

Report on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project 2. Sponsorship Request from Dungannon and South Tyrone Chamber of Commerce and Industry 3. Hidden Heritage Tours 2025 4. Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update 5. Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26
Date of Meeting	Thursday 15 May 2025
Reporting Officer	Economic Regeneration Service Manager Tourism Service Manager Strategic Programmes Service Manager

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	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project</p> <p>As part of the Maghera Regeneration Programme being delivered in partnership with our Environment Department, the town centre public realm element of the programme is near completion. Following the completion of previous public realm schemes in other larger town centres across the district, a new town brand was created to profile and enhance opportunities to market and promote the town centre.</p>
2.2	<p>Sponsorship Request from Dungannon & South Tyrone Chamber</p> <p>Council has received a sponsorship and support request from Dungannon and South Tyrone Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their upcoming business event - The Big Debate: Navigating Global Trends, Confronting Local Challenges, which is planned for Wednesday 4 June at The Junction, Dungannon.</p>

2.3	<p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2025</p> <p>Hidden Heritage Tours are organised annually across the Mid Ulster District to encourage locals and visitors to explore heritage sites and discover the hidden gems of Mid Ulster.</p>
2.4	<p>Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update</p> <p>As previously reported, the Minister for the Economy launched the Sub-Regional Economic Plan on 1 October 2024. The Plan will focus on three strands of delivery: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of new Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). • The enhancement of Invest NI’s sub-regional role with local targets. • The realignment of Departmental policies and programmes to drive local growth. <p>All projects funded under the Sub Regional Economic Plan must meet the four objectives included in the Minister’s Vision for the Economy: Increased Productivity, More Good Jobs, Regional Balance and Decarbonisation.</p>
2.5	<p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26</p> <p>A fresh Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan has been prepared for 2025/2026 which highlights a variety of key activities to support our businesses, towns, and villages. It also includes reference to ongoing work of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and Mid Ulster’s Mid South West Growth Deal projects.</p>
3.0	<p>Main Report</p>
3.1	<p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project</p> <p>Following the anticipated completion of the Public Realm Scheme, there is a need for Council to review and consider creating a brand identity for Maghera Town Centre. Following consultation with key town centre stakeholders, a need has been identified to develop a new, strong brand identity for the town centre to shape positive perceptions, attract further investment, and boost local pride and unity in the area. A brand identity will ensure a fair approach is taken in line with the other four larger town centres namely Coalisland, Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt.</p> <p>The creation of this brand identity will require the appointment of a creative company to produce an identity reflective of Maghera including engagement with Maghera Town Centre Forum and other key stakeholders during development. Following approval of the new Maghera brand identity, merchandise will then be procured and purchased to showcase and promote the new Maghera brand identity and raise awareness with residents, shoppers and visitors.</p>

3.2 **Sponsorship Request from Dungannon & South Tyrone Chamber**

Dungannon & South Tyrone Chamber of Commerce and Industry, wrote to Council on the 11 April 2025 (**see Appendix 1**) to formally request sponsorship and support for an upcoming business event being planned for Wednesday 4 June 2025 at the Junction, Dungannon.

The high-profile event will convene a panel of respected experts including John Campbell, Economic Business Editor, BBC, Angela McGowan, CBI Northern Ireland, Iain Joannides, Director of Regional Business, Invest NI and Karen Doyle, Planning Service Lead within Mid Ulster District Council.

The Chamber is seeking sponsorship from a maximum of four sponsors, of which Council has been asked to be one of the four sponsors with a contribution of £500. The remaining three sponsors secured includes: PA Duffy Solicitors, Dungannon Enterprise Centre and AAB Group.

Council's involvement will be prominently acknowledged across all promotional materials and event communications.

3.3 **Hidden Heritage Tours 2025**

This year's Hidden Heritage Programme will look at four heritage experiences across the District, which allows the consumer to step back in time and discover what's on their doorstep, thus increasing visitor spend in the area and encouraging overnight stays in the district.

Across Europe for 2025, European Heritage Days will celebrate a shared theme of "Architectural Heritage: Past Structures, Future Connections," exploring how historic buildings, structures, and landscapes shape our communities, preserving the past while inspiring the future. It is proposed Mid Ulster Council will showcase the following tours for 2025:

Saturday 7 June 2025

The O'Neill & his Connections - Hill of the O'Neill and Ranfurly House, DUNGANNON and Benburb Priory and Castle, BENBURB

Explore a special place at the very heart of Ulster's history at Hill of the O'Neill and Ranfurly House. Here you'll uncover extraordinary stories that shaped the history of Ireland, hearing stories of The O'Neill, who was head of one of Ireland's most powerful dynasties.

