intention to present the plan to Forest Service. Consultation would be organised as a result once the Terms of Reference was drafted with the Altmore Community Group for their input. He said that a process had to be followed and this was a process in which the Council had embarked on and would keep members updated as things progress as Forest Service had to approve the masterplan before they consider issuing a recreational license for any of their properties. He stated that he could follow up any works being carried out at Altmore, but because Council don't have a remit, any work has to be carried out by Forest Service but would endeavor to get more information for Councillor Doris to see if this can be brought forward.

Councillor Doris enquired if there was any proposal or consultation with the Cappagh Group or Stewartstown Community Group in relation to the putting together of the masterplan. She also referred to the cleaning up of Drumcairn Forest carpark and said that it was previously carried out at the request of another Councillor but hadn't been done since last month and asked could this be done this month.

The Head of Parks in response to clean up of Drumcairn Forest advised that he would refer the matter on to Forest Service as Council do not have a remit for Drumcairn but would liaise with Forestry Service colleagues to see if something can be done. In relation to consultation with Cappagh Group, he stated that with regard to the Terms of Reference this had not happened yet as it was still in draft form and once it was a drafted consultation and discussions would take place and that would be the process.

Councillor Kerr referred to D128/20 – Youth Engagement and said that unfortunately there were a few cases of anti-social behavior around the Lineside area and pit area of Meenagh Park and referred to the wording from proposal from the previous month and said he would like Council to investigate opportunities along with the Education Authority to co-ordinate and enhance activity and have conversations with youth structure in the area and try to engage with any youths who may be feeling frustrated with the lockdown and the lack of activities and to vent their frustrations into positive progressive actions.

Councillor Burton enquired if there were any other meetings with the Forestry and their input into Lumford's Glen.

The Head of Parks stated that to date there hadn't been any meetings regarding Lumfords Glen. He did meet with Forest Service earlier but it wasn't on the agenda today unfortunately. He said that there stance remains that a clear filling had to take place but would bring Councillor Burton's concerns forward again.

#### **D159/20      Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group**

Members noted minutes of Tourism Development Group meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 that were approved at Tourism Development meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

## **D160/20      Mid Ulster District Tourism Update**

Members noted update on the Mid Ulster Tourism Group and ongoing webinars.

## **D161/20      Economic Development Report**

Members noted updates on the following matters:

- Cookstown Town Centre Forum Minutes – 7 July 2020
- Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes – 10 August 2020
- Town Centre Business Videos

## **D161/20      Mid South West (MSW) Region Update**

Members noted progress on the ongoing work in relation to the Mid South West (MSW) region.

Councillor Molloy said that the topic he wished to raise was not in relation to this item but would try and link it in. He said that a good meeting had taken place the other day on bypass issues with Dungannon being incorporated into the discussion and where things should go from here and to get to B you have to start with A. He proposed that Council start looking at a scoping exercise in relation to funding and under the infrastructure as a project within the Growth Deal and that Council investigate whether there was funding available, what kind of costs it may take to get this off the ground to start looking at a preferred route for the Dungannon bypass.

Councillor Monteith said that he would be happy to second Councillor Molloy's proposal.

Councillor Monteith referred to the Growth Deal and issues in proposals in Armagh for the Eastern route through Armagh City and felt that Moy was the glaring gap in all of this and there was a need to keep it on the radar. He said that he was aware of Cookstown being close to getting over the line and Dungannon also but there was no point in continuing with this scheme if Moy wasn't taken into consideration as it was the main route to Dublin from this part of the world and especially if Armagh City was going to get a bypass, then it would be important that Moy be included in the works as it was going to be stuck in the middle between Dungannon and Armagh.

The Chair agreed and said that he understood and also referred to Moneymore which was another area of concern.

Councillor Molloy stated that he would be happy to include Moy within his original proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy  
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

**Resolved**      That it be recommended to Council to start looking at a scoping exercise in relation to funding under the infrastructure as a project within the Growth Deal if available and amount it would take to get the project off the

ground to start looking at a preferred route for the Dungannon bypass.  
Moy to be also investigated under the proposal.

The Director of Business and Communities advised that the Growth Deal was launched a few weeks ago and there were obviously strategic projects but it was made clear to Department officials that these schemes cannot be treated in isolation and was important to get things moving.

*Live broadcast ended at 9.03 pm.*

## **Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business**

Proposed by Councillor Burton  
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

**Resolved** In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items D162/20 to D166/20.

### **Matters for Decision**

D162/20 Southern Health Trust Transfer of Assets  
D163/20 Brookmount to Spring Road Alleged PRow

### **Matters for Information**

D164/20 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 10 September 2020  
D165/20 Economic Development Report  
D166/20 Miscellaneous Matters

## **D167/20 Duration of Meeting**

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 9.25 pm.

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Report on</b>	DfC Strategy for Sport Consultation
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure

<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	For members to note that Officers have issued a return for the Department for Communities (DfC) Strategy for Sport Consultation.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	DfC had issued correspondence that they are developing a new Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity – <i>“Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2020 to 2030 and beyond”</i> and therefore have requested for key stakeholders to complete a pre-consultation survey. The closing date for submissions was extended until the 30 October 2020.
2.2	DfC has stated that they wish for the new strategy to build on the successful foundations of the Sport Matters strategy which was published in 2009 and which continues to guide Government policy until the new strategy is agreed and put in place.
2.3	Members are advised that Officers have been actively engaging with DfC in relation to the Strategy for Sport 2020 – 2030.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	DfC have stated that their aim is for the new strategy to be cross-Departmental in nature, meaning that it will cover all the Departments of the Northern Ireland Executive and will focus on linkages and shared outcomes between sport and physical activity and other policies of the Executive, such as physical and mental health and well-being, education, transport, economic, urban and rural regeneration, good relations, community safety, social inclusion and social equality.
3.2	It is anticipated that the new strategy is to be developed through a process of co-design with a wide range of stakeholders. Co-design is a process of developing the strategy jointly and in consultation with those who have a key interest in sport and physical activities, and those who are currently not engaging in such activities and using their views to help shape and refine the final document.
3.3	As an early part of the co-design process the Department for Communities is keen to know the initial views of a range of key interest groups on issues, concerns and future opportunities in relation to sport and physical activity. These will be collected through this survey and via any focus groups or meetings.

3.4	The Department will then seek to ensure that those issues, concerns and future opportunities are considered effectively in the formal consultation process and ultimately in the development of the new strategy for sport and physical activity.
3.5	<p>Following a focus group meeting with DfC and neighbouring Councils, a number of issues emerged from the discussion which have been incorporated into the response from Mid Ulster District Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective to increase participation in sporting and non-sporting physical activities</li> <li>• Seek to innovate by encouraging additional and new participants into physical activity through non-traditional routes.</li> <li>• Aim for closer engagement and alignment with Education that should promote early years to old age participation.</li> <li>• Seek to embrace new technology and how support can be given to become more digitally advanced.</li> <li>• Understand Impact of Covid 19 – specifically mental health and the role of physical activity.</li> <li>• Action Planning as a result of Covid 19 - financial challenges current/post pandemic and impact on programming and facilities.</li> <li>• Aim to provide enhanced support for people development and deployment specifically with volunteers.</li> <li>• Seek to clarify Sport NI's role and future – ie. Current Everybody Active 2020 Programme/Small Grants – What next? Specifically, for EBA 2020 as currently programme is due to end March 2021.</li> <li>• Aim to define the prioritisation and objectives clarity on investment between participation versus performance.</li> </ul>
3.6	The new strategy is due to be published in March 2021 and further updates, when received, will be brought back to Development Committee.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That members note the contents of this report.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	N/A

<b>Report on</b>	Potential Restructure of Intermediate Football
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Head of Leisure

<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	For members to note the correspondence issued by the Irish Football Association (IFA) to the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) indicating that the planned restructure of Intermediate Football is discontinued at this time.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Previously in 2019, the IFA released proposals on the planned restructuring of Intermediate Football and ground criteria.
2.2	One of the long-term objectives within the IFA's 5-year strategy 2017-2022 is to reinvigorate the everyday game. Specifically, within this objective is a proposal for the restructure of Intermediate Football.
2.3	The restructure aims were to raise standards and continue the development of the game at Intermediate level by seeking to improve the standard of football on the pitch, introducing a more standardised league format and enhancing the quality of facilities/spectator experience.
2.4	The enhanced Intermediate ground criteria requirements were required to be met by January 2021 and many Council's voiced concern at this time due to the potential financial impact and the extent of the work required for Council owned pitches to meet the required revised standards.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The Chief Operating Officer of the IFA wrote to CLOA on 8 September 2020 advising a change in their plans to restructure Intermediate Football (see appendix A).
3.2	The correspondence notes the ongoing financial impacts that the pandemic is having on both local clubs and Councils and confirms that the IFA have taken a decision to act responsibly to safeguard the immediate financial viability and sustainability of current intermediate clubs.
3.3	As a result, the IFA have advised that the planned restructure of the intermediate game is to be discontinued at this time.
3.4	The correspondence goes on to state that it remains the intention of the IFA Board to bring about a restructure of the football pyramid in due course to provide a clear and equitable pathway for ambitious clubs.

3.5	Following the correspondence issued on 8 September 2020, Council officers have been seeking further clarity and it is still remains unclear if the proposed changes to the ground criteria, as part of the restructure plans, are to be discontinued indefinitely.
3.6	All Councils are awaiting further clarity on this position, to understand any impact on current or new pitch developments and to understand how the IFA plan to take forward the re-structure of the football pyramid.
3.7	If and when any further updates are provided, further information will be brought to a future Development Committee detailing the impacts (if any) within Mid Ulster District Council.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That members note the contents of this report and the correspondence within Appendix A.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix A – Correspondence issued by the Irish Football Association (IFA) to the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA)





8 September 2020

Mrs. Patricia Allen  
Honorary Secretary  
Chief Leisure Officers Association

Dear Patricia

**Re: Restructure of Intermediate Football**

I write in respect of the above and to advise that at its meeting held on 27 August, the IFA Board considered the hugely changed football landscape in Northern Ireland since March 2020 as a result of Covid-19.

The ongoing financial impact on clubs (whilst yet to be fully understood) against the backdrop of an evolving global health pandemic is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, it is a matter of record that local councils across Northern Ireland (who are significant providers of Intermediate football facilities) are facing budget shortfalls due to Covid-19.

Following lengthy discussion on the subject, it was agreed that it was incumbent upon the Irish Football Association to act responsibly in choosing to safeguard the immediate financial viability and sustainability of current Intermediate Clubs. It was therefore, further agreed that the planned restructure of the Intermediate game will be discontinued at this time.

However, it fully remains the intention of the IFA Board to bring about a restructure of the football pyramid in due course as it remains imperative that a clear and equitable pathway is created for ambitious clubs.

This will provide greater opportunity for those ambitious clubs and players with aspirations to progress through the pyramid and continually compete at the highest level of competition possible. In doing so, it will strengthen the overall Performance Game element of the football pyramid, whilst also continuing to cater for those clubs where a more recreational centered football philosophy is more often than not viewed as of greater importance than a desire to continually seek progress and advancement to a higher level.

I trust that you will take note of the above and communicate to members as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean Murphy".

Sean Murphy  
Chief Operating Officer



<b>Report on</b>	Lough Neagh Partnership Core Funding Progress Report
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Allison O'Keefe

<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 update on Lough Neagh Partnership (LNP) Core funding activities, marketing tourism, recreational, environmental and heritage activities on Lough Neagh (LN) and the shoreline on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p>LNP is the main co-ordinating body for tourism, environmental, heritage and marketing activities on LN, delivering projects and programmes on behalf of local and central government. Mid Ulster District Council agreed an annual contribution of £22,000 towards core running costs and to operate a continuous marketing plan for LN, specifically within Mid Ulster.</p> <p>LNP receives funding toward core running costs from five Council's around the Lough Shore for the co-ordination of substantial development, promotion and marketing of LN.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Funding primarily contributes towards core staff costs (Manager, Marketing Officer and Admin/Finance Officer), development/ delivery of programmes and office running costs.</p> <p>LNP continue to identify and secure additional investment to the region to assist in addressing social, environmental and economic issues around the Lough. As part of the funding LNP offer Mid Ulster District Council continued coordination and marketing around LN and its Waterways and continue to develop Lough Neagh as a tourism destination.</p> <p>Measurable targets and quantifiable outputs are attached in Appendix 1.</p> <p>£22,000 was identified in the 2020/21 budget, with £13,708.45 having been drawn down for the period April – September 2020.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial: £13,708.45 towards Core running and salary costs in first claim submitted to cover period 1 April – 30 September 2020.</p>

<b>4.2</b>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>Ensure effective co-ordination of activities on LN and its shoreline and deliver social, economic and cultural benefits within MU. LNP is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster area of LN.</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>LNP has been in existence since 2003 with experience in managing risk. Funding has been secured with 4 Councils surrounding Lough shore therefore minimising risk to MUDC. Monitoring and verification of original invoices, payslips and corresponding bank statements, as well as, quarterly reports and site visits will be carried out to minimise risk.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Recommendation(s)</u></b>
5.1	For information.
<b>6.0</b>	<b><u>Documents Attached &amp; References</u></b>
6.1	Appendix 1 - LNP Progress Report

**LOUGH NEAGH PARTNERSHIP CORE FUNDING 2020/21 - £22,000 1 April – 30 September 2020**  
**MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL FUNDING MEASUREABLE TARGETS AND QUANTIFIABLE**  
**OUTPUTS**



Targets	Quantifiable Outputs	Progress with Measurable Targets up to 30 September 2020
<p><b>1. Landscape Partnership Project</b>                      Deliver Year 2 of the Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership project</p>	<p>Implement projects as agreed in HLF plan for 2020/21 e.g. signage project, manage Brookend and Derryloughan nature reserves.</p> <p>The Partnership is working with local communities and the Council in helping develop a community buy out of Derrytrasna land owned by DEL. This is a major environmental conservation project within the Mid Ulster Area and includes a major effort to conserve Curlews that breed in the bog area. This is one of the last breeding areas for Curlew around the shores of the Lough and an important site.</p> <p>The Partnership has also worked with local communities and Mid Ulster council to address peatland fires at Derrytrasna. This has been a serious problem in the area.</p> <p>The Partnership has also been liaising with the planning section regarding illegal extraction of peat in the area. Overall the Partnership has been working closely with the Council in this area.</p>	<p>Significant progress has been made on the acquisition, implementation of conservation actions and community involvement at the SW Lough Neagh peatlands at Derrylaughan and Derrytrasna. With support from Councillors and Council Officers we have progressed the lease agreement to a stage where transfer to the Partnership is imminent. The Curlew research and conservation programme has been very successful and has received extensive media coverage. We have also completed habitat, species, hydrological and access surveys of the site which will be used alongside the community engagement ‘deep mapping’ reports to develop a 10 year site management plan. This will be used to secure future investment to implement conservation, access and community interventions which will contribute to the wider site restoration. Alongside the branding of the site as a primary Curlew sanctuary, we hope to see the south west peatlands become one of the best community-led restoration projects in N. Ireland. The statutory agencies have now become interested in our work here and have expressed interest in supporting future interventions.</p> <p>At Brookend we have completed 14 acres of scrub management, installed riparian fencing, installed new access gates and provided cattle drinkers. This alongside</p>

		<p>rush management has brought the site into ‘favourable’ conservation condition.</p> <p>The archaeology programme continues to progress well with widespread interest and participation around the Lough. We have successfully delivered a community archaeology event at Ballyeglish Church working closely with TABBDA and the Loup &amp; District Historical Society to investigate the potential for structural remains and a historic routeway thought to be present at the Church. A geophysical survey has been completed and we hope to secure future funding to undertake a more extensive investigation. The project engaged with 45 pupils and members of both organisations and was very well received.</p> <p>As part of our wider community heritage engagement we developed a six-week programme that provided participants and community groups with new skills to read, understand and interpret the features, history and heritage that tell the story of their home area.</p>
<p><b>2. Destination Marketing Plan</b> Working with Mid Ulster Council and stakeholders, identify and help develop new tourism products on Lough</p>	<p>Develop and promote two new major Lough Neagh Tours, two of which relate to and promote the Mid Ulster Tourism development product.</p> <p>The Partnership has been working closely with the Mid Ulster Council to develop an “Embrace the Spirit” Experiential Tourism project with Mid Ulster. This is building on the work of the Partnership in developing the Food and Craic tours around the western shores of the Lough and Lough Beg. The new potential programme will work with local private businesses in the mid ulster area and at the same time</p>	<p>Lough Neagh Tours have developed three new tour itineraries; two of them feature Mid Ulster tourism businesses. In response to the pandemic, these tour itineraries are promoted as self-drive:</p> <p><a href="https://www.loughneaghtours.com/foodie-road-trip/">https://www.loughneaghtours.com/foodie-road-trip/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.loughneaghtours.com/scenic-road-trip/">https://www.loughneaghtours.com/scenic-road-trip/</a></p> <p>A marketing campaign has just completed 15/10/2020 to promote these itineraries, videos were produced and will be given to each participating business to use on their own channels.</p>

