

Report on	Collaborative Tourism Cluster – Partnership Agreement
Date of Meeting	Thursday 15 th April 2021
Reporting Officer	Michael Browne
Contact Officer	Mary McKeown

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 seek approval from the members for Mid Ulster Council to enter into a partnership agreement with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council and for Mid Ulster Council to lead on the delivery of the Lough Neagh Shoreline tourism cluster.
2.0	Background
2.1	Members are reminded that the Council agreed in October 2020 to apply to DAERA for the development of experience tourism and product development clusters with a maximum match funding contribution of £16,666 from the Council.
2.2	This funding presented an opportunity to develop a collaborative project with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council under the theme of 'Lough Neagh Shorelines' & a second project specifically developing Mid Ulster's strong heritage offering.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Officers can now report that the funding application to DAERA has been successful for a Heritage cluster and a joint Lough Neagh Shoreline cluster with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council.
3.2	The officers are now proposing that Mid Ulster District Council takes the lead on the Lough Neagh Shoreline Cluster and are now proposing to enter into a partnership agreement with Antrim and Newtownabbey, subject to approval from both Councils.
3.3	The total DAERA funding for both elements of this programme is £50,000, with the match funding of £16,666 from Council and the projects must be completed by 31 March 2022. Currently officers are in the process of procuring and appointing professional facilitators to develop and deliver both the Mid Ulster Heritage and Lough Neagh Shoreline programmes.

3.4	The Programme objectives will be achieved by the facilitator engaging with rural tourism businesses, attractions, and experiences to develop individual and collaborative experiences which will be marketed in the media and online.
3.5	It is essential that these experiences deliver on both visitor experience and economic development outcomes, from those outlined below, as well as being aligned to the new Mid Ulster Tourism branding and Tourism Northern Ireland's – Embrace a Giant Spirit' branding.
3.6	<p>The key tasks for both clusters are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and bring together members of the Heritage and Lough Neagh Shoreline clusters, • Develop a measurable action plan on how to bring the experiential tourism offering to the marketplace, • Identify any skills/digital gaps and how to address these, • Develop and implement a marketing plan to deliver the final experience product, • Identify stakeholders and partners who could benefit from the new experience offering.
3.7	<p>The expected outcomes because of the investment are:</p> <p><u>Visitor Experience Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced visibility and accessibility of individual products and combined experience (including where appropriate pre-visit and season extension) • Expanded services or product offerings to improve the visitor experience • Access new visitor segments • Greater visitor satisfaction <p><u>Economic Development Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitor spend • Increased visitor numbers • Increased dwell time • Increased employment opportunities
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>N/A</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

4.3	<u>Risk Management Implications</u> N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That Mid Ulster District Council enters into a partnership agreement with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council and that Mid Ulster District Council to lead on the Lough Neagh Shoreline cluster.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A