

The strategic framework

Premier, year-round destination

EPIC experiences in outdoor adventure

Myths & unique stories

Rich tapestry of cultural heritage

customer-focused

Mountains & maritime

Entrepreneurial

collaborative

Sustainable growth

Authentic local life



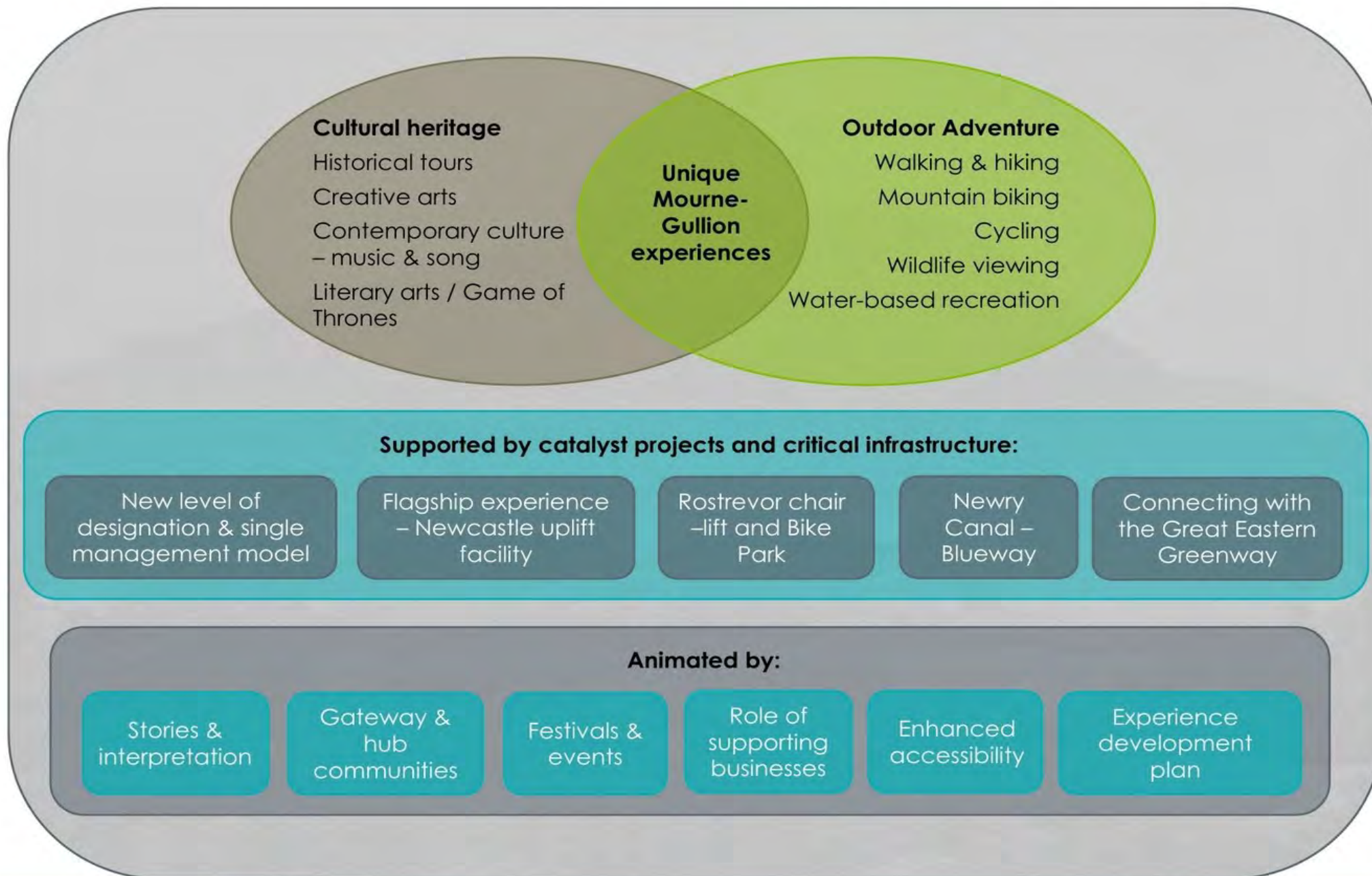
The remainder of this strategy looks at what is required in building the destination experiences – the Mourne-Gullion Experience, the Mourne Coastal Experience and the gateway communities – Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry, Warrenpoint / Rostrevor, and the Crossmaglen area.

There are a number of destination management strategies and masterplans already in place, and this strategy does not seek to duplicate them. Rather, the emphasis is on identifying projects that should have a catalytic effect in growing the value of tourism and in building a stronger identity for the unique destination experiences within NMD.

Bringing these destinations to life in a dynamic manner that will attract new international markets and increased visitation from traditional markets will require a commitment to a number of critical success factors. These factors generally relate to **a new way thinking** about the development and delivery of tourism in NMD – in effect, a **new paradigm** or mindset that understands the value of tourism as an economic driver and the importance of seeing tourism as everyone's business. It is these success factors that will animate the destinations and will entice visitors to stay longer, spend more, recommend to friends and return again.

4. A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNES & RING OF GULLION

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Introduction

The Mourne Mountains and the Ring of Gullion provide an exceptional backdrop for a wide array of nature-based activities and cultural heritage tourism. It is a landscape that has been recognised for its scenic qualities through AONB designations, and offers insights into many of the myths, stories and historical accounts of the evolution of today's cultural landscape. The underlying themes include elements of the St. Patrick story – a theme that overlays much of NMD.

KEY THEMES

1. Ancient and inspirational landscapes
2. Unique volcanic landforms
3. Juxtaposition of mountains and sea
4. Granite
5. Myths and magic
6. Storybook of Ireland – past to present
7. Granite
8. Resilience – industrial and agricultural heritage



The two upland areas are already working together to present the destination experience as a combined composite of activities that target the thrill seeker, the family, and those seeking quiet contemplation and 'soft adventure'. In actuality, the experiences are focused on a relatively small number of key locations, many of which are in public ownership – notably:

- The forest parks owned and managed by the N.I. Forest Service;
- The N.I. Water lands inside the Mourne Wall;
- The access opportunities to the High Mourne facilitated by the National Trust at Slieve Commedagh and Slieve Donard; and,
- Council's provision of access facilities at key points including parklands at Donard and Kilbroney, and car parks at key routes such as Carrick Little, Bloody Bridge and Trassey Track.

In recent years there has been significant development of access infrastructure around many of these assets, raising the provision to high national/ international standards

Recent developments include:

- Mountain bike trails in Rostrevor and Castlewella forests;
- New and/or enhanced walking trails at Castlewella Forest, Bunkers Hill, Kilbroney Park, Silent Valley and the Granite Trail;
- Adventure play areas in Slieve Gullion and Kilbroney;
- Public art and artistic trails across the area; and,
- Enhanced geotourism product and services.

In addition to these initiatives, developments have also occurred along the coastal route, which will be looked at in Chapter 5.

Summary of strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- The management structures of both the Mourne Mountains and the Ring of Gullion are based on a collaborative partnership-based model that cover a spectrum of expertise from geology, built heritage, biodiversity, tourism, agriculture, forestry, and recreation.
- There is recognition in the domestic market that the area provides N.I.'s most significant outdoor recreation resource and access for appreciation of the environment. The area, for example, is increasingly recognised as a mountain biking destination of distinction.
- There is enhanced cooperation between public land owners, with the development of licence agreements for recreational development between the Forest Service and Council being the most significant formal arrangement.
- Through collective working agreements, most of the management and maintenance of forest and upland amenity access is being managed by the Mourne Heritage Trust and NMDDC on behalf of the various public owners.

- Considerable emphasis has been placed on delivering unique experiences. Both areas have focused on identifying underlying stories, integrating these stories into experiences, and training guides and ambassadors to deliver memorable experiences.
- Joint marketing is highly evident – particularly with regard to printed publications.

Weaknesses:

- A lack of a clear and compelling proposition for either area. The status of AONB is not sufficient to create a strong position in the market place. Attempts to pursue alternative designations (National Park status and Global Geopark status) have stalled for various reasons.
- Despite recent progress on developing a more cohesive approach to management (particularly trail development) and creative interpretation, the current arrangements continue to remain somewhat fragmented with a large number of organisations still involved in landscape management and outdoor access provision – with each employing quite different approaches and policies. There remains a need for greater consistency of approach and wider deployment of some of the existing expertise and management practices.
- There are gaps in visitor infrastructure, notably in the capacity of car parks at 'honeypot' sites such as Bloody Bridge, Carrick Little and Slieve Gullion.
- The mountain biking opportunity is potentially constrained by the absence of infrastructure such as lift serviced facilities and a skills-based bike park.

- There are issues relating to accessing water areas including Silent Valley Reservoir and Camlough Lake.
- The potential for developing a long-distance 'Blueway' has yet to be fully recognised and embraced.
- There is limited ability to promote multi-day off-road hiking, and an inconsistent approach to signage.
- The potential to continue improving interpretation and storytelling at focal points has not been fully realised.
- The lack of a 'stand out' or 'flagship' visitor attraction and/or visitor centre of a scale and standard commensurate with the quality of the landscape weakens the significance of the overall destination.
- The digital marketing of the areas is fragmented despite joint branding initiatives.
- The towns are not developing in tandem with the development of the Mourne and Slieve Gullion to drive visitor spend.
- There is insufficient range of accommodation to service target markets.
- Transportation linkages are weak and visitor infrastructure is inadequate in select areas. There are additional traffic issues within the Newry area.



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Catalyst projects and critical infrastructure

A series of **catalyst projects** have been identified that have the potential to be 'game-changing' in terms of growing the tourism economy. While not all of these projects may be entirely achievable within the five-year duration of this strategy, they all should be initiated during this period.

CATALYST PROJECT: UNESCO Global Geopark designation:

A cross border application with Co. Louth was initially submitted for the Mourne Cooley Gullion Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark encompassing three Palaeogene Igneous Complexes now seen as the Mourne Mountains (County Down, Northern Ireland), the Cooley Peninsula (County Louth, Ireland), and the Ring of Gullion (County Armagh, Northern Ireland). The boundary within NMD included all of the Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB and the Gullion AONB. Unfortunately the application process stalled and the dossier was withdrawn. The planning process discussions reignited enthusiasm for the initiative within NMD, and there is broad agreement that the Mourne and Slieve Croob AONB, and the Gullion AONB area should proceed with submitting a revised application through the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

A designation of European and global significance will play a key role in differentiating the area and in giving it a much stronger and cohesive market identity. This identity is critical in reinforcing the sense of 'destination' that has been lacking in the past, and will provide the basis for building a stronger overnight tourism industry.

It is possible that Geopark status could be augmented in the future through the area continuing to aspire to alternative designations that will resonate with domestic and near-in markets.

Any decision to proceed with a new form of designation offers the opportunity to establish the basis of an alternative management model for the entire area – one that is based on a fully consolidated approach to management of existing recreation sites through a unified structure.



RECOMMENDATION:

Prepare a revised application for Global Geopark status to be submitted to the UK National Commission for UNESCO and establish a new management infrastructure to allow for fully coordinated and cohesive management.

This action will ensure that there is an ongoing emphasis to build on past efforts at developing geotourism. Moreover, the underlying ethos of UNESCO Global Geoparks supports the direction of this Strategy – one that explores, develops and identifies the links between the physical heritage (particularly the geological heritage) and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages.

The establishment of a new management model will create the basis for a new approach to management and marketing that can leverage the critical mass of the area's assets and experiences in a more relevant manner, while ensuring a cohesive approach to the development of related recreational opportunities and visitor experiences.

ACTIONS:

- Establish a commitment from NMDDC to proceed with the application.
- Set up a new Management Committee that is appropriately equipped to address the entire area. This Committee should provide the basis for a single, unified management structure and should include all relevant local and regional actors and authorities.
- Continue to work with the Geological Survey of N.I. to prepare a new dossier for submission by October 2017.
- Continue to organise and host events that will increase public and stakeholder awareness of the Aspiring Global Geopark and its international significance.

In the event that partners in Co. Louth wish to reassess their involvement in a cross-border Geopark, there will be the opportunity to resubmit a modified proposal during a revalidation process.

Pursuing alternative designations that will strengthen the identity of the Mourne-Gullion Destination Experience remains an option that should continue to be explored.



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CATALYST PROJECT: Flagship experience – the Newcastle uplift facility to the higher Mournes

The lack of a flagship experience within the District was noted in virtually all the planning discussions. It is felt that an iconic attraction could significantly strengthen the key propositions associated with the dramatic interplay between the mountains and the coast. A new uplift facility providing access to the high Mournes has been in discussion for a number of years. The concept was included within the *South East Coast Masterplan* and in a more recent Feasibility Study (2014). Further work is now being undertaken to generate and assess proposals for “the sustainable enhancement of access from Newcastle to the mountains and for the broadening of visitor and recreational activity provision, in a way that will provide standout in the tourism market and generate growth in tourism performance”.

RECOMMENDATION;

Continue to move forward with the development of an iconic and innovative uplift attraction that strengthens the overall destination experience of both the coastal route and the mountain. An attraction of this nature should have broad market appeal and should support a range of activities on the Mourne Mountains – not simply access.

ACTIONS:

- The way forward is likely to be prescribed by the Mourne Mountains Gateway Study that is currently underway. Ideally it will provide the opportunity to develop a strong high Mourne experience that is enhanced through an innovative mix of activities – from passive enjoyment to active recreation, and from interpretation and storytelling to events and new ways of enjoying the mountains.

CASE-STUDY

The Sea to Sky Gondola rises through Stawamus Chief Provincial Park near Squamish in British Columbia, Canada. The \$25 million project was officially opened in May 2014 – the completion of a project that was first discussed in 2004.

The facility has a 9,000 ft² summit lodge with 6,000 ft² deck, restaurants and gift shop. The 8-10 minute ride provides access to the lodge, the Sky Pilot suspension bridge, 30km of trails (including 2km of 'stroller-ready' trails), guided services and viewing platforms. Squamish is a mecca for outdoor recreation activities, particularly mountain biking – the vision behind the Gondola was to broaden the market reach of the area and to strengthen the tourism industry. In 2015 it was anticipated that 300,000 would ride the Gondola. In 2014 the number of visitors to the Visitor Centre in Squamish increased by almost 37% over 2013, the number of buses stopping at the Centre rose by over 40%, web traffic increased by 32%, and hotel occupancy grew by 10%.



