

Outline Plan for promotion of walking in the Mid Ulster area

1. Context

The Marketing and Communication service developed an outline communications plan in June 2020 to support the work of the Tourism service in its Mid Ulster wide tourism recovery plan.

The draft outline communications plan externally prepared in May 2020 suggests targeting initially the domestic, then ROI and GB markets, through the application of an innovative, engaging and unifying communications campaign, which will also provide marketing and communications support for all the tourism businesses in the area.

It recommends that the overarching campaign has a 'voice' that reflects the warmth and welcoming nature of the region.

Given that the suggested strategy needed to act both as a standalone Council campaign in and of itself to ensure connection with Council owned and managed sites, as well as a campaign that supports a diverse tourism base in the district, we recommended a campaign that uses the 'Reconnecting people and places' concept (note that place marketing recommendations focus very much on the people aspects and the importance of story-telling which centres on people, rather than the place).

The draft outline communications plan suggests the innovative use of digital outputs and social media techniques.

Step one and two of the plan have been actioned and we are now in the position to move to Step 3: Re-activate planning and booking behaviour.

People go online to find out more about experiences in the general area and will visit online websites in a broader search initially and then a targeted focus as they delve deeper into what's available.

This step involves continue with Reconnect campaign as above, and also building experiences and content for all search touchpoints, e.g., tripadvisor, Instagram, google pages, Council websites, tourism business websites

Impetus to focus on walking product

At the July Development Committee meeting Council requested a renewed focus on the promotion of walking product within Mid Ulster, following the recommendation to participate in a WalkNI Marketing Regional Partnership (appendix one), asking for a report be presented to future committee of strategy to develop and promote walking routes throughout the district, and a promotional campaign on existing walks be commenced.

2. Target Market

Walking for recreation and as a holiday pastime appears to be on the increase:

Recreation

- 50% of all adults in Northern Ireland indicated that they participated in walking for recreation at least once within the last year, increasing from 36% in 2011/12¹
- 63% reported going outdoors for exercise every day during COVID-19 lockdown, a much
- higher proportion than the 28% reported in the annual household survey (CHS 2017/18)²
- 51% expect to spend more free time outdoors than they did pre-lockdown³

Tourism:

- Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips⁴

¹ Continuous Household Survey 2017/18

² Engaging with the Outdoors during COVID-19 Lockdown in Northern Ireland 2020, ORNI

³ Engaging with the Outdoors during COVID-19 Lockdown in Northern Ireland 2020, ORNI

⁴ Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism 2018, NISRA

- Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.⁵
- Intention by the Republic of Ireland market to take a short break post COVID-19 lockdown continues to increase – 48% intend to take a short break in Ireland / Abroad in the next 6 months⁶

Market Segments

Great Britain, Germany, France, North America	Great Escapers Breath-taking landscapes, remote and exciting places, fun evening in an authentic pub, gentle exploration – walking, cycling, boating.	Want to immerse themselves in nature and get away from it all. TV, newspapers, radio, outdoor. Internet and social media are all important. Ease of getting here and getting around is paramount. Let them know about NI's outstanding natural
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⁵ External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland 2016, NISRA

⁶ https://covid19.failteireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19_Consumer-Sentiment-and-Behaviour_18-May_FINAL.pdf

		locations, focusing on geographical hubs which cluster together a range of integrated outdoor activities.
NI & ROI	<p>Time Together Romance, cool nightlife, gentle walking, shopping, relaxation, good quality food and drink, natural scenery, contemporary cultural experiences, landmarks.</p> <p>Mature Cosmopolitans Curiosity, authenticity, insight,</p>	<p>Interested in romantic breaks and spending quality time as a couple. Local terrestrial TV & Radio channels, Local National papers, web and deal sites such as Groupon. Make them aware of idyllic relaxing retreats and romantic getaways offering inclusive packages.</p> <p>Aspire to travel more and have the time and</p>

	<p>exploration, eating out, natural beauty, relaxation, good quality food and drink, scenic drives, theatre experience, authentic pub experience.</p>	<p>money to do so, but are looking for good deals. Local TV, Sports Channels, Local National papers and Radio. Less digitally connected than other segments. Make them aware, largely through non-digital media, of high quality accommodation breaks in romantic settings.</p>
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3. Our product USP:

Walk	Location & Date	Length	Duration	WalkNI Website	Comment
1. The Carntogher Way	Maghera 20 September, meeting 10am An Carn	9k			Well used walk by locals and has some interesting features. A shorter walk of 6.4 km is possible and follows the same track for two thirds of the way of the longer route.

