

Report on	1. Hidden Heritage Tours 2023 2. Tourism Mentor Programme 2023 3. Service Level Agreement – Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2023/24) 4. Service Level Agreement – MEGA 2022/25 – Update 2023/24
Date of Meeting	5 April 2023
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 above
2.0	Background
2.1	Hidden Heritage Tours 2023 <p>Hidden Heritage Tours are organised annually across the District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites and discover the hidden gems of Mid Ulster.</p>
2.2	Tourism Mentor Programme 2023 <p>In March 2021 a similar project was delivered supported by DEARA through the Rural Tourism Collaborative Experiences Programme. This project brought together a small number of tourism businesses and other potential partners to co-develop combined visitor experiences. These new experiences met the visitor's needs, helped increase dwell time in the area, and thereby helped drive economic growth.</p>
2.3	Service Level Agreement – Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2023/24) <p>Over the past number of years, a group of 8 Councils from north and south (as listed below) have provided a financial contribution towards ICBAN to support their work; these are Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh Council,</p>

<p>2.4</p>	<p>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan County Councils.</p> <p>Service Level Agreement – MEGA 2022/25 – Update 2023/24</p> <p>MEGA (Mid Ulster Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement) is an award-winning collaborative growth network formed in 2017 with the support of Mid Ulster District Council and Invest NI to address the immediate and medium-term skills shortages in the manufacturing and Engineering industries in the Mid-Ulster area. MEGA is unique in that it is an industry-led collaborative network of businesses who are working together towards a common goal. Its main aim is to tackle skills and labour issues in Mid Ulster and create and implement ways to attract and retain talent in the engineering and manufacturing industry.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2023</p> <p>This year’s Hidden Heritage programme will look at three heritage experiences, which allow you to step back in time and discover what’s on your doorstep whilst increasing visitor spend in the area and encouraging overnight stays in the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Maghera, Past and Present, A Walking Tour of the Town - 3 June 2023</p> <p>The walking tour will begin at Maghera Heritage Centre in Main Street which houses historical information, records, publications, photographs and memorabilia. The tour includes a visit to St Lurach’s Church and the Walled Garden.</p> <p>• Summer Solstice Experience – Beaghmore - 21 June 2023</p> <p>Visit Beaghmore Stone Circles with a tour guide in daylight hours and hear how this area, once dense woodland, was cleared by Neolithic farmers. Today, a lack of light pollution at Davagh Forest means that the night sky is at its darkest. The tour includes a visit to OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory.</p> <p>• William Carleton and his Connections – Augher and Clogher – 8 July 2023</p> <p>Enjoy the scenery and stories along the Carleton Trail named in honour of the acclaimed 19th Century poet and novelist William Carleton who spent his childhood in and around the beautiful Clogher Valley. The tour includes a visit to St Macartan's Cathedral and the Forth Chapel.</p> <p>All tours are £25 per person, which includes coach, tour, refreshments, and a light meal. Each tour has a capacity of 48 persons. Booking is essential.</p>

3.2 Tourism Mentor Programme 2023

Mid Ulster District Council has a strong tourism product offering and is keen to further develop and enhance visitor experiences in Mid Ulster. This can be achieved by helping to strengthen existing and identifying new visitor experiences, all of which can be aligned to Tourism NI's "Embrace A Giant Spirit" brand experience.

Due to the success of the previous Tourism Mentor Programme, approval is being sought for the appointment of a facilitator to deliver a Tourism Mentor Programme to five new or existing tourism experiences.

The appointed facilitator will:

- Identify and engage with appropriate Mid Ulster Tourism business, and recruit potential participants, reviewing each to determine how they can work together in the development of a high quality, authentic visitor experience.
- Undertake Marketing intelligence, research, and support for the experience product target market to ensure that the new experience fits into the core existing markets and experience brand for Northern Ireland.
- Mentor business to stimulate ideas and to create new experiences.
- Mentor business to enhance existing experiences to become more immersive and engaging for visitors.
- Development of a measurable Action Plan that will deliver on a new product/experience offering to the marketplace.
- Scope and identify the market(s), customers, segments and opportunities for the experiences including how to target and maximise these.
- Identify stakeholders and partners who could benefit from the new experience offering.

Programme Outcomes and Evaluation

The expected outcomes as a result of the investment are:

Visitor Experience Outcomes

- Enhanced visibility and accessibility of individual products and combined experience (including where appropriate pre-visit and season extension).
- Expanded services or product offerings to improve the visitor experience.
- Access new visitor segments.
- Achieve greater levels of visitor satisfaction.

Economic Development Outcomes

- Increased visitor spend.
- Increased visitor numbers.
- Increased dwell time.
- Increased employment opportunities.

