

February 15th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on Thursday, 15th February 2024 at 6:00 pm in Microsoft Teams & Downshire Civic Centre.

Committee Membership 2023 - 2024

Councillor S O'Hare **Chairperson**

Councillor C Enright **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor J Brennan

Councillor P Byrne

Councillor O Hanlon

Councillor R Howell

Councillor T Kelly

Councillor A Lewis

Councillor A Mathers

Councillor D McAteer

Councillor L McEvoy

Councillor A Quinn

Councillor H Reilly

Councillor G Sharvin

Councillor D Taylor

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from SPR Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2024

For Approval

[Draft SPR-Action Sheet arising from 2024 01 18.pdf](#)

Page 1

For Discussion/Decision

4.0 Mourne Mountain Gateway Project - Memorandum of Understanding with the National Trust

For Decision

[SPR Report MMGP - NT MOU.pdf](#)

Page 5

[Appendix 1 MOU - NT and NMD- Draft_NMD Final.pdf](#)

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5.0 Governance Arrangements

For Decision

[Governance arrangements report.pdf](#)

Page 13

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

6.0 Insurance Renewal 2024/25

For Decision

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

[SPR Report Insurance Premiums 202425 Final.pdf](#)

Not included

7.0 Belfast Legal Services - Service Level Agreement

For Decision

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

(including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

 **SLA Belfast Legal Services.pdf**

Not included

8.0 Maintenance of Time and Attendance Systems

For Decision

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

 **2024-02 TMS Maintenance STA SPR Recommendations .pdf**

Not included

 **STAFORM - TMS 01.2024 for SPR.pdf**

Not included

9.0 Assessment Centre

For Decision

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 **Feb SPRC - Assessment Centre Extension for ADs (003).pdf**

Not included

10.0 ERT Recruitment Requirement

For Decision

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

 **SPR Report - Feb 2024 - ERT Recruitment - 09.02.2024 vf.pdf**

Not included

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

11.0 Industrial Relations Update

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council.

12.0 SFWG Action Sheets from meetings held 16.01.2024 and 31.01.2024

For Information

This item is deemed to be restricted under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business

 **SFWG Action Sheet 16.01.2024 (002).pdf** **Not included**

 **SFWG Action Sheet 31.01.2024 (002).pdf** **Not included**

For Noting

13.0 Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting 08.12.2023

For Information

 **Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Mtg 08.12.2023.pdf** **Page 15**

14.0 Minutes of Mourne Mountain Gateway Project Board Meeting held 6 October 2023

For Information

 **Minutes of Mourne Mountain Gateway Project - Project Board Mtg 06.10.2023 FINAL.pdf** **Page 20**

 **Minutes of Mourne Mountain Gateway Project - Project Board Mtg 19.10.2023 FINAL.pdf** **Page 28**

Invitees

- Cllr Terry Andrews
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- Cllr Callum Bowsie
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- Mrs Fionnuala Branagh
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- Cllr Jim Brennan
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- Cllr Pete Byrne
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- Mr Gerard Byrne
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- Cllr Philip Campbell
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- Mr Andrew Cassells
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- Cllr William Clarke
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- Cllr Laura Devlin
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- Ms Louise Dillon
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- Cllr Cadogan Enright
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- Cllr Killian Feehan
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- Cllr Doire Finn
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- Cllr Aoife Finnegan
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- Ms Joanne Fleming
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- Cllr Conor Galbraith
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- Cllr Mark Gibbons
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- Cllr Oonagh Hanlon
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- Cllr Glyn Hanna
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- Cllr Valerie Harte
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- Cllr Roisin Howell
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- Cllr Jonathan Jackson
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- Cllr Geraldine Kearns
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- Mrs Josephine Kelly
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- Cllr Tierna Kelly
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- Cllr Cathal King
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- Cllr Mickey Larkin
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- Cllr David Lee-Surginor
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- Cllr Alan Lewis
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- Cllr Oonagh Magennis
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- Mr Conor Mallon
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- Cllr Aidan Mathers
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- Cllr Declan McAteer
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- Cllr Leeanne McEvoy
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- Cllr Andrew McMurray
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- Mr Colin Moffett
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- Cllr Declan Murphy
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- Cllr Kate Murphy
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- Cllr Selina Murphy
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- Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
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- Cllr Áine Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Cllr Michael Rice
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
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Cllr David Taylor
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Cllr Jill Truesdale
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Mrs Marie Ward
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ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 18 January 2024					
Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken / Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet? Y/N
SPR/003/2024	Action sheet of SPR meeting held 14 December 2023	It was agreed to approve the action sheet.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/004/2024	Industrial Relations Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommendation One – Trade Union representation to Committee</i> <p>Matters relating to industrial dispute that have been formally registered with the Chief Executive Officer, which require a decision by Council will be referred to a Committee. The Committee will consider written submissions from Trade Union Side.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommendation Two – Officer Report</i> <p>Where there is a notified industrial dispute and matters cannot be resolved through the normal channels, the matters been brought forward would be agreed between management and Trade Union side and subsequently an officer paper and written submissions from Trade Union side would be put forward to Committee.</p> <p>Any usual exemptions e.g. in relation to legal or financial privilege would be exercised. Therefore, parts of the report would be redacted accordingly in line with the exemptions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recommendation Three - Future considerations</i> <p>Council Officers look, along with advice from Belfast legal services, at ways that Members might meet with Trade Unions on a regular basis when there is no formal dispute in place considering any regional approach to Trade Union engagement that may be developed.</p>	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/005/2024	Notice of Motion – Kilbroney Park Pitches	<p>The following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the contents of the report in relation to the progress of the Kilbroney Playing Pitches 	P Tamati	Agreed	Y