The tour will then continue to Benburb when Shane "the Proud" O'Neill built the first iteration of what would become known as Benburb Castle.

Friday 20 June 2025

Crosses and Cottages – Ardboe Cross, Coyle’s Cottage and Kinturk Cultural Centre, MOORTOWN

One of the most easily identifiable monuments along the shoreline of Lough Neagh is the Ardboe Cross, a national monument dating from the tenth century and the first High Cross built in Ulster. There are also remains of a church and abbey here. From the Cross we will continue the journey to Coyle’s Cottage which has been standing strong for approximately 300 years. The cottage is believed to be the last authentic fisherman’s cottage in the area and was inhabited until quite recently. At Kinturk Cultural Centre there is an informative and interactive exhibition exploring the history of Lough Neagh, its natural habitats and how it continues to play an important role in our everyday lives.

Saturday 5 July 2025

A Presidents Nest – Ulysses Grant’s Homestead, Ballygawley

Nestled in the beautiful countryside outside Ballygawley is the original ancestral homestead of President US Grant. The farmhouse, excellently preserved, where his great grandfather John Simpson was born and left in 1760, emigrating to Ohio. You will have the opportunity to meet the President himself and learn what his ancestor’s life was like in both Ireland and the USA. Sit back and relax to the sound of local musicians.

Saturday 20 September 2025

Literature and Heritage - Church Island, Bellaghy Bawn, Seamus Heaney Grave, BELLAGHY and Inishrush, GLENONE

The tour will begin at Church Island, a small island on Lough Beg near Bellaghy which can be viewed from Longpoint Wood. The tower and spire there were built for Lord Bishop Hervey of Derry in the late 1700's.

The journey will continue to Bellaghy Bawn which was built around 1619 by Sir Baptist Jones and features a mix of various building styles from different periods with the main house lived in until 1987.

Next on this Literature and Heritage tour is a visit to Seamus Heaney’s Grave, the poet's final resting place in Bellaghy. The inscription on his headstone is a line from Heaney's poem “The Gravel Walks”, which he used in his 1995 Nobel prize acceptance speech.

The final stop on the tour will visit Inishrush in Glenone, a historic Gaelic elite site which was home to Brian Carragh O’Neill, a great Gaelic Lord of the 16th Century.

All tours are £25 per person, which includes coach (departing from the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre, Cookstown) tour, refreshments, and a light meal. Each tour has a capacity of 25 persons. Booking is essential.

3.4 Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update

Members have previously been updated on the Department for the Economy's Sub-Regional Economic Plan including the commitment to establish Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) in each Council area with an overall financial allocation of £45m over three years (2025-28). Mid Ulster District Council will be allocated a total of £3.867m in total over the 3 years (£1.289m per annum). It is expected that each Council will receive around 30% of its year one allocation which is approximately £386k for Mid Ulster. A lower level of expenditure is forecast in the first year (2025-26) due to the nature of establishing the LEPs, undertaking preparatory work, developing an Action Plan and procurement.

Since the previous update in March 2025, the Department has made some progress and have submitted a Business Case to the Department of Finance for approval.

In December 2024, the Council agreed to utilise the industry-led Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) to create a Local Economic Partnership (LEP) following guidance from the Department for the Economy (DfE). This was also based on the LMP's membership, governance and track record in partnership working and delivery.

An inaugural meeting of the LEP took place on Tuesday 8th April 2025 at which Cllr Dominic Molloy and Sinead McErlain (Bloc Blinds / Manufacturing industry representative) were appointed to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair respectively. A Terms of Reference (ToR) for the LEP was approved by the partnership at the meeting following due diligence and guidance from the Department. The ToR has since been approved by DfE and it is now recommended that Council approve the Terms of Reference on **Appendix 2**.