The Summit Lodge
© TEAM



Viewing platform of a trail
© TEAM



CATALYST PROJECT: Lift assisted access for mountain biking

Following the recent development of two new national trail centres at Castlewellan and Rostrevor, the Mourne Mountains have become recognised as a key mountain biking destination in Ireland. The hosting of major events including the Irish Cross Country National Point Series at Castlewellan, and the Red Bull Foxhunt and the Irish National Mountain Bike Marathon Championships at Rostrevor have added to the area's status within the mountain biking community.

The appeal of the area will increase with the development of a new 'Blue Grade' trail for less experienced riders within Kilbroney Park and Rostrevor Forest – a purpose built trail featuring differing levels of difficulty that will also serve as a skills development or coaching facility. The recent growth of the activity is not only facilitated by the development of new trail infrastructure, but also with the provision of support services, including accommodation options through a number of specialised adventure companies.

With this strong basis for building national and international recognition in mountain biking, this Strategy seeks to maximise the advantage of this key strength with support for further development of critical infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Continue to review critical gaps and opportunities to further develop mountain biking in NMD, including the feasibility of developing lift-serviced access facilities and expanding training facilities at Rostrevor.

This recommendation has the added advantage of opening up access to this area of the higher Mournes for a wider range of visitors. Any added uplift facility should be accompanied with further planning for a wider high elevation experience

ACTIONS:

- Work with the mountain biking interest groups to assess the feasibility of developing lift-serviced infrastructure to access Slieve Martin. This would strengthen the experience significantly and would further differentiate NMD as a downhill mountain biking destination and as a site for world downhill championships.



Mount Roberts Tramway,
Juneau, Alaska

- In assessing the feasibility of a chairlift in the vicinity of Rostrevor, work with the Warrenport Harbour Authority to review the opportunity within the context of developing an on-shore tour for the newly emerging cruise industry. The length of time on shore can be quite limited (the Hebridean Princess stopped for four hours in 2016), and the ability to transport passengers to a significant viewpoint would be a highly attractive proposition.
- Review the proposals for the pump track at Kilbroney and identify its potential to widen the market demand for mountain biking facilities.
- Continue to assess the capacity to strengthen the mountain biking opportunity through trails and related infrastructural developments at Castlewellan and Tollymore Forest Parks.

CATALYST PROJECT: The Newry Canal 'Blueway' opportunity

The restoration of the Newry Canal was raised frequently during the planning discussions. The Newry & Portadown branch of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) has taken the lead on working toward the long-term ambition of restoring the canal and once again joining Carlingford Lough with Lough Neagh. The Canal is the oldest summit level canal in UK/Ireland (1742) and is listed as a Scheduled Monument. The towpath has been restored between Newry and Portadown and is well used as a local and regional recreational asset with approximately 93,000 users per year.

The focus is now on opening up the canal to small boats and canoes between Pontzpass and Lough Neagh – a distance of 21 miles. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is currently repairing the first lock at their end. A partnership commitment between Councils to work collaboratively on the initiative would establish the basis for fast-tracking the work and building on the momentum of the work undertaken by the IWAI volunteers.

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a memorandum of understanding between NMDDC and ABCBC to move forward with the restoration of the Newry Ship Canal as a 'Blueway' navigable by canoes and small boats, and support the local IWAI chapter in undertaking the project.

ACTIONS:

- Work with the local IWAI chapter to facilitate the dredging of Sand's Mill to Lock 2, including the dredging of Lock 2, and provide steps to portage Lock 2 and 3.
- Undertake an assessment of all other tasks required to make the Canal navigable as a Blueway and develop an action plan to complete the work.
- Continue to explore ways of revealing the underlying stories and industrial heritage associated with the Canal to the visitor. These stories are currently undersold.

The combination of a Blueway and the programme of works that is currently underway on Camlough Lake will result in strong water-based assets for NMD, and the ability to focus on developing recreational use that will contribute to overnight stays. The activities associated with Camlough Lake, including the Triathlon and the Camlough Lake Festival, will have a greater impact on strengthening its profile when the works are completed, and the supporting facilities are developed and improved.

With these improvements in place, there will be a need to attract investment into the accommodation sector for facilities that are suited to the needs of these recreational and sport tourism markets. These needs should be carefully analysed and presented in a tourism investment portfolio – see Chapter 7.



Tall ships will never grace the canal again, but the aspirations to open it up to canoes and small boats could have a significant impact on local businesses and the overall appeal of the Mourne & Ring of Gullion destination area and Newry itself.



CATALYST PROJECT: Connecting with the Great Eastern Greenway

There are plans to develop the Carlingford Lough Cross Border Greenway which would provide a 13.8 km link from Newry to Carlingford and would add significant value to the existing Newry Canal Towpath as a long distance path. The Omeath to Carlingford Marina section of the Greenway has already been built. The current connections to Carlingford are narrow and difficult for cyclists – a cross-border greenway of this nature would provide a world-class green travel route and would create a total length of 52kms.

The potential success of creating this linkage can be seen in the usage of the new Omeath to Carlingford section, which rose from 26,000 users in its first year (2013) to 61,500 in 2015. The Newry to Portadown towpath reports approximately 93,000 users per annum.

There are plans to further extend the trail from Greenore to Dundalk along the former rail line, and in time to Dublin. Ultimately the trail could link Belfast to Dublin and would provide a truly EPIC experience.

This potential long-distance Greenway provides impetus for the **Narrow Water Bridge project**. The proposed bridge across the top of Carlingford Lough where it meets the Newry River has the added significance of crossing an international border and would be of tourism interest in its own right, as well as providing the critical linkage between the two trail systems in each country, providing it has safe facilities for pedestrian and cycling traffic.

It should be noted that this project aligns with the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways – *Exercise, Explore, Enjoy* (November 2016).

RECOMMENDATION:

Continue to work on developing the concept of the Great Eastern Greenway through building connectivity between the Newry Canal Towpath and the Omeath to Carlingford Trail.

ACTIONS:

- This initiative has NMDDC support. The first section of this Greenway from Newry Albert Basin to the Weir is under construction – completion of this section will be the initial step in the project.
- Plans to work on the cross-border component will be subject to securing appropriate funds. Efforts to obtain the necessary funding are in progress and should be maintained. This project should continue to benefit from the full support of Council.
- Work with Transport N.I. to explore opportunities applicable to this project arising from the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways.

Animation – bringing the destination to life

While commitment and progress on catalyst projects and critical infrastructure is key to increasing the competitiveness of NMD, the market appeal and the strength of the visitor experience will also be dependent on the implementation of strategies and actions that further 'animate' the destination and bring it to life. The focus will need to be on the following:

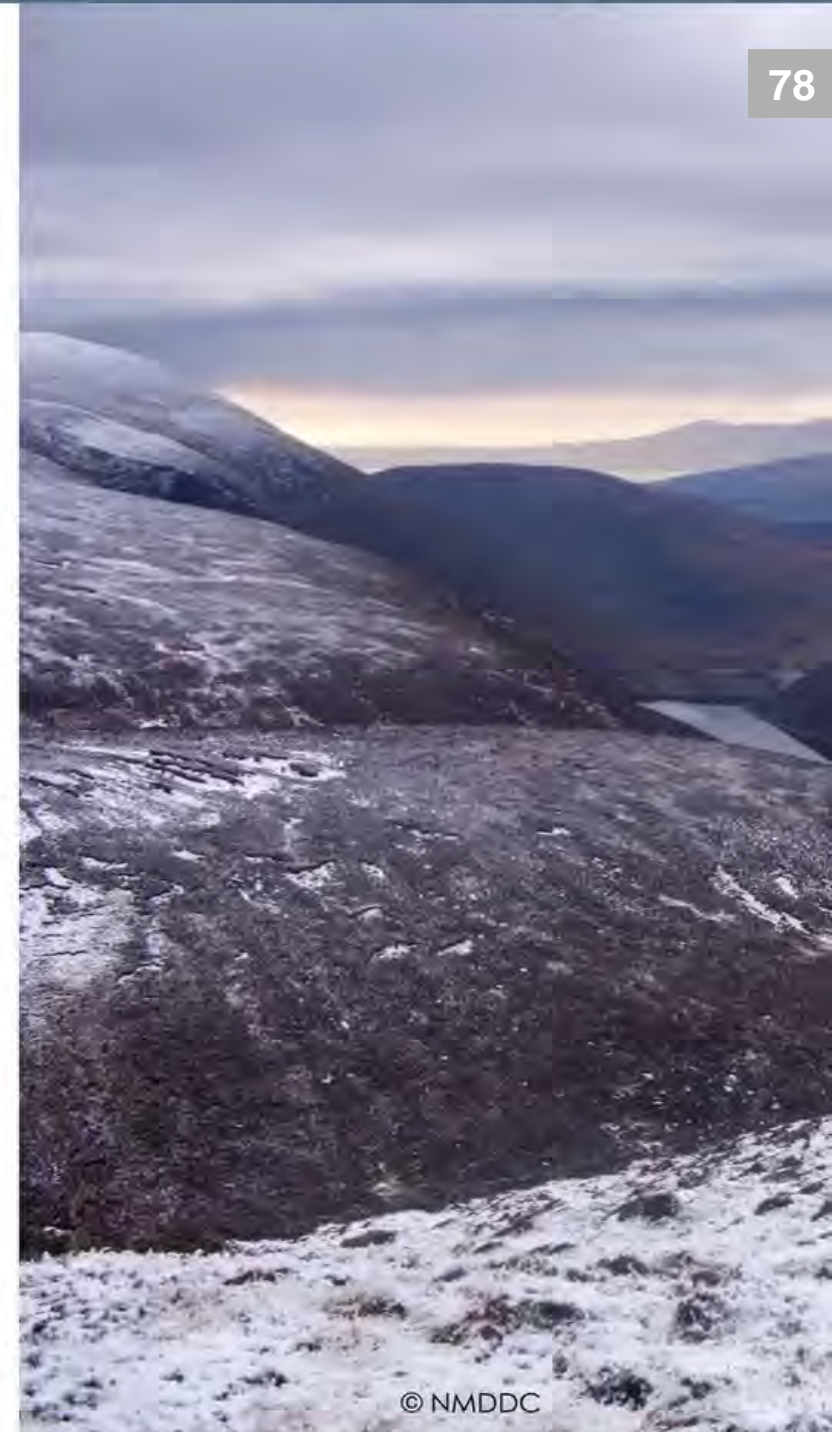
1. Continuing to identify significant **stories** that can be used to enhance existing and new experiences, and can be incorporated into ongoing work on developing interpretive signage, media and related facilities – see Chapter 7.
2. Developing more effective **gateway and hub communities.** – see Chapter 6.



3. Expanding the emphasis on **festivals and events**, particularly on a thematic basis where the underlying theme strengthens the positioning of the destination experience – see Chapter 7. An emphasis on festivals and events that have a literary and strong artistic component within the Mourne and Ring of Gullion, for example, will assist in further highlighting the unique cultural heritage of the area and the way to which this is shaped by the landscape.

In particular, the role of festivals that are likely to have a wider regional appeal within the Ring of Gullion area will raise its profile and assist in offsetting the limited domestic market awareness of the area – an issue arising from the era of 'The Troubles' and a long period where tourism did not play a part in the local economy.

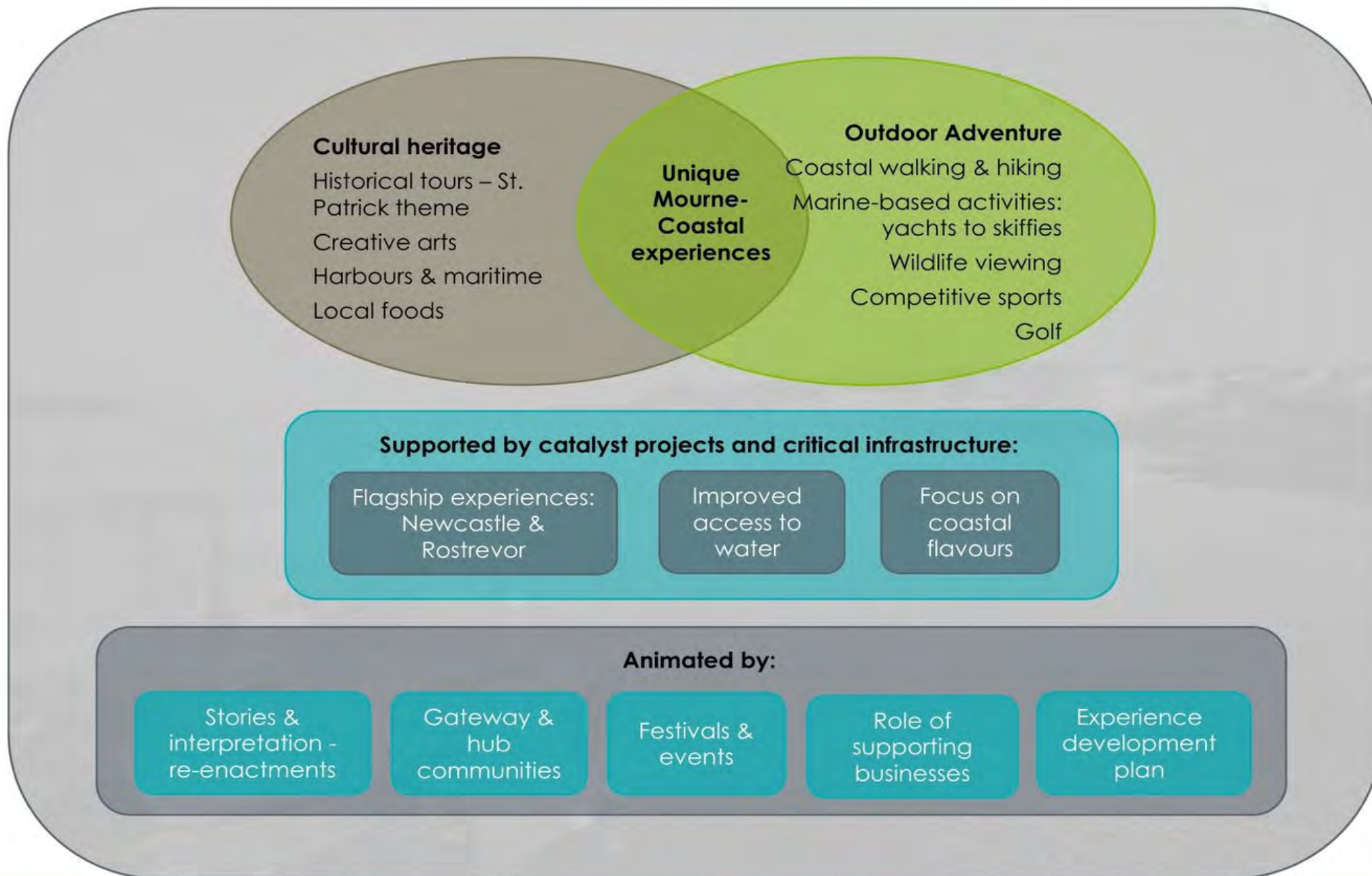
4. Developing the role of **supporting businesses** is a critical success factor in bringing a destination to life. Businesses need to understand the needs of the visitor and have the capacity to respond effectively. There are many touchpoints between the visitor and the wider community, and each of these encounters needs to reinforce a welcome and a commitment to ensuring that the overall experience has the EPIC hallmarks – experiential, personalised, iconic/immersive, and creative. Chapter 7 outlines initiatives that will assist in strengthening industry as a whole.
5. **Enhancing accessibility** – improving connectivity between trail networks, ensuring that signage and wayfinding markers are in place, and maintaining adequate public transportation services are important elements in delivering a satisfactory visitor experience.
6. **Experience Development Plan** – further planning and development of visitor experiences is required if the Mourne and Ring of Gullion are going to attract international markets and generate longer stays. An Experience Development Plan will identify the role that individual businesses can take in delivering experiences and in taking advantage of the catalyst projects. This is discussed in Chapter 7.



