

Report on	Sperrins Future Search Project Update
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Michael Browne

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on current progress of the Future Search initiative and seek approval for items outlined within the report.
2.0	Background

2.1	Members will recall approving at this committee a proposal to support the delivery of a Future Search conference for the Sperrins in partnership with Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.												
2.2	The conference entitled 'The Sperrins – Reaching New Heights, Realising Our Potential' was held in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown on 27 th – 29 th September 2017. The event brought together a group key stakeholders to draft and agree an action plan for the future development of the Sperrins and in particular the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).												
2.3	<p>It was agreed to build on the enthusiasm that was so evident at the conference and 5 thematic stakeholders groups emerged from the conference and convened to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirm that the draft action plans for each thematic area accurately reflected the discussions held at the conference - Clarify the actions suggested in the action plan to ensure they are stated in a way that can be easily understood - Prioritise actions - Confirm what attendees are ready and willing to do to help deliver the actions - Consider if any additional participants should be part of that thematic group. 												
2.4	<p>Each council was delegated co-ordinate the thematic group meeting as outlined in the table below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="384 1263 1417 1480"> <thead> <tr> <th>Thematic Group</th> <th>Lead Council</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Environment & Heritage</td> <td>Mid Ulster</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Infrastructure</td> <td>Fermanagh & Omagh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brand & Tourism</td> <td>Causeway Coast & Glens</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community</td> <td>Derry & Strabane</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management Structures</td> <td>Mid Ulster</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Thematic Group	Lead Council	Environment & Heritage	Mid Ulster	Infrastructure	Fermanagh & Omagh	Brand & Tourism	Causeway Coast & Glens	Community	Derry & Strabane	Management Structures	Mid Ulster
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2.5	The five thematic working groups agreed their short and long term action plans and the final plan has since been produced. It had been hoped to officially launch the report late last year but it was paused to allow for the recruitment process of officers to conclude and further delayed due to the current Covid-19 crisis. Consideration is being given towards an official launch of the document in the early New Year 2021. Key Stakeholders will be communicated with and kept up to date with information about the official launch event date and reengagement of the thematic groups.												
3.0	Main Report												
3.1	A Sperrins Future Search Project Officer and part time Administrative Support have been appointed and took up their respective roles on 12 th October 2020, initially for a period of one year.												

3.2	<p>The Project Officer will aim to preserve, enhance and manage the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Sperrins area through the identified Future Search Action Plans which have been established through four thematic groups. These action plans will assist with the delivery of the project which have been identified within the Sperrins Future Search report. A key part of the Project is to assist with the implementation and delivery of these plans on behalf of the five thematic groups.</p>
3.3	<p>Coronavirus outbreak has created much uncertainty in many aspects of everyday life, constant changes and subsequent restrictions have inadvertently created opportunities to encourage people to engage in local outdoor offering. There has never been a greater opportunity to motivate people to get out and explore their surroundings and the natural, cultural and built heritage that is on their doorstep, all of which is on offer in the Sperrins AONB.</p>
3.4	<p>Members will be aware that funding has only been committed from the partner Councils for one year and while the overall aim of the project will be to roll out the action plan developed due to the short time frame for this stage and the fact that there is a strong desire to capitalise on the wider work done to date that the initial focus will be on reconvening the Brand and Tourism Working Group in the first instance with the initiation of the remaining working groups following at a later stage throughout the tenure of the project.</p>
3.5	<p>There is a need to look more closely at gateway communities that can be further strengthened as destination hubs. Outdoor adventures to challenge and refresh and build on the unique inter-relationship between the area's cultural heritage, the landscape and the activities that take place within this setting, while elevating the linkages between the past and the present and offer an insight into the unique cultural heritage in inspirational settings.</p>
3.6	<p>The project thus far has been referred to as Sperrins Future Search Project, which was the name of the process used to create the report and the associated actions plans. It is suggested that the project going forward will be named Sperrins Partnership Project.</p>
3.7	<p>Current collaborative cross Council partner projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sperrins Sculptural Trail • The International Appalachian Trail
3.8	<p>The Sperrins Sculptural Trail</p> <p>The Sperrins Sculptural Trail tourism partnership initiative is a joint partnership project being developed by Derry City and Strabane District Council, Mid Ulster District Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.</p> <p>The Sperrins Sculptural project proposes the installation of three iconic artworks, which will be located at the preselected locations which are the Sperrins Heritage Site, Cranagh, Davagh Forrest, and Mullaghcarn Peak will form an iconic sculpture</p>

	<p>trail and flagship visitor offering for the region while celebrating the unique cultural heritage of the Sperrins.</p> <p>The aim of this scheme is to support investment in natural and built heritage projects that can act as a key driver for encouraging rural tourism and particularly out of state visitors. The Sperrins Sculpture Trail project will provide a focus for and link the many stunning walking, driving and cycling routes that currently exist and showcase the Sperrins AONB. This iconic and unique flagship tourism project will create capital infrastructure, enable increased visitor numbers to the area, encourage investment within our tourism sector and ultimately deliver new jobs while sustaining others. It is envisaged that the Sperrins Sculptural Trail will provide the focus for the Sperrins to establish itself as a must visit destination among local, national and international audiences.</p> <p>3.9 International Appalachian Trail</p> <p>The Ulster ~Ireland Chapter of the International Appalachian Trail was established in 2011. The trail is in the province of Ulster and runs from west Donegal in the Republic of Ireland to Larne, Co. Antrim. The route starts at the spectacular Slieve League Mountain and passes through the Blue Stack Mountains in Co Donegal then crosses into Northern Ireland. Here it picks up the Ulster Way where it passes the Giant’s Causeway, the stunning northern coastline before traversing the Glens of Antrim.</p> <p>Derry City & Strabane District Council has procured the marketing contract for the entire route and the successful company – Outdoor Recreation NI - has been appointed to deliver.</p> <p>3.10 Workplan and Timescales</p> <p>The Project Management Board Meeting will be reconvened early 2021 and scheduled quarterly thereafter. A Director Management Meeting will be convened on a quarterly basis, with the Operational Management Meeting taking place on a twice monthly basis at present. It is envisaged to host an event to officially launch the Sperrins Future Search Report in February 2021 and this event will combine promotion of the International Appalachian Trail and Sperrins Sculpture Trail collaborative projects. A basic outline of the communication plan can be found at ANNEX 1.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Each council has previously committed £23,210 for this project which includes salary and programming costs. It is expected that there will be a further ask to Councils to extend the project to maintain momentum and build on early success.</p>

4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A.</p>
5.0	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
5.1	<p>That Council support the Launch Event planned to take place in early New Year 2021.</p>
5.2	<p>That Council continues to support the delivery of the Sperrins Future Search initiative and collaborative projects.</p>
5.3	<p>That Council support the suggested project name going forward, that being, Sperrins Partnership Project.</p>
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
6.1	<p>ANNEX 1 – Sperrins Project Communication Plan</p>