<p>3.3</p>	<p>Service Level Agreement – Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2023/24)</p> <p>ICBAN submitted a request to Mid Ulster District Council on 26 October 2022 (Appendix 1a), seeking continued financial support from Council of £15,000 for the 2023/2024 financial year. By way of briefing, ICBAN has provided a detailed account of the work they have completed in 2022/2023 financial year (Appendix 1b) and seek support to build upon these initiatives in 2023/2024.</p> <p>Last year, Council provided a financial contribution to ICBAN via a Service Level Agreement and subject to Members approval this year, it is recommended that Members approve a further £15,000 funding for the 2023/2024 financial year, via a new Service Level Agreement as detailed in Appendix 1c. The SLA will be reviewed by Council’s Legal Services Team before issue.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p>Service Level Agreement – MEGA 2022/25 – Update 2022/23</p> <p>In 2022, MEGA (Mid Ulster Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network submitted a request to Mid Ulster District Council for a contribution of £15,000 per annum for the period 2022-25 to support the delivery of their new 3-year Strategic Action Plan.</p> <p>In May 2022, Council approved a 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with MEGA providing a financial contribution of £45,000 for the 2022/2025 term, which equates to £15,000 per financial year.</p> <p>Appendix 2 provides a summary of the work MEGA has completed in Year 1 (2022/2023).</p> <p>It is now timely for Council to approve release of its second payment to MEGA for the 2023/2024 financial year as per the original SLA. This will allow the work of the MEGA Network to continue the project’s momentum, building on early successes and allow for effective forward planning and project management.</p> <p>Council’s financial support to the MEGA Network will enable the group to deliver against the first 3 Work Streams of their Strategic Action Plan which include Focus on People, Skills for the Future and Collaborate to Win.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Other Considerations</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2023 Provision has been made in the 2023/24 tourism budget of £4,000.</p>

	<p>Tourism Mentor Programme 2023 Provision has been made in the 2023/2024 tourism budget of £10,000</p> <p>Service Level Agreement – Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2023/24) Provision has been made in the 2023/24 economic development budget for £15,000.</p> <p>Service Level Agreement – MEGA 2022/25 – Update 2023/24 Council previously agreed to fund MEGA with £45,000 over a 3 year period (2022/23 to 2024/25), with £15,000 to be paid per annum. Provision has been made in the 2023/24 economic development budget for the <i>second tranche</i> of funding of £15,000.</p>
	<p>Human: Officer Time</p>
	<p>Risk Management:</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
<p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <p>5.1 Hidden Heritage Tours 2023 Approve content of the proposed Hidden Heritage Programme 2023 and associated budget of £4,000 from the 2023/24 Tourism budget, required to deliver the tours.</p> <p>5.2 Tourism Mentor Programme 2023</p> <p>5.2.1 Approve content of the proposed Mid Ulster Tourism Mentor Programme and associated budget of £10,000 from the 2023/24 Tourism budget, which includes the appointment of a facilitator(s) to establish/develop ‘Embrace the Giant Spirit’ brand aligned experiences.</p> <p>5.2.2 Note that subject to approval, competitive quotations will be sought from suitably qualified facilitator(s) to deliver the programme and appointment(s) made to allow the programme to commence.</p>

5.3	<p>Service Level Agreement: Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) (2023/24)</p> <p>5.3.1 Note ICBAN's 2022/23 Progress Report outlining actions completed against their 2022/23 Service Level Agreement Targets.</p> <p>5.3.2 Approve Council's Service Level Agreement with ICBAN for the financial year, April 2023 – March 2024, as detailed on Appendix 1c, subject to Council's Legal Team having final review of the SLA before issue.</p> <p>5.3.3 Approve the release of £15,000 from Council's Economic Development Budget (2023/24), subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation as detailed in the Service Level Agreement on Appendix 1c.</p>
5.4	<p>Service Level Agreement: MEGA - Year 2 2023/24</p> <p>(i) Note MEGA's Progress Report 2022/2023, outlining actions completed, against their Service Level Agreement Targets for 2022/2023.</p> <p>(ii) Approve release of second annual payment to MEGA of £15,000 from Council's Economic Development budget (2023/2024), subject to Council being provided with all the requisite documentation as detailed in the existing Service Level Agreement (2022/23 to 2024/25).</p>
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p> <p>Appendix 1a – ICBAN Funding Request (2023-2024)</p> <p>Appendix 1b – ICBAN Progress Report (2022-2023)</p> <p>Appendix 1c – SLA between MUDC and ICBAN (2023-2024)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – MEGA Progress Report (2022-2023)</p>