

<b>Report on</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study</li> <li>2. Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Study</li> <li>3. Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid</li> <li>4. Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy's Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters</li> </ol>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	16 November 2023
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
<b>1.1</b>	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study</b></p> <p>Tullaghoge Fort is a monument in State Care and is of significant importance to County Tyrone as 'The O'Neills' inauguration took place here in the 11th Century and was seen as a royal centre of power. Tullaghoge Fort embodies an enclosure of approx. 30 meters in diameter which is encircled by two banks with entry to the enclosed area gained via a causeway in the inner bank.</p> <p>Over the past 20 years considerable investment has developed the site to include car parking, access and interpretation and in turn increasing usage by locals and visitors.</p> <p>Through the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme, Mid Ulster District Council has collaborated with Leitrim County Council and successfully secured funding to investigate the feasibility of new access pathways around the site with interpretation.</p>

This cross-border collaboration provides an opportunity for Leitrim County Council to learn from Mid Ulster District Council in developing archaeological heritage and visitor facilities at a similar heritage site at Killahurk.

## **2.2 Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Study**

Sliabh Beagh is a special landscape with a wealth of natural and cultural assets which straddles the northern area of County Monaghan, County Fermanagh and primarily the Clogher Valley region in County Tyrone.

The three partner councils (Mid Ulster District Council, Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council) have demonstrated a commitment to collaboration and partnership by setting up the Sliabh Beagh Partnership Board which represents the interests of communities, businesses, and local authorities in the area. This Partnership, established in 2021 and facilitated by the local authorities, is working to advance shared projects that will benefit the entire Sliabh Beagh region.

## **2.3 Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid**

In October 2021, the UK Government announced 'Multiply', a new programme to improve the functional numeracy skills of adults. 'Multiply' is a ringfenced element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and is part of government's Levelling Up agenda which supports high quality skills training and employment.

It is recognised that people who improve their numeracy skills are more likely to be in employment, have higher wages and better wellbeing. Following the announcement, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), undertook a brief scoping exercise locally, but no allocation was made from the UKSPF to Northern Ireland based providers.

DLUHC have approached the Department for the Economy (DfE) with a request to lead on developing and managing a portfolio of interventions, as part of the "Multiply" programme, with the following conditions: -

- all provision to be completed by March 2025;
- must be numeracy, or numeracy related training;
- only open to adults, over 18 years old; and
- up to level 2 or equivalent, with no qualification outcome required.
- funding for the numeracy element of larger co-funded schemes; and
- funding utilised for existing provision, with an element of re-badging.

To progress the Multiply Programme, DfE have engaged with the Department of Education (DE) and Department for Communities (DfC) in Northern Ireland, along with exploring what could be put in place in local colleges and universities.

A key element is around timescales with less than two years to design and deliver any interventions. DfE is keen to explore opportunities to work in partnership with

local government and have identified local Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) as an ideal vehicle and platform to deliver a Multiply programme in Northern Ireland.

DLUHC specifically mentioned the following as areas they would be interested in supporting:

- additional relevant maths modules embedded into other vocational courses.
- innovative programmes delivered together with employers – including courses designed to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace.
- new intensive and flexible courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths in Northern Ireland, leading to an equivalent qualification; and
- courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills or to encourage people to upskill in order to access a certain job.

It is recognised that the local community and voluntary sector can support the delivery of Multiply in Northern Ireland.

In GB, 'Multiply' has largely been delivered through local government, with councils bidding for allocations. In many instances this has replicated existing essential skills provision. A number of common elements have been identified:

- Many of the councils in England, Scotland and Wales have a "Multiply Officer" lead;
- Delivery seems to be largely through local voluntary and community network;
- Schemes including an adult focused fun maths class (with childcare on site), real life numeracy classes on things like nutrition, bills and helping children with homework, joint adult/children classes etc.;
- Multiply in London offers 300+ courses in numeracy, at entry and essential level.

#### **2.4 Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy's Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters**

Members were informed of the above consultation at Council in October 2023. The deadline for submission of a response is 24 November 2023.