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5. A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNE COAST

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Introduction

The Mourne Coastal Experience stretches from Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough. This complements the upland experience, and for a long stretch from Newcastle to Warrenpoint, it is an integral part of the Mourne and Ring of Gullion destination experience that is discussed in the preceding chapter.

The route encompasses the Strangford and Lecale Coast and AONB, and embraces much of the St. Patrick story through its proximity to Downpatrick, once connected to the sea and maritime trade. The entire route stretches from Strangford to Warrenpoint.

Here again the shaping of today's landscape owes much to the centuries of previous eras. The compelling nature of the Mourne Coast can be appreciated through a deeper understanding of its unique composite of topographies, fishing villages, wildlife, scenic beauty, and opportunities for unique outdoor adventure and cultural heritage experiences.



KEY THEMES

1. Inspirational landscapes and seascapes – mountains, bays, lowlands, drumlins and loughs
2. Granite coast
3. Storybook of Ireland – past to present – Kingdom of Ulaid, the Vikings, the Normans, the sacking of Downpatrick
4. St. Patrick
5. Maritime heritage
6. Local foods

Substantial effort has already gone into 'presenting' the Mourne Coast to the visitor as an extension of the Causeway Coast and in keeping with the emphasis in the Republic of Ireland on the Wild Atlantic Way. However, while specific areas of the coastline have considerable appeal and recognition, such as Strangford Lough and Newcastle, the concept of an integrated and holistic coastal experience has not resonated with the market as anticipated.

To address the opportunity, two major planning studies have assessed the coastline from the perspectives of both driving and walking: *The Mourne and Strangford Lough Coastal Walking Path Technical and Feasibility Study (2015)*, and the *Mourne Coastal Route Masterplan (2015)*. Both recognise the considerable potential to use the coastline as an asset to generate sustainable tourism growth, but not without significant capital infrastructure, a focus on trail connectivity and the development of hubs, an emphasis on aesthetics and the delivery of unique coastal experiences.

The development of the coastline visitor experience has been facilitated by a range of community interest groups, the Mournes Heritage Trust and the Strangford and Lecale Partnership. While each organisation has worked enthusiastically to impact local visitation and to protect and conserve fragile coastal ecosystems, there has not been a coordinated and integrated approach to developing and marketing the Mourne Coastal Experience, other than the Mourne Coastal Route signage programme. This Strategy advocates a stronger emphasis on working collaboratively to develop the entire coastal experience.

A number of catalyst projects and critical infrastructural initiatives already recommended in Chapter 4, will have a direct and beneficial impact on the coastal experience – particularly the projects associated with lift-assisted access to the higher Mournes.

Summary of strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Strong cross-section of tourism assets and related themes from coastal ecology to a diverse range of myths and historical accounts. The St. Patrick theme and the association with the contemporary Game of Thrones are both strong – particularly in the Strangford and Lecale coastal area and immediate hinterland.
- Unique fusion of landscapes – from drumlins, to a backdrop of granite peaks, and from estuarine areas to open ocean. It is this fusion that has long attracted the domestic summer market – the primary market for the area.
- Rich assortment of festivals and events – from St. Patrick's Festival to the Newcastle Festival of Flight and the Hallowtides Festival; and maritime and marine themed events such the Strangford Lough Festival.
- Diverse range of coastal geography – from Blue Flag beaches and stretches of strand at Murlough to small and intimate beaches and inlets – with many offering activities that are fairly specific to a particular beach – such as jet-skiing at Killough.

- A strong focus on competitive marine-based events – from yachting to the Skiffie Worlds.
- A significant range of other outdoor activities that are distinctive to the area, including golf and the world renown Royal County Down, horseracing at Downpatrick, and a range of motor sports at Bishopscourt Racing Circuit by Ballyhoran.
- An association with adventure, endurance and competition – this has been reinforced by the designation of Newcastle as the finishing line for the 26 Extreme Coast to Coast Multisport Race Across Ireland in 2017.
- An emerging wedding market and a significant yachting market.
- Significant potential to build local food experiences.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of connectivity in many aspects of the management and delivery of the coastal experience – in management structures, linkages between trails including canoe trails, and in the limited networking and collaboration between business operators.
- The digital presentation of the coastal experience is fragmented.
- Weak orientation of the visitor, and limited effort to 'move the visitor along the coastline experience'.
- Beach access issues along Carlingford Lough and boating access issues in Strangford Lough.
- Concerns regarding the condition of minor roads and signage related issues.
- Limited availability of accommodation, particularly in Downpatrick, and a need for new and innovative camping options.
- Limited boat access for visitors with physical disabilities.



Building on previous plans

A substantial amount of preparatory planning work has been undertaken already for development of the coastal driving route and walking trail. The *Mourne Coastal Route Masterplan* and the *Mourne and Strangford Lough Coastal Walking Path Technical and Feasibility Study* should continue to be used as a basis for providing direction on infrastructural and connectivity priorities that will strengthen the potential of the coastline to be more than simply a traditional summer vacation base. As implementation of these plans continues to move forward, it is important to stress the need for an ongoing programme of action on the aesthetics of place. Litter and anti-graffiti programmes and maintenance of safe public space should be regarded as priorities in developing not just the coast, but all of NMD as a tourism destination.

While improving the physical facilities and trail infrastructure for visitors is an important aspect of strengthening the Mourne Coastal Experience, **it will also be essential to work on developing thematic experiences that animate the coastline** and generate longer stays, repeat business and increased expenditure. Fáilte Ireland's focus on the preparation of experience development plans over and above all the marketing and infrastructural development work that has taken place along the Wild Atlantic Way, highlights the necessity of working with tourism businesses and local communities to encourage them in developing an EPIC (experiential, personalised, iconic/immersive and creative) approach to delivering experiences. This focus underlies the recommendation in Chapter 7 to develop Visitor Experience Development Plans and will be particularly important in providing a new framework of understanding on how industry should work together to bring the coast to life as a destination experience. Indeed, the value of investing in infrastructure will only be fully realised when this experiential focus is adopted as an integral element of creating a competitive coastal experience that will stand out in the marketplace.



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CATALYST PROJECT: Improving access to water

In assessing the coastline, attention should focus on a number of particular areas where access to water for boats or to beaches needs to be improved. The coastline has the potential for offering a range of water-based activities, but its success in attracting visitors is dependent on ensuring that access and related facilities are adequate.

RECOMMENDATION;

Undertake an inventory of access to the coastline and associated current and potential activities. Identify strategies to improve access to water where clear tourism benefits can be anticipated.

ACTIONS:

- Identify and map all existing and potential coastal activities that are dependent on good access to the coastline or to water and undertake a gap analysis. Good boat access to Strangford Lough is problematic and is constraining the growth of recreational boating and yachting in the area. Similarly, beach access is limited along the shores of Carlingford Lough (e.g. to Rostrevor beach) and should be addressed.
- Assess the mooring facilities for transient boat traffic and related transportation linkages as part of the mapping exercise and gap analysis. Strangford Lough is known to attract higher-value yachting visitors, but these visitors are limited in their ability to visit attractions and settlement hubs through the lack of shuttle transportation. This analysis will highlight infrastructural requirements that can then be prioritised and addressed as funding permits.
- As the Lecale Rambler no longer offers its services in the Strangford Lecale area, it will be necessary to reassess the feasibility of reinstating a public transportation service and work with local businesses to see how a new service could be made viable.
- Onshore facilities and aesthetics need to be adequate to meet the needs of today's boating market. This includes assessing the facilities that will be required to grow the **pocket cruise market at Warrenpoint**. Equally the needs of less able-bodied visitors should be considered, and action should be taken to address potential – e.g. the Mourne All-Ability Sailing Club proposals to improve access to boats in Newcastle Harbour should be pursued.



CASE-STUDY

In 2015 **Scotland** launched an ambitious new strategy to 'awaken the giant' – Scotland's marine tourism sector. Through improving the experience of visitors, building facilities and skills within the sector, and promoting the events and activities available on and around the coastline, the strategy aims to grow the total value of marine tourism by 25% over five years – from £360 million to £450 million by 2020.

The Strategy has three core themes – all of which are relevant to improving the Mourne Coastal Experience.

1. Providing authentic experiences – through improving linkages with the wider tourism offering and working more effectively with coastal communities to leverage existing events and to develop and package high quality themed terrestrial and marine experiences. The ability to grow sporting events through a more strategic approach is also regarded as a significant opportunity going forward.

2. Improving the customer journey – through helping businesses cater for the needs of marine visitors more effectively, and through improving digital information and overall booking capabilities. These activities include refining a Marine Host package to be aligned to World Host, to equip industry with appropriate training and accreditation.

3. Building capabilities – through a range of product development, marketing and skills development initiatives. This includes an emphasis on attracting investment to improve infrastructure – for example, the provision of adequate moorings, safe havens and step ashore facilities around the coast, inland waterways and islands of Scotland to ensure the visitor is able to enjoy each marine destination.

As with the NMD Strategy, success of Scotland's marine strategy is seen to be dependent on a partnership approach, and a commitment of the entire Scottish marine tourism industry to continually improve the product and visitor experience, and to work together to promote the marine tourism experience at every opportunity.



CATALYST PROJECT: Focus on coastal flavours

Culinary tourism has seen unprecedented growth in many destinations as visitors seek to connect with local cultures, and the tourism industry responds with a recognition that local foods are a way of portraying the essence of place. Tourism N.I. has sought to benefit from this trend through designating 2016 the N.I. Year of Food and Drink.

Actions already taken to boost culinary tourism include the launch of the Mournes Food Cycle Trail, the Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership's Seafood Report and the work of the Mourne Seafood Cookery School. While there are many restaurants recognised for serving excellent food, more could be done to differentiate the offer by focusing on seafood and authentic flavours and the creation of unique experiences relating to the enjoyment of food.

The figure illustrates what is involved in delivering EPIC and memorable food experiences – an emphasis on sourcing local and authentic high quality product; telling the story of local foods; and providing world-class services with genuine local hospitality.

Ultimately, creating and profiling local food experiences involves much more than developing a brochure – it requires investing considerable time and energy into establishing meaningful networks and strong linkages between all who are involved – from the food producer all the way through the supply chain to the visitor – **it is about building a vision and a commitment to deliver all aspects of a memorable food experience.**



Source: Fáilte Ireland, enhancing Ireland's Food Experiences: The Way Forward – Food Tourism Activity Plan 2014-2016

RECOMMENDATION;

Raise the profile of coastal flavours through working closely with the food and drink sector and related businesses to develop authentic Mourne coastal flavours experiences.

ACTIONS:

- Establish a local food/coastal flavours network to assist in creating dialogue and bringing the various stakeholders together – chefs, restaurants, farmers, seafood producers, educational institutions, specialised retailers, artisan food specialists, and local distributors. An active network will be essential in building the inter-connections that are needed to create experiences that truly local and memorable.
- Develop a Mourne Coastal Flavours Trail that will encourage visitors to discover fresh local flavours as they move along the coastline. This can be developed as a membership programme which should be based on criteria to which participants agree to adhere. Examples include:
 - Commitment to offering an experiential component that highlights the food and drink's local connections;
 - Consistent and posted hours;
 - Open for a predefined minimum season;
 - Agreement to train staff on delivering the experiential component.
- Review and promote opportunities to develop unique culinary events throughout the year that highlight the seasonality of coastal flavours.
- Continue showcasing local foods at all events.
- Work with producers to create coastal seafood experiences that are unique to the coastal communities.
- Create taste events that bring local food and drink providers together to provide local and regional visitors with an immersive experience.

CASE-STUDY

The Feast of Field events in British Columbia are annual sell-outs. Each event is a four hour wandering gourmet harvest festival that highlights the connections between farmers and chefs, field and table, and between farm folks and city folks. With a wine glass and linen napkin in hand, guests stroll across a farmer's field, traveling from tent to tent (sometimes through the barn, past the tractor or around the chicken coup) listening to live music, and tasting gourmet creations from BC top chefs, farmers, fishers, ranchers, food artisans, vintners, brewers, distillers and other beverage producers.

Feast of Fields only features local producers, artisans, winemakers, brewers and distillers, and only those chefs that have existing relationships with local farmers and producers. For those businesses, Feast of Fields offers a great way to highlight their commitment to local, sustainable food and promote their business to customers that truly love and support the local food movement. (www.feastoffields.com)



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As with the Mourne and Ring of Gullion destination experience, the Mourne Coastal Experience will benefit considerably from an emphasis on animating the destination through:

- Stories and interpretation, including re-enactments;
- Vibrant gateway and hub communities;
- Festivals and events;
- Appropriate services from local businesses; and,
- The preparation of a Visitor Experience Development Plan.

These elements are reviewed in the following chapters.