		<p>Upgrade project and associated environmental considerations of the site location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree to adopt a two-stage process taking into account the environmental and planning considerations and the sporting need and to consult with and continue to work with the Crotlieve DEA to consider the appropriate location for a changing pavilion. To approve the continued liaison with the relevant club representatives to reach a solution in relation to the Kilbroney Sports Pitch. To add the project to the action sheet to ensure regular monthly updates on this project will be provided to the Crotlieve DEA Councillors and Active and Healthy Communities Committee until the project reaches a conclusion 			
SPR/006/2024	NCCR – Flood Alleviation Scheme	<p>It was agreed that elements of the Newry Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 at Sugar Island and between Town Hall and Needham Bridge is included as a works package within the ITT for the NCCR Theatre Conference project.</p> <p>It was agreed that Mr Mallon would report back to Committee on any update on timescales of the flood alleviation scheme following consultation with DFI Rivers.</p>	C Mallon	Agreed	Y
			C Mallon	Agreed	Y
SPR/007/2024	Use of Social Media – Mandatory Training	It was agreed to approve the essential training for Members, SMT, CMT and key social media practitioners on behalf of NMDDC.	V Keegan	Agreed	Y
SPR/008/2024	Proposed renewal of lease at Milltown Playing Fields to Warrenpoint Tennis Club	It was agreed to renew the lease in respect of lands outlined in the officer's report with the party noted in the report for a period of three years subject to market rent to be determined by Council's valuer.	P Rooney	Agreed	Y
SPR/009/2024	Proposed renewal of lease for Cabra Community Centre	It was agreed to lease lands outlined in red on the map attached to the Officer's report with the party note in this report for a period of 15 years subject to a peppercorn rent.	P Rooney	Agreed	Y

SPR/010/2024	Proposed renewal of least at Meigh Community	It was agreed to renew the lease in respect of lands outlined in red with the party noted in the Officer's report for a period of 25 years subject to market rent to be determined by Council's valuer.	P Rooney	Agreed	Y
SPR/011/2024	Local Government Training Group Arrangements and Contribution fees	It was agreed to approve the payment of the LGTG contribution fee as outlined in the SLA agreement for the period of April 23 – March 24. It was agreed to approve this ongoing membership and associated contribution payment up until April 2029.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/012/2024	Specific Delegated Function	It was agreed to note that delegation has been exercised by the Chief Executive regarding a HR matter in the best interests of the Council and is being reported in accordance with 3.1.11 of the Council's Scheme of Delegation for Officers.	M Ward	Noted	Y
SPR/013/2024	Pay Protection Policy	It was agreed to approve the introduction of the Pay Protection Arrangements.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/014/2024	Strategic Finance Working Group action sheet from meeting held 14.11.2023	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/015/2024	Strategic Finance Working Group action sheet from meeting held 12.12.2023	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/016/2024	Statutory Reporting – Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for Period October – December 2023	It was agreed to note the contents of the report.	J Kelly	Agreed	Y
SPR/017/2024	Planning Department Update	It was agreed to note the contents of the report. It was agreed that Officer's table quarterly reports to update members on progress, or otherwise, against actions outlined in the report.	J McGilly J McGilly	Noted Agreed – Planning Report to be brought every quarter	Y N

Report to:	SPR Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 th February 2024
Subject:	Mourne Mountains Gateway Project - MOU with National Trust
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Mallon Director of ERT
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Conor Woods Strategic Project Manager

For decision	X	For noting only	
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	<p><u>Purpose</u> To seek members approval of the MOU between National Trust and NMDDC.</p> <p><u>Background</u> At the MMGP Programme Board Meeting on the 6th October 2023 it was confirmed that officers were progressing a MOU with the National Trust that would set out how both the NT and NMDDC would communicate and engage on the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project</p>
2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>Officials in NMDDC and NT have been working on a draft MOU document from October 2023.</p> <p>This draft MOU wording has now been agreed within the National Trust and was disused at the Programme Board on the 8th February 2024 with a recommendation to seek SPR committee approval.</p> <p>The MOU is presented in Appendix 1</p>
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	SPR committee members approve the MOU between NT and NMDDC as attached at Appendix 1
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	There are no resource requirements
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

<p>5.2</p>	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.3</p>	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> N/a</p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</p>
<p>6.1</p>	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>7.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 NMDDC / NT MOU</p>
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Background Documents – Available on request</p>

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Mournes Gateway Project

This document is a statement of intent about how the National Trust and Newry Mourne and Down District Council will communicate and engage effectively with each other in relation to the Council's proposed Mournes Gateway Project. It does not represent a formal commitment by either party to enter into any future legal agreement.

1. Between

- 1.1. **The National Trust**, a registered charity in England with the number 205846, whose office in Northern Ireland is at Rowallane Stable Yard Saintfield Ballynahinch BT24 7LH (hereinafter referred to as "**the Trust**") and
- 1.2. **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**, a local authority established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, whose principal office is at District Council Offices, O'Hagan House, Monaghan Row, Newry, BT35 8DJ. (hereinafter referred to as "**the Council**")

2. Background

- 2.1. The Trust is the owner of Thomas Quarry, a former granite quarry on the northern slope of Slieve Donard, the highest mountain in Northern Ireland (hereinafter referred to as "**the Property**").
- 2.2. The Trust is also owner of part of the surrounding Mourne Mountains, a granite mountain range in the south-east of Northern Ireland. Designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) under the Environment Order (NI) 2002 (as amended), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). Designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) since 1986. The Mountains are also part of the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark, which was officially recognised in 2021. The Mountains are a natural treasure that deserve to be protected and appreciated by everyone who visits them. They offer a unique combination of beauty, diversity, heritage, and adventure that can enrich lives and imaginations (hereinafter referred to as "**the Mournes**").
- 2.3. The Mournes area is already under considerable pressure from recreation, grazing, wildfires and traffic and parking demands. The Trust is investing heavily in helping this part of the Mournes to recover from the devastating wildfire of April 2021. The Trust, in partnership with the Woodland Trust, Mourne Heritage Trust and NI Water, commissioned a range of studies and stakeholder engagement to provide better insight and understanding of the area to help inform and create a shared long-term vision for the Mournes. A partnership approach between the agencies involved, "Forever Mournes" was established in April 2023. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), the Council, and Forest Service have also joined the partnership as observer members.
- 2.4. The Council invests heavily in the conservation and protection of the Mournes and provides significant annual funding to the Mournes Heritage Trust to assist in this important conservation work across the wider Mournes AONB. The Council also

works in partnership with stakeholders in the development and implementation of Conservation Management Plans supported by NIEA across the 3 AONBs in the District, including the Mourne.

