

<b>Report on</b>	Financial assistance offer from TNI for a new tourism website Development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA)
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<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To seek approval from members to avail of 100% financial assistance from Tourism NI for a dedicated Mid Ulster Council tourism website and to seek permission to avail of 75% funding from The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the development of experience tourism and product development clusters to align to the Tourism NI 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' brand.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Tourism Northern Ireland contacted the local authority in each council area to offer 100% financial assistance for the development of a new destination tourism website.
2.2	Tourism NI's long-term aspiration is for a collaborative and synchronized online presentation of Northern Ireland tourism across the regions; an approach that puts the visitor first. Tourism NI are now in contract with a Destination Management System provider (Simpleview) and this contract includes the rollout of the DMS to their strategic partners.
2.3	As part of the Tourism NI Covid Recovery Plan, Tourism NI wish to support local authorities with a strategic investment which benefits the wider tourism sector, by offering financial assistance of £41,886 per partner for tourism websites.
2.4	Recently the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) announced a funding opportunity to support Tourism Recovery in the District. This funding is an Experience Development Programme aimed at supporting the development of experience tourism and product development clusters.
2.5	DEARA has made a call for applications from Councils across NI for projects with a maximum fund of £50k available to each Council. The indicative project funding rate is 75% and consideration is being given to Council in-kind costs being eligible.
2.6	Within the Tourism departments 2020/21 Service improvement plan it states that the tourism department would: -

1. Increased the Mid Ulster tourism visitor's digital presence and increase the visitor's interactive immersive experience.
2. To develop at least two new visitor experiences under the Tourism NI 'Embrace a Giant Sprit' brand with a specific focus developing the heritage pillar and Lough Neagh as outlined in the Mid Ulster Councils tourism strategy.

**3.0 Main Report**

Mid Ulster Council Destination Website

3.1 As part of the Tourism NI Covid Recovery Plan, Tourism NI wish to support local authorities with a strategic investment which benefits the wider tourism sector, by offering financial assistance of £41,886 per partner for tourism websites. The first two years will have no cost to council but will incur annually costs of £11,305 +vat.

3.2 Proposed Running costs

Table 1 Annual Costs from year three onwards

<b>DMS Licence x5</b>	
Website Licence, Support and Bandwidth (up to 30GB)	
SSL Certificate	
Blog Main Site	
Event Submission and Approval Module - Enhanced	
Trip Advisor Widget – Accommodation + 1 other product	
Live Availability from OTA's (polling) and PMS	
<b>Total annual costs -</b>	<b>£11,305 + VAT</b>

3.3 Table 2 Funding Streams Analysis

TNI Funding for Year 1 and Year 2	<b>£41,886</b>
MUDC year three	<b>£11,305 +Vat</b>

Tourism Experience Cluster Product Development

3.4 The development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA) fund is intended to support rural businesses centred on a theme or cluster. The theme can be activity based, a key market segment or a geographical area. DAERA launched the scheme on 2nd Oct 2020, with applications being submitted no later than 21st October 2020. Councils will have approximately 18 months for delivery through to 31st March 2022 with the potential for match funding to be split across two financial years. The funding is entirely for revenue expenditure to be spent on services such as marketing, promotion, print and facilitation.

3.5	<p>Officers are exploring the option to partner with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council on a collaborative project for greater impact specifically focusing on Lough Neagh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Loughs: The promotion of activities and experiences centred around Lough Neagh.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>Secondly the officers are proposing to develop experiences with a very clear focus on the Councils rich History and Heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid Ulster’s history and heritage: A series of trails and self-service itinerary of unique sites and attractions across the area under this theme utilising such sites and attractions as Hill of the O’Neill and Tullaghoge Fort.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>Based on the proposed approach to administer the funding the minimum project budget is £66,666 per Council with 75% grant and a match funding contribution and / or in-kind contribution at a value of £16,666 (25%) with a proposed even allocation of £33,333 to each thematic experience.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b></p> <p>Financial: No financial assistance required until year three annual charges £11,305 thereafter for the Tourism Website</p> <p>Match funding contribution for Development of experience tourism and product development clusters (DAERA) £16,666.</p> <p>Human: Current staff structure sufficient to manage the project.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>N/A</p>
<b>4.3</b>	<p><b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b></p> <p>The project will be managed in accordance with MUDC policies and procedures.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	<p>Approval is sought to progress with the development of a new destination tourism website.</p>
5.2	<p>If successful Council development two experiential tourism and product development clusters with a maximum match funding contribution of £16,666. Opportunities to develop a collaborative project with Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey under the themes of ‘Living Loughs’ and ‘Mid Ulster’s history and heritage’.</p>

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	N/A