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6. DEVELOPING GATEWAY AND HUB COMMUNITIES

The role of gateway and hub communities

The towns and villages play a significant part in bringing the overall destination experience to life. They have a role either as prominent gateways to an upland or coastal experience, or as smaller service hubs within a wider destination area. This chapter provides a brief overview of significance, issues and priorities for Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry, Warrenpoint/Rostrevor, and the Crossmaglen area in relation to their gateway role.

This role entails:

- Orienting the visitor and servicing their information needs;
- Providing a 'destination experience' in their own right through attractions, activities, evening entertainment, retail and related theming;
- Servicing hospitality needs – restaurants, cafes, pubs and accommodations.

Indeed these roles are not just unique to the towns that have been listed, but are applicable to all communities.

Sense of place – a cross-government priority

The success of the gateway and hub communities as part of the destination experience will partially depend on their individual personality, geographic setting, and sense of place. Most of the communities have Masterplans with many of these plans including initiatives that contribute directly to strengthening the town as a tourism destination. Implementation of these Masterplans will play a key role in enhancing the competitiveness of NMD as a destination and in strengthening the communities as gateways and smaller hubs.

The Newry Masterplan emphasises the importance of the **public realm and defines it as the outdoor areas that are accessible to the public**. This is a principle that is applicable to public space in all communities. To be regarded as attractive, there is a need to ensure that parks, squares, streets, car parks and other more incidental spaces together send out a positive message and contribute to a strong sense of place.

Maintaining the quality of the public realm does not simply relate to enhancement projects and restoration schemes. The ongoing maintenance of streetscape, the cleanliness of open spaces and the absence of weeds and litter are all areas of activity that contribute to creating strong destinations.

Similarly, empty shop fronts and derelict buildings can detract from the destination experience and can send a very mixed message to the visitor. Schemes designed to attract new businesses and convert empty upper floors into residential units will all contribute to injecting a stronger sense of life into the town centres, particularly in the evening.

Clearly a cross-government commitment to tourism will require all NMDDC divisions to be involved in different ways in developing healthy, vibrant and safe town centres – for visitor and resident alike.

The remainder of this chapter looks at the key gateway communities and identifies a range of specific initiatives that will strengthen their position as destinations and as gateways. The discussion is a high-level overview and is not based on a detailed analysis of each community.

Downpatrick

Significance:

Downpatrick is one of Ireland's earliest settlements and has many significant archeological sites within its vicinity. It's unique point of identity is its rich association with the story of St. Patrick, and it has become recognised as the 'cradle of Irish Christianity'. St. Patrick landed in the Downpatrick/Lecale area in 432AD, built his first church at Saul, and after all his travels, he is purported to have died there and his grave is in the grounds of the Cathedral. The story of St. Patrick is told largely through the St. Patrick Centre. The Down County Museum presents the wider history of County Down through its exhibits and artefacts.

Issues:

- Visitors do not stay long. The key constraint is the inadequate accommodation supply. While the town benefits from significant coach traffic to the St. Patrick Centre, it cannot host these visitors overnight.
- The evening economy remains weak and restaurant provision is limited.
- The town centre is congested with the combination of local and through traffic.
- Despite regeneration work, the town has a tired look to it.
- While the St. Patrick theme is the town's point of differentiation, there is little activity to tell the story in the town, beyond the Centre. There is no cohesive strategy in place on how to present this story to the visitor, and 'fitting the pieces' together at times can be difficult for the independent traveller. Considerable effort has been put into developing the regional St. Patrick story in the past through the work of Tourism N.I. on a driving trail, and the conceptual development of St. Patrick's Way – a walking trail between Downpatrick and Armagh. However, the walking trail includes sections on roads and both trails had limited uptake. In general, despite recognising the value of the theme, the local tourism industry has yet to fully embrace an integrated approach to delivering a memorable experience.



Priorities:

- Continue to work on attracting investment for the **hotel sector**. This infrastructure gap has been recognised in various studies and needs to be addressed if the town is to be successful in generating overnight stays. The coach sector has expressed an interest in staying overnight, and the needs of this market must be kept in mind when addressing this gap.
 - In assessing the gaps in accommodation, consider the concept of the WELL-BEING hotel outlined in the 2014 study on *Maximising The Tourism Potential of St Patrick In the Communities of Armagh and Downpatrick*. Creating an accommodation experience that encompasses the principles of 'retreat, contemplation, peace and regeneration of the spirit' will fit with the town's St. Patrick theme.
- **The St. Patrick theme** needs to be offered to the visitor in a more consumable way. Currently a local entrepreneur is working on developing a regular tour that will take in a range of local sites, including St. Patrick's Landing. This tour could play a key role in developing and delivering an actual **'joined-up' experience** and would be attractive to the out-of-country markets. An initiative of this nature could be a local catalyst that is needed for more effective storytelling from other supportive businesses, such as the B&B sector.
 - In joining up the experience, consideration should be given to developing a St. Patrick's circular trail within the Downpatrick-Lecale area that ties together the various key Christian heritage assets within this area.

The St. Patrick Festival that has been planned for the commemorative year of St. Patrick in 2017 has the potential to make the underlying story more meaningful through its emphasis on who Patricius/St. Patrick was, his values, his life, and his legacy. The festival is seeking to tie the story into the wider story of Ireland's spirituality from the pre-Christian era through to contemporary times. This broader context is likely to resonate more effectively with a range of Culturally Curious audiences – it will provide a different perspective to the current approach, while still enhancing the significance of the central theme of St. Patrick.

- Similarly, developing an approach that ties the story into a wider offering that incorporates outdoor activities, music, contemporary arts and culture, and local foods will create a stronger experience and will appeal to markets other than the Culturally Curious.
- Tying the wider story remains important, and will require ongoing collaborative efforts with partners, including ABCBC.
- The success of the 2017 programme should be carefully monitored, including a survey of participants. The programme has the potential of offering a model for events that could run year round.
- The concept of St. Patrick's Way still offers potential to attract markets such as the Great Escapers. However, it only has real value if it is an off-road trail. Efforts should continue to assess whether there is an opportunity to expand the off-road component.

- o The 2014 study on maximising the tourism potential of St Patrick, has a range of potential actions that are designed to animate the story and to take it beyond the St. Patrick Centre. These actions remain relevant – for example, further developing a themed rail experience that brings elements of the story together.
- **Visitor orientation** remains a priority in Downpatrick. Although there is a well-stocked visitor information centre, there needs to be a stronger emphasis on assisting the visitor with understanding how to experience the St. Patrick story and how to connect with the wider area. The Visitor Centre staff need to have a comprehensive understanding of the two key destination experiences within NMD – the Mourne and the Ring of Gullion, and the Mourne Coastal Experience, and be able to demonstrate Downpatrick's gateway role to these wider destination experiences.
 - o The St. Patrick Centre has a pivotal role to play in assisting visitors understand how they can experience the story outside of the Centre.
- An emphasis on building a **vibrant evening economy and a strong sense of place** needs to be maintained. The look and feel of the community should be appraised from the visitor's perspective and actions to address concerns (litter, safety and lighting, arrival points such as the bus station) should be addressed.
- In addition to St. Patrick, Downpatrick is known for its **horseracing**. This unique attribute needs to be given a higher level of profile and can be tied into the many other competitive events that are hosted within NMD, including the motorsports at Bishopscourt Racing Circuit.

Newcastle

Significance:

Newcastle is a gateway to the Mourne and Ring of Gullion destination experience, and for many visitors it is a core hub of the Mourne Coastal Experience. The town has a long history as a summer holiday resort for N.I. residents and a day-trip location for short visits. It has international recognition as the setting for the Royal County Down Golf Club, and the Slieve Donard Hotel has become an iconic hotel in N.I. Substantial investment has been made recently in enhancing the public realm with the work that has been done on redesigning the promenade. The well-recognised backdrop has been made famous by the lyrics of Percy French: "...where the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea", and the town has been described as *one of the most magically positioned seaside resorts in the British Isles*⁸. With its unique geography, Newcastle presents an impressive setting for its annual Festival of Flight.

Issues:

- The town is heavily reliant on good weather. As a result of limited wet-weather facilities, it has a high degree of seasonality. This is exacerbated by its strong association with summer fun – sea and sand holidays.
- Newcastle offers a starting point for many visitors that are on day hikes. However, despite the high number of day trippers, the expenditure left behind in the community is limited.
- The activity base and available opportunities for spontaneous participation in outdoor land and marine-based activities is less sophisticated than the Causeway Coastal Route .



Priorities:

- The destination appeal and the level of expenditure within the community could be significantly enhanced through the **development of new amenities**. In particular the **flagship lift-assisted facility** already highlighted in Chapter 4 would be a game-changer for the town and should be regarded as both a local and regional priority. **Wet weather facilities and enhanced recreational and family leisure amenities** have been identified in two masterplans⁹ as potential projects for Donard Park and Newcastle Islands Park. Again, these new facilities along with the lift-assisted facility, would motivate longer stays and a greater level of expenditure, and would likely attract new markets and increased visitor numbers, while also offsetting many of the issues associated with seasonality.
- As a gateway community to both the coast and the mountains, Newcastle is in a unique and strategic position to service visitors – perhaps more than any other community within NMD. To be effective, it has to continue to 'grow into' this role and **become a dedicated information and trip planning base for visitors looking to explore and experience either setting**. It is likely that commercial enterprise will be required to maximise this opportunity and to drive new business.
- Alongside the provision of information for trip planning, Newcastle should be regarded as **a hub for social and informational events about the outdoors** – whether this is through hosting forums or special release adventure films, the town should seek to create events that will attract Social Energisers with a passion for the outdoors and being with like-minded people.
- With the development of new facilities, consideration should be given to developing **innovative space for interpretation** and telling the regional story. This can co-exist with a trip planning function.
- As noted in the Mourne Coastal Route Masterplan, there is scope to enhance Newcastle's reputation in the delivery of **short-timed activities** (1-2 hours), particularly marine-based activities and boat tours.
- As with all NMD communities, there is a need to continue strengthening the **evening economy**. Similarly, there is room to expand and improve the serviced accommodation base

Newry

Significance:

The City of Newry is the largest settlement in NMD and is located on the Belfast to Dublin corridor, thus acting as the primary gateway to the Mourne and Ring of Gullion from both cities and international ports of arrival. The city has a long history as a medieval town, an industrial port with the oldest summit level canal in Ireland and the UK, and now the administrative centre of NMD. With its rich maritime and industrial heritage, its literary association with writers such as Jonathan Swift, its retail and hospitality base, and its close proximity to two AONBs, Newry is well positioned to fulfil its role as a major gateway.

Issues:

- The City lacks a true identity as a visitor destination.
- There are issues associated with parking (particularly for coaches), ease of navigation and related traffic congestion, availability of good public toilets, accessibility of the tourist information centre, and general aesthetics associated with the public realm.
- The community has yet to maximise key local assets such as the Newry Ship Canal.

Priorities:

- The underlying theme of the Newry City Centre Masterplan is **regeneration**. Implementation of this masterplan will make a significant difference to the visitor appeal of the city – particularly if the waterfront areas are substantially regenerated given their unique character.
- The **opening up of the Newry Ship Canal to small boats** and canoes/kayaks will animate the city centre and will

attract a new segment of visitors to the area.

- Likewise, **linking the Newry Canal Towpath with the greenway to Carlingford** will open up new interest in visiting Newry.
- Newry has **growing strengths as an arts and cultural hub**. This needs to be integrated more effectively into the tourism offering in the form of short activity breaks, packaged with complementary outdoor activities or culinary offers.
- Improving the **navigability and traffic flow of the area**, including signage, will be advantageous for the tourism industry. Various transportation options are under consideration, including the Southern Relief Road. The ultimate focus is on easing traffic flow within the wider region and improving the visitor's ability to readily navigate around and through the city and its immediate hinterland.
- The development of a stronger gateway community can be **further enhanced through**:
 - A strengthened evening economy;
 - Additional higher-end accommodation within the city centre;
 - Access to good Information and booking services – this will become critical in the event of the Mourne and Ring of Gullion area being successful in gaining designation as a Geopark.
- The Masterplan's vision of developing a city that is international, welcoming, healthy and competitive is entirely relevant to its role as a gateway. In addition, the mandate of the Business Improvement District and its activities will assist in strengthening Newry as a major gateway community.

Warrenpoint and Rostrevor

Significance:

These communities, like Newcastle, offer the rare combination of mountains and sea, and the opportunity to build a tourism industry that is based on both the coastal and upland experiences. Rostrevor has firmly established its reputation for mountain biking, while at the same time enjoying a strong and mystical association with the Tales of Narnia and C.S. Lewis.

The stories that underlie these communities are rich and diverse – they speak of legendary and recent giants, Napoleonic major-generals, and the poignant goodbyes as many fled from famine in the mid nineteenth century and sailed to the New Country.

Today, Warrenpoint welcomes visitors who arrive by sea, by ferry or by road. Together these communities and many other coastal hubs, such as Strangford, Ardglass, Kilkeel, and Annalong contribute to a unique visitor experience that is based on an ability to observe authentic coastal lifestyles and experience the diversity of local cultures.

Issues:

- The aesthetics of Warrenpoint marina and port detract from the experience of arriving by sea.
- The Narrow Water Castle is under-utilised – the visitor information services are not always available on public holidays.
- While only three cruise ships have arrived to date, the itineraries that were offered took the visitors out of NMD.

Priorities:

- Explore opportunities to **increase the number of arrivals by cruise ship**, with a particular focus on smaller pocket cruises.
- **Develop a series of land and water-based itineraries** that would provide short but memorable experiences of the coastal and mountain environments for cruise passengers, and would be an alternative to an itinerary that takes visitors to Belfast.
- There is scope to develop other **marine-based activities in Carlingford Lough** – such as eco-tourism based boat tours, canoeing and kayaking guided tours.
- **Aesthetic improvements** to the port and marina area.
- **Facilities for cyclists** – with the potential development of the Great Eastern Greenway, there will be an increase in cyclists. This will generate new demand for a range of services, including accommodation services that are 'bike friendly'. Similarly, with the growth of mountain biking, the demand for accommodation that meets the needs of mountain bikes (repair and cleaning area, safe storage etc.) will increase.
- Position the **Narrow Water Bridge project** as an integral infrastructural element of the Great Eastern Greenway project – the bridge would add significant value to this project.