- 2.5. NIEA is responsible for developing Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for all SACs. Mourne Heritage Trust has been tasked with developing the CMP for the Eastern Mourne. They have started the process in the high Mourne – capturing land owned by those signed up to Forever Mourne. All SACs have Conservation Objectives, and they will form the basis of the SAC CMPs. The conservation objectives in this case, are to maintain and restore SAC features such as montane heath. Recent studies carried out by the Trust show that this protected habitat is in decline. The Trust's Land Outdoors and Nature Plan sets out a vision for Slieve Donard and how its management aims to improve the condition of the ASSI/SAC features.
- 2.6. The Council project proposes a Visitor Centre at Thomas Quarry with an uplift by gondola from Donard Park at the foot of Slieve Donard to the Property, (hereinafter referred to as the "**Visitor Centre**") as part of the Mourne Gateway project, which aims to boost tourism and regeneration in the area. The project is estimated to cost £44 million, with £30m of the funding coming from the Belfast City Deal and £14m from the Council
- 2.7. The Trust and the Council have been in preliminary discussions about the possibility of entering into a lease agreement for the use of part or all the Property for the proposed Visitor Centre.
- 2.8. The Trust and the Council have agreed that, before entering formal discussions regarding a lease requested by the Council, they need to establish a clear and mutually beneficial framework for their communication and cooperation going forward.
- 2.9. The purpose of this MOU is to set out the principles and expectations of the Trust and the Council in relation to their potential landlord and tenant relationship, and to outline the steps and processes that they will follow to explore and (subject to contract) negotiate the possible lease agreement.

3. Principles

- 3.1. The Trust and the Council acknowledge that they share a common interest in protecting and enhancing the natural heritage and habitat of the region for the benefit of the public.
- 3.2. The Trust and the Council agree to work together in good faith, with respect, transparency, and accountability, to achieve their common goals and objectives.
- 3.3. The Trust and the Council recognise that they have both distinct and shared roles, responsibilities, and obligations.
- 3.4. The Trust as a Conservation Charity and landowner and Council as the Local Authority with responsibility for the environmental heritage, culture and is the project promoter. Each will respect each other's autonomy, authority, and decision-making processes.
- 3.5. The Trust and the Council commit to communicating regularly and effectively with each other, and to keeping each other informed of any developments or issues that may affect their potential relationship or/ and respective interests.

If either The Trust or The Council makes any material decision (s) which may impact the viability of the potential project they shall notify the other party forthwith (within 48 hours) of the decision, to ensure and safeguard any future expenditure.

- 3.6. The Trust and the Council agree to cooperate and collaborate with each other on matters of mutual concern or benefit, examples include communications, marketing, public relations, education, research, conservation, or community engagement as appropriate.
- 3.7. The Trust and the Council agree to seek constructive solutions to any problems or disputes that may arise between them, and to resolve them amicably and promptly.

4. Expectations

4.1. The Trust expects that the Council will:

- 4.1.1. Respect the Trust's ownership rights, responsibilities and interests in relation to the Property and Mournes.
- 4.1.2. Prioritise compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, standards, and best practices in relation to the Property and Mournes.
- 4.1.3. Obtain any necessary consents or approvals from the Trust or any other relevant authorities for any action that it may wish to make affecting the Property (including but not limited to access for land surveys, intrusive surveys, ecology surveys etc.)
- 4.1.4. Seek to discuss with and inform the Trust in advance of any publicity or promotion of the proposed Visitor Centre;
- 4.1.5. Provide commissioned reports to the Trust on the forecasted or anticipated performance and impact in relation to the proposed Visitor Centre and Mournes more generally.
- 4.1.6. Consult with the Trust on any major changes, developments or amendments to the proposals which would constitute a change to the planning approval or require other statutory permissions;
- 4.1.7. Notify the Trust of any complaints or claims that may arise in relation to proposed Visitor Centre or its proposed relationship with the Trust.
- 4.1.8. Grant full access (except where information is of a financial or commercial sensitive nature) to reports and surveys commissioned by the Council and invite and permit adequate opportunity to respond.
- 4.1.9. Respect the aims of the "Forever Mournes" partnership in relation to the wider Mournes area.

4.2. The Council expects that the Trust will:

- 4.2.1. Respect the Council's objectives to
 - 4.2.1.1. deliver a world-class tourist attraction that will support the sustainable regional growth of tourism in Northern Ireland and help to position Newry, Mourne and Down as one of the premier tourism destinations

on the Island of Ireland.

- 4.2.1.2. provide major enhancements to the visitor experience in and around the Mournes, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural heritage and habitat of the region.
- 4.2.1.3. create a standout experience for visitors, that will be sensitive to the environment and local community, currently comprising a gondola that will commence in Donard Park and a visitor centre at the Property recognised as a world-class visitor attraction, catering for 350,000 visitors annually.
- 4.2.1.4. highlight the diverse geology, landscapes, wildlife, culture, and history of the region, and offer many opportunities for visitors to explore and learn.
- 4.2.1.5. create jobs and opportunities for the region, and to attract more investment and spending from domestic and international tourists.
- 4.2.1.6. be part of the Belfast Region City Deal funding for projects based on tourism, regeneration, and innovation. to promote tourism in relation to the proposed Visitor Centre;
- 4.2.2. Comply with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, standards, and best practices in relation to its ownership of the Property and Mournes.
- 4.2.3. Provide reasonable access to the Property for inspection [subject to prior notification and where reasonably practicable prior appointment, the Council having due regard to its SAC status and using best endeavours to avoid any damage to the Property];
- 4.2.4. Notify the Council of any complaints or claims that may arise in relation to the proposed Visitor Centre or its proposed partnership with the Council.

