

Report on	Walk NI Consortium Proposal 2021-22
Date of Meeting	Thursday 17 th June 2021
Reporting Officer	N Hill Head of service
Contact Officer	Anne Reid Parks/Countryside Development Officer

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Council approval to commit to Walking NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2021-22
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>WalkNI.com is delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), its work was previously directed and funded by its four 'core funders' namely Sport NI, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Tourism Northern Ireland and Inland Waterways Unit of the Department of Infrastructure.</p> <p>With significant cuts in government funding, this is no longer the case, with ORNI delivering its strategic not-for-profit role under a number of new arrangements. In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the WalkNI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of WalkNI.com.</p> <p>By continuing to contribute to the WalkNI Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:</p> <p>Solid Foundation: Significant investment has already been made to establish a website, e-marketing and social media channels</p> <p>Engaged Visitors: As indicated by 'WalkNI Key Stats' the website / brand has a strong engagement from the target market.</p> <p>Combined Resources: The small investments from a number of local authority partners can be combined to produce an outcome greater than the sum of its parts.</p> <p>Cross Sell: There will be opportunities to cross sell between destinations i.e. visitors to the Mourne Mountains will be able to learn about the Causeway Coast and Glens and vice versa.</p> <p>Redeveloped Website: A redeveloped WalkNI.com was launched in October 2019. The new look website provides an enhanced user experience, be responsive across platforms (mobile,</p>

	tablet, desktop) and can avail of the latest interactive mapping.
2.2	Within Mid Ulster District Council – WalkNI.com incorporates detailed information on 29 no walks, ranging from short walks of under 5 miles to longer walks over 20 miles.
2.3	<p>WalkNI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2021/2022</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <p>WalkNI.com attracted 655,427 users making 1,044,266 visits from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021 (a 45% and 55% increase on the previous year respectively) confirming its position as the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland. With 62% of visits from Northern Ireland, 24% from Great Britain, 10% from Republic of Ireland it is clear the website is an important platform for locals and tourists alike.</p> <p>It is clear that walking brings significant tourism and local participation benefits:</p>
2.4	<p>Local Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% reported going outdoors for exercise everyday during COVID-19 lockdown, a much higher proportion than the 28% reported in the annual household survey (CHS 2017/18)¹ • 51% expect to spend more free time outdoors than they did pre-lockdown
2.5	<p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking or rambling is the most popular activity (36%) undertaken by Northern Irish residents on domestic overnight trips • Hiking or cross-country walking was the most popular sporting activity (12%) undertaken by external overnight visitors whilst in Northern Ireland.⁴ • Intention by the Republic of Ireland market to take a short break post COVID-19 lockdown continues to increase – 48% intend to take a short break in Ireland / Abroad in the next 6 months
2.6	<p>WalkNI.com Key Stats:</p> <p>The followings statistics clearly highlight the reach and engagement level of WalkNI.com:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 655,427 users (2020) • 1,044,266 web visits (2020) • 29,919+ social media subscribers (across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram) • 25,310 e-newsletter subscribers • Key driver of walking product information and content to DiscoverNorthernIreland.com

2.7	<p>Rationale and Benefits: WalkNI.com is delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI), a not-for-profit organisation with the vision ‘To create a happier, healthier society where enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors improves wellbeing.’</p> <p>In recent years, ORNI has transformed from an entirely core funded position to now deliver its strategic not-for-profit role through a variety of arrangements including delivering for Strategic Partnerships, Consortia, Service Level Agreements and on a project by project basis. In 2016 / 2017, ORNI successfully established the WalkNI Marketing Consortium to ensure local authorities could continue to benefit from the success of WalkNI.com. The consortium is therefore entering into its sixth year. By continuing to contribute to the WalkNI Marketing Consortium – local authorities can reap the following benefits:</p>
3.0	<p>Main Report</p>
3.1	<p>Partnership Approach: Funding from DAERA (NIEA's) Environment Fund ensures that all Councils receive free walk listings on WalkNI.com. Councils that wish to proactively promote their walking offer to the local population and tourist can avail of the activity of the WalkNI Marketing Consortium. The two available packages are outlined below:</p> <p>3.2 Regional Partner An area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is a key part of a wider itinerary <p>Partners in the past have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ards & North Down Borough Council • Belfast City Council • Fermanagh & Omagh District council • Mid Ulster District Council <p>3.3 National Partner An area which has a portfolio of walking product, access, infrastructure and supporting tourism services to meet the demands of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local walkers • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is key part of a wider itinerary • Visitors from Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland on either day trips or short breaks of which walking is the primary reason to visit

3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking Clubs from Republic of Ireland <p>Partners in the past have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Newry, Mourne & Down District Council 						
3.5	<p>Delivery Costs for the WalkNI Marketing Consortium - 1st July 2021 – 31st March 2022:</p> <p>In order to continue the proactive marketing activity for Regional and National Partners, ORNI will dedicate staff time through a combination of ORNI's Marketing Manager and a Marketing Officer.</p> <p>The anticipated contributions are as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="231 795 758 907"> <tr> <td>Partner Level</td><td>2021/22</td></tr> <tr> <td>National</td><td>£6,890</td></tr> <tr> <td>Regional</td><td>£3,445</td></tr> </table> <p>Accountability:</p> <p>The WalkNI.com consortium will be managed by ORNI's Marketing Manager who will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree an annual work programme including KPIs Provide Quarterly progress reports Hold two meetings per year to report on progress, discuss campaigns etc. 	Partner Level	2021/22	National	£6,890	Regional	£3,445
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4.0	Other Considerations						
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: Mid Ulster District Council will contribute £3,445.00 as a participating Regional Partner. This is included in Parks 21/22 revenue budgets.</p> <p>Human: Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.</p> <p>Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>						
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.</p>						

	Rural Needs Implications: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Council approval is sought to participate as a Regional Partner with the Walking NI Marketing Consortium and contribute £3,445.00 to 2021-22 campaign. The expenditure is budgeted for within current Parks Service allocations.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix Walk NI Marketing Consortium Proposal 2021/2022 Walk NI Marketing Consortium Key Stats 2020/2021