Crossmaglen and surrounding area

Significance:

Crossmaglen holds a strategic gateway location into NMD and the Ring of Gullion area from South Armagh, with easy access from the M1/A1 Dublin to Belfast arterial route. The town is built around a central square (reputed to be the largest in Ireland) which gives it a distinctive identity. The area has striking geological, landscape and archeological heritage, and has a stronger association with the 'story of Ireland' and its myths and legends than many other established destinations within NMD or indeed Ireland. Crossmaglen is particularly well known in the field of Gaelic football and the town regularly plays host to visiting teams and spectators. The surrounding area is known for its music, poetry and story telling.

Issues:

- During the era of 'the Troubles' tourism was non-existent in the Crossmaglen vicinity and the town still struggles to some extent with market perceptions that are tainted with a negative image. The N.I. domestic market is only slowly discovering the scenic beauty of the area and the charm of Crossmaglen.
- The South Armagh area is less developed than other gateway areas from the perspective of road network, signage, mobile coverage, and availability of accommodation and camping facilities.

Priorities:

- Continue to build **experiences that highlight the local arts, culture and heritage** and identify ways of raising the profile of South Armagh in the domestic market through innovative short activity breaks.
- The area is likely to benefit from the recent announcement of the 4-star hotel and wellness centre at Killeavy Castle – a project that will **raise market awareness** of South Armagh and create a stronger association with health and wellness.
- Continue to build on **the partnership with Monaghan County Council** to enhance the cross-cutting stories, myths and legends across events, arts and cultural activities, outdoor recreation and water-based activities.



7. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Introduction

The direction of this Strategy has been shaped by the 2021 vision statement:

Newry, Mourne & Down is a premier, year-round mountain and maritime destination in Ireland recognised for its EPIC experiences in outdoor adventure, its rich tapestry of cultural heritage, myths and unique stories, and its authentic local life.

The entrepreneurial and customer-focused industry works collaboratively to promote and deliver EPIC moments and advance the sustainable growth of tourism.

To achieve this vision and the underlying goal of a 6% annual growth rate will require doing business differently. An investment in catalyst projects and critical infrastructure creates the framework for establishing stronger destinations, but that will not be sufficient in itself.

The destination experiences that have been presented in this strategy will only come to life for the visitor if these investments are supported consistently by three critical success factors:

1. A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences and story-telling;
2. A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management – product development, infrastructure, leadership and collaboration; and,
3. A compelling market presence and position.

This chapter outlines what is involved in developing **a new paradigm for the delivery of tourism**. Tourism is everyone's business. NMD cannot be a premier destination in Ireland without everyone understanding the significance of tourism – its importance in creating jobs; diversifying the rural economy; ensuring the viability of smaller community businesses; celebrating local cultural heritage values; providing a rationale for maintaining the integrity of landscapes and ecosystems; and, creating a business case for investing in community infrastructure and sense of place.



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A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences and story-telling

The growing demand for experiences and immersive connections with local culture has resulted in destinations increasingly looking at ways of engaging the visitor more effectively. Visitors that are truly engaged tend to stay longer and spend more on a trip.

Storytelling has become a key component of building experiences. An experience should change the way the visitor looks at and feels about the destination. The underlying stories bring the destination to life – they create personality and give meaning and significance to place. Visitors can remember good stories and how an experience made them feel long after other memories of a trip have faded.

NMD is a land of myths and stories. These stories have the potential to differentiate the destination experiences in a way that is unique in N.I. The stories relate to all aspects of the District's cultural and natural heritage. Building new experiences and augmenting existing activities will require a strategic approach to developing this experiential focus – one that involves planning and capacity building.

The following recommendations are designed to assist NMDDC and the wider tourism industry to make the shift away from offering a list of activities to do and sites to see, toward an approach that allows the visitor to learn, participate and engage in an emotional journey within the destination.

RECOMMENDATION:

NMDDC will support the development of an experiential focus and will work with industry to build destination experiences that are distinctive and of sufficient scale and significance to provide international 'cut-through' in the marketplace. This will include the preparation of Experience Development Plans.

ACTIONS:

- Begin the process of **collecting and developing a database of stories**. There are many stories associated with NMD, and a number are already being used to add value to existing activities such as tour guiding. The process of creating an inventory will assist in identifying key themes, and sites and artefacts that are directly linked to the story. The inventory should include the myths, the known





historical accounts, materials on the natural heritage – the geology, the topography and its relationship to land-use through time to the present, and the biodiversity and ecosystems. Work with academics and other experts to build a comprehensive understanding of NMD.

It is recognised that stories can be politically sensitive, particularly with regard to telling the 'story of Ireland', and such stories will need to be handled respectfully. Ultimately there needs to be some degree of consensus on the stories that a community wishes to share.

- **Prepare two Experience Development Plans:**

- The Mourne and Ring of Gullion Destination Experience Development Plan;
- The Mourne Coast Experience Development Plan – to include Downpatrick and its linkages with the coast and Lecale through the life and heritage of St. Patrick, and other relevant historical accounts.

Each plan should focus on identifying key themes that will unify the destination experience and ways of invigorating existing activities. The Plans should assist business operators in understanding how to adopt a different approach that will enable them to align to the key destination themes in a more effective manner.

- **Establish Working Groups for each planning process.** These groups should include key stakeholders and leading business operators from within the destination area. The participants will need to be capable of championing a new approach and/or trail blazing with the adoption of a stronger experiential focus in their own business activities.

- Upon completion of the Plan, review the composition of the Working Group and transition to an Implementation Committee that will oversee implementation of each plan. Ensure that members of the Committee have the passion and capacity to do so effectively.
- Review existing and proposed **festivals and events** against the context of this strategy and the new Experience Development Plans. Festivals and events should be used strategically to enhance the positioning of NMD – in other words to support 'the headline', *mountains, myths and maritime*, and the underlying themes:
 - *Outdoor adventures to challenge the body, spirit and mind*
 - *Unique cultural heritage in inspirational settings*
 - *The storybook of Ireland*

Festivals and events play a very significant role in animating the destination and in generating growth in visitor numbers, particularly in shoulder seasons. NMDDC should establish new criteria for supporting community event funding proposals on the basis on the event's relevance to key underlying themes and stories and to the region's core focus on outdoor adventure.

- Explore entrepreneurial private sector proposals to animate areas through **interpretive re-enactments** of history. Again, establish clear criteria to ensure that such regular or one-time events are in alignment with this strategy and the proposed Experience Development Plans.
- Work with the AONB partnerships to develop a single and **unified guide training programme** and develop a more visible **visitor-facing guiding service**.



A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management

The current approach to destination management, development and marketing has been very fragmented, and has resulted in both gaps and duplication. The need for a 'joined-up' approach relates to product development, infrastructure, leadership and collaboration.

Without adopting this approach, little is likely to change in the short-term and growth of the tourism economy will remain hesitant. This critical success factor is discussed in two different contexts – firstly, in relation to product development and infrastructure; and, secondly in relation to leadership and collaboration.

1. Product development and infrastructure

There is a need to adopt a more holistic perspective to the develop of recreational opportunities and infrastructure that supports the growth of tourism within NMD. While the issues and opportunities of the different destination areas will vary, it is important to assess them against a wider backdrop of the overall District and its linkages with neighbouring Councils both North and South.

RECOMMENDATION:

Review supporting infrastructural requirements for tourism in NMD and prepare or promote appropriate mechanisms to respond to these requirements.

ACTIONS:

- Assess the **connectivity of the District in terms of public transportation**. This should include NMDDC looking at:
 - The viability of reinstating the service that the Lecale Rambler offered (at least in peak season), and the level of need from yachting visitors.

- The need cyclists and mountain bikers may have for transportation services to trail heads.
- The condition of roads and related maintenance issues on routes that tend to be popular driving or cycling routes, including the A2. This assessment should include a signage audit and a review of facilities at key viewpoints and lay-bys. A visitor-centric perspective is particularly important in undertaking this work. (Transport N.I. Policy RSPPG EO29 identifies the roles of the various partners with regard to different types of signs).
- Issues associated with traffic congestion and parking, particularly within gateway communities. This review will include looking at Newry's Southern Relief Road project.
- Opportunities associated with the **Greenore-Greencastle ferry crossing** – assuming that it is in service for 2017.

One particular initiative that should be pursued with N.I. Water, is the option of providing coach access to the **Silent Valley Reservoir**. This was not considered in the recent Silent Valley Recreational Facilities Feasibility Study (2016), but would assist in maintaining the economic viability of the café and related facilities.

- Assess the connectivity of the District in terms of **Wi-Fi and broadband speed**, and identify the areas with challenges. Access to Wi-Fi is an important consideration for international visitors, particularly as information for trip planning becomes increasingly digital. Equally, for businesses to be able to compete effectively in today's technological world, broadband width and speed are both important factors.

- Work with Invest N.I. and Tourism N.I. to **develop an accommodation investment strategy/ portfolio for the entire District**. The shortcomings within the hotel sector have been highlighted in various studies. Equally, there is a further need for new and innovative camping options, such as different glamping structures, yurts and an increase in the number of sites for camper vans. The requirements for new facilities is likely to grow with the ongoing focus on outdoor recreation. The investment strategy should support Council's current efforts to work with investors, and the opportunities should be highlighted in appropriate channels.
 - Assess opportunities for developing a stronger profile in marine and fresh water adventure activities as a means of generating visitor demand. This should also include gaps, such as camping requirements for the coastal canoe trail, and services needed to support the Blueway, assuming further work is undertaken on the Newry Ship Canal

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a three-year action plan for outdoor adventure – land and water-based – that looks at the entire spectrum of opportunities within NMD, but with a particular focus on the Mournes-Gullion area and the Mourne Coast.

An action plan of this nature will assist in identifying gaps and priorities. It should complement the work of the Experience Development Plans and will identify the projects that will have particular visitor appeal versus projects that are of more local concern.

- Develop the **action plan** and in so doing:
 - Work with N.I. Forest Service to look at forest recreation within this broader context.
 - Identify key priorities for trails development across the region within this 3-year timeline, including the actionable items relating to the Great Eastern Greenway.

- Consider developing a **geocache programme** for NMD that supports story-telling and highlights unique cultural and natural heritage sites around the District. A 'reward programme' (e.g. for stamps collected in a 'passport') that is based on offering incentives to stay longer or spend more will benefit local businesses. A programme of this nature, if developed creatively, can assist in dispersing visitors.
- Extend the Ring of Gullion **signage / wayfinding audit** to the Mourne Mountains and the coastal area, including Downpatrick. Address signage issues that are identified.



One area of outdoor recreation that requires particular focus relates to **the overall cycling experience**. Cycling has the capacity to strengthen the Mourne-Gullion destination experience to a significant extent. Given the growth of downhill mountain biking within the area and the general surge of interest in both leisure and competitive cycling within NMD, this is a sector that needs to be singled out for specific action.

RECOMMENDATION:

As part of the outdoor recreation action plan, review the entire spectrum of cycling and biking opportunities and develop a series of actions that will generate strategic growth of cycling and biking as a tourism sector while increasing NMD's appeal as a cycling destination for all cycling and biking markets.

ACTIONS

A tourism cycling strategy focuses on how to use cycling and biking as a demand generator for tourism. It has a different perspective to N.I.'s *Changing Gear* bicycle strategy which looks at the community needs and actions that would increase cycling as a mode of transport. Obviously there are overlaps and a tourism-focused strategy will complement the N.I. strategy.

A cycling and biking strategy should be based on the following activities:

- Map the location of current and potential cycling and biking routes, and identifying 'signature' or 'EPIC' rides (in addition to the mountain bike trails).
- Identify suitable databases such as trailforks.com or mapmyride.com. In both of these examples, the mapping and profiling of opportunities in NMD is limited.
- Explore how to leverage the link with Sustrans National Route 1 which can potentially link Belfast with the Ring of Gullion, with much of the journey on greenways, including the Newry Canal towpath. As further linkages into Co. Louth are made through progress on the Great Eastern Greenway, NMD's strategic location as a cycling destination becomes more prominent – particularly given the scenic beauty of the Mourne and the Ring of Gullion.



- Assess en-route signage and trail-head facilities and identify priority projects.
- Review the potential to designate 'quiet roads' where vehicular speed can be reduced (likely to be accomplished through working with Transport N.I.) – new signage can promote safe sharing of the road.
- Identify potential experiences that can be paired with cycling and explore ways of developing these experiences, including strengthening the existing Mourne Foods Cycle Trail.
- Research and create an awareness of visitor needs within this activity sector – accommodation requirements, bike storage, potential for guided tours, location of rental and repair services, and transportation options. Consideration should be given to developing a 'bike friendly' business scheme.
- Developing front counter staff knowledge on the spectrum of opportunities throughout NMD.
- Explore the opportunity to continue building the reputation of the area as a premier biking and cycling destination. A number of highly successful events have been held at Castlewellan and Rostrevor, but establishing a multi-day annual event that includes events for children, annual adult competitive events, opportunities to 'demo' new equipment, evening events etc. will begin to solidify the reputation. The cycling events that were launched in 2016 as part of the N.I. Festival of Cycling is a strategic move in that direction.

In British Columbia, two major events have become core to the status of mountain biking in Whistler and Squamish – Crankworx and Test of Metal. Similarly, events such as the Moab EPIC in Utah (part of the AXS Race Series – endurance events where participants choose a route with a topographic map, have helped define the nature of mountain biking in Moab. Elsewhere, new annual GrandFondo road races are developing – again in response to the growing interest in road racing. Events of this nature have the potential to be held in shoulder seasons and can bring in considerable expenditure to a local community.



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2. Leadership and collaboration

Developing a 'joined-up' approach to leadership and collaboration is of paramount importance to the growth of tourism and the successful implementation of this strategy. Without a change in how business is done, NMD is unlikely to see much change to its current dependence on the highly seasonal domestic market with its relatively low-yield returns. Attracting new markets and establishing stand-out in the market place through the develop of EPIC experiences will require visionary leadership and strong collaboration.

The following recommendations represent the nature of change required. They represent a team approach with everyone pulling in the same direction. They involve new structures, new and strengthened working relations between partners, and a new approach to overseeing tourism within Council. These recommendations will require commitment and passion to realise the vision and goals that have been established in this Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION:

Establish a new structure and model to oversee and manage tourism based on:

1. **A new NMDDC inter-departmental tourism working group to work alongside a stronger and more focused team of officers within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism.**
2. **A reorganised internal structure within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism to oversee all aspects of experience development, destination management, visitor services and the marketing of NMD destinations – in partnership with key external agencies.**
3. **An industry advisory group based on a public-private participation model.**

ACTIONS:

Each of these structures has distinct roles. Working together to implement this strategy will create synergies and momentum that will facilitate progress. The approach is designed to build on existing expertise and to spread the benefits of current good practice.