5. Process

- 5.1. The Trust and the Council agree to establish a joint working group, consisting of representatives from both parties, and Tourism NI, NIEA as observer members, to explore and negotiate the terms and conditions of a lease agreement for the use of the Property.
- 5.2. The joint working group will meet regularly, at least once every quarter and will report to senior management, and if appropriate, governing bodies of both parties on their progress and recommendations.
- 5.3. The joint working group will assess the feasibility, viability, and desirability of a lease agreement, considering the following factors:
 - 5.3.1. the compatibility and alignment of the vision, mission, values, and objectives of both parties;
 - 5.3.2. the availability and suitability of the Property for the proposed Visitor Centre;
 - 5.3.3. the costs and benefits of a lease agreement for both parties;
 - 5.3.4. in partnership with the Forever Mournes group and other key stakeholders, the effect of additional visitors as a result of the proposed gateway project and the effect on the Trust's and Councils ability to continue protecting and enhancing the natural heritage and habitat of the Mournes.
 - 5.3.5. the risks and challenges of a lease agreement for both parties;

- 5.3.6. the legal and regulatory implications and requirements of a lease agreement for both parties;
- 5.3.7. the stakeholder and public opinions and expectations of a lease agreement for both parties.
- 5.4. If the conservation impact has been assessed and if found acceptable by the Trust, the joint working group will aim to reach a consensus, in principle, on the key terms and conditions of a lease agreement, such as:
 - 5.4.1. the duration, and renewal options of the lease;
 - 5.4.2. the decommissioning and restoration of the site at lease expiry;
 - 5.4.3. the rent and fees payable by the Council to the Trust taking into consideration the impact on the Mournes;
 - 5.4.4. the performance indicators and evaluation methods for measuring the success and impact of the proposed Visitor Centre on the Mournes;
 - 5.4.5. the rights and responsibilities of both parties in relation to maintenance, repair, improvement, insurance, security, and access of the Property and the Mournes.
 - 5.4.6. the dispute resolution mechanisms for resolving any conflicts or issues that may arise between the parties. The termination clauses for ending or modifying the lease agreement in case of breach, default, unanticipated impact to the Mournes or by mutual consent.
- 5.5. The joint working group may by agreement draft a lease agreement based on agreed terms and conditions and submit it to the senior management and governing bodies of both parties for consideration. Each party respects the other's decision-making boards and processes as authoritative and independent.
- 5.6. The joint working group will work together to review and agree a set of holistic values and vision for the Property and Mournes to reflect the special qualities and key delivery aims.
- 5.7. Parties will openly share reports, information and knowledge whilst encouraging and facilitating effective working relationships between each other.

6. Legal Status & Enforceability

- 6.1. Nothing in this MOU shall constitute a legal agreement or the formation of a partnership as recognised under the Partnership Act 1890 between the parties and no Member shall be entitled to enforce any rights or liabilities against any other Member in relation to any issues arising under this MOU.
- 6.2. This MOU does not
 - 6.2.1. constitute a legally binding contract but is a non-binding expression of mutual understanding between the Trust and the Council.
 - 6.2.2. create any rights or obligations for either party, nor does it grant any exclusive or preferential treatment to either party.
 - 6.2.3. Commit either party to the proposal under discussion nor imply or guarantee that a lease agreement will be entered into by the Trust and the Council, nor preclude either party from pursuing other options or opportunities.

6.2.4. affect or limit any existing or future agreements or arrangements between the Trust and the Council, or between either party and any other third parties.

7. Duration

7.1. This MOU will run from the date of agreement for a period of five years unless previously amended or terminated by either party.

7.2. Every five years this MOU will be reviewed by the parties, amended if appropriate, and renewed for a further period of five years if required.

7.3. This MOU may be amended or extended at any time by mutual written consent of both parties.

8. Variation and Waiver

8.1. No variation of this MOU will be valid unless it is in writing and signed by or on behalf of each party.

8.2. The parties cannot assign or in any other way dispose of or delegate responsibilities under the MOU or any part of it to any third person or organisation.

9. Limitations of Liability

The parties will not be liable for any direct, special, or consequential loss or damage; or any loss of profits, turnover, business opportunities or damage to goodwill (whether direct or indirect).

10. Governing Law

This MOU and all disputes or claims arising out of or in connection with the activities of the parties shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Northern Ireland.

SIGNED on behalf of The National Trust

SIGNATUREDATE...../...../.....

SIGNED on behalf of Newry Mourne & Down District Council

SIGNATUREDATE...../...../.....

Report to:	Strategy Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 February 2024
Subject:	Governance Arrangements
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Sarah Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either: -

For decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For noting only	<input type="checkbox"/>
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Amending the agreed date for Council and Committee Meetings in April 2024.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Due to Easter Monday and Tuesday, it had been agreed at the Annual Meeting that the April Council Meeting would be held on Wednesday 3 rd April 2024.
2.2	There are 5 Mondays in April 2024, therefore it is recommended to facilitate holidays and in accordance with Standing Order 1.4, to hold the Council Meeting on Monday 8 th April 2024.
2.3	The following amendments are also recommended: ERT Committee to be held on Monday 15 th April 2024 SPR Committee to be held on Thursday 18 th April 2024 AHC Committee to be held on Monday 22 nd April 2024 S&E Committee to be held on Tuesday 23 rd April 2024
2.4	Audit Committee has been scheduled for Tuesday 9 th April 2024. It is recommended to postpone this to a future date to be agreed in consultation with Audit Committee Members and the Independent Chairperson.
2.5	Planning Committee Meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 24 th April. It is recommended to bring this forward to Wednesday 10 th April 2024.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	1. Council approve that the April Council Meeting will now take place on Monday 8 th April 2024. 2. Council approve the amended Committee dates as outlined in 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 above.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None identified
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)