	<p>promote the wider Lough as an important place to visit.</p> <p>The Partnership has also helped Mid Ulster with implementation of their tourism strategy particularly in the area of built heritage and heritage signage. The signage project will be implemented around the shoreline in 20/21 period.</p>	
<p><b>3. General Marketing and Promotion of Lough Neagh</b></p> <p>Ensure that VICs provide event information to Tourism NI on regular basis</p> <p>Co-ordination of Tourism NI marketing features for LN work includes co-ordination of marketing features for Tourism NI productions/advertorials. Production &amp; distribution of Lough Neagh E-Newsletter for stakeholders &amp; consumers online.</p> <p>Trade fairs and exhibitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 20 events per District</li> <li>• MUDC events submitted to TNI will be featured on Discover Lough Neagh website &amp; app</li> <li>• 2 advertorials - Spring and Autumn</li> <li>• 3 stakeholder newsletters - Quarterly</li> <li>• Minimum 6 press releases</li> <li>• Review other content on website &amp; update</li> <li>• Issue of event updates and press releases.</li> <li>• 200 posts for consumer and trade pages on Facebook &amp; Twitter</li> </ul> <p>Lough Neagh Partnership will attend trade fairs and exhibitions with Mid Ulster staff where opportunities arise to promote the destination and its events.</p>	<p>Due to the pandemic events were not promoted and advertorials not used by TNI. Lough Neagh Tours supplied content to TNI for their embrace a giant spirit campaign such as the legend of Finn McCool.</p> <p>Lough Neagh also participated in virtual Meet the Buyer to engage with tour operators and follow up communications are now ongoing in anticipation of the return of international visitors.</p> <p>A series of seven webinars for Tourism Businesses were hosted from April to June to upskill businesses in tourism marketing and in response to covid.</p> <p>Influencer marketing was utilized when lockdown eased to promote the tour Itineraries, Dish You Were Here promoted BakeHouse NI and an article was also facilitated in the NI Travel News for Bakehouse.</p> <p>Weekly posts/stories on Social Media are ongoing, website updated and funding application submitted to TNI for new website &amp; booking system</p> <p>Press clippings report attached.</p>

		<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/111RZKr6xSnqv7wvKi2cJpbBLi9GaODRn/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/111RZKr6xSnqv7wvKi2cJpbBLi9GaODRn/view?usp=sharing</a>  Application also submitted to TNI for an outdoor kitchen under the experience development programme  Newsletters issued: 8th April 4th May 11th May 18th May 21st May 28th May 1st June
<b>4. Lough Neagh Artisan Food Programme</b> Implement a Lough Neagh Artisan Food project	Implement an artisan food branding project and help group members in Mid Ulster area. There are six businesses in total, two of which are in the Mid Ulster area. The purpose of the project is to help train the businesses and create a supply chain for the artisan products. It is now in the second year of the programme.	Work on this project went on hold during the pandemic. The group will meet via Zoom 26 <sup>th</sup> October to work on Christmas Hampers and look at recruiting new membership.
<b>5. Liaison with MUDC</b> Ongoing liaison MUDC	The Partnership manager meets regularly with Mid Ulster Council officers to update on progress and assistance in any joint projects	Regular meetings have been held with Mid Ulster regarding development of DAERA and Tourism NI Experiential project
<b>6. NIEA Shoreline plan</b>  Attract new funding and engage with farmers and landowners on the western shore to improve condition of western shore	Lough Neagh Partnership staff will help implement and administer funding of £73,000 which has been secured for a second year from NIEA towards the development and implementation of management plans for Special Protected Areas (SPAs). A large part of this project will relate to the Mid Ulster Council Area.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor all birds on Loughs western shore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Lough Neagh Ranger started with LNP.</li> <li>• Invertebrate study completed</li> <li>• 4 priority Islands identified for conservation</li> <li>• Weekly bird monitoring counts for WEBs , NIEA and BTO</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor condition of all small Islands on western shore.</li> <li>• Monitor all main important beaches for invertebrates.</li> <li>• Monitor any habitat changes in western shores</li> </ul> <p>This is a very important service that could help the Council as it provides an indication of the health of its Lough shoreline in terms of habitats and species.</p> <p>The Partnership has also applied for assistance to carry out a study into the impact of climate change on the Lough and again Lough Neagh Partnership will liaise closely with Council when it is implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application made to develop tarn platform in Mid Ulster Linked to Ballyronan Glamping Pods</li> <li>• Relationships with 3 Gun clubs in Mid Ulster area developed</li> <li>• Receipt of 2 small monitoring boats.</li> <li>• Liaison with NIEA regarding receipt of larger boat</li> </ul>
<b>7. Implement 2 Group Farm Schemes on Lough Neagh</b> 2 new Group Farm Schemes set up.	<p>The Partnership manages and administers a £200,000 DAERA Group Farm Scheme for Lough Neagh with main focus area in western shores/ mid ulster area giving help and assistance to over 16 new farmers along the mid ulster shoreline on Lough Neagh.</p> <p>Over 50 farmers within the Council area are included in the scheme which helps farmers better manage their land in an environmentally sensitive way and received income for this. Over £1.27 million of investment has been brought into the area through the Environmental Group Scheme and this offers great value to the Council area. The partnership would be very willing to deliver a presentation to the Council on this project.</p> <p>A new extension farm management programme will begin on 1 September 2000. This will cover the rivers in the east side of Lough Neagh.</p>	<p>52 farmers are now included in the scheme.</p> <p>New East river project has now started with involving 3 rivers</p>
<b>8. Lough Neagh Planning</b>	<p>Lough Neagh Partnership staff to attend any Lough Neagh Planning meetings led by Mid Ulster District</p>	<p>Presentation with Mid Ulster Development Committee to discuss planning issues on southern shore of the Lough.</p>

Assist Mid Ulster Council Planning Group to develop new planning zone designation for Lough Neagh	Council and give advice and assistance on the development of a new co-ordinated Lough Neagh plan. It has also liaised closely with Council regarding the illegal extraction of peat in the southern area of the lough.	
<b>9. EU Life Plus Project and NPA application</b>	<p>Lough Neagh Partnership has applied for a Life Plus project with support from Mid Ulster Council.</p> <p>The Partnership will also apply for 3 other funding projects which have been discussed with Mid Ulster Council.</p>	Life plus application submitted and still awaiting feedback.
<b>10. Coalisland HLF Great Places Project</b> Make application	Lough Neagh Partnership is in the second year of implementing the Great Places project in Coalisland and wider area. Up to £500,000 will be invested in the area working with local people to protect and celebrate its industrial heritage. The Coalisland Museum has been restored and is now open for planned visits. Communities have worked closely to complete this project. The Project has been impacted by Covid, however a great deal of work has been taking place on-line and an extension is expected. It is estimated that the programme will allocate over £100,000 spend in 2020/21.	Lottery have extended the project to September 2021. They have also agreed to an alternative programme of activities and events which will maximise community involvement through socially distanced engagement and the delivery of innovative online resources and performances. The new approach to the project remains anchored in the support and input of local businesses and stakeholders. The original programme remains the core of the project and the legacy outcomes are unchanged. It will now include a three year forward plan, developed using public consultation, with recommendations of how to sustain community heritage assets through the Covid/Post-Covid cultural environment.
<b>11. Lough Neagh Interdepartmental Committee and Ownership</b>	Work with political parties to develop an interdepartmental committee and ownership for the Lough. This is an important project that the Council should become involved in.	Conference was held in March 2020. Meeting held with senior DAERA staff regarding need to develop
<b>12. Moil Cattle Scheme</b>	Develop a Moil Cattle scheme on the shores of Lough Neagh with focus on western shores. The partnership has received a small grant to develop a moil cattle scheme. The intention is to create a bank of 6 farmers	<p>Scheme has now been set up with tender specification for development of supply chain now agreed.</p> <p>Third meeting of group held</p>

	who have moil cattle and create a supply chain. Two farmers will be from the Mid Ulster area.	
<b>13. Navigation scheme and Black water mouth</b>	The Partnership will attempt to improve navigation of Lough Neagh and Mid Ulster Rivers. The partnership will implement feedback from recent Lough Neagh Conference, e.g. dredge mouth of Blackwater to try and develop a Navigation sub authority for the Lough.	Discussions with some Councils regarding navigation needs of the Lough. Meeting with MLA to identify navigation problems and see if a meeting with Minister can be arranged
<b>14. Common Tern Project</b>	Lough Neagh Partnership staff intend to assist with the implementation and administration of Interreg Water Quality Programme (Waterpro) relating to the whole of Lough Neagh but parts will relate to the Mid Ulster area.	Application has been made to the NIEA Challenge Fund. Includes new tern platform and work to torpedo platform



<b>Report on</b>	Ulster-Scots Funding, PHASE 2, US Grant Ancestral Homestead
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Genevieve Bell

<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 report and inform Committee of the manufacture and fit-out of new interpretation and signage at U.S. Grant Presidential Homestead which will further develop and enhance the existing visitor experience.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Ulster-Scots Agency has identified a further opportunity to promote the Ulster-Scots (Scotch-Irish) story and its connection with the United States through the story of Ulysses S. Grant. Grant was one of the most iconic American military and political leaders and was well aware of his Scotch-Irish heritage. The ancestral home of Ulysses S. Grant, 18th President of the United States is located at 45 Dergenagh Road, Dungannon, County Tyrone.
2.2	The Grant Homestead provides an excellent opportunity to showcase our Scotch-Irish heritage. The homestead has huge potential both for local people (including visitors, pupils and residents) and for tourists (the U.S. is one of our most important tourist markets, where 20million people are believed to have Scotch-Irish roots).
2.3	The Agency will significantly 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 navigate around the site and suitable interpretive displays within and around the buildings.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Project to be delivered by 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2020
3.2	In partnership with Mid Ulster District Council, The Ulster-Scots Agency will project manage in delivering the project objectives, outputs and outcomes.
3.3	The following project objectives will include:
(i)	To engage Mark Thompson Design to develop a concept plan for the interpretive project, to research, develop and provide all the content required, including narrative and imagery to incorporate into the design of the interpretive signage and manufacture the interpretive

	<p>signage based on the information contained within the concept plan for the interpretive signage project.</p> <p>Black Sheep Display will install the interpretive signage based on the detailed plan of how the panels will be arranged to maximise the space available.</p>
(ii)	To promote the Grant Homestead Interpretive Signage Project wherever possible in Ulster-Scots Agency publications, websites and social media.
(iii)	To publish the Mid Ulster District Council logo next to the Discover Ulster-Scots logo when promoting the Grant Homestead Interpretive Signage Project at all times.
(iv)	To assist Mid Ulster District Council in conducting a post-project evaluation.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p><b>Financial:</b></p> <p>The Ulster-Scots Agency has procured Mark Thompson Design in respect of the project.</p> <p>The Ulster-Scots Agency have allocated £30,000 toward the cost of the project to cover new interpretive panels, interpretive signage, directional signage and artefact labels.</p> <p>Council's contribution will be considered 'in-kind' towards the project.</p>
	<p><b>Human:</b></p> <p>Mid Ulster District Council will appoint an officer for the Grant Homestead Interpretive Signage Project to manage timescales and ensure deadlines are adhered to.</p> <p>Mid Ulster District Council is also responsible for providing guidance and professional advice to enhance the Grant Homestead Interpretive Signage Project.</p> <p>To attend meetings with the Ulster-Scots Agency as required during the development of the Grant Homestead Interpretive Signage Project and to undertake all tasks using due professional skill, care and diligence.</p> <p>To conduct a post-project evaluation (with the assistance of the Ulster-Scots Agency).</p>
	<b>Risk Management:</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	<b>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</b>
	<b>Rural Needs Implications:</b>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
	For information.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>





<b>Report on</b>	Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group minutes of meeting of 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Tony McCance, Head of Culture & Arts
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Tony McCance, Head of Culture & Arts

<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 receive and consider for approval the minutes of the Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group held on 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 at Council offices Dungannon and by remote link.
1.2	To seek members approval for the revised Irish Language Action Plan for the remainder of 2020/2, including the Delivery of the annual Irish Language Activity Funding Programme.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council previously resolved to establish a Language Working Group to assist with policy development and to support the implementation of Mid Ulster District Council's Irish Language and Ulster Scots language policies and associated work.
2.2	The Working Group Terms of Reference confirms that the business of the Regional and Minority Language Working Group be reported through Mid Ulster District Council's Development Committee.
2.3	The Irish Language Action Plan has been revised as a result of impact of COVID-19 and the fact that some activities will not be possible to be delivered in the current financial year, (e.g. the Irish Language Bursary Scheme (2020/21).
2.4	The Irish Language Activity Funding scheme was advertised in local press on Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2020 with a closing date identified for all returned submissions of Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2020.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The minutes of the meeting of 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 is attached for members' consideration (Appendix 1).

3.2

The revised Irish Language Action Plan is attached for members approval (Appendix 2)

3.3

Under Irish Language Activity Funding, a total of 17 applications were received, from a wide range of groups with diverse programmes being proposed to be awarded to a total of 16 groups (1 group submission deemed to be ineligible).

3.4

The total allocation of funding required to support the Irish Language Activity Funding for 2020-2021 is £40,818. The total amount of funding requested from groups was £70,306.82. Below is a summary of the £40,818 of funding which is proposed to be allocated to 16 groups following assessment and processing by the Officer Team:

GEOGRAPHIC AREA	NAME OF GROUP	ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED	TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED
Clogher Valley	Pobal an Ghleanna	adult classes, intensive course, lectures, conversation event, youth activities	£2,800
Coalisland	Cairde Uí Néill	Féasta Sráide festival event, singing club, Coalisland and Clonoe Sean-nós project, public talks series, traditional music workshop	£7,900
	Feis Oileán agus Cluain Eo	Coalisland and Clonoe Irish language feis	£1,450
Cookstown & District	Institiúid Ceannasaíochta Éireann	Online adult course and Gaeltacht Thír Eoghain event	£1,500
	C.L.G Cill Dreas	Campa Chill Dreas Irish language childrens activities	£2,350
	Tobin Youth Centre	Irish language programme for 4-11 year olds	£2,780
	C.L.G Baile na Scríne	Lecture programme, family event, Gaelscoil blitz	£1,250
Ballinascreen	Glór na Speiríní	adult classes and intensive course, intensive AS/A2 course, local history workshop, language workshops for local primary schools, family event.	£6,000

			Scéilíní/Stories from Gleann Concadhain			
		Sixtowns Cross Community Group	Irish for All adult education programme	£700		
		Comhaltas Uladh (An Chraobh Rua)	Online Irish Language reading group	£780		
	<b>Dungannon &amp; District</b>	Kileeshil Community Centre	Irish language courses for children and adults	£750		
		Glór na nGael	Online resource "Best practice in early years provision"	£3,193.82		
		Coiste Forbartha Charn Tóchair	adult classes, intensive courses, Feis Charn Tóchair, conversation event, youth activities, mentoring scheme, online summer college, Gaeltacht linkages, book club, drama club, schools vocational day, GAA outreach classes, Nollaig na mBan event, GCSE and A level support courses, language accuracy course, Scoil Samhraidh language festival event	£18,218		
	<b>Maghera</b>	Granaghan & District Women's Group	Labhair í agus mairfidh sí adult education programme	£1,475		
		Conradh na Gaeilge Charn Tóchair	Gaeilge don Teaghlach family support programme	£10,445		
	<b>Magherafelt &amp; District</b>	Glór Mhachaire Fíolta	Adult classes,intensive courses, Youth club, book club, conversation event, family days x2	£4,400		

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p><b>Financial:</b> The revised proposals outlined within the Irish Language Action Plan for 2020/21 can be met from within existing resources and specifically the funding allocation identified within the Irish Language Development plan 2020-2021 under the themes <i>“To Promote Opportunities to Learn Irish”</i> and <i>“To Develop Irish Language in the Community and to make it more accessible for All”</i>.</p>
	<p><b>Human:</b> N/a</p>
	<p><b>Risk Management:</b> Cognisance has been given to the ability of officers and organisations to deliver activity detailed within the Irish Language Action Plan as a result of COVID 19.</p> <p>All risks identified and arising from the delivery of the Regional and Minority Language Programme are discussed and addressed through the Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	<p><b>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</b></p> <p>The language policies are implemented in a way that is sensitive to the concerns of certain sections of the community, that is inclusive, and that aspires to promote good relations between all sections of the community in the longer term.</p> <p>The language policies are introduced so as to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the promotion of a good and harmonious environment, either among Council staff or within the District as a whole.</p>
	<p><b>Rural Needs Implications:</b> Rural needs implications are considered as part of the implementation and delivery of the regional and minority language programme of activity.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are asked to note the minutes of the Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working group of 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 (appendix 1)
5.2	Members are asked to approve the revised Irish Language Action Plan for the remainder of 2020/21 including the Delivery of the annual Irish Language Activity Funding Programme as detailed and as discussed at the Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working group of 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 (appendix 2).

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 - Minutes of the Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group of 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2020.
6.2	Appendix 2 – Revised Irish Language Action Plan 2020/21



## APPENDIX 1



### Report of Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group of Mid Ulster District Council

Report of Regional and Minority Language Implementation Working Group of Mid Ulster Council held on Monday 5th October 2020 in the Council Offices, Dungannon.

**Attendees Members:** Cllr John McNamee (Chair), Cllr Wilbert Buchanan, Cllr Sean McGuigan, Cllr Trevor Wilson

By Remote link: Cllr Seán McPeake, Cllr Martin Kearney, Cllr Cora Corry.

**Officers:** Tony McCance, Déaglán Ó Doibhlin.

AGENDA	MATTERS AGREED	ACTIONS & RESPONSIBILITY
1.0	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Adrian McCreesh, Seán Mac Nia, Cllr Kim Ashton	
2.0	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	No declarations of interest submitted.	
3.0	<b>Minutes of previous meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020.</b>	
	A report of the minutes of the previous meeting of 24th February 2020 was presented to the Working Group.	