#### **3.1 Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study**

Mid Ulster District Council and Leitrim County Council have partnered in a cross-border application to the Shared Island Fund and secured funding of €100,000 for a Ringforts Feasibility Study at Killahurk, Co Leitrim and at Tullaghoge Fort, Co Tyrone.

The purpose of this project is to preserve, protect and transform the heritage of the Forts, research and increase awareness and understanding of the history the

sites and examine the viability of introducing new pathways, carrying out consultation with stakeholders to ensure that statutory requirements are met. The Tullaghoge Fort element of the project was awarded €20,000. The feasibility study is now complete was presented to the Cookstown DEA members on 18 October 2023.

The feasibility study (**on Appendix 1**) includes the following –

- Enhances existing path network with Interpretation
- Expands path network within HED owned land
- Provides 'open access' within HED owned land
- Provides access to previously inaccessible sites of built heritage interest, such as, the recently discovered Great Hall

#### A Digital Layer of Interpretation

By using the existing MUDC app interface, introduces an additional layer of interpretation across the site on a Tullaghoge app. Within the fort the 'golden slipper' could be passed overhead, or, within the field, the soldiers could be attempting to destroy the site. The Great Hall will come alive with a **Light touch 'echo' of the Great Hall**. Creating anchor point for placement of 'AR' at the Great Hall site to hear the sounds of the whispers, arguments and celebrate at first hand. Raised beds 'set on' to the site of the Great Hall and replanted to differentiate from surrounding grassed areas and takes account the biodiversity at Tullaghoge Fort.

#### Elements of Surprise

Utilising existing end of life trees, place hidden 'guardians' – the Great Wolfhounds still watching over, for friend or foe.

All interventions to be 'set on' or 'fixed to' existing trees or wooden post fencing.

- Total project cost estimated at £197,015 + Vat
- Annual maintenance cost to Council estimated at £20,041.78
- Project is now at RIBA Stage 2.
- Possible funding sources; Shared Island / Heritage Lottery / Peace Plus

### **3.2 Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Study**

The Councils involved in the Sliabh Beagh Partnership (Monaghan County Council, Mid Ulster District Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council) partnered to submit a joint bid to the Shared Island Local Authority Development Scheme to carry out a feasibility study focusing on seven work packages (as noted below) to develop the Sliabh Beagh region as an Eco Tourism Destination.

The purpose of this project is to develop a number of inter-connected tourism and outdoor recreation initiatives to build upon the existing services and facilities in the region. Monaghan County Council acted as the Lead Partner and was awarded €145,475.

Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) were appointed as consultants to undertake the feasibility study (**Appendix 2**). This study focused on the following seven work packages within the Sliabh Beagh region;

1. Walking
2. Cycling
3. Equestrian
4. Signage / public art
5. Accommodation
6. Ancillary services
7. The Hero Attractor: Sliabh Beagh as a Multi-Activity Destination

An in-person public consultation event took place on 1 August 2023 at Sliabh Beagh Hotel, Knockatallon, coupled with an online survey, where a variety of stakeholders, including community groups, landowners, etc input their views to the process.

### 1 & 2 Walking and Cycling

A number of key themes were considered during the development stage, such as sustainability, connectivity, ecological considerations, trails as an attractor, trail standard and existing knowledge. As only 5km of new trails were costed in the project, following consultation it was agreed to use existing trails by way of upgrades and linkages for cost effectiveness.

Each section has been identified as an opportunity to enhance the accessibility and sustainability of the existing trail networks and therefore the overall outdoor recreation offering of the wider Sliabh Beagh area. Sections comprise of short linkages to link existing sections, upgrades of existing trails or forest roads that are in poor condition, sections of trail which improve the gradient and therefore accessibility. Trail networks will comprise a mixture of forest roads, public roads, new trails and existing trails.

A new build link at Favour Royal with existing trails will upgrade 1,299m of walking trails, suitable for walkers of all abilities and in an area of wildlife designation. A further combination of new and upgrading of existing trails within Favour Royal Forest, a long-established woodland, will add an additional 737m of trail.