The next step in the process is to commence work developing an annual Action Plan outlining priority areas for action and Councils' are awaiting further guidance from the Department on same. As previously noted, DfE and Invest NI are involved in the LEP to provide advice on project selection and delivery and to ensure alignment with wider activity and investment. There will be potential to supplement funding for existing programmes to drive additional impact in a local area. One of the key principles being considered is that the LEP should focus on a smaller number of impactful interventions, rather than having a range of small schemes

In line with the Minister's vision and the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, the priority outcome for activities supported through LEP funding is higher productivity. The guidance notes suggest that there are a range of categories that are eligible for support including:

- Commercial property/land development
- Entrepreneurship support
- Sectoral entrepreneurship support
- Scaling support
- Sectoral scaling support
- R&D investment

3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficiency • Upskilling/reskilling in digital/engineering skills • Sectoral cluster development <p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26</p> <p>The Action Plan on (Appendix 3) aims to prioritise the development of a comprehensive range of activities, projects, programmes and support across Mid Ulster during the 2025/26 financial year.</p>
Other Considerations	
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>4.1.1 Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project A budget circ. £50,000 has been set aside for Maghera Town Centre brand identity project from the Economic Development budget 2025/2026. A proportion of these costs will be used to procure suitable merchandise to showcase and promote the new brand identity created.</p> <p>4.1.2 Sponsorship Request from Dungannon Chamber If Council decide to support the sponsorship request, funding will be made available from the economic development budget for: Navigating Global Trends and Confronting Local Challenges at a cost of £500 +Vat.</p> <p>4.1.3 Hidden Heritage Tours 2025 Provision of £4,500 has been made in the 2025/2026 tourism budget.</p> <p>4.1.4 Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update The LEP is fully funded by the Department for the Economy. The total budget allocation for Council is £3.867m over three years.</p> <p>4.1.5 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26 Funding provision has been made for projects within the 2025/26 Economic Development & Tourism Budgets. However, the delivery of a number of projects will be subject to securing external funding.</p> <p>Human:</p> <p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project Officer time to ensure adequate engagement with stakeholders, in conjunction with the Council’s communication team.</p> <p>Sponsorship Request from Dungannon Chamber Officer time.</p>

	<p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2025 Officer time.</p> <p>Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update Administrative costs are eligible as part of the funding, and it is intended to appoint appropriate staff to support the LEP and manage the programme of work.</p> <p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26 Officer time.</p>
	<p>Risk Management: N/A</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project Equality Screening to be completed.</p> <p>Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update All activities to be undertaken will be subject to equality screening. This funding formula will be determined by the Department for the Economy.</p> <p>Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26 Council policies and procedures will be adhered to in the roll out of this plan.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project Rural Needs to be completed.</p> <p>Hidden Heritage Tours 2025 Screening will be carried out prior to commencement of the tours.</p> <p>Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update All activities to be undertaken will be subject to equality screening. This funding formula will be determined by the Department for the Economy.</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendation(s)</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <p>Maghera Town Centre Brand Identity Project</p>

5.1.1 Approve a budget of circ. £50,000 to develop a new brand identity and associated merchandise for Maghera Town Centre from Councils' existing Economic Development budget.

5.1.2 Approve that Council proceed to seek competitive quotes to appoint a creative design company to create a new brand identity for Maghera followed by the procurement and purchase of suitable merchandise to showcase the new brand identity.

5.2 Sponsorship Request from Dungannon Chamber

5.2.1 Approval for Mid Ulster District Council to provide sponsorship of £500 to Dungannon Chamber for sponsorship towards "The Big Debate: Navigating Global Trends, Confronting Local Challenges" event at The Junction, Dungannon on 4 June 2025.

5.2.2 Approval that Dungannon Chamber be notified immediately after the Development Committee in May 2025 to enable event planning, due to the short timeframe between the Council Meeting on 22 May 2025 and the Dungannon Chamber's Event on 4 June 2025

5.3 Hidden Heritage Tours 2025

5.3.1 Approve content of the proposed Hidden Heritage Programme 2025 and the associated costs to deliver the following Tours, at an approximate cost of £4,500 to be borne out of the Council's Tourism Budget 2025/2026.

Hidden Heritage Programme 2025

- Saturday 7th June 2025, The O'Neill & his Connections - Hill of the O'Neill and Ranfurly House, DUNGANNON and Benburb Priory and Castle.
- Friday 20th June 2025, Crosses and Cottages – Ardboe Cross, Coyle's Cottage and Kinturk Cultural Centre.
- Saturday 5th July 2025, A Presidents Nest – Ulysses Grant's Homestead
- Saturday 20th September 2025, Literature and Heritage - Church Island, Bellaghy Bawn, Seamus Heaney Grave, and Inishrush.

5.4 Sub-Regional Economic Plan – Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update

5.4.1 Note content of the report.

5.4.2 Approve the Mid Ulster Local Enterprise Partnership Terms of Reference.

5.5 Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26

Approve projects and indicative costings within the Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Projects Action Plan 2025/26.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 - Sponsorship Request from Dungannon & South Tyrone Chamber</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference for Mid Ulster Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes Action Plan (2025/2026)</p>