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Signage Programme update</b>	
	<p>T. McCance provided an update on the progress of the signage programme. With regard to road signage, procurement and installation of August approved signage will be complete by 16th October, and September approved signage should be complete by mid November though difficulties being experienced by the contractor in sourcing perspex (given COVID 19 ) might cause a delay. Total requests received from January stand at 101 with 65 surveys completed and a further 31 due by the end of October. Covid restrictions in place in the Electoral Office are having an impact on the work of officers.</p> <p>Cllr McNamee enquired as to the position with regard to internal building signage for Arts and Culture venues. T. McCance advised the Working Group that a procurement exercise had taken place but that none of the applicants met the specifications provided. This meant it was necessary to re-tender and this process was ongoing.</p>	T McCance
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Irish Language Programme update</b>	
	<p>D Ó Doibhlin informed the meeting that there had been no second Irish Language Officer in post for the period from the beginning of October 2019 to the end of March 2020 when Mr Seán Mac Nia was appointed in a temporary capacity. In light of the problems posed by the ongoing pandemic, certain aspects of the work could not be delivered including the Language Bursary programme, Irish in the Primary programme and a considerable portion of the Adult Education programmes. Staff were attempting to deliver as much of the service as possible online, and to this effect a number of online language learning initiatives have been developed by Seán Mac Nia. Cllr McGuigan enquired as to the feasibility of delivering a degree level course in Mid Ulster but it was felt that this would be difficult off-campus.</p>	D Ó Doibhlin
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Ulster Scots Language Week 2020</b>	
	<p>T McCance informed the meeting that Mid Ulster Council will be supporting the Ulster Scots Agency's Ulster Scots Language Week in November. Cllr Wilson asked what level of funding would be required. T McCance stated that the Ulster Scots Agency had offered some fundign assistance should it be required, however given the realtivley low cost of delivery, particulalry given that for this year's event it</p>	T. McCance



	will be necessary to deliver online that additional financial support would be required. Cllr Wilson felt that, given the low cost of delivery and that we had the budget to deliver the programme, as was the case in previous years, the additional funding may not be necessary.	
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Irish Language Action Plan 2020-2021 (B)</b>	
	D Ó Doibhlin presented an updated Irish Language Action Plan reflective of the current restrictive conditions for service delivery. A number of actions are no longer viable and a number of new online education and heritage actions are being developed to cater to the needs of the language community in Mid Ulster. Cllr Wilson commented that he would like to see which groups would be receiving Language Activity programme funding this year and it was agreed that this detail be added to the plan. Cllr McNamee stated that Council should seek to develop a major online event to celebrate and encourage the growth of the language in Mid Ulster and asked that this be investigated.	D Ó Doibhlin
<b>8.0</b>	<b>A.O.B.</b>	
	It was agreed to schedule the next meeting for December	
<b><i>Meeting concluded at 6.30pm</i></b>		

**Reports of Working Groups:** Finalised Reports of Working Groups should be forwarded to Democratic Services on [committees@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:committees@midulstercouncil.org) with a cover report to be scheduled on the agenda of the next available relevant committee meeting

## Appendix 2

PLEAN GNÍOMHAÍOCHTA GAEILGE – Aibreán 2020-Márta 2021  
IRISH LANGUAGE ACTION PLAN - April 2020-March 2021



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

# GOAL 1

## To Promote Opportunities to Learn Irish

ACTION STEP DESCRIPTIONS	DATE TO BEGIN	DATE DUE	RESOURCES REQUIRED (staff, tech, etc.)	DESIRED OUTCOME	NOTES
Deliver language taster days and or cultural workshops at various locations within the community	Oct 2020	March 2021	£30,000	3 taster days and or Cultural Workshops to be delivered across MUDC	
Deliver Irish language classes at key locations across the District at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginner Level</li> <li>• Intermediate Level and</li> <li>• Advanced Level</li> </ul> This will include youth and adult audiences and will involve clustering & collaboration with other groups eg schools, sporting, cultural groups and community organisations	Oct 2020	March 2021		Residents of MUDC will have access to Irish Language class within 10 mile radius	MUDC classes will be marketed collectively Online options will be developed
Assist with provision of facilities /promotion for delivery of University of Ulster Diploma in Irish	Oct 2020	March 2021		15 + students will commence the Irish Language Diploma with Ulster University 2020/21	Advice and promotion provided to (potential) applicants
<del>Deliver a schools Irish Language and Heritage programme in various Council venues across the district and/or in the classroom setting</del> Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irish language lessons</li> <li>• Gaelic Heritage projects (Gaelic origins of townlands/surnames)</li> <li>• Workshops/site visits</li> </ul>	Oct 2020	March 2021	£13,000	<del>Engage 40+ schools in the language and heritage programme</del>	<del>Aimed at Key Stage 1 &amp; 2 classes</del>
<del>2020 Mid Ulster District Council Regional &amp; Minority Languages Bursary</del>	April 2020	October 2020	£30,000	<del>200 + applicants across the district to attend recognised language summer colleges for an average of 3 weeks</del>	<del>Opened to residents (adults and young people) of MUDC only</del>
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## GOAL 2

To Develop Irish Language in the community and to make it more accessible for all

ACTION STEP DESCRIPTIONS	DATE TO BEGIN	DATE DUE	RESOURCES REQUIRED (staff, tech, etc.)	DESIRED OUTCOME	NOTES
Provide development support, advice, information and guidance to individuals, groups and schools within the region in the promotion and development of the Irish Language.	October 2020		£2,000	Community programme at HOTON to enhance linguistic support for bilingual families in the South Tyrone area	In conjunction with HOTON education office
Provide development support through activity grant funding to external cultural organisations to establish Irish language programmes and to promote the language among its audience base. See below for details:	October 2020	March 2021	£40,818	Irish Language Activity Fund	Publicly advertised March 2020
<p><b>Kileeshil Community Centre</b>, Irish language courses for children and adults</p> <p><b>Tobin Youth Centre</b>, Irish language programme for 4-11 year olds</p> <p><b>Pobal an Ghleanna</b>, Activities to include adult classes, intensive course, lectures, conversation event, youth activities</p> <p><b>Institiúid Ceannasaíochta Éireann</b>, Online adult course and Gaeltacht Thír Eoghain event</p> <p><b>Glór na Speiríní</b>, Activities to include adult classes and intensive course, intensive AS/A2 course, local history workshop, language workshops for local primary schools, family event, Scéilíní/Stories from Gleann Concadhain</p> <p><b>Glór Mhachaire Fiolta</b>, Activities to include adult classes, intensive courses, Youth club, book club, conversation event, family days x2</p> <p><b>Glór na nGael</b>, Online workshop "Best practice in early years provision"</p> <p><b>Cumann Ban Ghreanacháin</b>, Labhair í agus mairfidh sí adult education programme</p> <p><b>CnaG, Carn Tóchair</b>, Gaeilge don Teaghlach family support programme</p> <p><b>C.L.G. Baile na Scríne</b>, Lecture programme, family event, Gaelscoil blitz</p> <p><b>An Carn</b>, Activities to include adult classes, intensive course, Feis Charn Tóchair, conversation event, youth activities, mentoring scheme, online summer college, Gaeltacht linkages, book club, drama club, schools</p>					

<p>vocational day, GAA outreach classes, Nollaig na mBan event, GCSE and A level support courses, language accuracy course, Scoil Samhraidh language festival event</p> <p><b>Sixtowns Cross Community Group</b>, Irish for All adult education programme</p> <p><b>Feis Oileán agus Cluaine</b>, Coalisland and Clonoe Irish language feis</p> <p><b>Cairdeas Eoghain</b>, Activities to include adult classes, intensive course</p> <p><b>Cairde Uí Néill</b>, activities to include Féasta Sráide festival event, singing club, Coalisland and Clonoe Sean-nós project, public talks series, traditional music workshop (all events through the medium of Irish).</p> <p><b>An Chraobh Rua</b>, Online Irish language reading club</p> <p><b>CLG Chill Dreas</b>, Campa Chill Dreas Irish language childrens activities</p>					
Establish and maintain conversation circles and reading groups in local communities and possibly link to graduates and participants of Ulster University & Mid Ulster District Council Diploma participants	Oct 2020	March 2021	£1,000	Adult fluency/language enrichment	
Cooperate with Irish Language community to develop an online Mid Ulster Seachtain na Gaeilge programme branded as 'Gaelfest Lár Uladh' which will feature a range of engaging activities aimed at Irish speakers and non-Irish speakers wanting to get involved in the language and profiling the Irish Language across the district in an online capacity	March 2021	March 2021	£3,000	Gaelfest delivered online	Ensure geographical spread
To enhance and promote youth services in Irish across MUDC and provide guidance and support to local youth projects	Oct 2020	March 2021	£3,000	Materials, online resource development, workshop/conference	Engage with relevant external groups to increase the language capacity of local groups

## GOAL 3

To develop the Promotion and Use of Irish within and by Mid Ulster District Council

ACTION STEP DESCRIPTIONS	DATE TO BEGIN	DATE DUE	RESOURCES REQUIRED (staff, tech, etc.)	DESIRED OUTCOME	NOTES
To develop Irish Language service in the area of education	April 2020	March 2021	Collaboration with Environmental Health -	6 schools will avail of the Nigh Do Lámha— Environmental Health Project	Service to be proactively marketing to Irish Medium schools
To develop Irish Language service in the areas of Tourism and Education within our Arts and Cultural facilities	Oct 2020	March 2021	Collaboration with MUDC Cultural Venues £3,000	Provide a range of digital resources for visitors to access online	Facilitate Irish language tours to key heritage sites as required
To raise awareness of Gaelic linguistic heritage within the district	Oct 2020	March 2021	£4,000	Develop a series of bilingual publications and workshops	Continue to promote Gaeilge don Teaghlach/family learning project
Provide in-house translation services to Council Departments.	April 2020	March 2021	£1,000	Increase awareness within Council of this service	As per Irish Language policy

<b>Report on</b>	1) Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020 2) Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020) 3) Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative 4) Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation (2019/2020) 5) Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes - 7.9.20 6) Business Eye Magazine : Mid Ulster Feature 7) ICBAN Update – October 2020
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	12 November 2020
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

<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>
	To receive updates on the matters detailed below.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b>  At the Development Committee on 12 March 2020, Members recommended to Council “in principle” to approve to sponsorship of the Mid Ulster Business Awards in November 2020 at Category Sponsorship £1,750 + vat – ‘SME Business of the Year’ subject to:</p> <p>(i) clarification of other sponsors involved as per previous Council decision; and,  (ii) seeking seek clarity in relation to voting regarding the public vote categories and how this may disadvantage “public voting” for businesses in the Clogher Valley area given the newspapers are not in wide circulation in this area.</p>

2.2	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b></p>
	<p>Following on from the success of Mid Ulster's Enterprise Week in 2019, a second year of events is now planned in 2020. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, these events will take place online in the form of high quality business webinars, encompassing a range of issues pertinent to all businesses during the pandemic.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b></p>
	<p>The Mid Ulster Skills Forum identified a number of priority actions contained within the Mid Ulster Skills Report and Action Plan 2018-2021 for delivery in the current financial year. This included a Careers Attractiveness Initiative focused on showcasing Mid Ulster's key priority sectors to post primary schools in Mid Ulster to ensure a future pipeline of talent to feed local company needs.</p>
2.4	<p><b>Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation</b></p>
	<p>The Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme offered discretionary grants of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property for external and/or internal improvements. The Scheme was available to both occupied commercial premises and vacant/derelict units within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon as per Area plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015) and development limits of the eligible villages as per the proposed Mid Ulster Settlement Report within the draft Local Development Plan (2030), published in February 2019, under the Mid Ulster Settlement Hierarchy, with the additional village of Moygashel. The scheme opened for applications on Monday 19 August 2019 and closed for applications at 4pm on Wednesday 18 September 2019.</p>
	<p>Knox &amp; Clayton Chartered Architects were appointed to assist in the delivery of the Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme, including assessment of applications and management and monitoring of the successful projects. Applications, which proceeded to assessment, had to achieve a minimum threshold of 40% to be eligible for grant aid. 253 applications achieved over the 40% threshold to value of £912,306.29.</p>
	<p>In the financial year 2019-2020, under Phase 1, 32 applicants accepted Letters of Offer and completed works to the value of £112,771.42.</p>
2.5	<p><b>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes - 7.9.20</b></p>
	<p>Coalisland Town Centre Forum was established in March 2019. It is a partnership of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations working together to deliver a range of strategic economic actions to develop Coalisland town.</p>
2.6	<p><b>Business Eye Magazine – Mid Ulster Feature</b></p>
	<p>Business Eye magazine ran a Regional Economic Development feature in their September/October 2020 edition focusing on some of the key activities carried out by Council's economic development sections during the Covid-19 crisis.</p>



2.7	<p><b>ICBAN Update – October 2020</b></p> <p>Over the past number of years, a group of 8 Councils from north and south (as listed below) have provided a financial contribution towards ICBAN to support their work; Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils.</p>
3.0	<p><b>Main Report</b></p>
3.1	<p><b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b></p> <p>On 3 September 2020, JPI Media advised Council that due to Covid19 they had to cancel some events for this year. On 13 October 2020, they contacted Council to confirm that, with this being the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mid Ulster Business Awards they were planning to postpone with a view to holding the Awards in April 2021 and would advise Council of their plans accordingly.</p> <p>JPI Media have noted in response to the two issues Council sought clarity on (as outlined in 2.1);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) once sponsors are confirmed they will send these through to Council and</li> <li>(ii) this is a vote that is promoted not only in the paper but also online and through JPI's social media channels and [JPI] also encourage their sponsors to share and spread the word about the reader vote. They also noted that the Council could also promote this through their own database therefore reaching the Clogher Valley area.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b></p> <p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 will take place from Monday 16 to Friday 20 November with 12 online webinars staged throughout the week under the theme of 'Survival, Recovery and Resilience'. The webinars have been tailored to provide specific support to businesses of all sizes and sectors from start-up through to growth in the context of Covid19. Examples of the topics include; start-up advice; building digital/online capacity; sales, communication, team building, exploring new ways of working, managing mental health and people, EU exit etc.</p> <p>Spearheaded by Council's economic development team, support has also been attained from Invest NI, MEGA and GoForIt. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Fermanagh and Omagh Council is also collaborating in a tri-Council Mid-South West Region webinar celebrating leading entrepreneurs from across the region.</p> <p>A full programme of business webinars is attached on Appendix 1.</p> <p>Members are welcome to register to attend any of these virtual events.</p>
3.3	<p><b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b></p> <p>This project is aimed at enhancing the image and attractiveness of Mid Ulster's key priority sectors and is a valuable step in informing young people about the</p>

	<p>great career opportunities available locally and helping them make choices that work for them and benefit our local economy, by matching skills choices to industry needs.</p> <p>The SYNC (<b>See Your New Career</b>) resources comprise a mix of videos, fan-deck brochures and storyboards showcasing six key sectors (Manufacturing &amp; Engineering; Food and Agri-Food; Construction; Retail; IT; and Hospitality). The resources detail career opportunities and pathways, interesting developments, potential earnings, skills, attributes and qualifications needed to gain entry.</p> <p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently the school closures in October 2020, the launch of the project has been delayed. However, it is planned to distribute the SYNC career resources in a safe manner to all post primary schools within the Council area in November 2020. The resources will provide schools with a great stimulus for classroom discussions on the range of career options available in Mid Ulster.</p>
3.4	<p><b>Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation</b></p> <p>Following the completion of Phase 1 of the Spruce Up Scheme during the 2019/20 financial year, an Evaluation was completed by Knox &amp; Clayton (independent chartered architect), a copy of which is attached at Appendix 2.</p> <p>In summary, Council provided grant-aid to 32 applicants in Phase 1 amounting to £112,771.42 and this leveraged further private sector investment of £88,062.96. The funding provided by the scheme has unquestionably improved the external frontages and internal areas of each property.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the scheme is well underway in this financial year (2020/2021), involving 55 properties, and is scheduled to complete by March 2021.</p>
3.5	<p><b>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 7.9.20</b></p> <p>Minutes of the meeting of Coalisland Town Centre Forum held on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 are attached at Appendix 3.</p>
3.6	<p><b>Business Eye Magazine – Mid Ulster Feature</b></p> <p>Mid Ulster Council is promoted in Business Eye Magazine's special regional economic development feature (Appendix 4). The article highlights some of the work undertaken by Council's economic development section during the pandemic to assist local businesses.</p>
3.7	<p><b>ICBAN Report – October 2020</b></p> <p>The Report on Appendix 5 provides an update on ICBAN's work across the five key strategic areas of;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Framework of Regional Priorities</li> <li>2. Community Engagement on Brexit</li> <li>3. EU Funded Projects</li> </ol>

	<p>4. High Speed Broadband Infrastructures</p> <p>5. Border 'Animator' Project</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:</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b> £1,750 + vat from within existing economic development budget (subject to Council being satisfied regarding the issues they sought clarity on).</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b> Within existing budget.</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b> Within existing budget.</p> <p><b>Business Eye Magazine – Mid Ulster Feature</b> Business Eye article costs have been included in the Economic Development Budget for 2010/21 (£750+Vat)</p> <p>Human:</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b> Officers time</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b> Officers time</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b> Officers time</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b> Could be postponed again due to Covid 19 situation</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b> Virtual event low risk</p> <p><b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b> Schools may not be willing to take receipt of the Careers Resources at present due to Covid19 situation.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: n/a</p>

	Rural Needs Implications: Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020) is open to all urban and rural Businesses across Mid Ulster
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
	It is recommended that Members:
5.1	<b>Mid Ulster Business Excellence Awards 2020</b> <b>Note</b> the postponement of the Mid Ulster Business Awards to April 2021 and await further update and clarity from JPI Media on the issues raised.
5.2	<b>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (16-20 November 2020)</b> <b>Note</b> details of online business webinars taking place during Mid Ulster Enterprise Week from 16 – 20 November 2020.
5.3	<b>Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative</b> <b>Note</b> update on Mid Ulster Careers Attractiveness Initiative.
5.4	<b>Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation</b> <b>Note</b> Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation Report (2019/20)
5.5	<b>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes - 7.9.20</b> <b>Note</b> minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum meeting held on 7 September 2020.
5.6	<b>Business Eye Magazine – Mid Ulster Feature</b> <b>Note</b> Business Eye article (Sept/Oct 2020).
5.7	<b>ICBAN Update – October 2020</b> <b>Note</b> ICBAN Update Report, dated October 2020.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2020 – Online Webinar Events Programme</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Mid Ulster Town &amp; Village Business Spruce Up Scheme – Phase 1 Evaluation (2019/2020)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum - 7.9.20</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Business Eye Magazine – Mid Ulster Feature</p> <p>Appendix 5 – ICBAN Update - October 2020</p>



# Mid Ulster Enterprise Week

16 - 20 Nov 2020

Survival, Recovery, Resilience

#GEW2020  
#MidUlsterDCRegister  
Online

## MON 16th November

### Introducing Your Company Quickly and Compellingly

10.00 am - 11.00 am

Una McSorley, Marcom m Training

You've just bumped into a former client in the lift. He asks you what your new company does. You open your mouth, try to organize your thoughts when the lift stops and he's on his way. Missed opportunity and one where it would have helped to have had an "elevator pitch."