Upgrading and installing a new link at Fardross Arc, within Fardross Forest will see development of a 714m trail. As part of the study ORNI were asked to design these trails to at least RIBA stage 2/3.

Following investigations and site visits at Lumfords Glen, Council was advised that civil engineer studies, ecological appraisals, concept drawings for five bridges, geotechnical investigations and topographical surveys are required for some of the walks but were out of the scope of works for this project.

ORNI have provided a breakdown of costs to bring Lumfords Glen to a shovel ready stage in order to apply for funding to complete the works as part of the Shared Island Capital Fund. The breakdown of costs is estimated at £24,875

+Vat. Lumfords Glen is not identified as a strategic priority site within current Outdoor or Tourism Strategies.

### 3. Equestrian

Development of 2,260m of new build trails at Fardross Forest will establish Fardross Equestrian Loop, the only equestrian trail within the Sliabh Beagh region, with parking facilities at Clogher Valley Horses Welcome. Walkers and cyclists will also benefit from Equestrian Loop at Fardross.

The trails will form a wider network to the Sliabh Beagh region and provide opportunities for large scale outdoor events, such as extending the Fermanagh Gravel Grinder further into Mid Ulster and Monaghan with potential of attracting hundreds if not thousands of international visitors to the region.

### 4. Signage / Public Art

The roll out of the Signage Strategy will begin by introducing Inner Gateway signs, informing the visitor 'you are here' e.g., St Patrick's Chair and Well'.

Welcome signs on the edge of towns will connect Sliabh Beagh to the wider communities and Outer Gateway signs, that will be optional, will connect Sliabh Beagh to even wider communities. Information points will be installed at key trail heads.

The signage will incorporate the image of Bith which was agreed within the Sliabh Beagh Master Plan in 2016. Three pieces of artwork will be created, based on the sustainable and circular economy principles linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the Sliabh Beagh area. The sculptures, placed in each of the three council areas, will reward the visitor for their exertion in finding them and will deliver the Bith story in three instalments. The sculptures will visually connect and interact with the landscape, be photogenic and shareable on social media and robust with minimum maintenance. The Mid Ulster Sculpture is proposed to be installed at Favour Royal.

### 5 & 6. Accommodation and Ancillary Services

Recommendations to carry out an audit of current accommodation and ancillary service provision, market demand and engagement with industry, as well as gap analysis.

### 7. The Hero Attractor: Sliabh Beagh as a Multi-Activity Destination

A detailed screening process identified this proposition as the one with the best potential for Sliabh Beagh. A multi-activity destination is considered:

- A destination that offers a wide variety of outdoor activities scattered across different locations, e.g., swimming, kayaking, walking, cycling, outdoor challenges, horse riding. Some activities will be free to access and others at a charge.
- Working with existing operators, infrastructure, and towns/villages in

the first instance before adding any additional activities and accommodation.

- Focus on a shared brand and vision for the area that towns/villages and operators can participate in.
- Opportunities to develop unique off-grid accommodation.

The longer-term projects to be developed as part of the Hero Attractor are infrastructure to support water access at key locations for wild swimming (potential to flex existing fishing pontoons adjacent to trails e.g., Lough Jenkin, Lough Natroey, Lough Eshbrick) and integrated indoor/outdoor wellness experiences to be developed.

### 3.3 Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid

The 'Multiply' Programme is a government-funded programme to help adults to improve their numeracy skills and boost their number confidence. The government wants to help people unlock new job opportunities or progress in work, get higher wages, improve their wellbeing, and take the next step to higher levels of training. It is also recognised that boosting numeracy abilities can also help with everyday tasks like bills and budgeting or helping children with homework. Improved numeracy also matters to businesses by helping boost productivity and improve employee retention.

In early summer, the Department for the Economy (DfE) was approached by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to submit a bid for a 'Multiply' programme in Northern Ireland through a mix of FE/HE and LMP delivery as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation. In June 2023, DfE officials attended a meeting of DfC's LMP Co-Design Group and provided an overview of Multiply and requested that LMPs deliver approximately £4M of the total £11.8m funding allocated to the Programme, with universities and colleges being allocated the remaining £7.8M.

