

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

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 present minutes of Tourism Development Group meeting held on 28 th April 2020 that were approved at Tourism Development meeting held on 22 nd September 2020.
2.0	Background
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>
3.0	Main Report
	The ratified minutes of the most recent meeting of the Tourism Development Group dated 22 September 2020 attached Appendix 1.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Mid Ulster Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	For information.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A – Minutes of Tourism Development Group Meeting dated 22 September 2020.

MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP
Tuesday 28 April, 2020 at 11.00am via Zoom

Present

Hugh McCloy

Acting Chair

Cllr Sean Clarke

Mid Ulster District Council

Cllr Niamh Doris

Mid Ulster District Council

Norman Bell

Visitor Attractions

Cathy O'Neill

Hotel Sector

Clare Doherty

Self Catering

Claire Murray

Local Food Producers/ Farmers Markets

Terry McCrory

Craft Sector

Colleen McGrath

Education & Skills NRC

Simon Wiggins

Education & Skills Sector

D Friel

Vintners

In Attendance

Michael Browne

Mid Ulster District Council

Tony McCance

Mid Ulster District Council

Mary McGee

Mid Ulster District Council

Mary McKeown

Mid Ulster District Council

Charmain Bell

Mid Ulster District Council

Genevieve Bell

Mid Ulster District Council

Graeme Major

Mid Ulster District Council

Sharon Arbuthnot

Mid Ulster District Council

Martha Beattie

Mid Ulster District Council

Joanne Robinson

Hill of The O'Neill & Ranfurly House

Apologies

Cllr Frances Burton

Mid Ulster District Council

Brenda Murphy

Tourism NI

Mary Gervin

Events Sector

Mary McKeown

Mid Ulster District Council

Martha Beattie

Mid Ulster District Council

	DISCUSSION	ACTIONS
	<p>Introductions</p> <p>In the absence of Cllr Burton, Hugh McCloy, chaired the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were raised for the Tourism Manager, who has been temporarily redeployed to work on the Community Hub.</p> <p>M Browne provided a brief overview on the plan to develop a Recovery Plan for Tourism, with the assistance of L Goodall, which will be brought to Council for approval.</p>	
1.	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 4 March 2020</p> <p>Having been circulated in advance of the meeting the minutes were taken as read and correct.</p> <p><i>Proposed: T McCrory Seconded: C O'Neill</i></p>	

<p>2.</p> <p>2.1</p>	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Brown Signage M Browne informed that he has discussed signage with D Friel and K Bradley relating to their businesses following an update from Transport NI.</p> <p>G Bell informed that T Bratton confirmed that an inventory of signage within MUDC was not available and suggested Council carry out an audit within the district. G Bell advised that a suitable company would be appointed to deliver this exercise and provide quarterly updates. Cllr N Doris queried as to why Council staff could not carry out the audit. G Bell replied that staff would not be aware of the location of all signage in the area. M Browne added that this would be too big a task on officer's time and resources and informed that suitable companies who carry out maintenance and erecting of signage for Transport NI were more viable. Cllr Doris informed that she will raise it with the local MLA and MP to request that the department would deliver an audit. Cllr S Clark enquired as to how a company would have this information and Transport NI do not. C Doherty raised that Transport NI are quick to inform businesses who erect signs illegally and felt therefore that they should have a list of approved signs.</p>	<p>Cllr Doris to enquire with local MLA and MP to request Department of Infrastructure deliver an audit on all brown signage within MUDC.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Overview of Tourism in Covid-19 Pandemic – TNI Review</p> <p>M Browne reported that he is a member of TNI Covid-19 Industry Working Group across all councils. He informed that they are currently working on gathering intelligence and statistics to look at where the markets will sit during recovery and financial rescue plans. M Browne advised that TNI are continuing with online surveys to measure the impact of the virus on tourism businesses and should be able to break this information down to district level.</p> <p>M Browne informed that TNI are developing a recovery plan to look at where the markets are likely to sit, including airlines, following the pandemic and future years. He briefly outlined the following plans for TNI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on domestic market, including ROI and GB for next 2 years • Formal launch of Embrace the Giant Spirit brand in June 2020 • Plan for The Gathering 2021 <p>M Browne added that he will update the group frequently and businesses could avail of regular updates from R McHugh, TNI, who feeds into the MUDC WhatsApp forum.</p> <p>Acting Chair thanked the Tourist Board for their support to the MUDC group. M Browne added that businesses will have to regenerate and target domestic markets and Council are looking to put mechanisms in place to assist. During discussion the Acting Chair felt it would take up to 2 years for global markets to reopen and as competition would be fierce businesses need to be prepared to react, therefore should continue to engage with these markets.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Update</p> <p>M Browne spoke of how during the time from the last meeting, members now find themselves in an unusual and surreal environment which has been a shock in terms of what council and businesses are facing and the need now is to look at how each will function moving forward.</p>	