But how do you craft a pitch that generates interest in your product or service in just 30 seconds or less? This webinar takes you through writing an elevator pitch and what it should include.

### EU Exit | Chemicals Regimes REACH / CLP / PIC

2.00 pm - 3.00 pm

Speakers from HSE(GB) &amp; DEFRA

Learn what your business needs to know about impending changes to labelling, packaging and chemical regulations which will apply from 1st January 2021. This event will focus on the chemical regimes of Registration Evaluation Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals (REACH); Classification Labelling and Packaging (CLP); and Prior Informed Consent (PIC)

Find out about the required procedures to be followed in relation to labelling and packaging of chemical products moving between GB and the NI(EU) and the export and import of designated hazardous chemicals and how this will work after the transition period.

### Reinventing Retail in a Covid World

7.00 pm - 8.00 pm

Graham Sault, Canny Insights

Join Graham Sault, respected retail commentator and High Streets Task Force Expert as he focuses on practical hints and tips to navigate the Covid-19 situation, and trade as successfully as possible now and into the future. Learn how to effectively respond to trends and challenges affecting the high street during and post Covid-19, gaining expert advice on marketing messages, customer service and future proofing your store.

## TUES 17th November

### A Recipe for Recovery : Tourism and Hospitality

10.00 am - 11.30 am

Michael Deane, DEANES Restaurants

This webinar is especially suited to the hospitality and tourism sector. Michael Deane will share how he adapted his businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic and will outline his plans for moving forward. Michael is one of the most recognisable faces of Ireland's hospitality industry. As proprietor of seven diverse restaurants in Belfast, he shares the credit for transforming the city's food culture. Join this webinar for useful insights and suggestions on how to become resilient and get your business on the road to recovery.

### The MEGA Impact - One Year On

1.00 pm - 2.00 pm

Panel Discussion with Manufacturing / Engineering Leaders from Mid Ulster

Come and hear about the significant progress and developments made by the Manufacturing and Engineering Growth Advancement (MEGA) network over the last 12 months. This includes the decisive positive impact made during this challenging period within the local manufacturing and engineering sector. Local celebrity Malachi Osh will comper proceedings with a live Q&A speaking to an expert panel including guest speaker Pat O'Neill - founding member of Powerscreen.

### Confessions of a Start-up Business Owner

7.15 pm - 8.15 pm

Host: Cate Conway, Local Radio Personality

The Go For It Programme will host the first in a series of 'Confessions of a Start-up Business Owner' to inspire potential entrepreneurs. This one hour virtual workshop will provide honest and inspirational insights from experienced entrepreneurs including a Mid Ulster new start, Laura Irwin, Noble Spaces. Hear them talk candidly about their strategies and mistakes along their journey to success.

All events are online webinars and FREE to attend - register at:

[midulstercouncil.org/enterpriseweek](http://midulstercouncil.org/enterpriseweek)

\* All information is correct at time of publication. Please confirm details online when registering.

## WED 18th November

### It's a Zoo Around Here: A Guide to Better Communication in the Workplace

10.00 am - 11.00 am

Una McSorley, Marcom m Training

This humorous presentation is perfect for leaders at all levels. Una McSorley will share her guide to better communication in the workplace. She will explain how to become a more effective communicator and ultimately a leader, by recognising the variety of communication styles used by the animals in your zoo and adapting your strategy accordingly.

### Linked In to Win

1.30 pm - 2.30 pm

Louise Brogan, Social Bee

Learn how to maximise LinkedIn to build relationships and win new business. This webinar will provide insight on how to optimise your LinkedIn profile, understand types of content to share, and grow valuable networks. No more feeling lost, frustrated, or overwhelmed as you leave ready to use LinkedIn to WIN!

### The 4 C's: Creating Content that Connects through Covid

7.00 pm - 8.00 pm

Gail Sheen &amp; Clara Maybin, So Social Marketing

Gain an invaluable insight into creating meaningful online content that directly impacts and connects with your customers. This session will take into account the impact that Covid-19 has had on our customer relationships and how we can appropriately communicate with them during the pandemic.

If you attend any of our webinars your name will automatically go forward into a prize draw with the opportunity to win some great prizes. The more events you attend, the more opportunity you have of winning a prize!



## THURS 19th November

### Inspiring Entrepreneurs

10.00 am - 11.00 am

Q&amp;A with Cormac Diamond (Bloc Blinds), Mairead Mackle (Tarasis Enterprises) and Shane McCrory (ElectriCast Ltd)

Register for 'Inspiring Entrepreneurs', a webinar featuring some of the best business leaders from across the Mid South West region of Northern Ireland. Hear how they charted a path for their businesses during lockdown, pivoting to meet new challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities. This session will offer learnings for companies of all sizes and sectors, with growing relevance as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact businesses.

### Leading Teams Through a Pandemic

12.00 pm - 1.00 pm

Julie Allen Consulting

Over the past 8 months everyone has experienced challenges both personally and professionally. As a business leader learn how you can create the conditions in the workplace to foster resilience, innovation, and growth. This 60 minute webinar will focus on what is required to keep teams energetic, enthusiastic and emotionally connected through the pandemic.

## FRI 20th November

### Business Funding and Support Event

11.00 am - 12.15 pm

Comper: Karen Patterson, TV and Radio Personality

Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to hear about the range of business support and funding available to businesses in these difficult times. Hear from Mid Ulster District Council, Invest NI, InterTrade Ireland and Mid Ulster Enterprise Agencies about their current support programmes. Cavanagh Kelly Accountants will also brief business owners on a variety of funding and support to help businesses navigate the pandemic. Not to be missed, this invaluable webinar will be hosted by well known and respected TV and radio personality Karen Patterson. Each participant will receive an e-booklet outlining the various support packages available.



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

## APPENDIX 2



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

# **FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

## **MID ULSTER TOWN & VILLAGE**

## **BUSINESS SPRUCE UP SCHEME**

### **(PHASE 1 – 2019/20)**

Completed by Lawrence Power of Knox & Clayton Architects – October 2020



# CONTENTS:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Aims and Objectives of the scheme
- 3.0 Who could apply?
- 4.0 Scope of works eligible for funding
- 5.0 Procurement
- 6.0 Application process
- 7.0 Assessment of the Applications
- 8.0 Successful Applicants
- 9.0 Geographical spread of successful applications
- 10.0 Payment of grant
- 11.0 Case studies
  - 11.1 Mary's Bar, 10 Market Street, Magherafelt
  - 11.2 Hope for U Foundation, 49 Main Street, Clogher &  
Vacant Property, 51-53 Main Street, Clogher
  - 11.3 Vacant, 102-104 Moore Street, Aughnacloy
  - 11.4 McAleer's Medical Hall, The Diamond, Pomeroy
- 12.0 Statistical Data
- 13.0 Overview of Scheme
- 14.0 Conclusion

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 Guidance Notes
- Appendix 2 Application Form
- Appendix 3 Individual Assessment Sheet
- Appendix 4 Commencement Inspection Form
- Appendix 5 Final Inspection Form

## **1.0 Introduction**

This report provides an overview of the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme, 2019-2022. It presents a breakdown of the applications received, a synopsis of a number of successful projects and the impact of the scheme.

Mid Ulster District Council supports the improvement and enhancement of business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015 of each town) and development limits of each village as identified in the attached maps.

The Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is a pilot project and offers discretionary grants of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property for internal and/or external improvements. The Scheme is available to both occupied business/commercial properties and vacant business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015) and the development limits of each village. Whilst the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is intended to aid minor works to business/commercial premises, large scale schemes may apply however please note the maximum grant aid is up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property.

The allocation of grant was a competitive process and limited funds were available. Applicants were made aware that this would potentially be the only funding opportunity for the next 3 years (Subject to funding).

Successful applications, who scored a minimum of 40%, were ranked highest to lowest.

## **2.0 Aims and Objectives of the Scheme**

The aim of the Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is to improve the competitiveness and economic sustainability of the identified towns and villages in the Mid Ulster District Council area by:

1. Making external improvements to the built environment in the towns and villages.
2. Encouraging the improvement of the internal appearance of properties visible to the public.

The objectives of the scheme are:

1. To enhance and improve the attractiveness of business/commercial properties.
2. To deliver high-quality external and internal improvements to properties in the towns and villages.
3. To attract new business and investment through improvements to vacant properties.
4. To stimulate private sector investment.
5. To assist businesses in each town and village to increase competitiveness and sustainability.
6. To improve user perceptions of each town and village.



### 3.0 Who Could Apply?

- Business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015) as identified within scheme maps
- Business/Commercial properties within the development limits of villages under the Mid Ulster Settlement Hierarchy, draft Local Development Plan (2030) as identified within scheme maps.

**TOWNS:** - Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon, Maghera and Magherafelt.

**VILLAGES:-** Aghaginduff/Cabragh, Annaghmore, Ardboe, Augher, Aughnacloy Ballinderry, Ballygawley, Ballylifford, Ballynakilly, Ballyronan, Bellaghy, Benburb, Brockagh/Mountjoy, Caledon, Cappagh, Castlecaulfield, Castledawson, Churchtown, Clady, Clogher, Coagh, Creagh, Desertmartin, Donaghmore, Draperstown, Drummullan, Edendork, Eglishe, Fivemiletown, Galbally, Granville, Gulladuff, Killyman, Moneymore, Moortown, Moy, Moygashel, Newmills, Orritor, Pomeroy, Sandholes, Stewartstown, Swatragh, Tamnamore, The Bush, The Loup, The Rock, Tobermore and Upperlands.

The grant was available to:

- Business/commercial premises
- Shops (including hairdressers, beauty salons, dry cleaners, clothing retailers etc).
- Financial and Professional services (e.g. estate agents, insurance companies etc).
- Restaurants, Public houses, Cafes and Food takeaways.
- Vacant premises. For a vacant property to be eligible evidence was to be provided that:

- 1) The property is used as a business/commercial property. If this was not evident from the supplied photograph then evidence (old photographs, rates bills, etc.) was to be provided.
- 2) If the vacant property existed as a residential property with plans to change use to a commercial property, a change of use planning permission should be submitted to Council prior to commencement of works.
- 3) That it will be marketed/let as a business/commercial property after improvement works are complete. Evidence must be provided of how this will be achieved and actively promoted, such as letter from proposed letting agent, letter from property owner of actions that will be taken to seek a tenant.

Application forms were acceptable from the property owner/s or tenants. If a tenant made an application, it had to be co-signed by the property owner(s) otherwise the application was deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected.

Individual applications from owners/tenants whose properties were adjacent to each other were welcome. Where two or more applications adjacent to each other were made they were defined as 'Multiple Applications'. These applications were viewed as having a greater positive effect on the appearance of a street and were scored as per page 5 of the Guidance Document 'How do we assess your application'.

## 4.0 Scope of Works Eligible for Funding

The property owners/tenants of eligible business/commercial properties in the designated areas could apply for grant-aid to carry out the following:

**Internal Works** eligible for grant-aid include repair and refurbishment of:

- Walls, ceilings, doors, floors and stairs.
- Internal redecoration work e.g. repainting of walls, ceilings etc
- Rewiring and plumbing.
- Access improvements.
- New interior window display lighting, where shutters are not in use.
- Subdivision to form smaller units.
- Restructuring to form larger units.
- Permanent (i.e. not loose fitted or mobile) display cases/built-in furniture and joinery.
- Please note that internal works to a business/commercial property which is above ground floor level will be considered.

**External works** eligible for grant-aid include repair and refurbishment of the following:

- Shop fronts, including fascia, signage and lighting.
- Windows.
- Doors.
- Rainwater goods; guttering or downpipes on shopfronts.
- Redecoration (including painting, signage etc.).
- Pedestrian access improvements.
- Security measures (including security glazing/laminated glass which allows window shopping to take place in the evening e.g. open or lattice shutters/door grilles-NOT solid shutters).
- Virtual graphics / hoardings.
- Equipment and associated labour costs as deemed appropriate for preparation of work e.g. power washing, hire of lift equipment etc.
- Please note that external works to a business/commercial property which is above ground floor level will be considered.

### **Ineligible Works included:**

The scheme did not support:

- Works which required planning permission which was not in place at the Application stage.
- Routine maintenance such as clearing of debris from gutters, cleaning tarmac, cleaning of roofs, chimneys etc.
- Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises.
- Retrospective applications (for work already completed or underway).

- CCTV / Alarm systems.
- Mobile/loose fixtures and fittings or furniture.
- Internal work which was not in the public area of the property.
- Mannequins.

The grant did not include:

- Statutory fees (e.g. Building Control Approval), professional fees etc.
- Insurances
- Interest (on loans taken out to fund your building project)
- VAT (except if the applicant is not VAT registered)

## 5.0 Procurement

Completed applications had to be accompanied by competitive quotations/tenders from bona-fide reputable contractors. If a contractor is not employed to complete all works, the appropriate number of quotations/tenders had to be submitted for each element of the scheme.

The scheme required:

- 2 Written Quotations for project elements costing up to £4,999.99
- 4 Written Quotations for project elements costing from £5,000-£30,000

All quotations had to be dated and on headed paper and the funder reserved the right to have an independent quantity surveyor check the validity of quotations/tenders.

## 6.0 Application Process

Completed application forms were to be returned to Knox Clayton Architects, or alternatively, one of the Council Offices (Dungannon, Cookstown or Magherafelt), by 4pm on Wednesday 18 September 2019. Only fully completed Applications were validated and late submissions were not accepted.

12 No. Business Clinics were held at various public locations spread around the Council area. This provided the opportunity for those interested in applying for funding to drop-in without appointment and receive advice on their application. Representatives from the scheme's Chartered Architect and Mid Ulster District Council were present at each business clinic.

## 7.0 Assessment of the Applications:

The following criteria was used by the assessment panel to score the application for a grant:

- i) **Current Condition of the elements of work requesting funding (25%)**  
Scoring ranged from 0%-25%, for example, if the current condition of the elements of work requested for funding to the property was considered very poor, the maximum 25% was allocated.

**ii) Impact the proposed element of works will make (25%)**

Scoring ranged from 0%-25%, for example, if the proposed element of works would have a transformation impact on the property, the maximum 25% would be allocated.

**iii) Value for Money (25%)**

This was calculated based on the formula: - Impact (points) ÷ Grant Sought = Weighted Criteria. Weighted criteria achieved ranged from 5%-25%, with excellent Value for Money allocated the maximum 25%.

**iv) Multiple Application Status (10%)**

Multiple applications received a favourable weighting, where individual applications were received from owners/tenants whose properties were adjacent to each other. These applications would be viewed as having a greater positive effect on the appearance of a street and as a result were scored highly by the assessment panel, being allocated a further 10%.

**v) Vacant Business/Commercial Property (10%)**

Vacant Business/Commercial Property favourable weighting were allocated 10%.

**vi) Property's first submission (5%)**

A Favourable weighting of 5% was granted to any property which had not previously been awarded funding under a Mid Ulster District Council Improvement Scheme. *Any property which had previously received funding under a Mid Ulster District Council Improvement Scheme will be allocated 0%.*

**All applications had to score a minimum of 40% to be considered for funding.**

**There was no internal appeal or review process for unsuccessful applications. The decision of the Independent Chartered Architect was final.**

## **8.0 Successful Applicants – “Your Letter of Offer”**

If an application was successful, the applicant was issued with a ‘Letter of Offer’. This was a form of contract that stated:

- The amount of grant awarded
- The terms and conditions associated with the grant

It was made clear to the successful Applicants that no works could commence until a signed ‘Letter of Offer’ was returned to Mid Ulster District Council within the allocated timescale.

## 9.0 GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS (Completed Schemes)

Valid Applications were received from the following villages (in alphabetical order):

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of approved &amp; completed Schemes</u>
Ardboe	1
Aughnacloy	1
Ballyronan	1
Cappagh	1
Castlecaulfield	1
Clogher	3
Coalisland	2
Cookstown	1
Desertmartin	1
Dungannon	2
Maghera	4
Magherafelt	5
Moneymore	1
Moy	2
Pomeroy	2
Stewartstown	3
Tobermore	1
	32

## 10.0 Payment of Grant

It was stipulated that payment of grant would only be made once Mid Ulster District Council was satisfied that all the terms and conditions in the 'Letter of Offer' had been fulfilled. A site visit was carried out by Knox & Clayton Architects to verify that the works had been completed as stated at application stage and to the required standard. Applicants were advised that they would be asked to amend work which does not comply with or falls below the agreed standard

Payment of grant was be made on receipt of a single claim following a successful site visit. This claim had to include the submission of original invoices and proof of payment.