Following a consultation on the emerging focus and types of 'Multiply' initiatives which local LMPs could potentially deliver, the 11 Councils submitted a collective outline proposal to DfE identifying interventions which could be co-ordinated and implemented through LMPs (**See Appendix 3**).

Correspondence has been ongoing with DfE throughout the summer and the Department submitted a bid to DLUHC on 4th October 2023. Once preliminary checks have been completed, the bid will be submitted to the DLUHC Minister for approval. In parallel, to ensure that the NI Multiply Programme is ready to commence delivery once approved, working groups will be established to discuss a coordinated approach to delivery and to determine roles and responsibilities for interventions. The Multiply Programme is considered to hold great promise in advancing critical maths skills and knowledge across various sectors of our society and a collaborative approach is essential to maximise the impact of these interventions and to avoid any unnecessary overlap or duplication of efforts.

### Indicative Multiply Budget Allocation (Revenue)

The indicative budget allocation for each Council is between £350k and £400k. It is important to note that subject to a successful bid, funding must be spent in full by March 2025 and all 11 Councils agreed the need for a dedicated staff resource to deliver Multiply activity at a local level. Therefore, costings within the bid include a 'Multiply Officer' in each Council, who would be appointed on a fixed term contract to match the programme delivery timetable and within the available funding received. A separate report on this matter will be brought to the Council's Policy & Resources Committee.

If the funding bid is successful, DfE and DfC will hold discussions with each LMP to agree local plans and deliverables, but the overall Multiply Action Plan for NI will be maintained by DfE. The department have noted the tight timescale and one-off nature of the funding will require elements of the project approach to be simplified to prioritise delivery. It is anticipated that letters of offer would be issued to Councils in December 2023, with a view to delivering programme activity between January 2024 and March 2025.

The proposal to participate in the delivery of the NI Multiply Programme was submitted to the Mid Ulster LMP at its recent meeting on 14 September 2023. Following discussion, the LMP board agreed to participate in the delivery of the programme (subject to funding and council approval) to ensure residents of the district benefit from the support and opportunities that would be available.

Importantly, it is the view of the Departments that a successful funding bid to DLUHC would provide additional security to core funding of LMPs in 2024-25.

### **3.4 Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy's Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters**

The aim of the Department's consultation (**See Appendix 4A**) is to seek and receive views from stakeholders from a range of sectors on elements of the proposed approach to activity across priority sectors of the Northern Ireland (NI) economy, focusing on innovative technologies and Unique Selling Points (USPs) within each.

Priority sectors were identified as Agri-Tech, Life & Health Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing, Materials & Engineering, Fintech / Financial Services, Software, Screen Industries and Low Carbon (including Green Hydrogen).

The planned approach to activity within each sector is viewed as a progressive and positive approach and this is reflected in the Council's draft response on **Appendix 4B**, which provides support for the outlined proposals, and references Council's specific key sectoral strengths.



