

Report on	<p>1. Proposal Submitted to DAERA for a COVID 19 Support Programme for Rural Businesses in Mid Ulster</p> <p>2. Response from Department for the Economy re Project Stratum</p>
Date of Meeting	9 July 2020
Reporting Officer	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>Proposal Submitted to DAERA for a COVID 19 Support Programme for Rural Businesses in Mid Ulster To update Members of Mid Ulster Council's proposal to Minister Poots, DAERA for a COVID 19 support scheme for rural businesses in Mid Ulster.</p>
1.2	<p>Response from Department for the Economy re Project Stratum To update Members of response received from Department for the Economy regarding Project Stratum, dated 22 June 2020.</p>
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Proposal Submitted to DAERA for a COVID 19 Support Programme for Rural Businesses in Mid Ulster Further to a request at the June 2020 Development Committee, Members are asked to note at Appendix 1, a letter issued by Councillor Cathal Mallaghan, Chair of Mid Ulster District Council to Minister Poots, DAERA, seeking financial assistance to deliver a COVID 19 support programme to assist rural businesses in Mid Ulster. This letter complements Council's proposal to DfC seeking assistance for urban businesses in Mid Ulster's 5 large towns.</p>
2.2	<p>Response from Department for the Economy re Project Stratum Members will be aware the Chair of Council's Broadband Working Group, Cllr Clarke, issued a letter to Ms Geraldine Fee, Director Tourism, Telecoms, Minerals and Petroleum Division, Department for the Economy (DfE), on 8 June 2020, seeking an urgent meeting with senior officials from the DfE to update Mid Ulster Council's Broadband Working Group on progress as regards the rollout of Project Stratum.</p>

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Proposal Submitted to DAERA for a COVID 19 Support Programme for Rural Businesses in Mid Ulster</p> <p>COVID 19 has hit Mid Ulster particularly hard. Our district is the area most impacted by COVID 19 in Northern Ireland and within the top 10 regions worse impacted in the whole of the UK. In a letter to Minister Poots (Appendix 1), Council seeks urgent financial support from DAERA to fund a COVID 19 rural business support programme in Mid Ulster, to enable rural economy businesses implement a range of interventions to aid their recovery.</p>
3.2	<p>Response from Department for the Economy re Project Stratum</p> <p>The Chair of Council's Broadband Working Group, Cllr Clarke, issued a request to Ms Geraldine Fee, Department for the Economy (DfE) on 8 June 2020, seeking an urgent meeting with Departmental officials to brief Council's Broadband Working Group on progress related to Project Stratum.</p> <p>A response was received from Ms Fee, dated 22 June 2020, advising that as the procurement process has not concluded, it would not be appropriate for the Department to discuss the project at this sensitive time, nor until they are in a position to fully discuss the outcome of this highly competitive procurement process. Ms Fee, therefore, declined to meet Council's Broadband Working Group at this juncture, but added the Department would be willing to meet at the point of contract award.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/A
	Human: Officer Time
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members: -</p> <p>Proposal Submitted to DAERA for a COVID 19 Support Programme for Rural Businesses in Mid Ulster</p> <p>Note letter issued by the Chair of Mid Ulster District Council to Minister Poots, dated 15 June 2020, seeking urgent financial assistance from DAERA to fund a COVID 19 rural business support programme in Mid Ulster.</p>

5.2	<p>Response from Department for the Economy re Project Stratum</p> <p>Note response from Ms Geraldine Fee, Director Tourism, Telecoms, Minerals and Petroleum Division, Department for the Economy, dated 22 June 2020, regarding Project Stratum.</p>
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter to Minister Poots, DAERA (dated 15 June 2020)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Response from Department for the Economy, re Project Stratum (dated 22 June 2020)</p>