## 11.0 Case Studies of selected completed projects

We have selected the following projects for a brief Case Study of Phase 1 of Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme. These have been selected for the reason as noted below:

- i) Project No 98 – Mary’s Bar, 10 Market Street, Magherafelt –  
Reason selected: Epitomises the very essence of the scheme.
- ii) Project No 264 - Hope for U Foundation, 49 Main Street, Clogher &  
Project No. 265 - Vacant, 51-53 Main Street, Clogher –  
Reason selected: Multiple/adjacent Projects
- iii) Project No 130 – Vacant, 102-104 Moore Street, Aughnacloy –  
Reason selected: Scheme with both internal and external works.
- iv) Project No 50 – McAleer’s Medical Hall, The Diamond, Pomeroy –  
Reason selected: How a simple paint job, with the right colour scheme, brightens up a property and the townscape.

## 11.1 Mary's Bar, 10 Market Square, Magherafelt

Scope of Works: Remove the entire front facade and replace with new.

Before:



After:



**Impact of the Works:**

On closer inspection, it was very evident that the ornate façade to the building was in a bad state of repair. The wooden surround was rotten, the moldings decayed, and the various decorative features (clock and lighting fixtures) rusted and broken.

The Applicant completely removed and replaced the façade with a new structure. The required works were extensive and costly. The funding, whilst a small part of the overall cost, was most welcomed and appreciated. The Townscape in this part of Magherafelt has been greatly enhanced as a result of the works carried out to this property. The project epitomizes the very essence of the scheme.



11.2 **Hope for U Foundation, 49 Main Street, Clogher (Project No 264)**  
Scope of Works: Paving to Front courtyard & install traffic safety bollards

Before:



264 After:



**Vacant.** 51-53 Main Street, Clogher (Project No 265)

Scope of Works: Repair & extend shop frontage, new doors paint façade

Before:





After:



## **Impact of the Works:**

**Hope for U Foundation, 49 Main Street, Clogher (Project No 264)** – The Old Court House is an attractive building both internally & externally. The rough ground area to the frontage took away from the attractiveness of the building. Council funding enabled the property owner to carry out paving & landscape works to this area. Safety bollards were also installed. The works to the adjoining property further enhanced the area.

**Vacant, 51-53 Main Street, Clogher (Project No 265)** – The property, previously a pub, had a very worn out / run down look about it. The works included repairs to the existing wooden surround and an extension surround to the remainder of the frontage; the installation of new doors and the overall façade of the building being re-painted in a colour scheme, that both enhances and compliments the adjoining property.

The combined impact of the adjoining projects has had a very positive effect on the townscape in this area of Clogher.

### 11.3 Vacant 130, 102-104, Moore Street Aughnacloy

Scope of Works: The inside of the building was gutted, ceilings replaced, walls drylined and skimmed. Rooms and hallways prepped for painting.

Externally, works included replacement of 6 no. Windows and 1 no. door

Before:



After:



**Impact of the Works:**

The funding assisted the applicant in turning an old rundown property into an attractive building on a prominent corner site in the town, ready for occupation. The property had lay empty with little prospect of being occupied until the works were carried out. It is now a bright modern building which adds positively to the townscape. The applicant has invested significantly in the works to the property.



#### 11.4 Project No 50 – McAleer's Medical Hall – The Diamond, Pomeroy

Scope of Works: Prep and Paint front, side, and rear of building, including all woodwork at front entrance.

Before:



After:

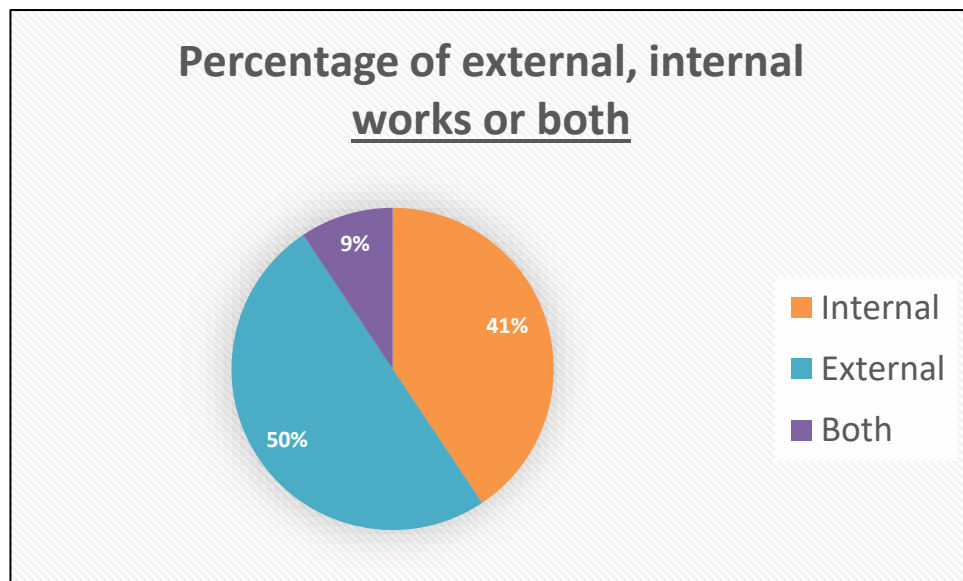


#### Impact of the Works:

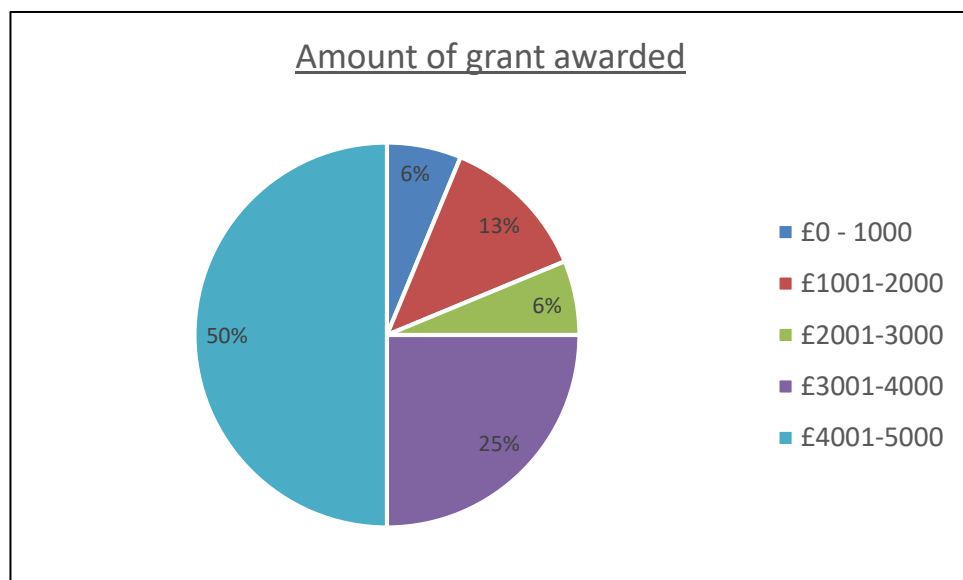
The paintwork to the front of building and wooden shop surround was flaking and falling away. The funding encouraged the applicant to carry out repainting works to the front and side of the property. This straightforward scheme demonstrates the impact that, with the right colour scheme and a lick of paint, how a property can be readily refreshed and brightened up.

## 12.0 Statistical Data

In terms of the ratio of projects that were funded for Internal and External works, 50% carried out External works only, 11% interior works only and 44% carried out both (total of 32 schemes).

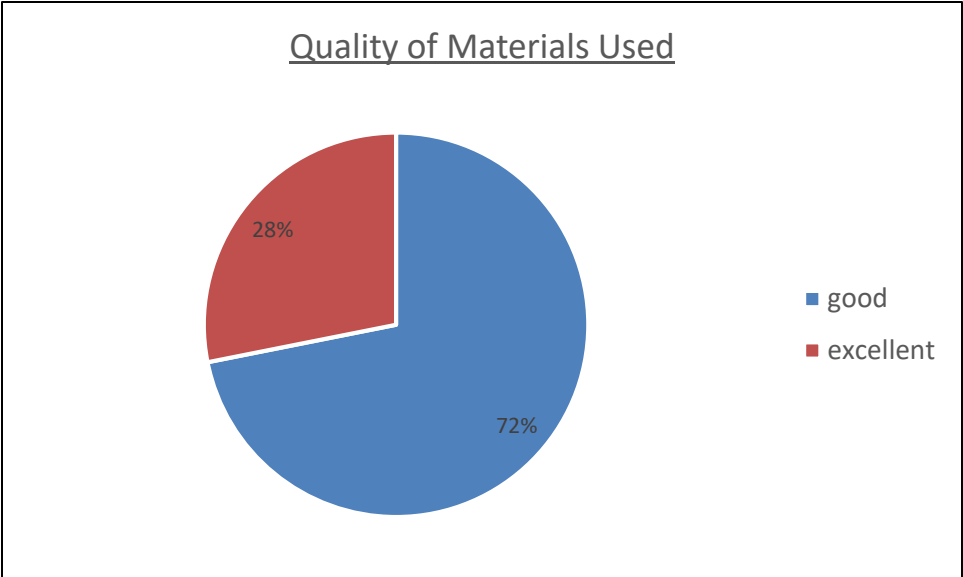


The Scheme provided a grant of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000. As can be seen from the pie chart below, the biggest percentage of grants (50%) were awarded in the £4,001 - £5,000 range and the lowest (6%) in the £0 - £1,000 range.

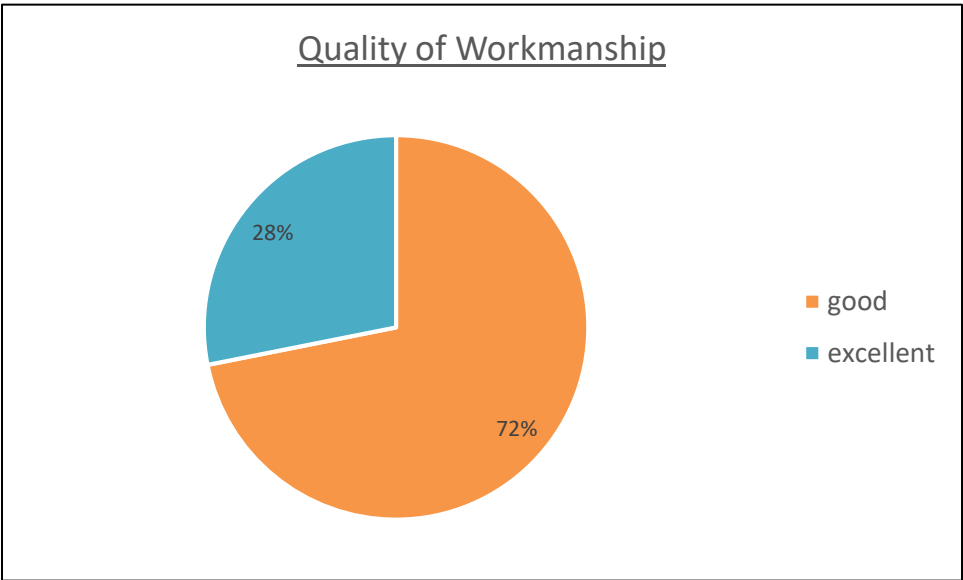




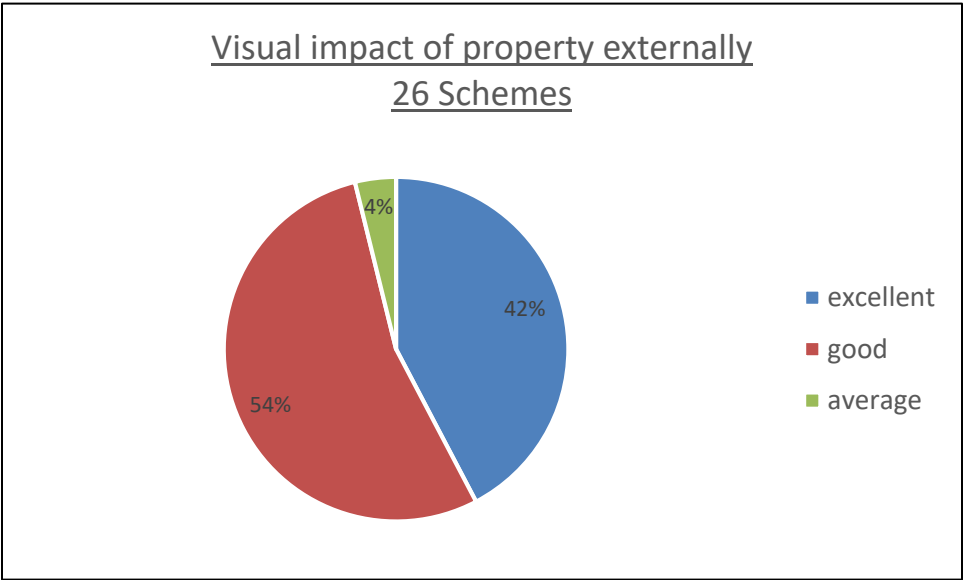
The quality of the materials used overall were rated as 75% excellent, with the remaining 25% deemed good (total of 32 schemes).



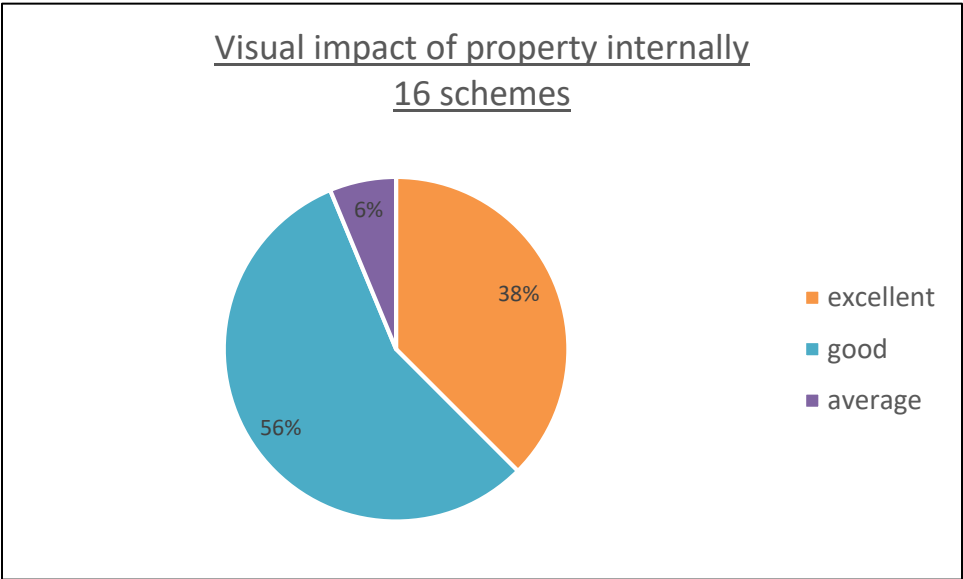
The quality of workmanship overall was rated as 75% excellent, with the remaining 25% deemed good (total of 32 schemes).



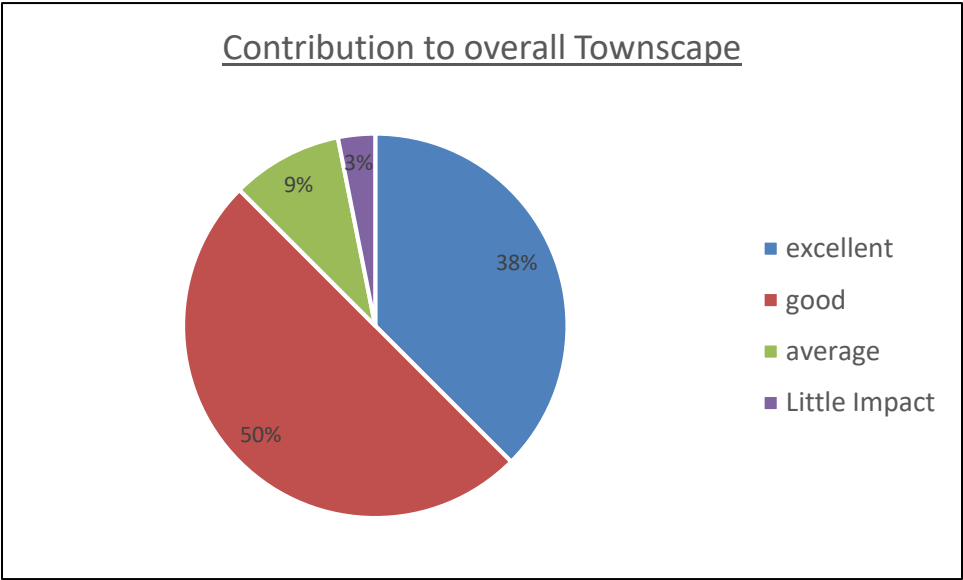
The Visual Impact of the majority of external works rated overall as excellent, 54%, closely followed a 42% rated as good. 6 of the 32 schemes did not have external works as part of their project.



The Visual Impact of the majority of internal works rated overall as good, 56%, closely followed a 38% rated as excellent. 16 of the 32 schemes did not have internal works as part of their project.



An important and key statistic in the delivery of the scheme is the Contribution to the Overall Townscape. 50% of schemes had a good impact, with 38% deemed as having an excellent impact.



**13.0 Overview of Scheme**

The Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme aimed to improve the competitiveness and economic sustainability of the eligible towns & villages.

Through the delivery of the scheme properties awarded funding strived to achieve a comprehensive improvement to building frontage, internal repairs and refurbishment. The wider impact on each town & village aimed to visibly enhancing the townscape and improving local infrastructure.

