

<b>Report on</b>	Forest Service NI Consultation Forestry Planning in the East Fermanagh/East Tyrone Area
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2019
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Nigel Hill
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Anne Reid

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To advise and gain members approval for the consultation response being carried out by Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) - Scoping a new forestry plan for forests in East Fermanagh and East Tyrone.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	FSNI have made Council Officers aware of the current consultation for the East Fermanagh and East Tyrone Forestry Planning Area. Council Officers facilitate quarterly partnership working meetings with FSNI providing a forum for discussion for current management issues and future project development proposals.
2.2	Consultation period runs from 27th June to 27th September 2019.
2.3	Council continues to work closely with FSNI in this area and currently has the following forests under licence from FSNI for the purpose of outdoor recreation: Drum Manor, Pomeroy, Brantry, Iniscarn, Moydamlaght, Derrynoyd and Knockmany Forest Properties.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Council Officers have considered the details of the report and in particular the: <i>Opportunity to continue to discuss options for maintaining the existing provision of facilities and improving access to forests with Council's and other partners and potential partners.</i>
3.2	Council welcomes this opportunity to continue its partnership working with FSNI to increase the opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Forest Recreation Audit completed by Outdoor Recreation NI, on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in August 2015 provides a complete overview of the current recreation facilities and future potential of forests within the Council area.
3.3	The Forest Recreation Audit identified that all forests in the Council area were found to be deficient in basic infrastructure and consequently customer-focus. A significant

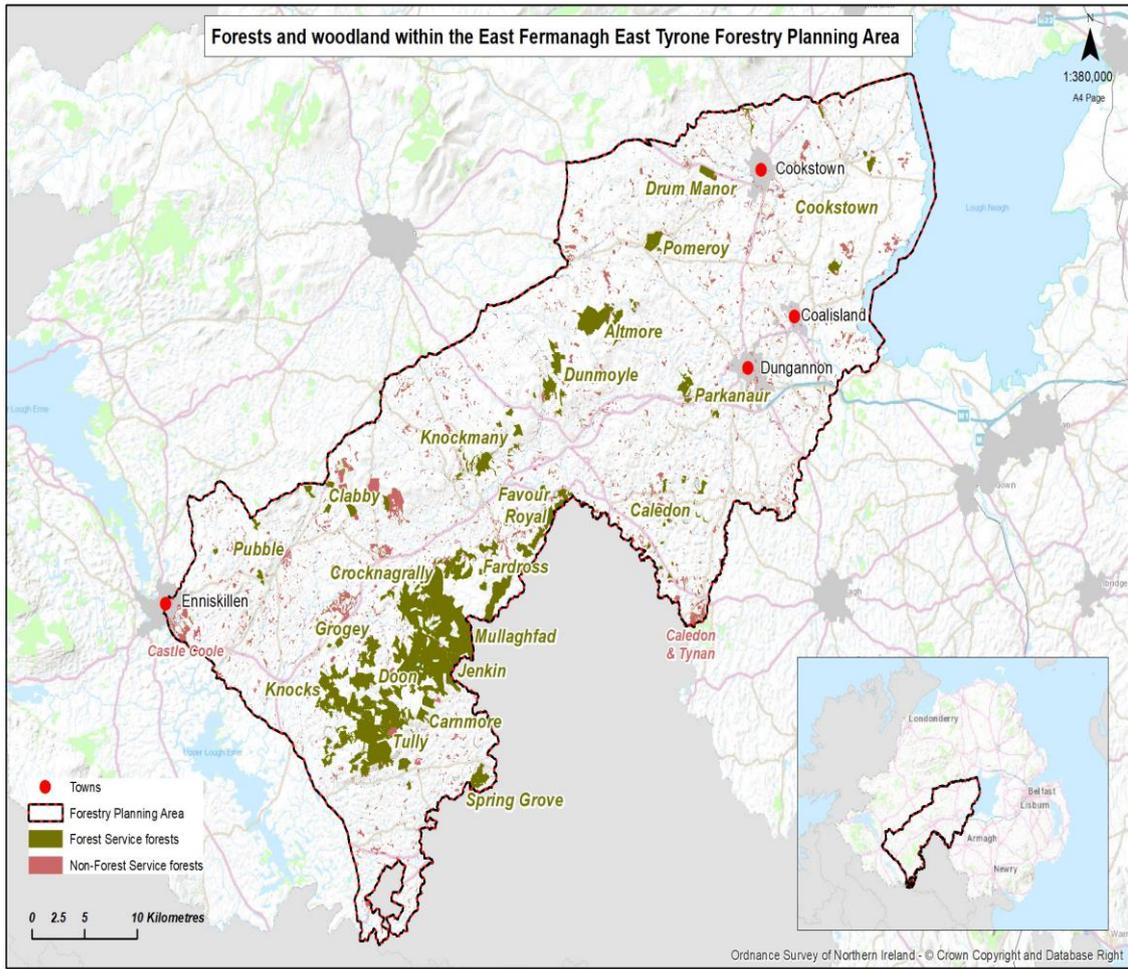
<p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p>	<p>change is therefore required to ensure that the forests become more ‘visitor inspired’ moving forward. The audit further identified that creating new or enhancing existing outdoor recreation facilities, such as adventure play, multi-use trails, mountain biking trails, walking trails, angling facilities would also benefit many of the forests in the area as would co-ordinating a series of planned events throughout the year and improved promotion of the forest resource. By close partnership with FSNI and the local community, Council have been successful in securing funding to improve the facilities within the catchment area, e.g. in Knockmany and Brantry. Council are continually working to attract additional funding and work with FSNI to improve Forest sites.</p> <p>The importance of the forests in providing doorstep opportunities for the local community and consequently the direct benefits that this brings in terms of improvements in health and well-being, social capital and protection of the resource cannot be underestimated. It is essential that moving forward local communities are ‘bought in’ to the future development of the forests in their area. Council will continue to work closely with FSNI and the local community groups to ensure that Forest recreation becomes a part of everyday life.</p> <p>What is proposed as part of the scoping consultation is in line with the recommendations of the Audit</p> <p>Council is concerned about the scale of annual charges FSNI levy on Council’s as a result of lease and licence arrangements that are put in place to increase the recreational use of forests. It is difficult to understand the justification for these and runs contrary to the spirit of collaboration. Should these charges continue, they may act as a barrier to future projects.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Other Considerations</b></p>
<p><b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: None</p> <p>Human: Staff time</p> <p>Risk Management: None</p>
<p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: In accordance with MUDC procedures and policy</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: In accordance with MUDC procedures and policy</p>

**5.0 Recommendation(s)**

5.1 Approval is sought for the response attached in Appendix 1 and confirm that Council will continue partnership working arrangements to expand opportunities for the development of Forest Recreation in East Fermanagh and East Tyrone. This continued development will be managed under the scope of the current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Mid Ulster District Council and Forest Service NI and delivered through the creation of new Licence and Lease Agreements for identified properties within the catchment of scoping area.

**6.0 Documents Attached & References**

6.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation Response



6.2 Appendix 2 - East Fermanagh and East Tyrone Forest and Woodland Consultation Area