

Report on	1) Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 12.10.20 2) Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network 3) DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grants Scheme 2020
Date of Meeting	10 December 2020
Reporting Officer	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 12.10.20 Coalisland Town Centre Forum was established in March 2019. It is a partnership of public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations working together to deliver a range of strategic economic actions to develop Coalisland town.</p>
2.2	<p>Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network MEGA is supported by both 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 working towards attracting, retaining and upskilling the region's engineering and manufacturing workforce.</p>
2.3	<p>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grants Scheme 2020 The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is funded by DAERA through the TRPSI (Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation) Programme. It focuses on existing rural micro businesses employing less than 10 employees, offering 50% in grant aid against eligible costs up to £4,999 to support actions aimed at improving business sustainability and growth.</p>

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 12.10.20 Minutes of the meeting of Coalisland Town Centre Forum held on the 12th October 2020 are attached on Appendix 1.</p>
3.2	<p>Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network The MEGA (Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network was launched in November 2019 to address critical skills shortages and employability issues within the manufacturing and engineering sectors in Mid Ulster. Its strategic vision is to ensure that Mid Ulster manufacturing and engineering companies have a successive pipeline of skilled talent fit for industry needs.</p> <p>During a challenging and uncertain backdrop created by the Covid-19 pandemic the network continues to make an indelible mark on the future strategic direction of skills, training and talent development for the industry as a whole in Mid Ulster. The network has steadily grown to 32 local member companies, with 14 playing active roles within MEGA sub-committees. To date 18 ‘Ambassadors’ have been recruited and trained under its MEGA Ambassador Programme. Each ambassador is now linked to an individual post primary school in Mid Ulster and will deliver mentoring, industry talks, careers events etc.</p> <p>A total of 4 Industry 4.0 virtual webinars have been delivered by Invest NI, which attracted 30 participants from MEGA member companies.</p> <p>MEGA is recognised as a strong collaborative network and during the lockdown, launched a high-level Apprenticeship Campaign to influence government support for companies retaining and recruiting apprenticeships. This led to an intervention from the Department for Economy (DfE), namely the Apprenticeship Recovery Initiative. This initiative has enabled MEGA companies to retain 58 apprentices and recruit 33 new apprentices. As part of its campaign the network designed and developed new easy to follow ‘MEGA Apprenticeship Model’ literature. This sets out the various apprenticeships on offer by the manufacturing and engineering companies who are members of the network.</p> <p>To assist with achieving their vision MEGA has now created a new website (www.midulstermega.com) which is a fantastic one-stop-shop for information to help inform students, teachers and parents about the opportunities within the advanced manufacturing and engineering sector in Mid Ulster. The industry-led website promotes the benefits of a career in the sector and provides important information on the various career pathways available.</p> <p>More recently, the MEGA Network successfully secured funding of £51,213 from DfE’s Apprenticeship Challenge Fund to develop the MEGA Degree Apprenticeship in Manufacturing Engineering with specialism in Industrial Digitalisation, Robotics and Automation, in partnership with Ulster University. This will be the first ever Manufacturing & Engineering Degree Apprenticeship and</p>

	<p>supports DfE's OECD Skills Strategy NI Report 2020, produced by OECD earlier this year.</p> <p>Furthermore, in order to further resource its work MEGA have secured two graduates who will undertake a 6-month placement; one graduate through the SWC Future Leaders Programme and the other from Ulster University's Graduate Leadership Programme.</p> <p>If Members would like to receive a presentation from the MEGA Network at a future meeting, this can be arranged.</p> <p>3.3 DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grants Scheme 2020 The Scheme opened for applications on 3rd August 2020 and closed on 11th September 2020 at 12 noon. A total of 317 complete applications were received by the closing date. A further 15 were received after the closing deadline and deemed ineligible.</p> <p>The initial grant allocation available for this Scheme was £67,500. The value of grant requested within the applications received has exceed £1.1million. DAERA has now confirmed that the initial allocation will be uplifted to allow all applications who reach the funding threshold of 65 to be funded. Based on indicative scoring this will be in the region of £470,000 across 135 projects but this is to be confirmed.</p> <p>A further audit check on approved projects is to be undertake by DAERA before letters of offer can issue. In addition, a virtual funding workshop has to be attended by successful applicants before they can accept their letter of offer. These workshops will commence w/c 7th December 2020 and continue through w/c 14th December 2020 for issue of approved letters of offer.</p>
	<p>Other Considerations</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network Funded from within existing economic development budgets.</p> <p>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 None – all grant aid approved to project promoters will be paid by DAERA.</p> <p>Human:</p> <p>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 Staff time. An administrative budget of £9,300 will be paid to Council by DAERA for associated administrative duties on completion of the scheme.</p>

	<p>Risk Management: DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 None</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p>
	<p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 None</p>
	<p>Rural Needs Implications: DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 This scheme is specifically targeted at rural areas (defined as all areas outside of settlements with over 5000 residents).</p>
5.0	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p>
5.1	<p>Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 12.10.20 Note minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum 12.10.20</p>
5.2	<p>Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network Note update on the Mid Ulster MEGA Network.</p>
5.3	<p>DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant – 2020 Note progress and the additional funding allocation from DAERA for this Scheme.</p>
6.0	<p>Documents Attached & References</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum - 12.10.20</p>