

<b>Report on</b>	Mid Ulster District Tourism Development Group
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Michael Browne
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Allison O'Keefe

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To present Minutes of Tourism Development Group meeting held on 11 September 2018 and ratified at Tourism Development meeting held on 20 November 2018.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p>Tourism Development Group (TDG) was established to create a working forum between Council and private sector businesses. The TDG will assist with policy development and support the implementation of Council's Tourism Strategy and associated work in order to create economic growth, increase visitor numbers and create employment.</p> <p>The group meet on a bi-monthly basis and as per the agreed Terms of Reference all business will be reported to Council through the Development Committee.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The ratified minutes of the most recent meeting of the Tourism Development Group dated 11 September 2018 are attached as Appendix 1.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b><u>Financial &amp; Human Resources Implications</u></b>  Financial: NA  Human: NA
<b>4.2</b>	<b><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></b>  NA



<b>4.3</b>	<b><u>Risk Management Implications</u></b>  NA
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	NA
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix A – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 11 September 2018.

**MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP****Tuesday 11 September 2018 at 10.00am in Arts Studio, Burnavon, Cookstown****Attendees:**

Chair N Bell - Lissan House  
 Cllr S Clarke – MUDC  
 M McGeehan – J&K Coaches  
 R Mullholland – Ballyscullion Park  
 R Carmichael – Jungle NI

**Officers:**

M Browne – Head of Tourism  
 M McKeown – Tourism Manager  
 M McGee - Business Engagement  
 S Arbuthnot – Events Officer  
 G Bell – Tourism Officer  
 C Bell- Tourism Officer  
 M Beattie – Tourism  
 A O’Keefe – Business Support

**Apologies:**

Cllr N Doris – MUDC  
 Cllr M Kearney – MUDC  
 A M McFerron – Old Thatch Inn  
 H McCloy – Jungle NI  
 S Wiggins – SWC  
 AB McCartney – NRC  
 C Lowry – Blessingbourne  
 G Mullholland – SWC  
 T McCance – Head of Arts & Culture  
 B McCormick – HomePlace Manager  
 G Major – Tourist Information Supervisor

Meeting commenced 10.05am.

**1. Minutes of Meeting held on 8 May 2018**

The minutes of the Tourism Development Group meeting held on 8 May 2018, having been circulated in advance of the meeting, are adopted.

**Proposed: S Clarke**

**Seconded: R Mullholland**

**2. Matters Arising**

- 2.1** C Lowry, when sending her apologies, requested the Board to consider providing a number of date options, including evenings, when arranging TDG meeting. Chair requested this be put on agenda for next meeting.
- 2.2** Group were informed that H McCloy was indisposed due to an accident and asked that all correspondence is sent to R Carmichael in his absence.
- 2.3** S Wiggins, SWC, while forwarding his apologies, reported that following industry workshops that were held in the Burnavon in recent months, SWC delivered training and support to at least two businesses and are continuing to engage with several other employers to provide business place support, advice and training. He added that the workshops were very successful and good connections made. M McGee informed that another workshop has been scheduled in October. She reported that a SWC chef provided one day in-house mentoring to the business. She added that a TDG representative will sit on the Invest NI and N I Hospitality Federation Skills Forum. Cllr Clarke raised that due to Brexit and the possibility of migrant workers

leaving NI, training is important now more than ever. He suggested that training should begin at school age and with teaching staff. M McKeown informed that she has raised the matter of offering more options in hospitality to pupils within Holy Trinity, Cookstown and will raise the matter again when she attends their next Board meeting. She added that offering apprenticeships in all MU schools could be an option.

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that the committee's best wishes are forwarded to H McCloy in his recovery following an accident.

### **3. Cluster Reports**

The three clusters continue to meet and are progressing their respective work programmes.

These groups are delivering on the Tourism Strategy and report to the Tourism Development Group.

