

Report on	<p>1. Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023</p> <p>2. Service Level Agreement – Lough Neagh Rescue – Update 2023/24</p> <p>3. Project Gigabit – Public Review</p> <p>4. Branded Jute Shopping Bags</p>
Date of Meeting	15 June 2023
Reporting Officer	Colin McKenna, Economic Regeneration Service Manager Mary McKeown, Tourism Service Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	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 Enterprise Week 2023</p> <p>Mid Ulster's fourth Enterprise Week will take place in November 2023. It is anticipated that it will run from Monday 6 November to Thursday 9 November 2023. The format in 2022, incorporated a mix of online and in-person events, which proved a great success, and a similar format will be used this year.</p>
2.2	<p>Lough Neagh Rescue (2023-2024) – Service Level Agreement</p> <p>Over the past number of years, the 3 Councils from around the shoreline of Lough Neagh (as listed below) have provided a financial contribution towards Lough Neagh Rescue to support their work; these are Mid Ulster District Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.</p>

<p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>Project Gigabit – Public Review</p> <p>Council recently became aware of the Department for the Economy (DfE) public review on the broadband intervention project known as Project Gigabit, which launched on 5 June and closes on 6 July 2023.</p> <p>Branded Jute Shopping Bags</p> <p>In 2016, Mid Ulster District Council commissioned a Positioning Study, of which a key outcome was identified to review the existing brands of Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt. The refreshed/new brands aim was to reinforce and enhance a positive image of the town centres and ensure those who utilise the town centres have a sense of ownership and pride in each respective town.</p> <p>Over the last number of years, jute shopping bags have proven to be a very successful way to promote the towns brands to Mid Ulster citizens and beyond. It is now timely to replenish the stocks of branded jute shopping bags for each of the three large towns, namely Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt. The bags will be distributed at key shopping periods throughout the year and at corporate events etc in each of the respective towns.</p> <p>At present, Council has a sufficient stock of new Coalisland branded jute shopping bags, however, should further supplies be required within the next 12 months, prices will be sought for such when Council is developing a comprehensive tender for branded bags.</p> <p>A brand has not yet been developed for Maghera, but this will be addressed and will tie in with the completion of works on Maghera Levelling Up Scheme.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main Report</p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023</p> <p>It is proposed to deliver a mix of up to 10 online and in-person events across Enterprise Week. Council is keen to build on the success of the previous three Enterprise Week’s held in Mid Ulster and deliver an equally impactful high-quality programme of business focused events.</p> <p>A wide range of business topics will be offered to ensure all sectors of industry are supported. Feedback from last year’s event was very positive, with many attendees supporting the virtual format, as this enabled them to attend with limited time away from their work commitments and without the need to travel to and from a venue along with the opportunity to access the event recording at a later date.</p> <p>To build upon the success of previous years’ events, it is proposed to procure the services of a Management / Delivery Partner who will report to Council throughout the organisation, co-ordination and delivery of a comprehensive range of actions to ensure the smooth delivery of Enterprise Week 2023.</p>

3.2 Lough Neagh Rescue (2023-2024) – Service Level Agreement

Lough Neagh Rescue submitted a request for funding (**Appendix 1a**) to Mid Ulster District Council for an annual financial contribution of £12,000 towards Search and Rescue and Flood/Swift water activities at Lough Neagh and its tributaries for the 2023/24 financial year. The progress report for 2022/23 is attached for Members information (**Appendix 1b**)

The base at Ardboe continues to benefit all of the western and south-western shores contiguous with the Mid Ulster District Council area. If Members are minded to approve this annual financial request, it is recommended that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) on **Appendix 1c** is issued to Lough Neagh Rescue to cover the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

3.3 Project Gigabit – Public Review

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has written to all Councils seeking our assistance to support awareness raising of their Public Review on the broadband intervention project known as Project Gigabit. This is in an attempt to improve gigabit capable broadband across Northern Ireland.

The window of opportunity for responses is extremely tight lasting only one month, which launches on 5 June and closes on 6 July 2023. This is possibly the last chance to get broadband issues resolved and more time is needed.

Over the last year few years, there has been a lot of activity via the Project Stratum programme resulting in increased provision of high-speed fixed broadband services in rural areas on the back of significant private and publicly funded investment.

In 2021 Project Stratum broadband programme commenced, targeting premises with less than 30 Mbps broadband and unlikely to benefit from commercially led investment, mainly in rural areas.

Mid Ulster District Council had the second worst broadband provision in NI at the beginning of this programme. As a result, Council established a Mid Ulster Broadband Working Group to proactively address this situation. At that time, there were 12,289 premises set to benefit from Project Stratum in Mid Ulster, which is due for completion Autumn 2024 and this is currently on target.

The new proposed intervention is one *gigabit* per second (Gbps), which is a 1,000 megabits per second (Mbps) connection.

As with Project Stratum, DfE will be the contracting authority, managing local project delivery requirements. The UK government has committed £5 billion across the UK and this intervention is for the hardest to reach areas. In NI this new programme is coming in behind Project Stratum to pick up any premises that did not avail of it. DfE have met with the Broadband providers regarding future planned coverage and this exercise is to ensure no one is left behind.

