

<b>Report on</b>	1) DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme 2) PLATO 2 Proposal (2019/2020) 3) NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal 4) ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20) 5) Invest NI - International Conference 6) Retail NI Meeting Minutes – 18.2.19 7) Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group Minutes – 26.11.18
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	3 April 2019
<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>DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme</b>          The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has approached Councils to explore the potential to deliver a Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme in the financial year ending 2019/20. The proposed pilot scheme would be funded by DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI). The scheme's key aim is to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived rural areas. Subject to DAERA's approval of the business case, the scheme would offer grant aid of 50% (up to £4,999) to micro businesses (employing 9 or less people) to improve their sustainability and growth prospects.</p>
2.2	<p><b>PLATO 2 Proposal (2019/20)</b>          Council is currently funding a PLATO1 Programme in Mid Ulster which is due to end in June 2019 with targets on schedule to be achieved. There are currently 6 PLATO groups in existence (3 in the North and 3 in the South), with 12-15 companies participating in each. Each group may contain a jurisdictional mix e.g. Mid-Ulster clients may choose to engage in a cross-border group in another</p>

	<p>Council jurisdiction for monthly meets and vice versa. In addition to 'monthly meets' there are a number of inter-group/inter-region training and networking events according to the needs of participants.</p> <p>Council has recently received a proposal for the delivery of a further 'PLATO 2' Programme, targeting approximately 20 businesses in the Mid Ulster District Council area over the 12 month period from June 2019 to June 2020.</p>
2.3	<p><b>NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal</b> Council received correspondence from the NOW Group in February 2019, enclosing a Proposal requesting Council to provide ESF Match Funding to the NOW Group of £60,000, comprising of £20,000 per annum for each of the next 3 years (2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22).</p>
2.4	<p><b>ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20)</b> 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; these are 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>
2.5	<p><b>Invest NI – International Conference</b> Invest NI has informed Council that on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Invest NI will bring its International Team to a base in Cookstown. The team will comprise of approximately 100 staff and include overseas representatives and those based in Belfast.</p>
2.6	<p><b>Retail NI Meeting Minutes – 18.2.19</b> Council agreed in January 2019 to invite Retail NI to make a presentation to Members on their recently launched Plan to Revamp Northern Ireland's High Streets. The meeting was open to all members to attend and took place on Monday 18 February 2019 at 6pm in Council's Dungannon Office, with Mr Glynn Roberts, CEO of Retail NI in attendance.</p>
2.7	<p><b>Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group Minutes – 26.11.18</b> A Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group was established to consider matters related to Brexit, which impact upon Mid Ulster District Council.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b>DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme</b> Following initial exploratory discussions with DAERA, it was agreed that Mid Ulster District Council (with input from each of the other 9 Councils) draft an</p>

indicative proposal, in the form of a Business Case for submission to DAERA. Subject to a positive outcome to the business case, DAERA has indicated that each of the 9 Councils would be awarded a minimum allocation of £50,000 funding towards the Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme in 2019/20 which can be spent within the years 2019/20 and 2020/21. Furthermore, it was tentatively agreed that Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council provide a co-ordinating role between DAERA and participating Councils during the delivery period, if Councils are awarded funding.

**3.2 PLATO 2 Proposal (2019/20)**

The PLATO Network has submitted a Proposal for PLATO 2 in Mid Ulster (**Appendix 1**). The proposal seeks funding for a further 12-month programme to be delivered over the 12-month period June 2019-June 2020 at an **enhanced cost of €20,000**, (current cost is €15,000) with the participating businesses each required to contribute a fee of €400 (as opposed to €300 currently). Council officers have liaised with the PLATO Network to ascertain if the Programme could be delivered within the same budget as 2018/19 but were advised this was not achievable. It is recommended that Council do not participate in the PLATO 2 Programme in 2019/20 due to the enhanced costs to Council and to businesses. It should also be noted that Council staff will be heavily involved in getting Council's own suite of business development programmes launched and companies recruited in the 2019/20 financial year, and therefore, this should remain our core focus.

**3.3 NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal**

The NOW Group's funding Proposal requests Council to provide ESF Match Funding of £60,000, equating to £20,000 per annum for each of the next 3 years (2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22). The proposal outlines this funding would be used to provide training and employment services to assist people with learning disabilities/difficulties and proposes to achieve the following outcomes for Mid Ulster.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Annual Target Y1</b>	<b>Annual Target Y2</b>	<b>Annual Target Y3</b>	<b>Total</b>
Participants Supported	32	33	35	<b>100</b>
Academy Vocational Training accreditation completed	20	25	30	<b>75</b>
Paid Employment Outcomes	10	12	14	<b>36</b>
Voluntary Jobs	10	12	14	<b>36</b>

Whilst Council is supportive of the work being delivered by the NOW Group, Members should be cognisant of our existing commitments to a number of other local ESF funded projects, which in the 2019/20 financial year, amount to approximately £60,000.

Council's 'match funding' budget is already fully committed in the 2019/20 financial year and therefore, it is recommended Council decline the request to match fund the NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Funding Proposal.

