



## **Proposal for the delivery of the MountainBikeNI Consortium 2021 – 2022**

### **March 2021**

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 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

This proposal outlines:

1. Overview of Outputs
2. Added value gained from adopting a consortium approach
3. Proposal for 2021 / 2022

## 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
<b>Partner Support</b>	£13,000	£16,666	£5,000	£5,000
<b>Sponsorship Contribution</b>	£5,000	£10,000	0	0
<b>Partner Total</b>	£18,000	£26,666	£5,000	£5,000
<b>% of Delivery Capacity</b>	33%	49%	9%	9%
<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 (£1000)
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
    - 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
  - Update of on-line toolkit for local tourism service providers including visitor profiles and requirements, product and service advice, marketing recommendations / opportunities and best practice benchmarking
  
- 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 attracting 63,449 visits in 2020/21 (37% increase from 2019/2020)
- E-marketing Database of 12,807
- Social media following of 26,070 (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

### 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 2021 / 2022

#### Delivery of Outputs

Partner	MUDC / £	NMDDC / £	BCC / £	FODC / £
Partner Support	13,000	16,666	5,000	5,000
Sponsorship Contribution	5,000	10,000	0	0
Partner Total	18,000	26,666	5,000	5,000
% of Delivery Capacity	33%	49%	9%	9%

#### Campaigns

Source	Amount / £	% of campaign delivery
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	2,000	50%
Mid Ulster District Council	1,000	25%
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,000	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

In 2021 / 2022, 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 as allowed by the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.



**MOUNTAINBIKENI.COM MARKETING CONSORTIUM**

**WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTING**

**(APRIL 2020 – 2021)\***

**\* Due to the impact of COVID-19 (including temporary trail centre closures), ORNI delivered the outputs of the MTBNI Consortium from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. An essential communication service was maintained between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020.**



## INCREASING AWARENESS OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

\*denotes where extra programme budget may be required on a case per case basis

	<b>WORK TO BE DELIVERED (2020-2021)</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>
<b>MountainBikeNI Consortium</b>	<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>	3 Consortium meetings held online – August 2020, February 2021 and March 2021.
<b>MountainBikeNI.com Website</b>	<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>	<p><b>April – July 2020</b> Essential updates provided regarding impact of COVID restrictions</p> <p><b>August 2020 – March 2021</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gortin Glens Forest Park Trail Centre added</li> <li>• Unique users increased by 50% from same period last year – 52% of these were new users</li> <li>• New content included:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 26 news articles</li> <li>○ 7 blogs</li> <li>○ Regular updates re trail conditions / closures / diversions – gained through regular interaction with trail managers / rangers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Customer Interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal with customer enquiries via telephone, email and social media in a timely manner</li> </ul>	<p>Daily interaction with mountain bikers primarily via social media direct messages (DMs) – providing advice and answering trail centre related queries</p> <p>Regular interaction with trail centre managers – providing feedback from public e.g. fallen trees and gaining updates re trail conditions / closures and diversions</p>

<b>Trail Cards</b>	<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>	<p>Online trail card sales were suspended due to COVID-19</p>
<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>Chain Reaction Cycles secured as official sponsor for 2020/2021.</p> <p>Ongoing liaison with CRC to roll out the month-by-month sponsorship plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRC sharing MTBNI content via their extensive communication channels</li> <li>• CRC using NI Trail Centres as backdrop for film / photos shoots for content features</li> <li>• CRC donating prizes for MTBNI online competitions (used to build e-zine database and social media following)</li> </ul>
<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>The domestic market was MTBNI's focus in 2020 / 21. Promotion was undertaken via MTBNI's established and engaged channels i.e.</p> <p>E-zine – 7 e-zines distributed to 11,150 subscribers</p> <p>Blogs – 7 blogs developed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to prepare for an accident on the trails</li> <li>• What do Gortin Glens Forest Park MTB Trails look like?</li> <li>• Mountain Biking Memories</li> <li>• Mountain Biking &amp; Mental Health</li> <li>• Is this trail for you?</li> <li>• 7 Bits of advice for new mountain bikers</li> <li>• Sperrin View Glamping Davagh Forest</li> </ul> <p>Social media c.30,000 following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook – 24,281 Page Likes – 3% increase</li> <li>• Instagram - 2,780 Followers – 11% increase</li> <li>• Twitter: 2,743 Followers – 5% increase</li> </ul>

		<p>The marketing activity was responsive to ongoing changes in COVID-19 guidelines / restrictions ensuring mountain bikers were aware of how changes in restrictions impacted them</p> <p>There was an increased focus on those new to mountain biking providing them with information on how to engage with the trails</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>	The paid media summer 2020 campaign cancelled due to Covid-19.
<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>	The paid media ROI marketing campaigns were cancelled due to COVID-19.
<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

### MountainBikeNI Trails Team (Volunteer Ranger Scheme<sup>1</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

Currently 140 MTBNI Volunteer registered

Due to COVID-19 only 1 volunteer maintenance session took place at Castlewellan – 5 attended.