A final evaluation of each completed property was carried out with a score awarded between 1 (very poor) and 5 (excellent) to measure the visual improvement to the property on an individual basis, and also to measure the contribution of the improvement works to the overall townscape. The overall impact of the scheme has been, in the main, very positive. It is doubtful whether such works would be carried out to the participating towns & villages, to the extent they were, if it were not for the grant being offered by the Council.

The Business Clinics that were held in the various locations were well attended, and many of the successful Applicants had attended these clinics.

In total £112,771.42 of Grant Aid was awarded in Phase 1 to 32 properties across the Council area, with private sector leverage of £88,062.96. Grants ranged from £420.00 to the £5,000 maximum with the average being £3,714.09. 14 applications received the maximum £5,000 grant.

KnoxClayton Architects believe that the budget for the scheme was put to excellent use as it helped 32 (mostly small) businesses improve their premises and enhance the visual appearance of their towns & villages.

## **14.0 Conclusion**

The Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme has made a significant impact to the properties and contributed to the enhancement of their respective Villages. Phase 2 of the scheme, involving 55 properties, will be rolled out and delivered by March 2021. Following completion, an evaluation will be completed and presented to Mid Ulster District Council.

The funding provided by the scheme has unquestionably improved the external frontages and internal areas of each property.

The scheme has certainly succeeded in offering local business a significant and meaningful support. The monetary incentive has encouraged property owners to carry out improvement works to their properties which, in today's economic climate, may not otherwise have been feasible.

The total amount of private investment in the scheme was £88,062.96, which shows a commitment from the property owners and tenants to successfully deliver the scheme. The impact this had made across the Mid Ulster District Council towns and villages has been significant and will assist the local economy to remain competitive in the current market.

# **Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme**

**Supporting Local Business**



## **Guidance Notes for Applicants**

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Welcome to the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme Guidance Notes for applicants. Before you complete your application form, you must take time to read this document carefully.

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme and how you can make a grant application.

### **Background**

Mid Ulster District Council supports the improvement and enhancement of business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015 of each town) and development limits of each village as identified in the attached maps.

The Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is a pilot project and offers discretionary grants of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property for internal and/or external improvements. The Scheme is available to both occupied business/commercial properties and vacant business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015) and the development limits of each village. Whilst the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is intended to aid minor works to business/commercial premises, large scale schemes may apply however please note the maximum grant aid is up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property.

**Please note that allocation of grant is a competitive process and limited funds are available, therefore not all applications will be funded.**

**Applicants MUST be aware that this will potentially be the only funding opportunity for the next 3 years (Subject to funding).**

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme is to improve the competitiveness and economic sustainability of the identified towns and villages in the Mid Ulster District Council area by:

1. Making external improvements to the built environment in the towns and villages.
2. Encouraging the improvement of the internal appearance of properties visible to the public.

The objectives of the scheme are:

1. To enhance and improve the attractiveness of business/commercial properties.
2. To deliver high-quality external and internal improvements to properties in the towns and villages.
3. To attract new business and investment through improvements to vacant properties.
4. To stimulate private sector investment.
5. To assist businesses in each town and village to increase competitiveness and sustainability.
6. To improve user perceptions of each town and village.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A 'SPRUCE UP' SCHEME INTENDED TO AID MINOR WORKS TO BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL PREMISES IN THE IDENTIFIED TOWNS AND VILLAGES. IT IS NOT ENVISAGED THAT WORKS INCLUDED IN THE SCHEME WILL NEED STATUTORY APPROVALS SUCH AS PLANNING PERMISSION, LISTED BUILDING CONSENT, BUILDING CONTROL ETC. HOWEVER IF ANY OF THE PROPOSED WORKS DO NEED STATUTORY APPROVALS THESE MUST BE IN PLACE PRIOR TO WORKS COMMENCING AND A COPY OF APPROVAL ISSUED TO KNOX & CLAYTON ARCHITECTS.**

## Who Can Apply?

- Business/commercial properties within the town centre boundary of each of the towns (Coalisland, Cookstown and Dungannon as per Area Plan 2010; Maghera and Magherafelt as per Area Plan 2015) as identified within scheme maps
- Business/Commercial properties within the development limits of villages under the Mid Ulster Settlement Hierarchy, draft Local Development Plan (2030) as identified within scheme maps.

**TOWNS:** - Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon, Maghera and Magherafelt.

**VILLAGES:-** Aghaginduff/Cabragh, Annaghmore, Ardboe, Augher, Aughnacloy Ballinderry, Ballygawley, Ballylifford, Ballynakilly, Ballyronan, Bellaghy, Benburb, Brockagh/Mountjoy, Caledon, Cappagh, Castlecaulfield, Castledawson, Churchtown, Clady, Clogher, Coagh, Creagh, Desertmartin, Donaghmore, Draperstown, Drummullan, Edendork, Eglis, Fivemiletown, Galbally, Granville, Gulladuff, Killyman, Moneymore, Moortown, Moy, Moygashel, Newmills, Orritor, Pomeroy, Sandholes, Stewartstown, Swatragh, Tamnamore, The Bush, The Loup, The Rock, Tobermore and Upperlands.

Please note that the inclusion of a building within an eligible area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant. This is a competitive process.

The grant is available to:

- Business/commercial premises
- Shops (including hairdressers, beauty salons, dry cleaners, clothing retailers etc).
- Financial and Professional services (e.g. estate agents, insurance companies etc).
- Restaurants, Public houses, Cafes and Food takeaways.
- Vacant premises

**PLEASE NOTE:**

For a vacant property to be eligible evidence must be provided that:

- 1) The property is used as a business/commercial property. If this is not evident from the supplied photograph then evidence (old photographs, rates bills, etc.) must be provided.
- 2) Should the vacant property currently exist as a residential property with plans to change use to a commercial property, a change of use planning permission should be submitted to Council prior to commencement of works.
- 3) That it will be marketed/let as a business/commercial property after improvement works are complete. Evidence must be provided of how this will be achieved and actively promoted, such as letter from proposed letting agent, letter from property owner of actions that will be taken to seek a tenant.

Application forms will be acceptable from the property owner/s or tenants. If a tenant makes an application, it must be co-signed by the property owner(s) otherwise the application will be deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected.

**Please note should your application be successful; evidence of ownership must be provided at Letter of Offer stage. If the tenant is applying, the tenant will have to request such information from the property owner.**

Individual applications from owners/tenants whose properties are adjacent to each other are welcome. Where two or more applications adjacent to each other are made they will be defined as 'Multiple Applications'. These applications will be viewed as having a greater positive effect on the appearance of a street and will be scored as per page 6 'How do we assess your application'.

**Properties that are ineligible to apply for grant aid include banks, building societies, charity shops, government organisations, political organisations, community groups/clubs, sports groups/clubs and social clubs.**

<b>Eligible Expenditure - what we can fund...</b>
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The property owners/tenants of eligible business/commercial properties in the designated areas may apply for grant-aid to carry out the following:

Internal Works eligible for grant-aid include repair and refurbishment of:

- Walls, ceilings, doors, floors and stairs.
- Internal redecoration work e.g. repainting of walls, ceilings etc

- Rewiring and plumbing.
- Access improvements.
- New interior window display lighting, where shutters are not in use.
- Subdivision to form smaller units.
- Restructuring to form larger units.
- Permanent (i.e. not loose fitted or mobile) display cases/built-in furniture and joinery.
- Please note that internal works to a business/commercial property which is above ground floor level **will** be considered.

External works eligible for grant-aid include repair and refurbishment of the following:

- Shop fronts, including fascia, signage and lighting.
- Windows.
- Doors.
- Rainwater goods; guttering or downpipes on shopfronts.
- Redecoration (including painting, signage etc.).
- Pedestrian access improvements.
- Security measures (including security glazing/laminated glass which allows window shopping to take place in the evening ,e.g. open or lattice shutters/door grilles-NOT solid shutters).
- Virtual graphics / hoardings.
- Equipment and associated labour costs as deemed appropriate for preparation of work e.g. power washing, hire of lift equipment etc.
- Please note that external works to a business/commercial property which is above ground floor level **will** be considered.

#### **Ineligible Expenditure - what we cannot fund...**

The scheme will not support:

- Works which require planning permission which is not in place prior to works commencing.
- Routine maintenance such as clearing of debris from gutters, cleaning tarmac, cleaning of roofs, chimneys etc.
- Improvements to residential property, including residential property located above commercial premises.
- Retrospective applications (for work already completed or underway).
- CCTV / Alarm systems.
- Mobile/loose fixtures and fittings or furniture.
- Internal work which is not in the public area of the property.
- Mannequins.

The grant **will not** include:

- Statutory fees (e.g. Building Control Approval), professional fees etc.
- Insurances
- Interest (on loans taken out to fund your building project)
- VAT (except if the applicant is not VAT registered)



## Procurement Guidelines

Completed applications must be accompanied by competitive quotations/tenders from bona-fide reputable contractors. If a contractor is not employed to complete all works, the appropriate number of quotations/tenders must be submitted for **each element** of the scheme: **Please cost each element of work separately in Section 3.1 of Application Form, Pages 5 & 6, and ENCLOSE the appropriate number of quotes for each element of work with your application. Quotes must be for comparable elements. (Failure to do so will result in your application being deemed incomplete)**

- 2 Written Quotations for project elements costing up to £4,999.99 (please note if one quotation is over £5,000, four quotations will be required.)
- 4 Written Quotations for project elements costing from £5,000-£29,999.99 (please note if one quotation is £30,000 or over but below EU thresholds you must appoint using publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition)
- For any items over £30,000 but below EU thresholds you must appoint using a publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition.

All quotations should be dated and on headed paper. All quotations/tenders will be assessed by an independent Chartered Architect to check the validity and the costings of each quotation/tender. The funding will be allocated accordingly. Failure to provide adequate numbers of quotations/tenders will result in the application being deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT A QUOTATION/TENDER WILL BE DEEMED INVALID IF THE APPLICANT IS DEEMED TO HAVE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST (A PERSONAL, PRIVATE OR FAMILY INTEREST) IN RESPECT OF THE COMPANY(S) QUOTING FOR WORK AND/OR DEEMED TO BE A 'LINKED COMPANY' (EU RECOMMENDATIONS 2330/361/EC). COMPANIES ARE LINKED IF ONE OF THEM DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CONTROLS, OR HAS THE CAPACITY TO CONTROL THE AFFAIRS OF THE OTHER.**

## How do we assess your application?

The following criteria will be used by the assessment panel to score the application for a grant:

- 1 Current Condition of the elements of work requesting funding (25%)**  
Scoring will range from 0%-25%, for example, if the current condition of the elements of work requested for funding to the property are considered very poor, the maximum 25% will be allocated.
- 2 Impact the proposed element of works will make (25%)**  
Scoring will range from 0%-25%, for example, if the proposed element of works will have a transformation impact on the property, the maximum 25% will be allocated.
- 3 Value for Money (25%)**  
This will be calculated based on the formula: - Impact (points) ÷ Grant Sought = Weighted Criteria. Weighted criteria achieved will range from 5%-25%, with excellent Value for Money allocated the maximum 25%.

**4 Multiple Application Status (10%)**

Where two or more application adjacent to each other are made, these applications will be defined as a 'Multiple Application' and will be viewed as having a greater positive effect on the appearance of a street. Therefore, Multiple Applications will be scored accordingly by the assessment panel and will be allocated a favourable weighting of up to 10%

**5 Vacant Business/Commercial Property (10%)**

Vacant Business/Commercial Property favourable weighting allocated 10%.

**6 Property's first submission (5%)**

Favourable weighting of 5% will be granted to any property which has not previously been awarded funding under a Mid Ulster District Council Improvement Scheme. *Any property which has previously received funding under a Mid Ulster District Council Improvement Scheme will be allocated 0%.*

**Please note all applications must score a minimum of 40% to be considered for funding.**

**There is no internal appeal or review process for unsuccessful applications. The decision of the Independent Chartered Architect is final.**

<b>Successful Applications - your 'Letter of Offer'</b>
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If your application is successful, you will be issued with a 'Letter of Offer'. This is a form of contract that states:

- The amount of grant awarded
- The terms and conditions associated with the grant

**IMPORTANT - NO WORKS CAN COMMENCE UNTIL A SIGNED 'LETTER OF OFFER' AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS ARE RETURNED TO MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL WITHIN THE TIMEFRAME NOTED ON THE LETTER OF OFFER.**

**Please note all successful applicants issued Letters of Offer in November 2019 must have works completed and claimed by 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

<b>Payment of Grant &amp; financial considerations</b>
--

Payment of grant will only be made once Mid Ulster District Council is satisfied that all of the terms and conditions in the 'Letter of Offer' have been fulfilled.

A site visit will be carried out to verify the works have been completed as stated at application stage and to the required standard. You may be asked to amend work which does not comply with or falls below the agreed standard.

Payment of grant will be made on receipt of a single claim following a successful site visit. This claim will include the submission of original invoices and proof of payment. Proof of payment should be in the form of copy cheques/copy of BACS payment and original bank statements/online bank printouts from a reputable financial institution (clearly showing the name of account and account number).

### **Insurance, Liability and Indemnity**

The applicant, agent and/or contractor is responsible for all risks in connection with public or employer liability associated with the building works under the scheme and will fully indemnify the Council. The applicant, agent and/or contractor shall maintain such insurance policies as are necessary to cover all possible liabilities to the Council arising under the Scheme.

### **How do I apply?**

Complete the attached application form and return, with relevant documentation listed in section 6 of the application form. Completed application forms should be returned in a sealed envelope marked **Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme** to the address below by **4pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019**:

KNOX & CLAYTON ARCHITECTS, 2A WALLACE AVENUE, LISBURN, BT27 4AA

#### **Or alternatively,**

Council Offices  
Burn Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 8DT

Council Offices  
Circular Road  
Dungannon  
BT77 6DT

Council Offices  
Ballyronan Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6EN

**Please note only fully completed applications will be considered. Any application submitted with missing information or incomplete questions will be deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected. A fully completed application constitutes:**

- **A fully completed application form - the following sections must be completed in full to warrant a fully completed application:**
  - **Your Details**
  - **Property Details**
  - **Project Details**
  - **Project Costs & Administration (including adequate quotations/tenders)**
  - **Declaration**
  - **Completed Property Owner Declaration**
- **Submission of all necessary documents as per section 6 page 13 of the application form, prior to 4.00pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019.**

**LATE OR INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED**

## Business Clinics

Property Owners/Tenants are invited to attend drop in business clinics to find out more about the scheme and to get advice/assistance in completing application forms. Representatives from the scheme's Chartered Architect will be present. These clinics will be held on two consecutive weeks. The dates and venues for these meetings are as follows:

Date	Town	Time	Venue
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Tobermore	10am-1pm	<b>The Kilcronaghan Centre</b> Rectory Road, Tobermore
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Bellaghy	2pm-5pm	<b>Seamus Heaney Homeplace</b> Main Street, Bellaghy
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Aughnacloy	10am-1pm	<b>Aughnacloy Youth Hall</b> Sydney Street, Aughnacloy
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Dungannon	2pm-5pm	<b>Hill of The O'Neill &amp; Ranfurly House</b> Market Square, Dungannon
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Ballygawley	10am-1pm	<b>Ballygawley Community Hall</b> Fairfield House, Main Street, Ballygawley (Located in playing fields off Main Street)
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> August 2019	Donaghmore	2pm-5pm	<b>The Torrent Complex</b> Hillview Avenue, Dungannon
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2019	Coalisland	10am-1pm	<b>Cornmill Centre</b> The Corn Mill, Lineside, Coalisland, BT71 4LP
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2019	Stewartstown	2pm-5pm	<b>Crieve Centre</b> 2 Hillhead, Stewartstown
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Moneymore	10am-1pm	<b>Moneymore Recreation Centre</b> Moneyhaw Road, Moneymore
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Maghera	2pm-5pm	<b>Walsh's Hotel</b> Main Street,

			Maghera
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Cookstown	10am-1pm	<b>The Burnavon Arts &amp; Cultural Centre</b> Burn Road, Cookstown
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2019	Magherafelt	2pm-5pm	<b>The Bridewell</b> Church Street, Magherafelt

### Who do I contact for more information?

If you need any assistance on any aspect of the Mid Ulster Town and Village Business Spruce Up Scheme, please contact:

Knox & Clayton Architects,  
Laura McIlwrath     [laura@knox-clayton.co.uk](mailto:laura@knox-clayton.co.uk)

Tel: 028 9267 4312

Or alternatively,

Mary McCullagh     [mary.mccullagh@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:mary.mccullagh@midulstercouncil.org)  
Lynn Shiels         [lynn.shiels@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:lynn.shiels@midulstercouncil.org)

Tel: 03000 132 132

Tel: 03000 132 132

All documents can be downloaded at  
[www.midulstercouncil.org/spruceupscheme](http://www.midulstercouncil.org/spruceupscheme)



# Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme

Supporting Local Business



## Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme 2019-2022 Application Form

Applications should be completed in conjunction with the attached Guidance Notes.

**Only fully completed application forms submitted with the required documentation (as per page 13) will be considered –Any application submitted with missing information or incomplete questions will be deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected.**

### PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

The closing date for applications is **4pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019**, and the applicants MUST be aware that this will potentially be the only funding opportunity for next 3 years (Subject to funding).