### 3.4 **ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20)**

ICBAN submitted a request to Mid Ulster District Council for a contribution of £12,500 for the financial year 2019/20 (**Appendix 3**). The request outlines a wide range of work streams to be undertaken, a summary of which are detailed below;

- A continuing priority effort dedicated to promoting and bringing about improvements to fixed and mobile broadband investments on both sides of the border and promotion of a regional voice on Broadband Infrastructure needs to government departments, regulators etc.
- Development of a coherent regional platform / voice for local authorities in promoting and advancing cross-border co-operation opportunities in the Central Border Region and to examine opportunities for common projects in local services delivery, for example, through helping establish a Community Planning forum for all areas of the Region;
- Commence delivery of regional elements of the BLITZ and Digi-2-Market projects (including SME programmes, literary tourism pilot projects, trialling of digital apps and the completion of a literary tourism Scoping Study);
- Planning for the delivery of a final Brexit research initiative with communities of the Central Border Region in summer 2019, partnering again with QUB, on service challenges, issues and opportunities arising as the border region moves into a new era of working impacted by the Brexit process. This will complete the trio of Brexit research initiatives completed in 2017 and 2018 and engaging with communities of the border region; and
- Source and secure sustainable core revenues for the organisation

The outcomes of all these initiatives will be shared with Council.

It is recommended that Members consider approving funding to ICBAN of up to £12,500 from Council's Economic Development Budget 2019/20, to be paid in two equal instalments, subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation (application form, confirmation of match funding, copies of accounts, insurances financial report and Progress Updates).

Finally, to approve the release of the first 50% payment, once Council is in receipt of all documentation requested (as outlined above). Progress updates from ICBAN will be furnished to future Development Committee meetings to keep Members briefed on developments.

<p>3.5</p>	<p><b>Invest NI – International Conference</b>  Invest NI will host its International Conference at a base in Cookstown on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11th June 2019, where in the region of 100 staff will be present from overseas markets and those based in Belfast.</p> <p>Both these days form part of the team’s week-long development programme in Northern Ireland. It is expected that whilst the Invest NI staff are in Mid Ulster, there will be an opportunity to hear a combined presentation from the three Councils involved in the Growth/City Deals (ie, Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council). This will provide an opportunity to inform them about the area, and the proposition Council wants these teams to present ‘in market’ to potential investors across the world.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to showcase local success stories and provide testimonials which can help the teams overseas understand how and why this area works as a business location. During the two day event there will be an opportunity to visit local businesses in the three Council areas and hear first hand their testimonials/success stories.</p> <p>Council Officers will work with Invest NI staff to ensure the success of their Cookstown visit and will arrange a networking event/lunch to greet delegates to the area and showcase the Mid Ulster offering.</p>
<p>3.6</p>	<p><b>Retail NI Meeting Minutes – 18.2.19</b></p> <p>A meeting with Retail NI was held on Monday 18 February 2019 at 6pm, in Council’s Dungannon Office. Mr Glynn Roberts, CEO of Retail NI led discussions on the recently launched Plan to Revamp Northern Ireland’s High Streets. Minutes of the meeting are attached (<b>Appendix 4</b>).</p>
<p>3.7</p>	<p><b>Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group Minutes – 26.11.18</b></p> <p>The first meeting of the Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group was held on Monday 26 November 2018. Minutes of the meeting are attached (<b>Appendix 5</b>).</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p><b>Other Considerations</b></p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p><b>DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme 2019/20</b>  Councils may have access of up to 15% of total spend towards administration; i.e. spend of £50,000 would equate to <b>£7,500</b>.</p> <p><b>ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20)</b>  Provision of £12,500 is available in Council’s LED Budget in 2019/20</p>

	<p><b>Invest NI – International Conference</b>  Host Networking Lunch for Invest NI International Conference in Mid Ulster.  Costs included within the economic development budget 2019/20.</p> <p>Human:  Officer time</p> <p>Risk Management:</p>
<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:  <b>DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme 2019/20</b>  Programme focused solely on rural areas.</p>
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p>
<p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p>	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <p><b>DAERA Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme</b>  Approve Officers in Mid Ulster District Council work with the other 9 Councils to compile a Business Case to submit to DAERA to secure funding for a Rural Micro Business Small Grants Programme, which if successful will provide a minimum funding allocation to each participating Council in 2019/20 of £50,000.</p> <p><b>PLATO 2 Proposal (2019/20)</b>  Decline the proposal from the PLATO Network for 2019/20, seeking funding from Council to deliver a PLATO 2 Programme at a cost of €20,000, due to the enhanced costs to Council and to business participants.</p> <p><b>NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal</b>  Decline the Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal from the NOW Group, seeking financial support from Council of £60,000, equating to £20,000 per annum for 3 years (2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22).</p> <p><b>ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20)</b>  Approve funding to ICBAN of up to £12,500 from Council’s Economic Development Budget 2019/20, to be paid in two equal instalments, subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation (application form, confirmation of match funding, copies of accounts, insurances financial report and Progress Updates).</p>

	<p>Furthermore to approve the release of the first 50% payment once Council is in receipt of all documentation requested (as outlined above).</p>
5.5	<p><b>Invest NI – International Conference</b> Note progress.</p>
5.6	<p><b>Retail NI Meeting Minutes – 18.2.19</b> Note minutes of meeting held with Retail NI on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019.</p>
5.7	<p><b>Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group Minutes – 26.11.18</b> Note minutes of meeting of Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group held on 26 November 2018.</p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – PLATO 2 Proposal (2019/20) Appendix 2 - NOW Group – Mid Ulster ESF Match Funding Proposal Appendix 3 - ICBAN Funding Request (2019/20) Appendix 4 – Retail NI Meeting Minutes -18.2.19 Appendix 5 - Mid Ulster Brexit Working Group Meeting Minutes - 26.11.18</p>