

Report on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Minutes 25.10.24 2. Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Annual Report 2023-2024 3. A5/N2 Cross Border Committee Update 4. Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 - Evaluation
Date of Meeting	Thursday 16 January 2025
Reporting Officer	Strategic Programmes Service Manager Economic Development Service Manager

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 provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Minutes 25.10.24 The Mid Ulster LMP was established by Council in October 2021 and aims to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by working through coordinated, collaborative, multiagency partnerships. The LMP provides a unique opportunity to greatly impact Council's priorities for skills and employability ensuring that an appropriate skills pipeline is available to local industries both now and in the future.</p>
2.2	<p>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Annual Report 2023-2024 It is a requirement of the Department for Communities (DfC) that LMPs produce an Annual Report which is readily available to the public. The Annual Report should include an assessment of the LMP's performance against targets, achievements and specific information on the LMP has carried out its functions.</p>
2.3	<p>A5/N2 Cross Border Committee Update The A5/N2 Cross Border Committee was established in 2019 to lobby for the delivery of infrastructure improvements and upgrades to the N2/A5/TEN-T route from Dublin to the Northwest serving the border region and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Committee comprises membership from five Councils: Derry City and Strabane District Council, Donegal County Council, Fermanagh and Omagh</p>

<p>2.4</p>	<p>District Council, Mid Ulster District Council and Monaghan County Council. Each Council nominates up to 4 Members to the Committee.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 – Evaluation To coincide with Global Entrepreneurship Week 2024, Mid Ulster’s sixth Enterprise Week comprised 14 events: 7 in-person events and 7 virtual, which took place between 18-22 November 2024. This year Council was supported by its delivery partner Dungannon Enterprise Centre in the event management, promotion and management of the webinars.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Minutes 25.10.24</p> <p>Minutes of meeting of Mid Ulster LMP held on the 25 October 2024 are attached at Appendix 1.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Annual Report 2023-2024</p> <p>It is a requirement of the Department for Communities (DfC) that LMPs produce an Annual Report which is readily available to the public. The Mid Ulster LMP Annual Report 2023-2024 details all programme outcomes delivered within the 2023-2024 Action Plan. This report is available to the public on request via the Council’s website and has been circulated across all key stakeholders. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 2.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>A5/N2 Cross Border Committee Update</p> <p>The Committee meets approximately quarterly, and the role of Chair is rotated annually each calendar year, usually alternating between the Northern and Southern Councils, with the Chair’s Council acting as secretariat. Councillor Gael Gildernew from Mid Ulster District Council undertook the role of Chair for the year 2024, with Officers in the Economic Development section providing administrative support. Work undertaken during the year was detailed in the October 2024 Development Committee Report and included two Committee meetings held on 19 March and 30 April, and two Ministerial meetings (13 May 2024 and 12 August 2024) where Members lobbied at the highest level for the delivery of improvements and upgrades to the A5 / N2 / TEN-T route from Dublin to the Northwest, for the benefit of all stakeholders.</p> <p>The final Committee meeting of 2024 took place on 16 December 2024 at Canavan’s and was attended by Seamus Keenan (A5WTC Project Sponsor) at the Department for Infrastructure who provided an update on the progress of the A5 project, following the Minister’s Announcement (2 October 2024) of the beginning of the construction of the first stretch of the road. At the meeting with Minister O’Dowd in August 2024, the Minister agreed to the committee’s request that Seamus Keenan (or other DfI senior representative/s) would attend the A5/N2 meetings at regular intervals to provide an update at key stages of the project’s</p>

progress as well as discuss any issues raised by Committee members. As part of his update Seamus Keenan advised the following: -

A5WTC – Current Status

Following Executive agreement on 2 October 2024, the Minister announced the decision to proceed with the length of the scheme between south of Strabane and Ballygawley (55 of total 85km length). This was followed by a formal Notice published in the press, week commencing 21 October 2024, which initiated a legal challenge period of 6 weeks, expiring on 6 December 2024. As of 25 November 2024, the vesting orders became operative and the lands necessary for construction of this length of the scheme are now in the Department's ownership. On 13 November 2024, the Department received a formal legal challenge to the Minister's decision from the Alternative A5 Alliance (AA5A). Initial hearings have been heard in the High Court and the case is now listed for a full hearing on 3 March 2025. No further challenges have been received. Archaeological and geotechnical investigations have been underway across the 55 km length of the new road since April 2024 and are continuing. All affected landowners have received full details by post in relation to the vesting of their lands and all have been offered one-to-one meetings with DfI and LPS officials to discuss any issues and concerns they may have. Around 100 landowners have availed of this offer and around 80 meetings have taken place to date.