2.Slieve Gallon	Money more / Cookstown Date TBC	Various lengths depending of access point.			There are a number of approached to Slieve Gallon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of people access the hill from the car park near to the summit of the mountain. This starting point allows walkers to walk to Tintagh Mountain or the mask on the north east end on the mountain. • Access can also be gained from the west side of the mountain close to Lough Fea. This route had been marked out a number of years ago and I am unsure if the markers remain. • Access from Iniscarn Forest. This route has a very steep ascent at the end of the forest before reaching open ground. However it is manageable with care.
2. Moydamlaght forest and Eagles Rock ++	Moneyneany Date TBC	4 miles +1 or 2 for open hill walk		Yes	This is an uphill forest walk but has the potential to be extended onto open ground adding a further 2/3 miles depending on direction taken after leaving forest. Could walk to either Mullaghmore or Craigna-shoke. (Could also do both)
3. Crockmore / Crockbrack	Moneyneany Date TBC	7.2 miles		Yes	
4. Knockmany Forest Ascent	Augher Date TBC	TBC		No	Contact made with Knockmany Rambler regarding length of walk. Brendan to visit

Industry examples of best practice:

4. Potential tactics to employ during campaign:

Review of website

Consumers continue to book more and more components of their itinerary online. With their travel options now virtually unlimited most consumers no longer want an off-the-shelf package and are happy to build separate and independent tourism products into a bespoke and personal holiday.⁷ We need to give them the tools to do this.

Add to walks on web site currently

Add new categories under Walking section – Leave No Trace Guidelines / Top walks in Mid Ulster (could create UGC by asking people to vote for their top walk in Mid Ulster, collate and then list these) / Walking guides / Walking Clubs in Mid Ulster

Add walks by type? For example, upland; woodland; lakes, rivers and shores; Urban Walks; Rural Road Walks

Video production

⁷ <https://tourismni.com/globalassets/grow-your-business/toolkits-and-resources/northern-ireland-tourism-toolkit.pdf>

We recommend production of a show reel video (3 – 3:30 mins) featuring couples/families walking, close up footage combined with drone footage, showing some of the most iconic walks in Mid Ulster. A suite of “Walk with” individual videos (2 – 2:30 mins) for the top 5 or 10 (depending on budget) could be produced, profiling the history and features of the site and linking in with tourism providers on route.

Links with influencers and other stakeholders

Consumers are increasingly influenced by what their peers are doing and saying on social media. Driven by ‘FOMO’ (Fear of Missing Out) or bragging rights, visitors increasingly want once-in-a-lifetime experiences that they can share on social media.⁸

Asking walking / tourism bloggers to do walks with GoPro and film reaction.

Recruit National Trust volunteers, local historians, Forest School, Conservation NI, Woodland Trust etc to do shorter 1 minute pieces of their favourite walks.

Content Marketing

Autumn photography competition – Meteorological start of autumn is 1st September – could run competition all of September. Capture the colours of autumn on your walk, sunrise, sunset (focus on images for Instagram content). GoPro prize, link with tourism providers to give prize.

Campaign bridging current #Reconnect activity with opening of OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory focusing on walking. Suggested strapline/hashtag – Space to wander / space to roam / space to wonder?

Bundling Offers with local accommodation providers (Sperrins Walking Bundle) on Discover NI web site

PR

Digital Touchpoints:

⁸ Consumers are increasingly influenced by what their peers are doing and saying on social media. Driven by ‘FOMO’ (Fear of Missing Out) or bragging rights, visitors increasingly want once-in-a-lifetime experiences that they can share on social media.

Lastminute.com

BBC Travel

Travel Zoo

Secret Escape

Guardian Travel

Thejournal.co.uk

The Sunday Times

WalkNI Marketing Regional Partnership (July 2020 – March 2021)

Those investing in the WalkNI Marketing Consortium receive proactive inclusion within the following marketing activity. It is this key activity which drives visitors towards specific sections of the website.

Support provided by Walk NI includes:

Members of the public (local, regional and national) focused communications:

- Feature inclusion within WalkNI Blog <http://walkni.com/blog/>, WalkNI E-zines min 12 e-zines per year to 13,520+ NI contacts and WalkNI Social Media Channels (Daily posts to 15,000+ NI followers)
- PR in Regional and National Press via WalkNI Awards and other initiatives

Walking Club Promotional Campaigns including:

- E-marketing to 566 walking club contacts
- Promotion via Mountaineering Ireland and Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs

Outdoor media and paid advertising

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

New Zealand: Good Morning World campaign

Sligo County Council: Let's not only get Sligo walking, let's get the world walking Sligo.

Sligowalks.ie: a new website featuring detailed walking information on over 60 waymarked walks through Sligo, supported by virial video campaign

Norway: <https://ourwaytours.com/our-blog/sheep-with-a-view/>

Sweden: listed its entire country on Air B&B

Kate Keys

31 July 2020

Booking Information

All walks capped at 15 participants

Price: £10 per person

All bookings and enquiries to the Bridewell

Opening hours: Monday – Thursday, 9:30 - 17:00

Friday & Saturday 9:30 – 17:00

Telephone: 028 7963 1510

Email: Tourism@midulstercouncil.org

Covid19

Max numbers 15 per walk as this is based on information from Mountaineering Ireland. Walkers will also have to provide contact details for contact tracing purposes. Each person will be asked if they agree with following three questions prior to their participation:

1. You have not travelled outside Ireland in past 14 days
2. You have no Covid19 symptoms in the past 14 days
3. You have not been in contact/aware of contact with anyone who had Covid19 in last 14 days.

It is essential that all walkers observe social distancing (2 metres)