5.1	<p>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p>Proposal initiating consultation</p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
6.0	<p>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</p>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
7.0	<p>Appendices</p>
	<p>None</p>
8.0	<p>Background Documents</p>

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting
held on Friday 8th December 2023, 10.00am
Hybrid: Council Chamber, Newry & MS Teams**

In Attendance:

Programme Board Members

Councillor Declan Murphy - Chair
Councillor David Taylor
Councillor Aidan Mathers
Councillor Doire Finn
Councillor Killian Feehan

NMDDC Officials

Conor Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Jonathan McGilly, Assistant Director - Regeneration
Paul Tamati, Assistant Director - Leisure and Sport
Andy Patterson, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism
Caolain Boyd, Assistant Director - Capital Projects & Procurement
Conor McGeown, Strategic Capital Projects Manager
Conor Woods, Capital Projects Manager
Tracie McLoughlin PA, ERT Dept.

External Members: **Paula Moan DfC**

Apologies: **Neil Richardson, Dept for Communities**

NCCR/177: Welcome and Apologies

Apologies received from N Richardson, Dept for Communities

NCCR/178: Project Board Minutes / Action Sheets

- Newry City Park Project Board Action Sheet 27 Oct 2023
- Newry City Centre Regeneration/BRCD Project Board Minutes:
 - 14 Sept 2023
 - 12 Oct 2023
 - 9 Nov 2023

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Aidan Mathers, seconded by Councillor Doire Finn it was agreed to 'Note' the Project Board Minutes & Action Sheets.

NCCR/179: Newry Civic Centre Advocacy Group Meeting 26 Sept 2023

J McGilly advised that membership had been reviewed to reflect recent personnel changes and members were updated on the current status of the programme and the design visuals.

Agreed: Members 'noted' the update provided.

NCCR/180: Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Minutes 8th September 2023

Members were asked to consider the minutes of previous meeting for accuracy.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Aidan Mathers, seconded by Councillor Declan Murphy it was agreed to approve the Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 8th September 2023.

NCCR/181: Newry Flood Alleviation Scheme

Mr Mallon advised Council Officials had been liaising with Rivers Agency on the Newry Flood Alleviation Scheme over a number of years and the project had been progressing however given the recent floods in Newry, Council officials and Rivers Agency have recently discussed the potential to progress some elements of Phase 2 as part of the Theatre/Conference Construction project. This will consider the repair of the collapsed wall at the rear of Newry Town Hall and increasing the height of the walls around the Sugar Island area and between Town Hall and Needham Bridge.

Cllr Mathers said he supported the progression of works and enquired about the financial impact down the line. Mr Mallon advised that a business case would be prepared by Rivers Agency to secure funding through Dept for Infrastructure and Rivers agency would assume maintenance responsibility.

Cllr Taylor said he was conscious the funding hasn't been signed off by Rivers Agency and we should seek confirmation from DfI and Rivers Agency on their position re financing the scheme."

Mr Mallon said Phase 2 was a large project that would involve works from the Courthouse to Albert Basin and discussion at present only related to the section in the vicinity of the Town Hall and that we needed to be mindful that the full benefits of the

scheme would not be realised until it was completed in its entirety.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor D Finn, seconded by Councillor A Mathers it was agreed that officers progress discussion with DfI Rivers on the potential of delivering elements of the Newry Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 as part of the Newry City Centre Regeneration Theatre Conference Centre Construction project.

NCCR/182: Theatre/Conference Alternative Design

Mr McGeown advised, following meetings with Historic Environment Division and other statutory agencies, it was agreed that alternative elevation designs for the new Theatre/Conference facility be explored. The Integrated Design Teams submitted alternative proposals which the HED have agreed to in principle.

Cllr Finn said it is important to make the public aware of the changes and the reason for those changes. Mr Mallon said this item would be discussed at the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee on Thursday 14 December and would be in open session and detail would also be available on the Planning Portal which is also a public record.

Cllr Feehan agreed with Cllr Finn and said the Arts community are not overly concerned about exterior design but would be interested in the functionality, access and capacity and suggested a workshop with the groups would be beneficial.

Mr Mallon advised nothing had changed with functionality and capacity etc since the previous workshops with the user groups but a general update for the arts groups would be to arranged in the new year.

Cllr Mathers said it was important to take the lead from HED on this matter.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor A Mathers, seconded by Councillor D Finn it was agreed that Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee consider approval of the submission of the amended elevations to the Planning Department.

EXEMPT ITEMS

NCCR/183: Newry City Park – Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) Appointment

Mr C Boyd advised tender returns had been received for the Integrated Consultancy Team and moderation completed this week. Further processes will take place to finalise and a paper will be taken to Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on 14 December 2023.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor A Mathers, seconded by Councillor D Murphy it was agreed to note progress and on the appointment

of the Integrated Consultancy Team and approve a Paper to be taken to Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on 14th December 2023.

NCCR/184: Project Manager Updates

C McGeown referred members to Item 8 in the Agenda pack and provided an overview and update on the Regeneration Project.

- **Budget:**
 - Total ICT costs incurred to date were circa £1.7m which included surveys, reports, consultant fees, compensation events and planning fees. Costs are expected to increase due to parking surveys requested by DFI Roads. Awaiting quotations for additional modelling as requested by Rivers Agency.
 - CEs for public realm aspect of the works have been processed and are reimbursable from BRCD – grant claim submitted for £189,890
 - NCCR/BRCD Budget indicated of circa £42m as per approved OBC.
 - RIBA Stg 3+ costs received for Theatre/Conference.
 - RIBA Stg 3 costs for Civic Hub: Public Realm & building costs £17,020,00
 - Summary table of estimates for each project detailed within PMs Report under No.4 and No.5.

- **Risk Management:**
 - Updated carpark surveys being undertaken.
 - Issues regarding the Theatre/Conference facility being addressed following feedback from HED and Planners.