4.0	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<p data-bbox="228 255 975 293"><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p data-bbox="228 338 368 376">Financial:</p> <p data-bbox="228 412 1142 450"><b>Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study</b> Funded through Shared Island Fund at the value of €20,000.</p> <p data-bbox="228 521 903 560"><b>Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Study</b> Sliabh Beagh Feasibility study was funded through Shared Island Fund, an additional request to align Lumfords Glen to RIBA stage 3 has been made, this is estimated at £24,875 +Vat but currently no budget exists to fund this additional expenditure.</p> <p data-bbox="228 741 1203 779"><b>Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid</b> The new 'Multiply' programme will be fully funded by DLUHC and administered by DfE and DfC. A letter of offer in the region of £350k to £400k is expected in December 2023 for the delivery period January 2024 to March 2025.</p> <p data-bbox="228 927 416 999">Human: Officer Time:</p> <p data-bbox="228 1039 496 1077">Risk Management:</p> <p data-bbox="228 1077 1203 1115"><b>Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid</b> The risk level is mitigated as Multiply programme activity would be 100% externally funded and includes the employment of a Multiply Officer via a contract post.</p>
4.2	<p data-bbox="228 1261 746 1299"><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p data-bbox="228 1335 794 1373">Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</p> <p data-bbox="228 1408 1362 1480"><b>Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid</b> Officers are not aware of any equality or good relations implications at this time.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1516 1369 1664"><b>Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy's Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters</b> DFE have completed an Equality Screening exercise in relation to the proposals set out in the consultation document.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1704 1270 1816">Rural Needs Implications: <b>Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid:</b> None anticipated at this juncture.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1852 1257 1964"><b>Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy's Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters:</b> No RNIA has been presented in conjunction with this consultation.</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p data-bbox="228 259 708 293">It is recommended that Members;</p> <p data-bbox="228 333 1142 367"><b>5.1 Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study</b></p> <p data-bbox="228 407 1390 441"><b>5.1.1 Approve</b> the Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Report.</p> <p data-bbox="228 481 1370 589"><b>5.1.2 Approve</b> this scheme is added to Council's Capital Planning Framework as an emerging project; and pursue external funding opportunities to help develop a funding package to deliver the scheme.</p>
5.2	<p data-bbox="228 663 903 696"><b>5.2 Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Study</b></p> <p data-bbox="228 736 1385 844"><b>5.2.1 Approve</b> the content of the draft final version of the Sliabh Beagh Eco Tourism Feasibility Report. A final version will be brought to Committee at a later date for noting.</p> <p data-bbox="228 884 1386 1064"><b>5.2.2 Consider</b> the additional studies and drawings required to bring the Lumfords Glen up to RIBA Stage 3, to maximise the potential for Shared Island Capital Funding at this site. If agreed, the Committee will be required to make a recommendation to the Policy &amp; Resources Committee seeking a reserve release of £24,875 +Vat.</p>
5.3	<p data-bbox="228 1137 1203 1171"><b>5.3 Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs): NI Multiply Programme Bid</b></p> <p data-bbox="228 1211 855 1245"><b>5.3.1</b> Subject to DLUHC approving the bid;</p> <p data-bbox="228 1285 1211 1319">(a) <b>Approve</b> Council's participation in the NI Multiply Programme.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1359 1315 1429">(b) <b>Approve</b> Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) as the delivery vehicle for the Multiply Programme in Mid Ulster.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1469 1331 1538"><b>5.3.2</b> Subject to DLUHC approving the bid; <b>approval</b> is sought for delegated authority to be granted to the Chief Executive to;</p> <p data-bbox="228 1579 1394 1798">(a) <b>Sign and return</b> the letter of offer from the Department for the Economy when it is received. It is expected that the letter of offer will provide funding in the region of £350-£400k to cover the period January 2024 to March 2025. The types of initiatives/activity that Council will be expected to deliver are included in <b>Appendix 3</b>. A copy of the letter of offer and programme of activity will be submitted to the Committee when available.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1839 1390 1946">(b) <b>Procure</b> suitable organisations to deliver the agreed Programme of activity in adherence with Council policy and procedures to enable the Multiply Programme to commence as swiftly as possible.</p>

5.4	<p><b>Draft Consultation Response on the Department for the Economy’s Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters</b></p> <p><b>Approve</b> Council’s draft response for submission to the Department for the Economy regarding 10X Technologies and Clusters on <b>Appendix 4B</b>.</p>
6.0	<p><b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b></p>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> - Tullaghoge Fort Access and Interpretation Feasibility Study</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> – Draft Sliabh Beagh Feasibility Study</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> – Outline of LMP ‘Multiply’ Programme Initiatives</p> <p><b>Appendix 4A</b> - Dept for the Economy – Consultation Document re 10X Technologies &amp; Clusters</p> <p><b>Appendix 4B</b> - Draft Consultation Response to Dept for the Economy re 10X Technologies &amp; Clusters</p>