*NB: The Council will process your personal data in accordance with Mid Ulster District Council privacy statement. For further details go to <https://www.midulstercouncil.org/privacy>*

### 1. YOUR DETAILS

1.1 Applicant Details (The applicant must be the key contact to discuss all details of this application)

Name			
	Are you the property owner or tenant? (Delete as applicable)      Property Owner      Tenant		
Address			
Telephone	Phone:		Mobile:
Email		Website	

## 2. PROPERTY DETAILS

2.1 Please provide details of the property for which the grant is being sought

Name of Business Trading in Property:	
Property Address:	
Please provide a short description of the business for which the grant is being sought.	
Are you the owner of the property? ( <i>delete as applicable</i> )	Yes/No
<p>Is the business/commercial property currently vacant?</p> <p>If Yes, please provide details of the vacant business/commercial property indicating:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The property's previous use as a business/commercial property</li> <li>2) Should the vacant property currently exist as a residential property with plans to change use to a commercial property, a change of use planning permission should be submitted to Council prior to commencement of works</li> <li>3) How it will be marketed/let as a business/commercial property after</li> </ol>	Yes/No

improvement works are complete			
Are you registered for VAT?	Yes/No	If yes, please provide VAT registration number.	
Has the building got 'Listed Building Status'?	Yes/No Status Type: - _____		
Have you received Listed Building Consent for the proposed works? Please note that Consent <b>MUST</b> be obtained prior to commencement of works	N/A		
Please state the current number of employees			

Type of Business (Please Tick the appropriate box):	Sole Trader	
	Business Partnership	
	Limited Company	
	Registered Company	
	Other (Please specify)	

## 2.2 Previous Funding Received

Has this property been awarded Grant Aid under previous improvement schemes? I.e. Mid Ulster Town Centre Shop Improvement Scheme / Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme	Yes / No
Please detail which scheme(s) applied for and please provide details of work completed	N/A



2.3 Please describe the current condition of the element(s) of work proposed to be improved/refurbished (***a current colour photograph must be attached to your application of each element of works proposed. NB: Please ensure the photograph is of high quality as it will be used for assessment purposes***)

### 3 PROJECT DETAILS

- 3.1 Please provide a full description of work to be carried out and the associated cost under each of the relevant headings in the tables.

**Please Note:**

1. Quotations **MUST** be comparable, like for like.
2. If one quote is over £4,999.99, 4 quotations must be provided; if one quote is over £29,999.99 but below EU thresholds you must appoint using a publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition.
3. All quotations should be dated and on headed paper. The funder reserves the right to have a chartered architect to check the validity of quotations/tenders. Please note that professional fees will not be eligible for grant aid and you employ such services at your own risk, whether or not your application is successful. **PLEASE NOTE THAT A QUOTATION/TENDER WILL BE DEEMED INVALID IF THE APPLICANT IS DEEMED TO HAVE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST (A PERSONAL, PRIVATE OR FAMILY INTEREST) IN RESPECT OF THE COMPANY(S) QUOTING FOR WORK AND/OR DEEMED TO BE A 'LINKED COMPANY' (EU RECOMMENDATIONS 2330/361/EC.):- COMPANIES ARE LINKED IF ONE OF THEM DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CONTROLS, OR HAS THE CAPACITY TO CONTROL THE AFFAIRS OF THE OTHER.**
4. Costs should not include VAT regardless if the company is VAT registered or not.
5. All projects which receive a letter of offer in November 2019 must have works completed and claimed for by 20 March 2020.

Element of Work	Description of Work (e.g. repair, replacement of new feature, materials to be used, colour schemes)	Cost (as per quotations / tenders obtained) Excluding VAT Please cost each element of work separately and ENCLOSE the appropriate number of quotes for each element of work with your application. <b><i>(Failure to do so will result in your application being deemed incomplete)</i></b> 2 Written Quotations for elemental costs up to £4,999.99 4 Written Quotations for elemental costs from £5,000-£29,999 For any items over £30,000 but below EU thresholds you must appoint using a publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition)			
		Quote 1 (Chosen Contractor) Contractor Name	Quote 2 Contractor Name	Quote 3 Contractor Name	Quote 4 Contractor Name
Internal Works					
TOTAL COST £					

Element of Work	Description of Work (e.g. repair, replacement of new feature, materials to be used, colour schemes)	Cost (as per quotations / tenders obtained) Excluding VAT. Please cost each element of work separately and ENCLOSE the appropriate number of quotes for each element of work with your application. <b><i>(Failure to do so will result in your application being deemed incomplete)</i></b> 2 Written Quotations for elemental costs up to £4,999.99 4 Written Quotations for elemental costs from £5,000-£29,999 For any items over £30,000 but below EU thresholds you must appoint using a publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition)			
		Quote 1 (Chosen Contractor) Contractor Name	Quote 2 Contractor Name	Quote 3 Contractor Name	Quote 4 Contractor Name
External Works					
TOTAL COST		£			

3.2 Please identify if the proposed project is part of a Multiple Application (See note on page 3 of Guidance Notes)

Is project part of a Multiple Application	Yes/No
If yes please give details below naming adjacent business/commercial premise applying	

3.3 What is the planned start and completion date for the project?

Expected Start Date:		Expected Completion Date:	
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**NB: All applicants issued a Letter of Offer in November 2019 must have works completed and claimed by 20 March 2020. If successful, no works should commence prior to receipt of Letter of Offer.**

3.4 Statutory Approvals

Is Planning Permission required for the project?	Yes/No	If yes, please state the status of your Planning Application: (Please tick)	Application to be submitted	
			Application submitted	
			Approval Received (Please enclose a copy of Planning Approval)	

**NB: Planning Approval must be in place BEFORE works commence. In addition to this, any signage alterations must have approved consent to display an advertisement prior to works commencing (a copy of the approval must be sent to Knox & Clayton Architects prior to commencement of works).**

Is Building Control approval required for the project?	Yes/No	If yes, Building Control Approval must be in place BEFORE payment of grant.
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Is Listed Building Consent required for the project?	Yes/No	If yes, a copy of the Listed Building Consent MUST be submitted prior to commencement of works.
--	--------	---

3.5 Please state how your scheme meets the objectives as stated in the Guidance Notes (See note on Page 2 of Guidance Notes)

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#### 4 PROJECT COSTS AND ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Please provide details of total project cost and grant aid sought:

<b>Total Project Cost:</b> If VAT registered please detail Net Cost, If Not VAT Registered please quote Gross Cost	£
<b>Grant Aid Sought:</b> If VAT registered please detail Net Cost, If Not VAT Registered please quote Gross Cost	£

**Details regarding the amount of grant-aid available through this scheme are detailed in the Guidance Notes Page 1.**

4.2 Please complete details of remaining funding for the project:

Are you able to provide the remaining funding for the project? <i>(Proof of available match funding may be required on request from Mid-Ulster Council)</i>	Yes / No
Anticipated Project Duration <i>NB: Work should not commence until a 'Letter of Offer' for grant aid is received and you have signed and returned the 'Form of Acceptance' in compliance with the terms and conditions of this grant.</i>	Number of Weeks

## 5. DECLARATION

Notes to Applicants:

- a. Only owners/tenants of properties located **within the scheme boundaries** included within the Guidance Notes and associated maps are eligible to apply.
- b. Please note that completion of this application does not guarantee an award of grand aid.
- c. Any costs incurred in the completion of this application will be at your own expense and will not be refunded.
- d. Please note that if your application is successful you will be required to provide documentation to Council for funding purposes before any funds can be released (e.g. bank account details, confirmation of VAT status, original bank statements)
- e. No funds can be issued until all the necessary information required by Mid Ulster District Council has been received (NB: the Council may ask for additional information at any stage of the application process).
- f. If approved, Council will issue a formal Letter of Offer for your scheme – works must not commence until a formal Letter of Offer has been signed and returned to Council. Grant aid cannot be awarded for works already carried out.
- g. Work commenced prior to a Letter of Offer being signed and returned to Council or work commenced before the required statutory approvals are in place will be deemed ineligible and will not be funded.
- h. All projects must meet the required timescales.
- i. Applicants must comply with publicity arrangements: - Consent to the business being named in and participating in any publicity produced in relation to this Scheme.
- j. It is the applicant's responsibility to comply with all relevant health and safety, including in particular The Construction (Design & Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 for any works being carried out. For more information please visit <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/simple-guide-cdm-regulations-ni-2016>
- k. It is the applicant's responsibility to comply with all other relevant legislation.

**I/We confirm that the information contained in this Application is true and accurate to the best of my/our knowledge and belief.** I/We understand and agree to the above Notes and Guidance and I/We acknowledge that if false or misleading information is provided that the Council may exclude me/us from the Scheme. I /We further acknowledge that in the event that it comes to light, following the issuing of the Letter of Offer, that false or misleading information was provided, the Council reserves the right in its absolute discretion to refuse to withhold grant monies or seek to recoup grant monies already paid.

I/We hereby apply for Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme

Signature(s).....  
(PROPERTY OWNER(S)/TENANTS)

.....

Name(s) (Print).....

Date.....

**IF THE APPLICANT IS A TENANT, THE PROPERTY OWNER(S) MUST COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW**

I/We the property owner(s) give permission to\_\_\_\_\_ (tenant) to  
conduct and complete the works as detailed in the attached application form to:-

Property Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Business currently located in property: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s).....  
(PROPERTY OWNER(S))

Completed application forms should be returned to the address below in a sealed envelope  
marked

**Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme**

**KNOX & CLAYTON ARCHITECTS,  
2A WALLACE AVENUE, LISBURN, BT27 4AA**

Or alternatively,

**Council Offices  
Burn Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 8DT**

**Council Offices  
Circular Road  
Dungannon  
BT77 6DT**

**Council Offices  
Ballyronan Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6EN**



**Please note ONLY fully completed applications will be considered. Any application submitted with missing information or incomplete questions will be deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected**

**PLEASE NOTE**

- **A Fully Completed Application Form - the following sections must be completed in full to warrant a fully completed Application:**
  - **Your Details**
  - **Property Details**
  - **Project Details**
  - **Project Costs & Administration (including adequate quotations/tenders)**
  - **Declaration Completed**
  - **Completed Property Owner Declaration**
- **Submission of all necessary documents as per section 6 page 13 of the application form – Please ensure all required documentation required is enclosed with your application, as no documents will be accepted after 4pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019.**

**LATE OR INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED; THEY WILL BE DEEMED INCOMPLETE AND WILL SUBSEQUENTLY BE REJECTED.**

**CLOSING DATE FOR COMPLETED APPLICATIONS**  
**WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 4PM**

## 6 DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

**Failure to fully complete the application form and submit the required documentation below will result in your application being deemed incomplete and will subsequently be rejected.**

### 6.1 Please provide the following documentation as part of your application:

	Attached (Please tick)
Completed application form, signed appropriately by the tenant/property owner as per page 11	
Colour photograph showing the element(s) of works proposed to be improved / refurbished.	
Detailed costs for any works to be completed in Section 3.1. Please ensure to cost each element of work separately and ENCLOSE the appropriate number of quotes for each element of work with your application.	
If applying for a property which is currently vacant evidence must be provided that: 1) The property's previous use as a business/commercial property 2) Should the vacant property currently exist as a residential property with plans to change use to a commercial property, a change of use planning permission should be submitted to Council prior to commencement of works 3) How it will be marketed/let as a business/commercial property after improvement works are complete	
If proposed works require planning permission this must be in place prior to works commencing - a copy of permission <b>MUST</b> be attached if planning approval has been granted	
If proposed works require consent to display an advertisement this must be in place prior to works commencing – a copy of approval <b>MUST</b> be attached if it has been granted	
If proposed works require listed building consent, this must be in place prior to works commencing – a copy of approval <b>MUST</b> be attached if it has been granted.	
Property owner has signed the declaration.	

NB: Make a copy of this application and any supporting documentation for your own records as we do not intend to return any information supplied unless specifically requested.

# Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme



**Supporting Local Business**

## Individual Scoring Assessment Sheet

### SECTION A:

#### 1. Applicant Details:

Name of Applicant:			
Address of Applicant:			
Tel No:		Email Address:	
Name of Business:			
Property Address:			
Total Project Cost:		Grant Aid Requested:	

#### 2. Checklist

Eligibility Criteria	Yes	No
Is the property located within the boundary of the scheme as defined in the Guidance Notes.?		
Is the property type eligible for the scheme? (I.e. Commercial, NOT a bank, building society, charity shop, government organisation, community groups / clubs, sports groups / clubs, or social clubs?)		
Has the application form been signed by tenant and / or property owner?		
Has a colour photograph of the element of works proposed to be improved/refurbished been provided? (Interior and/or Exterior)		
Are written quotations from bonafide reputable contractors, of which there is no conflict of interest between the applicant and the companies who have the provided quotations?		
If for a vacant business/commercial property, has the following evidence been provided:-		

1) That it was previously used as a business/commercial property (If this is not evident from the supplied photograph then evidence (old photographs, rates bills, etc.) must be provided		
2) Should the vacant property currently exist as a residential property with plans to change use to a commercial property, a change of use planning permission should be submitted to Council prior to commencement of works.		
3) That it will be marketed/let as a business/commercial property after improvement works are complete. Evidence must be provided of how this will be achieved and actively promoted.		

### 3. Assisting documents checklist

	YES	NO	Is this permission needed for this scheme
Has a copy of planning permission been submitted?			
Has a copy of listed building consent been submitted?			
Has a copy of building control consent been submitted?			
Has a copy of advertising consent been submitted?			

Have detailed costs been provided (two/four written quotations / tenders as appropriate)?

**NB: Both written quotations for elementary costs up to £4,999.99 MUST be less than £5,000.00 or 4 quotations are required.**

Individual Element	2 Written elementary costs up to £4,999.99			4 Written Quotations for elementary from £5,000-£29,999			For any items over £30,000 but below EU thresholds you must appoint using a publicly advertised open or restricted tender competition)		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A


For Section B, please provide a score for each question in the box provided. Weighting criteria is provided for each question individually.

Please note all applications must score a minimum of 40% to be considered for funding.

## SECTION B

### 1 – CURRENT CONDITION OF ELEMENT(S) TO BE GRANT AIDED (25%)

#### Scoring Breakdown

Weighting Criteria	Assessment Comments
Very Poor / Non-Existent	Element(s) not fit for purpose / have an unsightly visual contribution to the street scape
Poor	Element(s) are in bad repair / have an unsightly visual contribution to the streetscape
Average	Element(s) in need of repair / works will improve the visual impact of the street scape
Very Good	Element(s) are in good condition, but minor works will improve the visual impact of the street scape
Excellent	Element(s) do not have a negative impact on current street scape / any works will not improve the visual impact of the street scape

Weighting Criteria	Score	Comments
Very Poor/Non-Existent 25%		
Poor 20%		
Average 15%		
Good 10%		
Very Good 5%		
Excellent 0%		
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

### 2 – IMPACT PROPOSED ELEMENT/ELEMENTS OF WORK WILL MAKE (25%)

#### Scoring Breakdown

Weighting Criteria	Assessment Comments
None	Works will not improve the visual contribution to the street scape
Minor	Works will have a minor contribution to the visual impact of the street scape / will not drastically change the street
Average	Works will have a positive impact on the visual aesthetics of the street scape / noticeably enhance the street scape
Good	Works will improve the attractiveness of the street scape
Very Good	Works will greatly improve the visual impact of the street scape / noticeably change the street elevation
Transformation	Works will transform the street scape completely / element(s) will be unrecognisable

Weighting Criteria	Score	Comments
None 0%		
Minor 5%		
Average 10%		
Good 15%		
Very Good 20%		
Transformation 25%		
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

### 3 –VALUE FOR MONEY (25%)

Value for money calculated as: Impact (points) ÷ Grant Sought (in thousands to nearest £500)

EXAMPLE 1 Average Impact(12) ÷ Grant Sought(£5000) = 12÷5 = 2.4 =Score of **10%**.

EXAMPLE 2 Very Good Impact(24) ÷ Grant Sought(£2000) = 24÷2 = 12 =Score of **25%**.