#### **SEAMUS HEANEY – C BELL/M MCGEE**

This cluster have gone from strength to strength and members have attended World Travel Market, London, The Incoming Tour Operators workshop, Belfast. The group are in receipt of Phase 1 Collaborative Growth Funding from Invest NI. They are also working with TNI on the development of market ready experiences and their work programme between now and March 2019 will include:

- **Exploring Cultural Tourism & Experiential Tourism** - guests invited to share best practice are Andrew Te Whati, Amanti Tourism, who are delivering NI's first HBO approved Game Of Thrones attraction, Mark Rogers, Dalriada Kingdom tours and Esther Dobbin, Responsible Tourism Manager, National Trust.
- **Protecting and Championing the Seamus Heaney Legacy** - guest Chris Kane, Chair Osborne and Company and thought leader on "Place Making"

High on the list of priorities is also the cluster study trips to take place Q1 2019. This will involve two fact-finding missions. Firstly, to Cork to meet key individuals involved in developed Tourism clusters including Pure Cork and Ring of Cork. Secondly, we would like to pay a return visit to Justin Albert to explore the impact of the Hay Festival on local businesses and benefits outside the timescales of the festivals. This would include a tour of the bookshops and Hay Castle.

The programme timescale is extended to accommodate the TNI Industry Support program and to allow change of provider to Mackle Communications. Given the closure of Marks, Belfast and to ensure continuity of the project, this will be a seamless transition which has already been approved by Invest NI and Marks SGS. It is envisaged the first draft of the Final Report for the Collaborative Growth Cluster will be ready at the end of March 19, with a view to submitting an application for Phase 2 end of April 19.

**ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & HERITAGE CLUSTER – G BELL/M MCKEOWN**  
**Boyne Valley Learning Journey, September 2018**

The trip to Boyne Valley on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September was a huge success. Slane Castle, Slane Distillery and Newgrange all formed part of the visit. Feedback was excellent with all in attendance finding it a very beneficial and worthwhile learning journey. The trip generated useful ideas and built relationships amongst the industry. The whole day demonstrated how effective collaboration amongst the tourism/hospitality industry has had a huge impact on developing the success of Boyne Valley region.

**Hidden Heritage events 2019**

The 2018 Programme was a huge success and suggestions for visits within the 2019 calendar are:

- The Three sisters tour comprising of Lissan House, Killymoon Castle and Springhill
- Drumnaph and An Carn - Maghera area
- U S Grant Ancestral Homestead/Parkanaur
- Ardboe Cross/ Coyle's cottage/Ardboe Eels

**TNI Heritage Programme**

M McKeown, G Bell and M McGee will meet with Rosemarie McHugh, Director of Product Development Tourism NI on Monday 19 November to discuss potential one to one and group mentoring opportunities for the Heritage Group.

**OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES & EVENTS – S ARBUTHNOT/G MAJOR**

All focus is on the Outdoor Weekend 2019 to take place 13 - 14 April 2019. The Cluster will work with Outdoor Recreation NI to promote the weekend and utilise relationships and channels that are established and available to Outdoor Rec. Further relationship building with Tourism NI, Visit Belfast and Visit Derry will ensure we have their promotional backing. Mid Ulster has two of the biggest and most established outdoor activity providers in NI. This weekend will include those that are members of the cluster and will provide invaluable resources and experience.

The Cluster members are currently establishing their objectives however; an overall objective of the weekend is to inform or reaffirm the NI market of what fantastic outdoor activities we have within our district and to increase usage. What's more, we intend to position Mid Ulster as the centre of excellence for outdoor visitors. Further long-term objectives of the cluster to be discussed and agreed in accordance with the Outdoor Activities section of the Tourism Strategy.

**HOTELIERS – M MCGEE/C BELL**

Following the Tourism Development Group Cluster Review, it was evident that engagement with the accommodation sector was absent within the group. It was decided to establish an hotelier cluster, a similar approach adopted by Visit Derry who have a very successful hotel working group.