Council's Economic Development Team has been endeavouring to raise awareness of this across our district, via all our social media channels, directories,

	<p>business and community networks/databases/newsletters, etc. and asking the relevant teams across Council to share the public review with their networks, including staff.</p> <p>Previous respondents to Councils broadband survey in 2021 regarding broadband problems will be contacted to see if their issues remain unaddressed.</p> <p>When the review is completed, DfE will confirm the premises eligible for subsidy and publish this. The roll out of delivery of this new scheme will follow a procurement exercise due to take place in Spring 2024.</p> <p>3.4 Branded Jute Shopping Bags</p> <p>The bespoke branded jute shopping bags for each town have proven to be a huge success. They have become synonymous with the local residents and with local retailers who have been a strong advocate for this branding mechanism for each of their respective towns. The branded bags will be made readily available at key periods throughout the retail calendar in our town centres and at corporate events etc.</p> <p>A new order for branded jute shopping bags, for each of the aforementioned three towns is now required to meet the current demand. Therefore, approval is sought to allocate a budget circ. £55,000 from the existing town centre budget to collectively tender for branded jute shopping bags, as this will create better value for money.</p> <p>Subject to Members approving the budget, a tender will be issued for the:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supply and delivery of branded jute shopping bags for Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt towns with a value circ. £55,000. - Obtain prices for a further order of Coalisland branded jute shopping bags, if required within the next twelve months.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023 A budget circ. £28,000 has been set aside for Enterprise Week 2023 from Council's Economic Development budget. A proportion of these costs will be used to procure the services of a Management / Delivery Agent to co-ordinate, manage and organise all virtual events and promotion of Enterprise Week 2023.</p> <p>Service Level Agreement – Lough Neagh Rescue – Update 2023/24 Provision has been made in the 2023/24 Tourism budget of £12,000.</p>

	<p>Branded Jute Shopping Bags Budget circ. £55,000 available within the town centre budget for procurement of branded jute shopping bags promoting the brand identities established in the towns.</p>
	<p>Human: Officer time</p>
	<p>Risk Management:</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p>
	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications:</p>
5.0	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p>
5.1	<p>Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023</p>
	<p>5.1.1 Approve a budget of circ. £28,000 for the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023 from within the existing Economic Development budget 2023/24.</p>
	<p>5.1.2 Approve that Council proceed to seek competitive quotes to appoint a professional Management / Delivery Partner to manage and co-ordinate the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023. The costs for such to be apportioned from within the budget detailed at 5.1.1.</p>
	<p>5.1.3 Approve that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to appoint the successful Management/Delivery Partner following the procurement exercise to allow work to commence over the summer 2023 period.</p>
5.2	<p>Service Level Agreement: Lough Neagh Rescue 2023/24</p>
	<p>5.2.1 Note Lough Neagh Rescue 2022/23 Progress Report outlining actions completed against their 2022/23 SLA Targets.</p>
	<p>5.2.2 Approve Mid Ulster District Council's Service Level Agreement with Lough Neagh Rescue for the year 2023-24.</p>
	<p>5.2.3 Approve the release of £12,000 to Lough Neagh Rescue from Council's Tourism budget (2023-24) subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation – Progress Reports (12 months) updating Council on the work undertaken against that outlined in the SLA.</p>

<p>5.3</p>	<p>Project Gigabit – Public Review</p> <p>5.3.1 Note correspondence from Department for the Economy (DfE), dated 1 June 2023, re Project Gigabit; and consider whether Members wish to;</p> <p>(a) Write to DfE to seek a two month extension to the consultation period, until 6 September 2023, to allow time for greater awareness raising to take place about the Project Gigabit consultation, especially throughout rural areas, thus ensuring our citizens are adequately informed and granted sufficient time to respond.</p> <p>(b) Request DfE to supply Council with the recent information they've collected from broadband infrastructure providers to help identify and map addresses / postcodes where remaining gaps in broadband provision still exist.</p>
<p>5.4</p>	<p>Branded Jute Shopping Bags</p>
<p>5.4.1</p>	<p>Approve a budget circ. £55,000 from existing town centre budget to purchase a supply of new jute branded shopping bags for Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt; and obtain prices for Coalisland branded jute shopping bags, should these be required within the next twelve months.</p>
<p>5.4.2</p>	<p>Approve officers progress to seek competitive tenders from suitably qualified companies and provide approval for authority to be delegated to the Chief Executive to appoint the successful tenderer during the period when Council is in summer recess.</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	<p>Appendix 1a – Lough Neagh Rescue Request for Funding 2023 2024. Appendix 1b – Lough Neagh Rescue Progress Report 2022/2023. Appendix 1c – Lough Neagh Rescue SLA (April 2023-March 2024). Appendix 2 - Project Gigabit – Public Review Correspondence Appendix 3 – Branded Jute Shopping Bag Designs</p>