<p>5.</p>	<p>Business Engagement Programme Online</p> <p>M McGee delivered a presentation to members on the MUDC Tourism Covid 19 Response. She briefly updated members on the WhatsApp group, setup as an emergency response to provide a platform of communication for businesses to share concerns, information and ideas.</p> <p>M McGee reported that this forum has now evolved to deliver 3 webinars per week including speakers from the financial, legal, hospitality and tourism sectors offering advice to businesses. She informed that the group now has 105 members across Mid Ulster and is used as a constant flow of information and as the main communication channel. She added that group emails and social media platforms are also being used for those not on the WhatsApp forum. M McGee thanked TNI for their continued support and for making available experts in financial and legal matters available to businesses on a one-to-one. M McGee reported that training has also been provided for businesses to use LinkedIn, Instagram and Mobile Movie Making.</p> <p>M Browne recognised H McCloy by thanking him for the work that he has done and informed the group that R McHugh, TNI, and organisations outside of the District are looking at this group as best practice.</p> <p>M McGee went on to advise members of other associations online where support is available. She added that businesses will have to look at other ways to function in the current climate and gave examples of attractions offering online experiences and breweries making hand sanitisers.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Mid Ulster Council Recovery Planning</p> <p>M Browne explained that Council are currently developing a Recovery Plan to work with businesses to rebuild, recover and reopen. He asked L Goodall to share and briefly deliver her document on Scenario Planning, showing 4 possible scenarios and discuss activities to help recovery among sectors, looking at different models.</p> <p>L Goodall went through her report and explained that the best scenario for the economy would be the V shape model that would allow business to bounce back following the pandemic. She discussed the shrinkage in the economy and job losses. Lara went on to explain that the rural setting of Mid Ulster and number of outdoors activities provided opportunities. She advised that communications should reflect this but in a sensitive manner to take into account the number of lives that have been lost. Lara went onto to look at possible scenarios, sector responses and reactions within other regions.</p> <p>When discussing moving forward, Lara suggested the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding the district as a safe area with plenty of outdoor space and activities • Ensure to continue offering support in a structured manner • Include businesses who are not within the WhatsApp • Build a bank of content to use digitally • Reengagement within sectors • Digital Meet the Buyer events • Businesses need to be innovative, engaging and reinvent themselves to reopen • Local marketing and promotions 	<p>M Browne requested officers' setup a Recovery Plan working group with a</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Action Plan with timescales <p>C O'Neill raised concern that during the recovery process there will be more risk to businesses than during supported lockdown due to limited capacity and costs. Acting chair also raised that guidelines need to be clear to prepare businesses for reopening.</p> <p>L Goodall warned businesses not to reduce their prices and to offer quality products as costs will rise due to capacity limits.</p> <p>Acting Chair thanked Head of Tourism and Business Engagement Officer for all their support to the private sector.</p>	<p>small number of members.</p> <p>M McGee to look at businesses developing new tour experiences and support implementation through TDG</p>
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