

Report on	Iniscarn Forest, (TRPSI) Development Project
Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7 th July 2021
Reporting Officer	Nigel Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	Anne Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

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	To seek approval from Members for the development of Iniscarn forest and to update on the application made to DAERA for TRPSI funding to assist in the development of Iniscarn Forest.
1.2	To seek Members approval in securing match funding from the Outdoor Recreation capital budget and to enter into a lease agreement with Forest Service NI (FSNI) to allow for the creation of a carpark and play area within the forest.
2.0	Background
2.1	In 2015 legacy Magherafelt District Council entered into a licence agreement with FSNI over Iniscarn Forest.
2.2	This licence provides Council with the remit to develop and maintain all aspects of recreation within the site.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Iniscarn Forest provides an outdoor resource that has the potential for supporting the delivery of long-term health and well-being for residents across Northern Ireland and in particular the people of Mid Ulster District. The Council recognises that access to this green space and opportunities for enjoying the outdoors must be improved for all sections of the community especially those who do not have regular access to the outdoor environment.
3.2	Local consultation has taken place with the community group (Protect Slieve Gallion) and the key findings are detailed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to have outdoor classroom/safe space for children to learn and develop • Desire to have infrastructure that would support young children and their families • The site has become run down and tired, as is indicative of a gradual reduction in usage and lack of investment;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forest has the potential to be a valued community resource; • There is a strong desire from the local community to be involved in its development;
3.3	<p>The development of Iniscarn Forest project is a result of taking consideration of previous scoping exercises, research and studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forest Recreation Audit, Outdoor Recreation NI on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council, 2015, • Mid Ulster District Council Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan March 2020 and on-going community consultation.
3.4	<p>This project seeks to provide a safe environment for taking part in outdoor recreation by up-grading the existing walking trails within the Forest, creating a new play area to include provision for all-ability play, providing picnic and rest benches along the walking trails, the creation of a carpark, the creation of an outdoor classroom and interpretation and way-marking.</p>
3.5	<p>In May 2021 an application for funding to help develop the site was lodged with DAERA for TRPSI (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation) funding.</p>
3.6	<p>Discussions and site visits with FSNi have confirmed that a lease agreement is required for the development of a carpark & play area within the forest. In principal FSNi have indicated that they are supportive of the proposed plans.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	<p>Financial: Estimated total project cost: £275,000.00 Funding DAERA: £206,250.00 (yet to be approved) Council: £68,750.00 Council funding for the project would be allocated from the Outdoor Recreation Strategy capital allocation that has been approved by Council (£250k annually).</p>
	<p>Human: Current staff structure sufficient to deliver on outcomes</p>
	<p>Risk Management: Council staff and appointed ICT will manage and monitor the project aims and outcomes to ensure compliance to council policies and procedures and associated funders criteria throughout the delivery of the project.</p>
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments

	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>In conjunction with Council Policy and procedures</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members are asked to approve the development proposal for Iniscarn project as described in the report.
5.2	Members approval is sought to present the Iniscarn Forest development proposal to the Policy and Resources committee for approval of the Council match funding subject to funding being approved from DEARA as part of the TRPSI funding allocation.
5.3	Members are asked to approve the request to enter into a lease agreement with FSNi to allow for the development of a carpark & play area within Iniscarn Forest.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix - Proposed Iniscarn Forest Development Plan.