Within the district there are nine hotels and two large guesthouses which operate like hotels:

1. Walsh's Hotel, Maghera
2. The Terrace Hotel, Magherafelt
3. The Royal Hotel, Cookstown
4. Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown
5. Greenvale Hotel, Coosktown
6. Tullylagan Country House Hotel, Cookstown
7. Cohannon Inn, Dungannon
8. Corick House Hotel and Spa – Clogher
9. The Valley Hotel – Fivemiletown
10. Ardtara House – Upperlands
11. The Ryandale - Moy

Officers met with individual hotels during September and October to discuss the group and obtain their thoughts. A positive response was received by those initially consulted. The first hotelier cluster meeting is scheduled for Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 10am in the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown.

The following additions were discussed.

Tourism Manager reported that the Scoping Study for Davagh Observatory Outdoor Experience is complete and an application will be submitted for Phase 2 delivery to DAERA by 31 January 2019.

### 3.2 Archaeology, History and Heritage Cluster

Head of Service spoke of a more established group similar to the cluster who could offer ideas and advice. Councillor S Clarke raised that Mid Ulster should look to replicate the Boyne Valley and felt that Mid Ulster has more to offer. Head of Service reported that various studies are taking place under the Heart of Ancient Ulster that he would share when complete. He explained the Heart of Ancient Ulster is a working brand that should eventually become the brand for this area. M McGee replied that the Boyne Valley Learning Journey will teach how the Boyne Valley belongs to both Ireland's Ancient East and also the Hidden East. Members were informed that TNI are working on a regional NI brand. It was stated that TNI are looking at creativity analysis, how to engage international audience and encourage industry engagement with international markets.

### 3.3 Outdoor Activities & Events

Head of Service reported that Council were reviewing strategic events and funding given to such events, in terms of value to the district and number of visitors they attract.

## **4. Brown Signage Update**

Tourism Manager informed that a new signage application had been made to Transport NI for signage to Davagh Forest from the Gortin area. She also announced that planning has been approved for a private business to erect glamping pods close to Davagh by next year. Enquiries have been made with Transport NI to erect pull in bays on the Davagh Road to allow easier passing. Transport NI to look at their budget and assess the site in the next financial year.

## **5. District Wide Monitoring Results**

Tourism Manager read through the Visitor Information Centre Stats and District Wide Monitoring Results circulated in advance of the meeting. She noted that Beaghmore Stone Circles were damaged due to flooding in the first quarter and Davagh trails figures have increased as monitor was relocated. Tourism Manager added that a monitor will also be erected at Lissan House.

Tourism Manager reported on the recently published NISRA figures for Mid Ulster area which found spend had gone down £10m from £30m to £20m. She stated that the results were very disheartening and were by no means a true reflection on figures collected from businesses in contradiction to NISRA, hotel bed nights increased 4%, visitors to Ballyronan Marina increased 15%, forest parks, parks including Dungannon Park are not taken into consideration with over 200K visitors, attractions increased 30% and hotel occupancy.

Head of Tourism, Tourism Manager and Business Engagement Officer met to discuss with NISRA how they gathered their information. She was informed that a sample questionnaire was collected at various gateways, such as, airports and ports therefore not taking into account actual figures such as bed nights etc. Head of Service stated that this leads to the next item on the agenda.

## **6. Mid Ulster District Council Tourism Strategy Review**

Head of Service reported that Council are reviewing how success in tourism is measured. He gave the example of Derry & Strabane District Council's model in collecting live figures from businesses on a monthly basis resulting in reactive actions and emphasised the importance of gathering genuine measurable figures to identify where tourism is successful or under-achieving. B Murphy added that TNI face similar difficulties figures released late after the time of collection by NISRA as it leaves no room for engagement or intervention. She informed that TNI have engaged the services of Deloitte to run a pilot scheme with Causeway Coast to look at what tourism is worth and how it can grow sustainably in the future without damaging environments or communities. She suggested Mid Ulster could look at a similar exercise and agreed to share the Terms of Reference. During discussions the Tourism Manager reiterated that the methods used by NISRA to collate data and produce statistics need to change as they are far from a true reflection. B Murphy agreed that she would be happy to work with Mid Ulster on this. Cllr Clarke added that the results show that income is down 30% and this paints a negative image to investors and private sector looking to join the industry.