- **Proposed Programme Timetable:**
 - Theatre / Conference
Construction Commence July 2024 / Completion March 2026

 - Civic Hub
Construction Commence June 2024 / Completion Nov 2025

 - Newry City Park
Works Commence July 2025 / Completion May 2027

 - Grade A Office Provision
Dates to be confirmed

- **Newry City Park**
 - The Permanent Secretary visited the site for the official opening of 'Meanwhile Use Area' and confirmed OBC approval and that draft Contract for Funding has been issued to Council.
 - CPD review of OBC carried out and project costs assessed. Costs increased due to inflationary rises.
 - 3 Tender returns received on 1st Dec 2023 for Integrated Consultancy Team. Moderation meetings took place w/c 4th Dec 2023.

- Grade A Office
 - Council and DFC to meet to discuss progress on funding and potential areas to explore.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor A Mathers, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to:

a) Note the updates on the:

- Civic & Regional Hub
- Theatre/Conference Facility
- Public Realm
- Newry City Park
- Grade A Office Space



This Meeting ended at 10:45am

**Approved by Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board 5th February
2024**

For Noting at the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee 15th February 2024

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Mournes Gateway Project - Project Board Meeting held on Friday 6th October 2023, 10.00am Council Chamber, Downpatrick

In Attendance:

Programme Board Members

Councillor Willie Clarke - Chair
Councillor Glyn Hanna
Councillor Laura Devlin
Councillor Jill Truesdale
Councillor Pete Byrne

NMDDC Officials

Conor Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Andy Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth & Tourism
Conor Woods, Strategic Capital Projects Manager
Caolain Boyd Assistant Director: Capital Projects & Procurement
Tracie McLoughlin, PA

External Members

Carole Long, Tourism NI
David Roberts, Tourism NI
Theresa Slevin, BRCD Regional Programme Services

MMGP/009: **Welcome and apologies**

Mr Conor Mallon welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made from each Member of the Project Board.

Apologies were noted from:

Councillor Michael Rice
Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Aisley McWilliams, Tourism NI
David Scullion, Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD)
Michelle Boyle, Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience

**MMGP/010: Nominate Co Chairs of Mournes Gateway Project –
Project Board**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor P Byrne, seconded by Councillor G Hanna it was agreed to appoint Councillor W Clarke as Co Chair of the Mournes Gateway Project Board.**

On the proposal of Councillor L Devlin, seconded by Councillor W Clarke it was agreed to appoint Councillor G Hanna as Co Chair of the Mournes Gateway Project Board.

Councillor W Clarke Chaired the meeting and will continue to for the first 6 month period.

**MMGP/011: Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Mourne Mountains
Gateway Project Board held 3rd March 2023**

Matters Arising:

Cllr Truesdale raised the following matters from the Minutes:

MMGP/003 – Have Officials contacted National Trust to be represented on the Project Board?

Mr Mallon confirmed the National Trust had been invited to be represented on the Project Board but had not confirmed acceptance, however discussion continues with the National Trust.

MMGP/005 – Officers agreed that feedback from Public Engagement Events would be recorded and considered going forward – how was this carried out? Can this be defined? Can reports be circulated to Members?

Mr Andy Patterson advised this matter would be discussed as Item 10 on today's agenda.

Mr Mallon said members were advised in a recent report to SPR that reports on feedback from engagement were available on request, this could be circulated to Project Board Members.

MMGP/007 – Who are the members on the Stakeholder Forum? Who were asked to participate as members? Have boundary landowners been included on the Stakeholder Forum?

Mr Patterson advised this matter would be discussed as Item 7 on today's agenda.

MMGP/008 – It was agreed meetings would take place every 2 months. Why has this not happened?

Mr Mallon said The Local Government Elections which took place in

May and the summer break delayed further meetings taking place since March.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor L Devlin, seconded by Councillor W Clarke it was agreed:

- a) **To approve the Minutes of the Mourne Mountains Gateway Project Board Meeting held 3rd March 2023.**
- b) **To forward the stakeholder feedback reports to the Project Board.**

MMGP/012: OBC Addendum Request from Dept for the Economy

Mr Patterson said as part of The Belfast Region City Deal, an OBC has been approved by the Department for Economy (DfE) for the Mourne Gateway Project. As part of the BRCD process it is necessary to have in place a Contract for Funding between the PMO within Belfast City Council and the Sponsoring Department (DfE).

In order to release the funding to the project promoter Newry Mourne and Down District Council, there is also a requirement to have a funding agreement in place between BCC and NMDDC.

This funding agreement will allow funding to be drawn down by NMDDC for eligible costs on the BRCD projects.

Since the approval of the OBC in October 2021 and DoF in Feb 2022, officials have been liaising with Tourism NI and DfE through the BRCD programme Office to secure the Contract for funding to allow the project to progress.

From early 2023 we have continued to liaise with the DfE on a few issues they have raised. It is the view of the Department that the OBC approval conditions need regularised. An addendum to the original Business Case is therefore needed.

Council officials and the Department have met on several occasions over the last few weeks to agree actions and a timetable for the development and completion of the addendum. Council have also agreed with the National Trust that an agreed way of working (MoU) and the sharing of information is the best way to engage with this project.

Cllr Devlin asked have the National Trust agreed to sign the MOU?

Mr Mallon said Officials have ongoing engagement with the NT and they are in agreement that an MOU is the best way forward. He advised the NT had submitted a draft MOU yesterday 5th October, and Officials would be meeting with them on 10th

October. He further advised Project Board Members would be kept updated on any agreements and approval would be sought at full Council.

Cllr Byrne asked that the Project Board were involved in the development of the MOU

Cllr Truesdale asked:

- Will the costs exceed £44m?
- If so, what is contributing to the increased costs?
- How are these costs going to be met?