A5WTC – Next Steps

Work is now ongoing with officials and the Department's legal team to robustly defend against the recent legal challenge. It is expected that advance works in the form of site clearance, fencing, the setting up of compounds and the like will begin in January 2025, though contracts for full construction will be placed on hold pending a judgement from the legal challenge. This is expected in late March / early April 2025. Further work is on-going in relation to addressing the PAC recommendations on the remaining two sections of the scheme – i) south of Strabane to New Buildings and ii) Ballygawley to the border. These will be subject to separate decisions by the Minister in due course.

The meeting marked the end of Mid Ulster District Council's secretariat support and Councillor Gael Gildernew's role as Chair. It was agreed that for the next year 2025, the Committee would be supported by Donegal County Council, with a Chair yet to be nominated from that Council's representatives. Members are keen to secure a meeting in January/February 2025 with the new Minister for Transport, once appointed, to lobby for progress on the N2/A5/TEN-T strategic route.

The Committee expressed its thanks and appreciation to Councillor Gildernew for her leadership throughout a year which saw a great deal of progress in taking forward the identified key road infrastructure projects.

3.4 Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 – Evaluation

Over 1300 people participated in Mid Ulster District Council's sixth Enterprise Week (18-22 November 2024), attending 14 free online and in-person events focusing on how to help businesses 'Create, Connect, Inspire', in today's ever-evolving economic landscape.

Events during the week included the popular launch event ‘The Road Ahead – Economic Insights and Trends for 2025’ which was hosted by Susan Hayes Culleton (The Positive Economist), alongside a panel of experts, including Catherine Martin (Cavanagh Kelly), Stephen McCammon (Menarays), Shannon McCaul (FRC Recruitment and Dr Juston Quinn (University of Ulster). During the in-person event at the Burnavon, Cookstown, attendees discussed key trends such as AI, automation, sustainability, changing consumer behaviours and the labour market.

Assisting businesses to grow their sales and empowerment was a common theme throughout the week. Attendees heard from leading experts in their field with webinars on topics such as Mastering Paid Social Media Advertising, Tik Tok Tactives, Business Growth etc. This year’s programme also spotlighted the importance of encouraging young entrepreneurs with a webinar attracting post primary schools. The programme also included an in-person event held at Pomeroy with a focus on Wealth and Wellness for Women Entrepreneurs hosted by Lynette Fay.

In Dungannon, business owners across Mid Ulster had an exclusive chance to 'Meet the Experts.' Held in the new Connect Building located in Market Square. With over 40 experts spanning various business sectors all under one roof, businesses received one-on-one advice to tackle challenges head-on. From export and energy to marketing and finance, Mid Ulster Enterprise Week had businesses covered.

Other important events were held by partners including MEGA, Intertrade Ireland, Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and Council’s Tourism section.

Chair of the Council, Councillor Eugene McConnell attended and engaged with businesses at a number of these events throughout the week, “The turnout from local businesses at this year’s Mid Ulster Enterprise Week has been the highest since we first launched the week back in 2019.”

Recordings of the webinars are now available on Council’s YouTube Channel under Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024:

<https://studio.youtube.com/playlist/PLzfkqzAiZjUzHfzdQp2u-gGIZtqaQ6R5/edit>

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	<p>Financial LMP activity is fully funded by the Department for Communities.</p>
	<p>Human Officer time.</p>
	<p>Risk Management The Mid Ulster LMP Action Plan is managed and monitored in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.</p>

<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments Equality and Good Relations Screening has been completed for the period 2024-2027.</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications Rural Needs Screening has been completed for the period 2024-2027.</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendation(s)</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>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Minutes 25.10.24 Note minutes of the meeting of Mid Ulster LMP held on 25 October 2024.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Annual Report 2023-2024 Note content of the Mid Ulster LMP Annual Report 2023-2024.</p> <p>A5/N2 Cross Border Committee Update Note update on N2/A5 Cross Border Committee and minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2024.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week - Evaluation Note evaluation report on Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024.</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Minutes of Mid Ulster LMP Meeting – 25.10.24</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Mid Ulster LMP Annual Report 2023-2024</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Minutes of A5/N2 Cross Border Committee Meeting – 30.04.24</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2024 Evaluation Report</p>