1. A new NMDDC inter-departmental tourism working group to work alongside a stronger and more focused team of officers within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism

This group is designed to facilitate the cross-government approach to developing tourism that has been stressed throughout this strategy.

- Identify the critical touch points that other departments have with tourism and the staff most able to influence decision making in relation to potential tourism interests.
 - Meet every two months to review all NMDDC policies and activities that are likely to impact tourism – e.g. a public art programme.
 - Develop a deeper cross-government understanding of tourism and the impact of Council policies and programmes on competitiveness. Use the dialogue to identify ways of implementing the strategy through regular Council activities.

2. A reorganised internal structure within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism to oversee all aspects of experience development, destination management, visitor services and the marketing of NMD destinations – in partnership with key external agencies.

A cohesive approach to the delivery of services relating to all aspects of tourism and to the implementation of this Strategy is essential if tourism growth is to be achieved. Under this recommendation, the Department of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism will undertake a restructuring to establish internal units responsible for experience development, destination management, visitor services and the marketing of NMD destinations.

These units in turn would work with a range of partners to deliver the required services on the ground using a combination of internal staff resources and external service agreements to ensure the effective management, development and marketing of NMD destination experiences.

- Develop an NMDDC **Tourism Division Action Plan** that outlines the roles of the Division in facilitating tourism growth and overseeing the implementation of the Strategy. Restructure staff responsibilities accordingly and ensure that internal capacity to provide leadership is adequate.
- Develop a delivery model that will facilitate a unified and coordinated approach to the management of tourism assets within the Mourne and Ring of Gullion Destination, particularly in light of the joint area seeking Global Geopark designation. This is likely to involve a strong partnership agreement with the Mourne Heritage Trust given their experience in recreation resource management, the provision of ranger services, and their ability to work collaboratively with a range of partners.
- Consideration should be given to ultimately proposing a wider geographic mandate for this delivery model – one that encompasses both the Mourne-Gullion area and the coastline. Many of the destination management functions are similar – trails development and maintenance, and establishing partnerships with land-owners and agencies to improve recreational access.
- Oversee the development of the Experience Development Plans and work with partners to develop experiences and strengthen industry capacity to deliver experiences. Again, this may involve out-sourcing roles, such as training, to partners with the prerequisite skills and experience.

3. An industry advisory group based on a public-private participation model.

- Establish an advisory working group consisting of officer and elected official representatives together with a cross-section of industry 'champions'. This group should be regarded as the 'voice of industry' and will act as a liaison group for Council.
- Develop Terms of Reference for group members. It is anticipated that NMDDC will assist with servicing the administrative needs of this advisory group.

Building a strong industry

Strengthening the competitiveness of NMD and its destination experiences will require developing a stronger programme of support for industry and facilitating a greater degree of networking.

RECOMMENDATION;

NMDDC will take the lead in building supportive services for the District's tourism industry and acting on behalf of it to build strong partnerships with national stakeholders and agencies

ACTIONS:

- Develop a **programme of supportive services** to include:
 - A business mentorship programme delivered primarily by webinar – to include topics such as on-line marketing and building unique experiences.
 - The development of an industry-facing website to act as a communications channel and an online resource.
 - Regular communications with industry to ensure that industry is well informed of relevant activities – the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association in British Columbia offers a weekly news service to industry

that has become highly valued and well followed: <http://news.totabc.org/>

- A business start-up programme and advisory service to encourage new entrepreneurs.
- Networking activities, including an annual tourism forum to review progress on implementation, discuss forthcoming activities relating to the Strategy and provide an opportunity to bring in experts and speakers on relevant topics.
- Familiarisation trips for front line staff to increase awareness of existing product and experiences, and improve their ability to cross-market.
- Services to assist business operators in building new packages.
- Planning advice – it is recommended that NMDDC has a planning officer dedicated to tourism.
- Improve the wider community's understanding of the **value and significance of tourism** through working with the media promote relevant news.
 - Undertake a survey every 3 to 6 months to gain insight on business confidence and produce a confidence index.
- Develop strong working relations with external agencies such as the Warrenpoint Harbour Authority and N.I. Screen to grow niche sectors .
- Continue to promote the importance of sustainability practices and the Green Tourism programme.
- Work with Tourism N.I. and the Department for the Economy to assess skills training and related labour needs for the District.

A compelling market presence and position

The emphasis throughout this Strategy has been on developing outstanding products and experiences that will differentiate NMD from other destinations. Success in creating this differentiation and *delivering EPIC moments* true to the underlying 'promise' will be the cornerstone of building a compelling market position – one that aligns with the 'headline' and the related themes.

This emphasis has been designed to support and be supported by the direction that Northern Ireland as a whole is taking in developing a major umbrella proposition, with a series of experiential propositions around the country. This will ensure that NMD can be part of branding and marketing programmes of scale and quality that will have real impact on external target markets.

To attempt to market the District on its own would be costly and would only have a marginal impact on the external markets that have been identified in this strategy. On the other hand, marketing as an integral part of N.I. and the island of Ireland can potentially have a much greater impact given the creative branding of scale that is being developed and implemented by both Tourism N.I. and Tourism Ireland, the growing appeal of the major propositions such as the Wild Atlantic Way, and the critical mass of the tourism experiences at this level.

For international, British and Republic of Ireland target market segments, it is anticipated that the new N.I. experience brand will provide the motivation for visitors to travel to the North, visiting NMD as part of an itinerary around N.I. or Ireland as a whole. The task for NMD is to support this experience brand through ensuring that the District has the compelling experiences to offer that will motivate visitors to stay. In this context the positioning of the District must be seen as a key part of the new N.I. proposition.

For domestic markets, the enhancement of the offer as proposed in this Strategy and its promotion through effective methods, with a strong focus on active and passive breaks and niche markets will contribute to the growth of tourism.



RECOMMENDATION:

The focus of marketing will be on supporting the promotion of compelling experiences and aligning with Tourism N.I.'s new and forthcoming creative branding.

ACTIONS:

- Develop a consolidated and unified visitor-facing website for the destination experiences within NMD, that provides the platform for developing an integrated digital and social media strategy. The website should house a comprehensive and up-to-date events calendar.
- Align the delivery of NMD visitor information services with the *N.I Visitor Information Strategy 2016-2020*.
- Develop a content management strategy covering acquisition, management and distribution of content.
- Prepare an integrated marketing action plan.

Measuring success

Overall success will be measured against the umbrella goal of working collaboratively toward assisting N.I. achieve its targeted growth rate of 6% per annum in overnight expenditure. The statistics that are produced annually for Local Government Districts (see Appendix) will provide a gauge for progress.

More detailed performance measures will be included in the NMDDC Tourism Division Action Plan and will relate to Council's role in implementation.

It is anticipated that NMDDC will produce an annual report on the overall implementation of the Tourism Strategy.

*It is a rough road that leads
to the heights of greatness*

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

*Coming together is a
beginning; keeping together
is progress; working together
is success*

Henry Ford

8. SUMMARY ACTION PLAN – RECOMMENDATIONS

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A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNES & RING OF GULLION

UNESCO Global Geopark designation:

Prepare a **revised application for Global Geopark status** to be submitted to the UK National Commission for UNESCO and **establish a new management infrastructure** to allow for fully coordinated and cohesive management

Flagship experience – the Newcastle uplift facility to the higher Mournes:

Continue to move forward with the development of an **iconic and innovative uplift attraction that strengthens the overall destination experience of both the coastal route and the mountain.** (Also relevant to the MOURNE COASTAL EXPERIENCE)

Lift assisted access for mountain biking:

Continue to review critical gaps and opportunities to further develop mountain biking in NMD, including the **feasibility of developing lift-serviced access facilities and expanding training facilities at Rostrevor.** (Also relevant to the MOURNE COASTAL EXPERIENCE)

The Newry Canal 'Blueway' opportunity

Develop a **memorandum of understanding between NMDDC and ABCBC** to move forward with the **restoration of the Newry Ship Canal as a 'Blueway' navigable by canoes and small boats**, and support the local IWAI chapter in undertaking the project.

Connecting with the Great Eastern Greenway:

Continue to work on developing the concept of the Great Eastern Greenway **through building connectivity between the Newry Canal Towpath and the Omeath to Carlingford Trail.**

A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNE COAST

Improved access to water:

Undertake an inventory of access to the coastline and associated current and potential activities. Identify **strategies to improve access to water where clear tourism benefits can be anticipated.**

Focus on coastal flavours:

Raise the profile of coastal flavours through working closely with the food and drink sector and related businesses to **develop authentic Mourne coastal flavours experiences.**

GATEWAY AND HUB COMMUNITIES

- Orienting the visitor and servicing their information needs;
- Providing a 'destination experience' in their own right through attractions, activities, evening entertainment, retail and related theming;
- Servicing hospitality needs – restaurants, cafes, pubs and accommodations.

DOWNPATRICK: Continue to work on attracting investment for the hotel sector; develop a 'joined-up' St. Patrick experience; strengthen the evening economy and visitor orientation; raise the profile of other activities such as horse-racing.

NEWCASTLE: Develop new visitor attractions and facilities, including the lift-assisted facility; become a dedicated information and trip planning base for mountains and coast alike; become a hub for social and informational events about the outdoors; develop short-timed activities.

NEWRY: Continue to implement the Newry City Centre Masterplan, given its focus on restoration; open up of the Newry Ship Canal to small boats and canoes/kayaks; link the Newry Canal Towpath with the greenway to Carlingford; improve the navigability and traffic flow of the area.

WARRENPOINT / ROSTREVOR: Pursue the growth of the 'pocket ship' cruise industry; develop marine-based activities in Carlingford Lough; develop facilities that will complement the Great Eastern Greenway project, including the Narrow Water Bridge.

CROSSMAGLEN & AREA: Continue to build experiences that highlight the local arts, culture and heritage; explore health and wellness as an emerging opportunity; raise the profile of the area in the domestic market.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

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A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences and story-telling

NMDDC will support the development of an experiential focus and will **work with industry to build destination experiences that are distinctive and of sufficient scale and significance to provide international 'cut-through' in the marketplace.** This will include the preparation of **Experience Development Plans.**

A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management

1. Product development and infrastructure

Review supporting infrastructural requirements for tourism in NMD and prepare or promote appropriate mechanisms to respond to these requirements.

Develop a **three-year action plan for outdoor adventure** – land and water-based – that looks at the entire spectrum of opportunities within NMD, but with a particular focus on the Mourne Gullion area and the Mourne Coast.

As part of the outdoor recreation action plan, **review the entire spectrum of cycling and biking opportunities** and develop a series of actions that will generate strategic growth of cycling and biking as a tourism sector while increasing NMD's appeal as a cycling destination for all cycling and biking markets.

A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management

2. Leadership and collaboration

Establish a new structure and model to oversee and manage tourism based on:

- a) A **new NMDDC inter-departmental tourism working group** to work alongside a stronger and more focused team of officers within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism.
- b) **A reorganised internal structure within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism** to oversee all aspects of experience development, destination management, visitor services and the marketing of NMD destinations – in partnership with key external agencies.
- c) **An industry advisory group** based on a public-private participation model.

NMDDC will take the lead **in building supportive services for the District's tourism industry** and acting on behalf of it to build strong partnerships with national stakeholders and agencies

A compelling market presence and position

The focus of marketing will be on supporting the promotion of compelling experiences and **aligning with Tourism N.I.'s new and forthcoming creative branding.**

ENDNOTES

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1. The tourist economy in Northern Ireland - <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/tourist-economy-northern-ireland>
2. Over two fifths (43%) hotels reported increased visitor numbers compared with the same period last year according to the June 2016 Tourism Industry Barometer – a survey of tourism businesses designed to provide insight into tourism performance, carried out by Millward Brown Ulster.
3. The Background Report (April 2016) prepared by TEAM and NMD's Tourism Position Paper (2016) both provide comprehensive summaries of this context, and the range of departments, agencies and organisations that have the potential to strengthen the development of tourism.
4. KPMG et al, 2013, Assessment of the Existing and Potential Tourism Development Opportunities Available from Northern Ireland Forests. A new vision for forest related tourism has been established *to use the forest estate to deliver an exceptional visitor and short break experience for all which will increase the economic impact of forest related tourism in Northern Ireland.*
5. NITB, 2013, *Northern Ireland Home of Great Events: Events Strategic Vision to 2020*
6. November 2015, *Northern Ireland Assembly Briefing Paper on Northern Ireland Tourism: Sectors*
7. The Background Report to this strategy maps the linkages between the actions in the *Economic Regeneration & Investment Strategy 2015-2020* and a range of tourism-related elements such as positioning, product and experience development, and capacity building.
8. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/aug/08/lets-move-to-newcastle-county-down>
9. AECOM, 2015, *Mourne Coastal Route – Draft Tourism Masterplan: Newcastle Cluster*, and 2013, *Southeast Coast Masterplan*.