Weighting Criteria	Score	Comments
0-1.999 - 5% Poor		Impact =
2-3.999 - 10% Average		-----
4 – 7.999 - 15% Good		Grant Sought =
8 – 11.999 - 20% Very Good		Value for Money =
12 – 30 - 25% Excellent		Score =
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

### 4 –MULTIPLE APPLICATION (10%)

Weighting Criteria	Actual Score	Comments
Not Multiple Application 0%		
Multiple Application as part of 2 properties 5%		
Multiple Application as part of more than 2 properties 10%		
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

### 5- VACANT BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL PROPERTY (10%) No Commercial activity taking place at time of application, can be long or short term vacant

Weighting Criteria	Actual Score	Comments
Not Vacant Business/Commercial Property 0%		
Vacant Business/Commercial Property 10%		
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

## 6- PROPERTY'S FIRST SUBMISSION (5%)

Weighting Criteria	Actual Score	Comments
No previous grant aid has been awarded to this property under previous improvement schemes 5%		
Grant aid has been awarded previously under an improvement scheme by Mid Ulster District Council 0%		
<b>Score in this Section</b>		

### Summary:

		Maximum Score	Actual Score
1	CURRENT CONDITION OF ELEMENTS TO BE GRANT AIDED	<b>25</b>	
2	IMPACT OF PROPOSED ELEMENT	<b>25</b>	
3	VALUE FOR MONEY	<b>25</b>	
4	MULTIPLE APPLICATION STATUS	<b>10</b>	
5	VACANT BUSINESS/COMMERICAL PROPERTY	<b>10</b>	
6	PROPERTY'S FIRST SUBMISSION	<b>5</b>	
	Total Score:	<b>100</b>	

<b>Recommended Grant Aid:</b>	
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Signatures of Assessment Panel:	Date:



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

# Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme



**Supporting Local Business**

## Commencement Inspection Report

Application Ref No.			
Applicant Name			
Business Name			
Property Address			
Photograph (Before Works Commence)			
Is the photo supplied with the application a true reflection of the current condition of the premises	Yes		
Have any of the funding works been carried out (if yes list within comments section)	No		
Planning Approval Granted	Ref No:	Building Control Approval Granted	Ref No:
Listed building Consent Granted	Ref No:	Advertising Consent Granted	Ref No: -
<b>SUMMARY OF WORKS</b>			
Element of Works	Description of Works		
Internal Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>		



External Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li></li></ul>
Other (Please Specify)	
Comments	
Date Works Due to Commence	
Date Works Due to Complete	
Inspection Conducted by	
Inspection Date	
Signed (original)	

# Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme

**Supporting Local Business**



## Section B: Final Site Inspection

Application Ref No.	
Applicant Name	
Business Name	
Property Address	
Photograph of Property before Works	
Photograph of Property on Completion	
Date of Completion	
Has the work been carried out within the required timescale (30th March 2020)	
Verification of Statutory Approvals attached	
Has the works been completed in accordance with the application	

## Summary of Works

Element of Works	Description of Works	Progress of Works
Internal Works		
External Works		
Other (Please Specify)		

## QUALITY OF WORKS

	1 Very Poor	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Quality of materials					
Quality of Workmanship					
Comments					

## IMPACT OF SCHEME IN RESPECT TO:

	1 Poor / No Impact	2 Little Impact	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
Visual Improvement of the external structure of the property					
Visual Improvement of the internal structure of the property					
Contribution to overall townscape					
Comments					

Final Inspection Conducted by	
Final Inspection (date)	
Grant Offered	
Recommendation to Pay Grant	

Comments on impact of Scheme	
Signed	
Date	

**Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum Meeting**  
**Monday 7 September 2020 at 12.30pm**  
**Microsoft Teams**

**Present**

Cllr Niamh Doris	Mid Ulster District Council (Vice Chair)
Ursula Marshall	Mid Ulster Disability Forum
Francie Molloy	Coalisland Residents & Community Forum
Brian O'Neill	Coalisland Credit Union

**In Attendance**

Colin McKenna	Mid Ulster District Council
Catherine Fox	Mid Ulster District Council
Oliver Donnelly	Mid Ulster District Council
Mark Leavey	Mid Ulster District Council
Celene O'Neill	Mid Ulster District Council

	<b>DISCUSSION</b>																												
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <table> <tr> <td>Cllr Joe O'Neill</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Dan Kerr</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Niall McAleer</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Robert Colvin</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> </table> <table> <tr> <td>Adrian McCreesh</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Mark Kelso</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Fiona McKeown</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Raymond Lowry</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>Michael McGibbon</td><td>Mid Ulster District Council</td></tr> </table> <table> <tr> <td>Patrick Anderson</td><td>Dept. for Communities</td></tr> </table> <table> <tr> <td>Raymond O'Neill</td><td>Coalisland Traders Association (Chair)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Declan Dorrity</td><td>The Venue/The Beer Shed</td></tr> <tr> <td>JP McCartan</td><td>PSNI</td></tr> <tr> <td>Dermot McGirr</td><td>Translink</td></tr> </table>	Cllr Joe O'Neill	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Dan Kerr	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Niall McAleer	Mid Ulster District Council	Cllr Robert Colvin	Mid Ulster District Council	Adrian McCreesh	Mid Ulster District Council	Mark Kelso	Mid Ulster District Council	Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster District Council	Raymond Lowry	Mid Ulster District Council	Michael McGibbon	Mid Ulster District Council	Patrick Anderson	Dept. for Communities	Raymond O'Neill	Coalisland Traders Association (Chair)	Declan Dorrity	The Venue/The Beer Shed	JP McCartan	PSNI	Dermot McGirr	Translink
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<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Introductions</b></p> <p>Cllr Doris Vice Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and took the role of Chairperson as Raymond O'Neill was unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies.</p>																												
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Previous Meeting - Monday 10 August 2020</b></p> <p>Proposed by F Molloy          Seconded by U Marshall and agreed: -</p>																												

	The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 August 2020 were a true and accurate record of proceedings.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – Monday 10 August 2020</b>  There were no matters arising from the minutes of Monday 10 August 2020
<b>5.</b>	<b>Covid-19 Business Support Grant Scheme</b>  C Fox updated members that the Covid-19 Business Support Grant Scheme closed on Friday 28 August 2020. There was a wide range of projects funded to include canopies, laptops to allow businesses to carry out track and trace, hand sanitizers, etc. There has been a number of claims submitted already from local businesses. Potentially there could be a second tranche of funding made available in the next few months.  C McKenna stated that there was £281k of funding allocated for urban areas and £281k allocated for rural areas. Overall, there were around 250 successful applications.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Coalisland Projects Updates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Coalisland Public Realm Scheme</b>  M Leavey provided an update on the Coalisland Public Realm scheme stating that Fox Contracts are currently working on Barrack Street and will aim to have this completed out within the next few weeks. Paving is also continuing on Main Street with a view to complete this week. Work is also continuing around the Cornmill area more particularly at Donnelly &amp; McAleer Pharmacy and at the 'Mamies Corner' side.   From next Monday (14 September), work will commence on Lineside with the introduction of a one-way system throughout the town.   Department for Infrastructure (DfI) have also indicated that they are planning to install a new man hole on Kings Row which will hopefully go some way to prevent any further flooding in the area. On Barrack Street the intention is to create, additional gulley's to try alleviate the potential of flooding in that area. On Platers Hill an investigation resulted in finding an undersized overflow pipe which now will be rectified. At the rear of Landi's property, it was discovered that the storm water was going into the combined system but this will now be redirected to a storm drain.   F Molloy asked if there was sufficient parking at Donnelly &amp; McAleer Pharmacy and if there was a disabled bay. M Leavey updated that there were 3 parking spaces outside the Pharmacy and that there were no disabled parking spaces included in this.   U Marshall asked as to the number of car parking spaces in the Cornmill car park and the dimensions of same.   <b>Action: M Leavey to clarify number of disabled spaces in the Cornmill Car Park and dimensions of those spaces.</b> </li> </ul>

	<p>B O'Neill asked for a clarification on the potential for broadband in rural areas within the hinterland of Coalisland. C McKenna stated that as far as the town is concerned especially where there is a new Public Realm scheme any new installation of broadband infrastructure could not commence within 2 years on completion of such works. Rural areas are being looked at under Project Stratum and as tenders are currently being assessed, we might know more in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Cllr Doris asked as to the type of seating to be placed in the events area. The main area of concern would be that there might be a potential for increased level of anti-social behaviour if the seating were to be incorrect. Cllr Doris suggested that metal seating would be preferable.</p> <p><b>Action: M Leavey is to look at options for seating and report back to Town Centre Forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gortgonis Recreation Centre Redevelopment</b></li> </ul> <p>M Leavey provided an update on the Gortgonis scheme stating that Mid Ulster Council are currently liaising with DfI Roads Service around access to the two sites – recreation centre and the school and that this has caused a slight delay in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coalisland Events – Halloween &amp; Christmas 2020</b></li> </ul> <p>O Donnelly provided an update with Council currently investigating the potential for holding a lighting show in the Cornmill Car Park as opposed to a fireworks show. O Donnelly also update that the community groups and organisations are currently working on their own respective events. This will complement the council event. A Working Group meeting will be set up in the next few weeks to provide an update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Town Centre Recovery Plan</b></li> </ul> <p>C Fox updated members on the Town Centre Recovery Plan. There was one application for a pavement licence in the town and the #reconnect stickers were also distributed to businesses throughout the town.</p> <p>Discussions were held regarding the proposed flower campaign. F Molloy asked if Mid Ulster Council would be willing to sponsor the shop window campaign. B O'Neill confirmed that Coalisland Credit Union would be willing to sponsor the shop window campaign.</p> <p>F Molloy asked if there was a card or a list of useful numbers readily available for local residents and businesses. This would be to let people know the contact details should they need them for flooding or other such services.</p> <p><b>Action: O Donnelly to create a list of contact numbers to be circulated to local businesses.</b></p>
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7.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>O Donnelly stated that he has contacted the traders represented on the Town Centre Forum to confirm whether they are willing to remain as a member. He confirmed that D Dorrity has verbally confirmed that he no longer is willing to be a member and will send an email to confirm that this is the case.</p> <p>C O'Neill updated members that there was a meeting held to discuss anti-social behaviour in the Gortgonis playpark. There has been instances of youth gathering in the park at the rear of the recreation building. It has been agreed that the Council would increase the frequency of patrols in the area.</p> <p>F Molloy asked if the pavements currently laid as part of the Public Realm Scheme will be power washed as they are getting quite dirty. M Leavey confirmed that they pavements will be power washed and sealed once the work is complete.</p> <p>U Marshall asked that when issuing grants for sanitizing stations that consideration is given to those less abled in not allocating funding for foot operated sanitizing stations.</p>
7.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p><b>Monday 5th October @ 12.30pm via Microsoft Teams</b></p>
8.	<p><b>Meeting Duration</b></p> <p>Meeting ended at 13.21pm</p>





# Helping Mid Ulster Businesses Recover and Grow

Effective, timely communication and the provision of speedy, targeted and tailored support have characterised Mid Ulster District Council's response to help businesses recover from the pandemic. Now the priority is to support companies through these difficult trading times and look towards future growth.

From the beginning of the pandemic, Mid Ulster District Council has prioritised the needs of its business sector, adopting a responsive approach which mirrored those needs as the pandemic progressed from the initial lockdown to the early stages of recovery and beyond. In the sudden, almost wholesale shut-down of the economy, there was never a more urgent requirement for effective communication, providing timely, accurate advice and information, while crucially signposting to and interpreting the myriad of financial support mechanisms available. As restrictions eased, the Council shifted its focus to the very practical help that businesses needed to get their doors open again safely for their staff and customers, while also working to promote a sense of confidence among local people and encouraging them to reconnect with their local traders, particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors. A social media campaign 'Reconnect with Confidence' showcased town centres and



Economy Minister Diane Dodds, MLA with Council Chair, Cllr Cathal Mallaghan, Deputy Chair Meta Graham and Paul Coote Director, PJD Safety Supplies, a programme participant, formally launching Council's £1m package of business support programmes at PJD's premises.

their unique offerings, giving local businesses a platform to talk about being open again, and told the stories of 'place' through people. At the same time, businesses could avail of branded online retail packs with useful materials to download, from social distancing posters to 'reconnect with confidence' window stickers for that visible reassurance to retail customers that their local traders were putting their safety first. Webinars on a whole range of issues enjoyed particular success with the tourism sector, while online signposting and regular ezines to businesses aimed to keep everyone up to speed in a fast-changing trading environment. A significant part of the recovery mix was the efficient distribution of COVID-19

business recovery grants which saw Mid Ulster become the first council area to open, assess and award funding of £529K to more than 230 local commercial premises in less than 3 weeks. The fund offered grants of between £500 and £3,000 for adaptations and adjustments to premises which would help provide a safe environment for customers and staff, and was awarded via the Department for Communities (DfC) for town centres and by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for smaller settlements, with further investment by the Council directly. The speed of the turnaround meant much-needed funding went directly to where it was needed. A new round of COVID-19 business recovery grants is being worked up and will be available soon to Mid Ulster businesses.

While the Council strove to deal with the immediate need, it also had a very firm focus on what the future held economically – and it went beyond the economic shock which was being experienced universally. Economic report after economic report showed the concentration of manufacturing, engineering, construction, agri-food and retail in the region, which accounts for more than 25% of employment locally, was going to have severe consequences – as early as April, one analysis predicted that Mid Ulster's GVA would drop by 45%. While lobbying for bespoke interventions by central government for Mid Ulster, the Council also took direct action to mitigate the economic forecast, launching a re-purposed business support programme worth more than £1M over 2 years. Part funded by Invest Northern



David Thompson (Owner, Thompson's Footwear, Cookstown) with one of his new Free Standing Hand Sanitising Dispensers funded by a Covid-19 Recovery Grant.



Council Chair with Stephen Mohan (Cuba Clothing, Dungannon & Cookstown) displaying one of Council's 'Reconnect' stickers.

collaborative partnership with Fermanagh and Omagh and Armagh, Banbridge Craigavon Councils, which has just launched a new Regional Economic Strategy for the Mid South West, which sets out the vision and ambition to invest over £252M of growth deal funding in what is the economic engine of Northern Ireland. Mid Ulster District Council recognises that for many businesses, the challenges are only beginning. The Council is committed to continuing to lobby for gaps in funding and support to be filled, for sole business owners, for example, and for rates relief schemes to be extended. Equally the local authority wants to see on-going support for town centres to help them transform and will continue its drive for re-training and reskilling staff from those sectors that have suffered the most severe economic shocks.

Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth & Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme alongside the Council, the re-focussed package of programmes is intended to help micro and small businesses in the area recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic, growing and sustaining employment in more than 690 local firms. Long-term support is also continuing via the unique

MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network in Mid Ulster which the Council and Invest NI supports and which, as the name suggests, targets that specific sector. Given the impact on those industries, tailored initiatives for them took place during lockdown, from essential information provision to webinars, and MEGA continues to implement its strategic action plan, with an Apprenticeship

Model most recently launched to all schools providing details of apprenticeships that will be available in MEGA companies in 2020/21. And in a broader strategic context, Mid Ulster is part of the

Eye

For more information on business recovery and support programmes in Mid Ulster, please contact Council's Business Team on 03000 132 132, email [business@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:business@midulstercouncil.org) or visit: [www.midulstercouncil.org/business](http://www.midulstercouncil.org/business)



# ICBAN UPDATE - OCTOBER 2020



## FOR ATTENTION OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER COUNCILS

ICBAN is the Cross-Border partnership for the Central Border Region, comprising eight-member Councils from the area. Through these regular updates we aim to keep stakeholders informed of the partnership's initiatives and developments for the Region:

### 1. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT - 'THE FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES'

The organisation is promoting the need for high-level supports and regional status for the Central Border Region. The 'Framework of Regional Priorities for the Central Border Region' strategy document has been completed and is being shared with member Councils. Through implementation of the Framework, ICBAN will promote key regional priorities and advocate for the delivery of emerging 'catalyst' projects. These projects outline actions that can help respond to current challenges; including the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and climate change. ICBAN is available to meet with member Councils to outline plans for the delivery of the Framework.

The Management Board are now prioritising the implementation of the Framework. This will require a multi-sectoral partnership approach, drawing on a range of expertise, experience, and capacities. Through such a 'mixed economy' approach, local authorities, government agencies, third level education, community and voluntary sectors, and private sector etc. will be involved.

### 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON BREXIT

The second element of the project is for a community engagement exercise on Brexit, leading to an academic report by Queen's University Belfast. This initiative will add to the three previous Brexit studies and reports completed since the UK referendum decision to exit the EU. As before, the new report will be used to bring local and regional findings, and issues to those involved in the high-level discussions and negotiations, and will supplement consultations on Brexit.

### 3. EU FUNDED PROJECTS

#### INTERREG Northern Periphery and Artic (NPA) Programme



**BLITZ (Business of Literature Zones) Project:** ICBAN is lead partner, with partners from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Finland. This three-year project aims to grow SME reach beyond local markets by developing and marketing literary tourism.

This includes delivery of a Product Incubation Programme of business mentoring and support to SMEs. The SMEs also receive monetary supports through an Innovation Vouchers scheme.

The other main focus of the project is the development of digital apps to promote literary tourism business, facilities and services across the Region. Separate Apps are being developed for NI and counties Cavan and Monaghan, and then also for Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo.

ICBAN will be presenting the project at the European Week of Regions and Cities, on 'Literary Tourism: Untapped Potential'.



**'Digi-2-Market' Project:** This project's focus is on digital solutions which will help businesses overcome problems of physical connectivity. The emphasis is on the use of Immersive Technologies, including Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality in particular.

In January 2021 there will be an online launch of the project's web-based resource for SMEs, 'Digital City'. This web portal will have a gated business community whereby companies sign up to use the site's resources and interact internationally on solutions. Businesses will be able to upload their own product stories and details through case studies. This should create opportunities for product collaboration and access to new overseas markets. Webinars will also be made available to local businesses explaining the resources available through the Digital City

#### 4. HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURES

The need for High Speed Internet Provision continues to be a key priority and adequate broadband in the Region is needed more now than ever; due to the needs for remote education, working from home and keeping in touch with family in these challenging times. The Governments in both Ireland and NI have promoted plans to address inadequate broadband provision in rural areas and the connectivity rollout needs to be completed quickly. This is recognised by ICBAN in our focus on complementary initiatives which detail technical and policy solutions, towards the ultimate goal of improving the quality of connectivity for citizens.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) has finalised an investigation into the use of public monies on broadband infrastructure in NI, through BT. This request had originally been put to the Audit Office by ICBAN in 2018. The report is expected in December 2020. Following publication of the report ICBAN will actively engage with Public Accounts committee and political stakeholders in following up on the recommendations.

#### 5. 'BORDER ANIMATOR' PROJECT

ICBAN and project partners, The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) recently completed delivery of the Border Animator' project, which was enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund. The modular programme of capacity building and animation for Management Board Members and Senior Council Officers was delivered online between May and July.

The programme was delivered during what is a very challenged geo-political context - not least shaped by the out-workings of Brexit, the climate emergency, changing demographics and, more recently, the public health emergency, and the expectations that this may lead to a global economic recession. Through the project the ICBAN Board have been reviewing regional strengths and asset-bases, and these can be effectively utilised, to both inform and nourish a model of sustainable regional development, linked to the Framework strategic priorities for the area.

#### COMMUNICATIONS

We want to actively engage with member Councils and stakeholders on progressing regional projects and initiatives of benefit to your area. You can contact us through:

- ☐ Engaging with your Council's elected representatives nominated to the ICBAN Board
- ☐ Emailing ICBAN to [info@icban.com](mailto:info@icban.com) or Phoning +44 (0)28 6634 0710