Mr Mallon advised the updated programme will determine the basis of the cost review and revised costs will be brought back to Council for approval. He advised time delays were a contributing factor to the cost review.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor L Devlin, seconded by Councillor G Hanna it was agreed to approve the recommendation contained within the Report to seek approval at Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee as follows:

- a) Officials progress the completion of the Addendum to the Outline Business Case in partnership with Project Partners.**
- b) Officials progress the development and agreement of an MOU with the National Trust.**

MMGP/013: Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) Procurement Strategy

Mr Caolain Boyd advised the procurement process to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team is likely to take up to six months however this can be run alongside the development of the OBC Addendum.

The ICT appointment if approved, will support the next stage of project development, including:

- To undertake a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme.
- To undertake the necessary environmental & ecological surveys.
- To progress the detailed design and update capital costs for the project.
- To develop the Park & Ride provision for Newcastle and the wider Mournes Area.
- To develop a Visitor Management Plan
- To assist Council to secure the required lands to deliver the project.
- To prepare and submit a planning application.

The above requirements will form part of the Full Business Case of the project and advised approval is being sought to proceed with the procurement of the Integrated Consultancy Team.

Cllr Truesdale advised the Alliance Party are opposed to further spending on this project until their concerns are met in terms of a full public consultation and alternatives. Alliance Party do not support this recommendation to SPR. It seems complete madness to spend even more money on consultants when we have no idea if the lease is secured for the project as it stands hence the need for alternatives not a team trying to deliver the project as it is. If National Trust won't join the project board and haven't signed up to an MoU or indicated any support for the project how has it got this far with so much money already being spent? That question is for Council Officers to address not an expensive consultancy team.

Cllr Byrne said full and robust stakeholder engagement needed to take place to advance the project and the appointment of an ICT is necessary to allow this to happen.

The Chairman then put the Recommendation to a vote by way of a show of hands and voting was as follows:

For:	4
Against:	1
Abstain:	0

The Recommendation was carried.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor G Hanna, seconded by Councillor P Byrne it was agreed to approve the recommendation contained within the Report to:

Seek approval at Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with procurement of an Integrated Consultancy Team to pre-appointment stage, to develop the project to Full Business Case stage. Appointment of the ICT will be subject to Council approval of the Contract for Funding/Funding Agreement.

MMGP/014: Stakeholder Engagement / Communications Strategy

Mr Patterson advised this Strategy needed to be in place in order to gauge and assess feedback.

Cllr Truesdale referred to the document circulated and highlighted there was no exact reference to "public consultation". A consultation allows public bodies exercising powers to fully understand and consider the impacts on those affected. Ultimately it is intended to help decision makers make better decisions. A failure to consult properly may constitute grounds for a public body to be challenged in the courts by way of a judicial review. She asked to what extent have stakeholders been able to influence the project to date?

Mr Mallon confirmed the feedback on consultation to date reports would be circulated to Project Board Members.

Cllr Byrne welcomed the Strategy and said we can't have the maximum engagement needed without the ICT Strategy in place in the first instance. Cllr Byrne asked what stage are we at with the formation of the stakeholder group?

Mr Mallon said the development of the Terms of Reference and Governance can commence when the ICT is in place. Cllr Byrne enquired if there will be an open public call for members of the group?

Mr Mallon confirmed there would be an open call for members to join the stakeholder group similar to the process used for the Newry City Park Project approved and submitted to BRCD.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor P Byrne, seconded by Councillor G Hanna it was agreed to approve the recommendation contained within the report to:

Seek approval at Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with procurement of an Integrated Consultancy Team to pre-appointment stage, to develop the project to FBC stage. Appointment of the ICT will be subject to council approval of the Contract for Funding/Funding Agreement.

MMGP/015: Consideration of Alternative Options

Mr Mallon advised following a request at recent Council meeting by Alliance this item was added to the agenda.

Cllr Clarke opened the item to the floor and asked the Project Board members to present alternative options.

Cllr Clarke opened the item to the floor and Mr Mallon advised the agenda item was included at the request of Alliance Party on Monday 2nd October 2023.

Cllr Truesdale responded 'Are you seriously asking me for alternatives? That is not my job, it was a motion passed in Council for Council to come up with alternatives'

Mr Mallon responded that the Council had made a decision to approve the preferred option recommended within the OBC following the appraisal of a range of alternative options considered during that process, the preferred option has been approved through Council, DfE & Dof, Mr Mallon confirmed that officers were delivering on the approved project as directed by the Council.

Cllr Truesdale asked that options that have less environmental impact be considered She said having been engaged with the public for a very long time over this there are a number of viable, sensitive, protective visitor management alternatives available which take account of our environmental impact, climate change and the danger present from fire and erosion and this conversation wouldn't even be happening had there been a full public consultation in the beginning.

She said the Alliance Party reject the gondola and the visitor centre in Thomas Quarry and despite what has been said they are supportive of alternatives, this is not a case of rejecting and losing the money. Newcastle residents could easily spend £44m.

Examples

- A visitor centre in Donard Park to educate and inform visitors and hikers, hosting green engagement rangers creating a presence in a badly abused area on Donard Wood.
- Opening up the already existing paths to electric buses or a small train.
- Opening up the already existing paths linking Bloody Bridge to Tollymore or vice versa

Cllr Truesdale said she understands the funding is more a Mourne Gateway Project that needs to meet several requirements in terms of enhancing the tourism product, although it is difficult to see the point in damaging your product to try and increase visitor numbers. There is nothing in this criteria that requires either a gondola or a visitor centre at Thomas Quarry, and we are rapidly losing time to come up with credible alternatives that are acceptable to ratepayers who we all ultimately answer to as officers and elected reps.

Cllr Truesdale's comments were noted.

MMGP/016: Project Manager Update

Mr Conor Woods said work was ongoing on the Procurement strategy and the tender documents and he continues to liaise with CPD on agreeing these. He also advised that Officials had contact with representatives of a similar project in Wales who are currently at \ more advanced stage to discuss the projects and to share lessons learnt.

MMGP/017: Infographic

Mr Patterson said the infographic circulated highlighted the main concerns and positive comments identified in previous consultations and engagements and sought approval from the Project Board that this infographic would be circulated on Council's Social media platforms and released to local press. Responding to a query from the Chairman, Mr Patterson confirmed this would be a fluid document going forward.