APPENDIX

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Tourism performance in NMD District 2015

LGD	Number of trips	% of NI trips	Total spend	% of NI spend	Av. Length of stay (2014 data)	Av. spend/night (2014 data)	2013-15 % domestic visitors	Hotel rooms + other rooms	Av. hotel room occ.
Antrim & N'abbey	204,290	4%	£34.2m	4%	3.6	£51	42%	631+1,788	61%
Ards & N. Down	376,755	8%	£51m	7%	3.5	£28	52%	299+568	54%
ABC	149,449	3%	£22.5m	3%	3.3	£37	43%	208+266	55%
Belfast	1,361,193	29%	£278m	37%	3.2	£67	30%	3,386+2,711	77%
CCG	911,388	20%	£136.8m	18%	3.6	£49	66%	723+4,221	59%
Derry & Strabane	223,172	5%	£42.5	6%	3.5	£49	38%	659+1,051	59%
Fermanagh & Omagh	341,051	7%	£54.6m	7%	2.8	£60	66%	415+1,360	59%
Lisburn & Castlereagh	130,924	3%	£24.9m	3%	4.0	£48	21%	255+224	52% (2014)
MEA	382,224	8%	£45.6m	6%	3.6	£47	52%	479+463	64%
Mid Ulster	155,708	3%	£22.3m	3%	2.9	£43	51%	238+271	48%
NEWRY MOURNE DOWN	404,442	9%	£47.7m	6%	2.6	£36	66%	529+1,294	55%



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**

**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN TOURISM STRATEGY

SUMMARY ACTION PLAN – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2017/18

A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNES & RING OF GULLION

Brand Position

- Establish a Strategic Fit with the Northern Ireland Brand

A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences, story-telling and events

- Commission 2 no. Experience Development Plans for The Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion and Mourne Coastal experience (Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough)
- Experiential Package Development which is industry focused
- Development of Destination stories in partnership with DEA forums
- Review and agree Framework and Action Plan for Events in the Context of new Experience Development Plans
- Develop a Business Support Programme with the Industry

Flagship experience – the Newcastle uplift facility to the higher Mournes:

- Review the recommendations of the Mourne Mountains Gateway study and agree the way forward with NMDDC

UNESCO Global Geopark designation:

- Agree the submission of an application to UNESCO for Geopark Status and a Communications plan with Council
- Establish a Task and Finish group with relevant local and regional stakeholders to oversee submission of the application working closely with Geological Survey NI
- Operate as a De facto Geopark from September 17

Lift assisted access for mountain biking, Rostrevor:

- Complete detail design of blue grade family trail
- Apply for planning permission for the Blue Grade family trail
- Seek funding for the Blue Grade Family Trail
- Undertake detailed design for a Pump Track
- Review opportunity for enhanced trail development, viewing opportunities for events and Bike lift provision with local user groups and seek funding to initiate feasibility study

The Newry Canal 'Blueway' opportunity

- Develop a memorandum of understanding between NMDCC and ABCBC to support restoration of Newry Ship Canal as a navigable channel for canoes and small boats
- Develop an Action Plan in consultation with key stakeholders to support restoration works.

Connecting with the Great Eastern Greenway:

- Submit planning application to complete phase 2 from the Weir to Omeath and from Carlingford Marina to Carlingford which will link to the existing Omeath to Carlingford Marina Greenway
- Complete Feasibility Studies on Greeway projects for Downpatrick to Newcastle, Downpatrick to Ardglass and Comber to Downpatrick and seeking funding for implementation

A FOCUS ON DESTINATION EXPERIENCES – THE MOURNE COAST**Brand Position**

- Establish a Strategic Fit with the Northern Ireland Brand

A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences, story-telling and events

- Commission 2 no. Experience Development Plans for The Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion and Mourne Coastal experience (Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough)
- Experiential Package Development which is industry focused
- Agree criteria and gather Destination stories in partnership with DEA forums
- Review and agree Framework and Action Plan for Events in the Context of new Experience Development Plans
- Develop a Business Support Programme with the Industry

Improved access to water:

Undertake an inventory of access to the coastline and associated current and potential activities. Identify strategies to improve access to water where clear tourism benefits can be anticipated.

- Identify and map all existing and potential coastal facilities including moorings for visiting craft
- Identify opportunities to increase visitor revenue and access to water with an implementation programme with particular emphasis on Strangford Lough and Carlingford Lough in partnership with Ards and North Down BC and Louth County Council
- Assess the feasibility of developing a new Rambler service with local businesses
- Development of a series of packages for Cruise Warrenpoint and sales programme agreed and pursued to small cruise operators

Focus on coastal flavours:

Raise the profile of coastal flavours through working closely with the food and drink sector and related businesses to develop authentic Mourne coastal flavours experiences.

- Establish Coastal flavour food and drink circle
- Develop a Mourne Coastal Flavours Trail experience which will be based on

- participants adhering to agreed criteria
- Develop the Food Proposition as a key part of Councils Tourism Events Programme
- Continue to grow bespoke food and drink events
- Work with producers to create memorable food experiences

GATEWAY AND HUB COMMUNITIES

- Orienting the visitor and servicing their information needs;
- Providing a 'destination experience' in their own right through attractions, activities, evening entertainment, retail and related theming;
- Servicing hospitality needs – restaurants, cafes, pubs and accommodations

DOWNPATRICK: Downpatrick: Continue to work on attracting investment for the hotel sector; develop a joined up St Patrick/Downpatrick experience; Strengthen the evening economy and visitor orientation; raise the profile of other activities such as horse racing.

- Produce a product enhancement design focused vision for Downpatrick - one that will bring together its many individual attractions/assets as a single product offering, utilizing the cultural, industrial and landscape heritage that is unique to Downpatrick.
- Review the inventory of St Patrick Sites and attractions within the Downpatrick/Lecale area in anticipation of developing a trail(s) or related visitor experiences.
- Identify issues relating to visitor orientation, signage, access and the potential for enhanced interpretation and animation
- Continue engagement with hotel developers - develop a business case outline as part of the larger portfolio of tourism investment opportunities.
- Review all aspects of the public realm and determine priority initiatives in relation to interpretation, overall look and feel, and sense of safety, all delivered in a joined up approach, particularly in public areas such as the bus station and Grove.
- Assess evening economy and identify gaps by season and by day of the week.
- Review frontage improvement schemes and identify alternative uses for vacant buildings in line with all the aforementioned initiatives.

NEWCASTLE: Develop new visitor attractions and facilities; become a dedicated information and trip planning base for mountains and coast alike; become a hub for social and informational events about the outdoors; develop short-timed activities.

- Complete the Mourne Gateway study and agree the way forward with NMDDC and relevant stakeholders
- Assess opportunity for wet weather facilities and enhanced recreational and family leisure facilities

GATEWAY AND HUB COMMUNITIES

- Progress the adventure activities/advisory booking service to be incorporated into the extended VIC 'hub' service at Newcastle in alignment with the VIC strategy.
- Working with the private sector to develop and promote a range of short experiential outdoor activities
- Assess evening economy and identify gaps by season and by day of the week.

NEWRY: Given its focus on restoration; open up of the Newry Ship Canal to small boats and canoes/kayaks; link the Newry Canal Towpath with the greenway to Carlingford; improve the navigability and traffic flow of the area.

- Pursue the establishment of a memorandum of understanding with ABCBC to pursue opening up of ship canal to small boats/canoes and agree an action plan on key works required to aid navigation
- Assess requirements and pursue linking the Newry Canal Towpath to the Greenway project
- Build and promote specific experiences that promote the art and cultural offering
- Continue engagement with hotel developers – develop a business case outline as part of the larger portfolio of tourism investment opportunities.
- Assess opportunity to improve information provision and booking services within the City
- Continue to pursue opportunities to enhance navigation and traffic flow through review of city centre signage and continue to pursue larger strategic transport projects such as the Southern Relief Road
- Assess evening economy and identify gaps by season and by day of the week.
- Development of a new major event for Newry based on the Maritime heritage

WARRENPOINT / ROSTREVOR: Pursue the growth of the 'pocket ship' cruise industry; develop marine-based activities in Carlingford Lough; develop facilities that will complement the Great Eastern Greenway project, including the Narrow Water Bridge.

- Develop an Action Plan for Carlingford Lough
- Development of a series of packages for Cruise Warrenpoint and sales programme agreed and pursued to small cruise operators
- Build and promote specific experiences that feature outdoor activities on both land and water with the industry
- Complete detailed design for blue grade mountain biking and walking trails at Rostrevor Forest and Kilbroney Park and pursue funding opportunities for delivery
- Review opportunity for Bike lift provision with local user groups and seek funding to initiate feasibility
- Review outdoor tourism event opportunities and agree actions to grow the destination as the premier outdoor activity destination in NI
- As part of the Great Eastern Greenway assess opportunities to incorporate strategic linkages with Narrow Water Bridge project

CROSSMAGLEN & SLIEVE GULLION AREA: Continue to build experiences that highlight the local arts, culture and heritage; explore health and wellness as an emerging opportunity; raise the profile of the area in the domestic market.

- Build and promote a specific experience(s) that is based in the Ring of Gullion and

GATEWAY AND HUB COMMUNITIES

packaged with the Cross Square Hotel and group accommodation sector (arts, history, literary, music, wellness theme etc.) into the north-west market (MEA, CCG, and Derry & Strabane) to develop new awareness of this area as a destination.

- Assess the current value of sport tourism to the area and identify opportunities for growth.
- Assess potential for interpretive signage – e.g. around the Ring of Gullion and the town square and new ways of further animating the square and using it as a focal area in attracting new visitors.
- Completion of Slieve Gullion Forest Park Economic Appraisal and pursue funding for key projects
- Assess potential for enhanced recreational and tourism development at Camlough Lake on completion of the Rehabilitation Programme
- Pursue funding for implementation of Derrymore Feasibility Study & Action Plan

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

A focus on creating 'EPIC' destination experiences, story-telling and events

- Commission 2 no. Experience Development Plans for The Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion and Mourne Coastal experience (Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough)
- Experiential Package Development which is industry focused
- Development of Destination stories in partnership with DEA forums
- Review and agree Framework and Action Plan for Events in the Context of new Experience Development Plans
- Develop a Business Support Programme with the Industry

A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management

Product development and infrastructure

- Develop a three-year action plan for outdoor adventure – land and water-based – that looks at the entire spectrum of opportunities within NMD, but with a particular focus on the Mournes Gullion area and the Mourne Coast (Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough)

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

A joined-up approach in relation to all aspects of destination management

Leadership and collaboration

- Establish a new NMDCC inter-departmental tourism working group to work alongside a stronger and more focused team of officers within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism.
- To reorganise the internal structure within Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism to oversee all aspects of experience development, destination management, visitor services and the marketing of NMD destinations – in partnership with key external agencies.
- Establish an industry advisory group based on a public-private participation model.
- Development of Project plan for Strategy Implementation, considering resource requirements

A compelling market presence and position

The focus of marketing will be on supporting the promotion of compelling experiences and aligning with Tourism NI's focus on driving international visitors and bednights

Agenda Item:	[This is the number the item will be given]
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Land at Slieve Croob
Date:	Monday 12 December 2016
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Heather Wilson, Countryside Access Officer

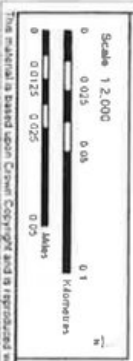
Decisions Required

To note/agree etc the contents of the report and approve recommendations at Section 3

1.0	<p>Purpose and Background</p> <p>To consider possible acquisition of land in Slieve Croob for future development of walking trails and to ensure environmental protection of this area</p>
2.0	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>A site meeting was held with Cllr Pol O’Gribin in September 2016 to discuss the potential for developing further walking trails in the area. He was also keen that the Council purchase land at the summit of Slieve Croob for the development of such trails and to ensure the environmental protection of the area.</p> <p>Access to the summit of Slieve Croob is currently limited to the western flank of the mountain with the development of the Transmitter Road to facilitate access to communications masts. The legacy Banbridge District Council agreed a permissive path with the relevant landowners (all public bodies) over this road to allow for public access to the summit. There is currently no agreed access to the southern or eastern side of the mountain-options for access were explored some years ago by legacy Down District Council but unfortunately no agreement could be reached with the landowners.</p> <p>In March 2015 the Northern Ireland Environment Agency declared an Area of Special Scientific Interest at close to the summit of Slieve Croob by reason of its geological features. As part of this designation, NIEA have listed a number of activities as likely to damage the geological interest of the area, including alteration of natural features and recreational activities. Therefore any proposed recreational activity in the area will require the assent of NIEA and careful management.</p> <p>Currently Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) is carrying out a community trails plan for the Slieve Croob and the Mourne DEA’s which will include consultations with local communities in the area. A key part of the plan will be to undertake a strategic review of all existing trails and identify gaps in the current provision, as well as assessing the need and public benefit of each community trail project identified.</p>
3.0	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Given that ORNI are currently developing a community trails plan for the Slieve Croob and Mourne DEA’s it would be recommended that no further action is taken in regard</p>

	to developing trails or purchasing land in the Slieve Croob area until completion of the study.
4.0	Resource Implications None currently
5.0	Equality and Good Relations implications None identified
6.0	Appendices Map identifying the location of the ASSI.

SLEIVE CROOB



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SLEIVE CROOB AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Map referred to in the Declaration dated

SITE BOUNDARY The Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) includes all the lands highlighted within the solid coloured line.

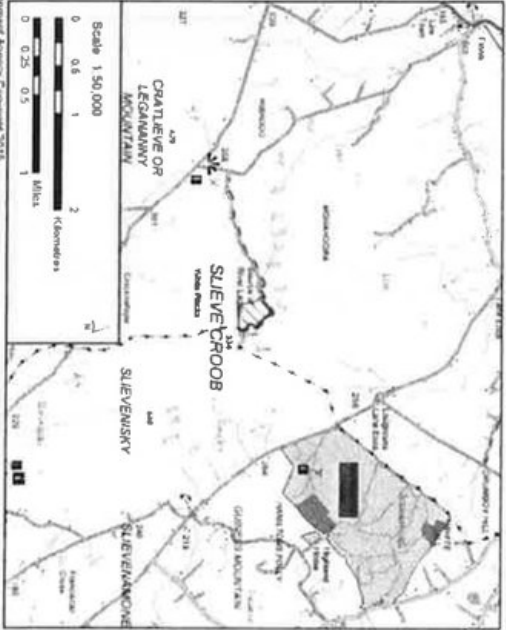
AREA OF SITE 7.44 hectares

OS MAPS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 20
1:10,000 Sheet No. 222

IRISH GRID REFERENCE UJ 315 455

COUNCIL AREA BANBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNTY DOWN

HELEN ANDERSON
SENIOR OFFICER OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT



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Agenda Item:	[This is the number the item will be given]
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	DOE Environment Fund for Ring of Gullion AONB, LPS and SLLP
Date:	30.11.2016
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Darren Rice, Ring of Gullion LPS Manager

Decisions Required

To accept the letter of offer and for officers to take necessary actions to implement.

1.0 Purpose and Background

In December 2015, the NMDDC submitted a Environment Fund application form to the Department of Environment for the project of Counties Armagh and Down Environmentally Protected Area Management to cover the costs of the Strangford Lough, Lecale and Down Coast AONB, Ring of Gullion LPS and Ring of Gullion AONB.

NIEA issued an agreement to fund 2016/17 to 2018/19 for SLLP and RoG AONB and RoG LPS. A letter of offer will be issued each year when NIEA have confirmed their budgets.