## **7. Hotel Group Proposal**

Tourism Manager and Business Engagement Officer met with Visit Derry who have a Marketing Hotel Group agreement to provide quarterly stats in order to participate in joint seasonal marketing. Business Engagement officer reported that she has contacted 9 Mid Ulster businesses to set up a Hotel Group to address skills, marketing and statistics. She informed that both herself and C Bell, tourism officer, will collate and report stats. Tourism Manager suggested that a member of the group be invited to represent the accommodation sector on the TDG.

## **8. Tourism NI Update**

B Murphy began by reminding members to sign up to receive Tourism NI emails. She reported that spend in tourism across N Ireland for 2017 added £2.5m daily to the local economy. She gave a brief update on the following:

*Global Conference* – TNI hosted the conference to showcase Belfast and NI to American buyers, and indicated leads and business resulted from the event.

*Meet the Buyer, Belfast 4 April 2018* – 5,000 sales appointments took place with over 200 markets represented. She reminded that registration opens for next year's event in November.

*Irish Tour Operators Association (ITOA) 13 November 2018* – 33 representatives from ROI coach operators will meet in Belfast for the first time with a networking event taking place the evening before and associated FAM trips. She stated that these organisation bring in £2.64m to the economy of Ireland.

*Heritage Experience Development Support* - funding available to cultural heritage sites/experience providers, including cluster networking groups, to develop new innovative market-ready cultural experiences through one-to-one mentoring, workshops and marketing. Support is available from up to March 2019. Also support to develop cultural experiences by immersive technologies in the form of 2 workshops that will be held on 25 September and 16 October 2018

148<sup>th</sup> Open, Royal Portrush – the event has sold out and reports state 40% of ticket sales went to out of state visitors. She encouraged hoteliers to deal directly with buyers/tour operators and providers not to price outside their markets. Head of Tourism stated that similar promotions should be given to World Super Bikes when it comes to Mid Ulster. B Murphy responded that whilst the World Super Bikes were not on the same scale, TNI would give some attention to the event.

## **9. Industry Update**

### **9.1 J & K Coaches**

Marketing Officer announced that J&K Coaches have received bookings in relation to the Open event. He added that in general tourism business has increased 3% and they will develop and reinvest into the business.

### **9.2 Ballyscullion Park**

R Mullholland spoke of how he felt that the NISRA figures reported were nonsense as his visitor numbers to Ballyscullion Park have increased year after year so much so that they have been able to increase private investment. Ballyscullion and HomePlace has provided a spin off to Bellaghy Village also. Head of Tourism informed that one local business intends to relocate his business from Belfast back to Bellaghy. Tourism Officer also reported that Department of Communities have begun investment in Bellaghy Bawn. R Mullholland thanked Mid Ulster Council and TDG representatives.

### **9.3 Jungle NI**

R Carmichael reported that he was busier each year, however, there was no consistency due to climatic conditions. He stated that ROI were their largest market for camping and planning permission has been granted to add 2 new treehouses



through RDP funding. He commented that significant progress has been made on car park issue and hopes it will be resolved in near future. He informed that social media has dropped 60% due to the negative impact of the Cambridge analysis, and so the company have recruited someone specialising in digital marketing. R Carmichael noted that Christmas events have already received 2,000 bookings without any promotion. He went on to discuss future proposals.

#### **9.4 Lissan House**

Chair N Bell reported that the Environment & Heritage Open Day in September proved to be a success with up to 500 attending. Lissan House has built up good working relationship with Crumlin Road Gaol and received considerable regional press coverage. He did add that unfortunately the manager has resigned.

#### **9.5 Lake Torrent, Coalisland**

C Bell, Tourism Officer, reported that the development has been held back due to underground mines requiring further exploration. Both she and G Bell, Tourism Officer, have begun to provide Customer Service and WorldHost training with businesses in Coalisland in preparation of the opening of Lake Torrent.

#### **10 Any Other Business**

None

Meeting ended at 11.45am.

#### **Date of Upcoming Meetings:**

- Tuesday 20 November 2018 at 10.00am South West College, Dungannon
- Wednesday 9 January 2019 at 10.00am Committee Room 3, Magherafelt Offices