On the 24 March 2016 the DEARA sent a letter of offer for 2016/17.

On 30 November 2016 DEARA issued a letter of offer for 2017/18:

SLLP £84,922 at up to 52% of eligible costs for the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 towards Option 1 in your application.

ROG £69,482 at up to 50% of eligible costs for the period 1 April 2017– 31 March 2018 towards Option 1 in your application.

Key Issue

Indicative funding levels for 2018-19 are outlined below, but which will be subject to a new letter of offer, which include:-

- Sufficient receipts being received by the Department from the carrier bag levy.
- Any changes in priorities for delivery identified by the Northern Ireland Executive.
- Decisions made by the NI Executive and Assembly on future Budget allocations to departments
- Successful delivery in 2016-17, 2017-18.

Part A SLLP

1 April 2018- 31 March 2019 – Up to £85,771 at up to 54% of eligible costs

Part B ROG

1 April 2018- 31 March 2019 – Up to £70,177 at up to 33% of eligible costs

	A Grant Acceptance form accepting this offer has to be returned within a month of the date of the letter of offer.
3.0	Recommendations 1. Sign and return acceptance form to NIEA
4.0	Resource Implications None
5.0	Appendices None

Agenda Item:	[This is the number the item will be given]
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	NI Chamber – Corporate Membership
Date:	12 th December 2016
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward
Contact Officer:	Jonathan McGilly

Decisions Required	
To consider recommendations outlined in 3.1 and agree a way forward.	
1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	NI Chamber of Commerce is a well known network for businesses in NI enabling members to grow their organisation locally and internationally and drive the development of the economy. They do this via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Growth and export support initiatives (ii) Networking and events (iii) Access to government (iv) Building brand and reputation
2.0	Key Issue
2.1	NI Chamber is offering corporate membership to all Councils across NI. From the perspective of our region, membership offers a one to one relationship manager who can provide assistance and advices across the organisation on business related matters. Membership also offers benefits around returning access to business development programmes such as Growth programmes and Meet the Buyer, meeting with senior Business leaders and influences across NI, hosting NI Chamber events in our area, promotional opportunities via NI Chamber website, access to NI Chamber Business Forums etc. NI Chamber also lobby on key areas affecting businesses like corporation tax, skills and learning, energy and interconnection, NI Economic Strategy and PFG etc.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Recommend NMDDC join NI Chamber of Commerce on initial 12 month period with review thereafter.
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	£2,500 for 12months membership.
5.0	Equality and good relations implications.
5.1	No negative impact on equality and good relations.

Agenda Item:	[This is the number the item will be given]
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Overseas Results for NMDDC Area
Date:	12 December 2016
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward
Contact Officer:	Jonathan McGilly

Decisions Required

To consider recommendations outlined in 3.1 and agree a way forward.

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	As part of the development and natural growth of a business export is a key area that businesses need to consider if they aspire to grow. This can be a daunting task and one fraught with complexity, if not given appropriate advice and assistance. It can often be discounted as an option by many SMEs given the complexity involved with the process and the lack of clear assistance. The most effective way to explore the export route for a business is to find partners who would be willing to purchase your specific product and from that point begin to explore the options.
2.0	Key Issue
2.1	As part of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Strategy, Business Development and growth is a key theme and in order to achieve this we need to be encouraging of SMEs to explore potential new markets for their goods and services. Having researched this extensively, officers have sourced a Business (Overseas Results Ltd) that can work with SMEs to explore potential markets for their goods and services and then via their network of overseas agents can begin to locate specific customers willing to engage with our SMEs to explore costs, scale etc which will allow SMEs from our area to make a more informed decision on exploring a route to market. This opportunity would be advertised locally to SMEs and a pre agreed upper limit of participants will be selected using agreed and advertised criteria. Following that process work will commence of finding participant partners. Once paired with export contacts the business themselves can then explore the market opportunity more extensively via the network of support INI offer to exporting company.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	NMDDC enter into an agreement with Overseas Results Ltd to run a programme of export sourcing for 20 companies in NMDDC to be completed in current financial year.
4.0	Resource Implications
4.1	£500 per company – total cost £10,000. Budget available in current financial year.
5.0	Equality and good relations implications.
5.1	Opportunity to avail of this service will be open to all SMEs in district to apply that meet the criteria.

Report to:	ERT Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 th December 2016
Subject:	Proposal to create a Mourne granite replica of the 8 th -century St Patrick's Cross in the vicinity of St Patrick's Grave to increase tourism to Downpatrick
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward, Director, ERT
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Michael King, Museum Curator, Down County Museum

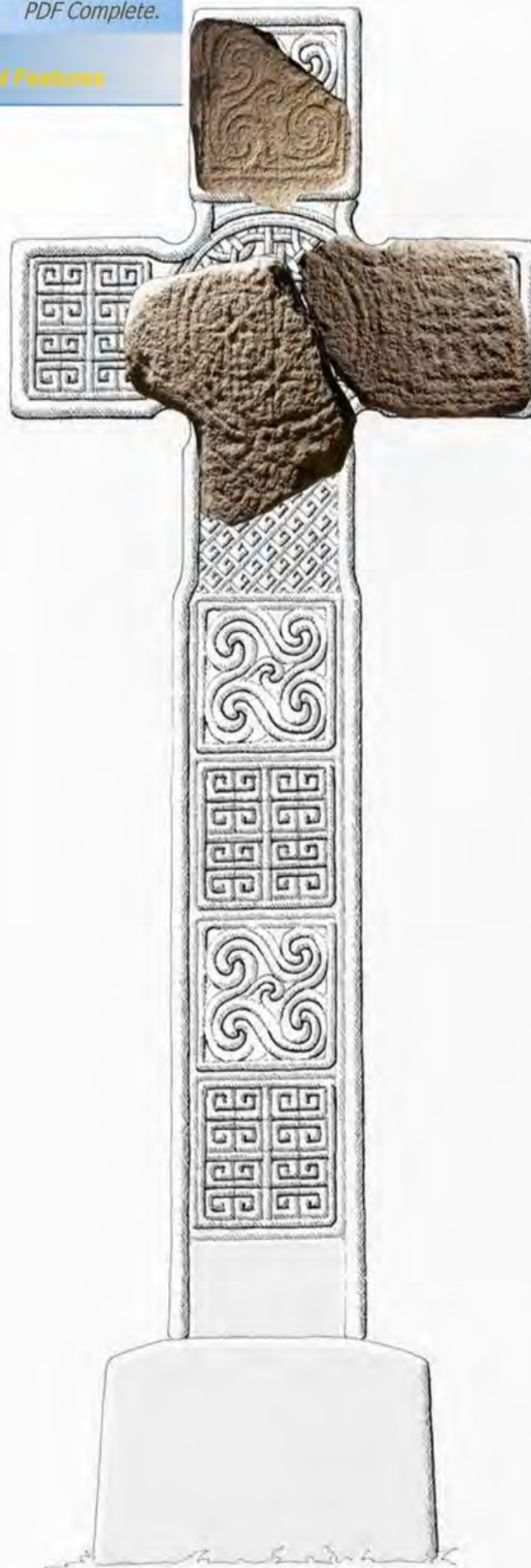
Decisions required:	
Committee is asked to note the inclusion of £25,000 in the draft capital programme for 2017-18 for the scanning and creation of a replica St Patrick's Cross.	
1.0	Purpose and Background:
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of a potential tourism project that would recreate a 4m high cross, named as St Patrick's Cross since c. 1840, the remains of which are known to have stood beside the traditional site of St Patrick's Grave to the south of Down Cathedral until 1900, when the large granite slab was placed on the site.
1.2	St Patrick's Cross represents a remarkable survival from the Early Christian period, and could be one of the earliest high crosses in Ireland. The cross-head would have measured 1.6m wide when complete. On one side of the cross head are large recesses that could have held painted wooden or jewelled metalwork inserts, which makes it unique. The cross may have been commissioned by King Fiachna of Ulaid who ruled in County Down from c. 750-789 and oversaw the early years of the monastery of Down.
1.3	The Dean and Chapter of Down currently displays three fragments of this cross, made of G2 Mourne granite, just inside the entrance of the Cathedral. The fragments are too damaged to reconstruct, and the cross is now incomplete. However, with the help of a grant from the Down and Lecale Historical Society, the three fragments have now been cleaned, revealing fine early Irish designs of interlace, fretwork and spirals, which date the cross to the late 8 th century (the period when the Book of Kells was written) when the monastery of Down had recently been established, c. 750 AD.
1.4	In the light of the success of the Downpatrick High Cross project, which involved the long-term loan of the early 10 th century High Cross to Down County Museum by the Dean and Chapter of Down, and the creation of an accurate replica in G2 granite to replace the original outside the east end of the Cathedral, a further tourism project, relating to the St Patrick's Cross, is now under consideration. It is envisaged that the fragments of St Patrick's Cross could be scanned, and a digital model of the complete cross could be created for replication by automated drilling in the same type of G2 Mourne granite as the original. The new 4m high St Patrick's Cross is envisioned as being a beacon for modern-day pilgrims and tourists coming to the area, and one of the 'must see' monuments that tourists should visit when they come to the island of Ireland.
2.0	Key issues:
2.1	As in the case of the recent upgrade of the pathway leading to St Patrick's Grave, this project would be a partnership between the Dean and Chapter of Down and

	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. The Dean and Chapter are very enthusiastic about the potential of the project in relation to pilgrimage to the site where Ireland's patron saint is said to have been buried (by Muirchú in the late 7 th century).
2.2	The precise location of the new Cross on the Hill of Down would have to be carefully considered in relation to impact on the environment, graveyard and archaeology. Any planning application for this proposal would be considered under Policy BH 1 of PPS 6 (regionally important scheduled monuments) which would assess the impact upon setting and physical impacts upon archaeological remains.
2.3	Potential costs include the scanning and replication of the original cross, planning application costs and requirements, and any necessary archaeological investigations.
2.4	Although only parts of the cross-head survive, and the cross-shaft has been lost, it will be possible to repeat the designs found on the cross-arms on the new cross-shaft, as is indicated from a drawing in PRONI showing the spiral pattern from the top cross-arm also at the top of the cross-shaft as it survived in 1843 at St Patrick's Grave.
2.5	The fragments of St Patrick's Cross are made from G2 Mourne granite from the area of the Bloody Bridge River, which can still be sourced from a working quarry on Thomas' Mountain near Newcastle. The new Cross can therefore be made from the original material still available in the District. There is potential to attract the interest of TV and media in following and filming the recreation of this important monument for added tourism impact, as the project has geotourism, archaeological, art historical and technological components.
2.6	There is potential for St Patrick's Cross to become an icon for St Patrick tourism which would provide an additional boost to those Downpatrick venues presenting the story of St Patrick to a worldwide audience (St Patrick Centre, Down County Museum, Down Cathedral). Currently over 800 coaches visit Downpatrick each year because of its links to St Patrick, and it is intended that those visitors will experience all the above venues, and especially the focal point of St Patrick's Grave. This project should therefore attract the support of TourismNI and Tourism Ireland.
2.7	Down County Museum staff have experience of successfully managing a previous high cross replication project (Downpatrick High Cross, 2013-14) and are in a position to manage this new project if progressed.
3.0	Recommendations:
3.1	This report is for noting by Committee.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	The full project cost is dependent on the archaeological intervention required, but is estimated to be in the region of £35,000. A sum of £25,000 is included in the draft capital programme for 2017-2018 as a Council contribution to this project and would cover the scanning and creation of the replica cross.
5.0	Equality and good relations implications:
5.1	The Museum has a track record of managing cross-community projects, programmes and activities and is active in maintaining good relations. This project involves the creation of a cross which will be outside and therefore accessible to all members of the public.
6.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Image of the three surviving fragments of St Patrick's Cross, super-imposed on a drawing of what a recreation of St Patrick's Cross would look like.



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Report to:	ERT Committee
Date of Committee Meeting:	12 December 2016
Subject:	Recommendations from Camlough Lake Working group – 10.11.16
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Michelle Boyle

1.0	
1.1	The Camlough Lake Working Group met on 10.11.16 Recommendations listed in paragraph 2 are presented for Committee consideration.
2.0	Recommendations for consideration by Committee:
2.1	Councillor Mulgrew as Chairperson and Stephen Boyle Vice Chairperson
2.2	Site meeting to view works to be programmed for February
3.0	Appendices
	N/A

Agenda Item:	
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Performing Arts Project at Newry & Mourne Museum: Progress Report
Date:	12 th December 2016
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Dr Robert Whan, Project Officer (Noreen Cunningham, Museum Curator)

Decisions Required

To note the contents of the report

1.0	<p>Purpose and Background</p> <p>Newry and Mourne Museum's two-year Performing Arts Project will research and enhance engagement with the Museum's extensive performing arts collection. It will also record for posterity the rich oral history of those who have been involved in performances since the 1930s. Outputs include online and travelling exhibitions, reminiscence activities, intergenerational workshops, and development of an audio-visual resource.</p> <p>A Project Officer was appointed on 26 September 2016 and the Project was formally launched on 19 October by the Council Chairperson, Cllr. Gillian Fitzpatrick, when representatives of some of the performing arts organisations in the district were present (Newry Feis, Newry Drama Festival, Newry Musical Society, Newpoint Players, and the Pantomimes).</p> <p>Two Project Volunteers (Pat Fox and Paula Bate) have also been recruited and started at the end of November 2016.</p>
2.0	<p>Key Issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To catalogue c.3,000 items in the Newry and Mourne Museum collection relating to performing arts. This will be the main focus to the end of January 2017. 2. To undertake oral history interviews. Initial contact has been made with Brian Fitzpatrick, who will be sharing his photographs and memories of Irish Dancing with Arthur Burns and drama in Lislea. Other planned interviewees include Charlie Smyth, Rowland Anketell, Alma Brown, Elizabeth Boyle, Nat Coleman and Jacqueline Turley. 3. To develop an Intergenerational Plan for the Project by January 2017. This will include an action plan for how the intergenerational aspects of the Project will be delivered.
3.0	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>That the above progress report be noted.</p>

4.0	Resource Implications None – the Project is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund (administered by the Museums Association).
5.0	Equality and Good Relations implications This project will have a positive impact, for instance, the intergenerational work will align well with the Council's current Age Friendly Initiative.
6.0	Appendices