Cllr Truesdale said with regards to visitor safety and particularly in relation to the 30% radon levels at Thomas Quarry, the Northern Ireland Radon Map was created in 2015 and asked if an up to date separate report would be commissioned for identifying levels of radon and any potential impact at this site.

Mr Mallon confirmed that Radon would be a consideration going forward and all necessary reports would be prepared, however he felt there were no significant concerns given that the majority of the proposed building would be elevated on columns above the quarry floor.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor P Byrne, seconded by Councillor G Hanna, it was agreed to issue the infographic document to local press and on Council's Social Media platforms.

MMGP/018: Schedule of Meetings

Agreed: Meetings to be scheduled every 2 months to take place at 4pm on the first 2 weeks of each month and schedule for the next 12 months to be circulated.

Interval meetings to be scheduled as needed.

This concluded the business of the Meeting. The Meeting ended at 11.00am

**Approved at the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project Board Meeting
held 8th February 2024**

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Mournes Gateway Project - Project Board Meeting
Agenda: Alternative Options****Friday 19th October 2023, 4.00pm
Downshire Civic Centre/MS Teams**

In Attendance:**Programme Board Members****Councillor Glyn Hanna - Chair
Councillor Willie Clarke
Councillor Laura Devlin
Councillor Jill Truesdale
Councillor Pete Byrne****NMDDC Officials****Conor Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Andy Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth & Tourism
Caolain Boyd Assistant Director: Capital Projects & Procurement
Conor Woods, Strategic Capital Projects Manager
Tracie McLoughlin, PA****External Members****Carole Long, Tourism NI
Ainsley McWilliams, Tourism NI
Theresa Slevin, BRCD Regional Programme Services****MMGP/019: **Welcome and Apologies****

Apologies were noted from:

Councillor Michael Rice

David Roberts, Tourism NI

David Scullion, Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD)

Michelle Boyle, Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience

Mr Mallon advised members that record of meetings will be a summary of discussions and any actions recorded. Meetings will not be recorded verbatim.

Minutes will be tabled for agreement at the next project board meeting and then tabled for noting at the next SPR meeting

Agreed: On the Proposal of Councillor P Byrne, seconded by Councillor W Clarke it was agreed to note that meetings will not be recorded verbatim.

MMGP/020: Alternative Options

Mr Patterson said this meeting was convened at the request of the Project Board at its meeting on 12th October 2023 to discuss alternative options for the Mournes Gateway Project. Project Board members were presented with extensive background documents which detailed how the preferred option of the gondola/uplift and visitor centre in Thomas Quarry was selected for approval by Council to be carried forward for inclusion in the Belfast Region City Deal Investment programme and Mr Patterson set out implications of any potential decisions to withdraw the preferred option.

Following Mr Patterson's detailed breakdown of events to date, Members were asked for their comments.

Cllr Truesdale raised the following queries/comments:

- a) Documents were not circulated in advance of meeting as per the Governance agreement document.
- b) How can the project proceed as it stands without approval from the main landowner, National Trust?
- c) Is there a live Risk Register and does this include the possibility of not obtaining a lease?
- d) Will BRCD consider a change to the project?

Responses to Cllr Truesdale's queries were as follows:

- a) Mr Mallon advised Governance issues could be discussed at a Project Board meeting as this meeting was a single item agenda to discuss alternative options.
- b) Mr Mallon advised the National Trust have agreed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Council which is currently being drafted.
- c) Mr Mallon confirmed there is a live risk register and not obtaining a lease is included.

Cllr Truesdale said her Party had no issue with the Mournes Gateway Project apart from the gondola aspect and asked if it's possible to amend the project to exclude this element.

Ms Slevin advised the funded project is as presented and approved which includes the gondola and the visitor centre as both of these would attract visitor spend. In a

response to a comment from Cllr Truesdale that no consultation costs were included, Ms Slevin stated this was at concept stage and further work would be done.

Cllr Clarke asked for clarification in the event the gondola aspect was taken out of the Project, would this then be back to the drawing board for an alternative.

Mr Mallon advised the inclusion of the gondola in the overall scheme was the most economically viable option for an uplift service. He said this scheme ranked No.4 on the BRCD panel's list of projects and if it wasn't to proceed as approved by BRCD its likely other projects would be considered

Cllr Devlin thanked officers for the detailed information provided and said this Project had been awarded £30m funding from BRCD to develop which will attract international visitors and be a significant boost to the economy. She said the mountains would not have been a big enough attraction on their own to draw visitors to the area in order to secure £30m funding. The project including the gondola aspect had been supported by all parties to date. She felt it was too far down the process to amend and submit alternative options now.

Cllr Byrne agreed with the comments from Cllr Clarke and Devlin and said all projects come with risks but Council are aware and will manage those risks. He said to date the proposal had received unanimous support across the Council and did not think any of the alternative options had the 'hook' as the gondola proposal.

The Chairman also agreed and advised an example was a cruise ship docked in Belfast in the summer had 37 coaches taking passengers on trips around Northern Ireland and only 1 of those coaches came to our district. He agreed with Cllr Devlin and Cllr Byrne, the mountains alone are not enough to attract international visitors, we need something special like the gondola. The Chairman also said he would not like to see this project back to the start and feared the money would be lost to other projects outside of our District. He said the entire district would benefit in terms of increased economy, accessibility for those with restricted mobility and the educational aspect of the project and felt the entire proposal had strong community support.

Cllr Truesdale also said she would not like to see the entire proposal lost, her concern is the uplift aspect.

Mr C Boyd confirmed that's following assessment a gondola to the base station was the least intrusive option available. Cllr Truesdale asked if an ecology report was carried out. Mr Boyd confirmed desk top surveys were carried out to support the OBC. Mr Mallon advised full ecology surveys would be carried out by the ICT.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor P Byrne, seconded by Councillor W Clarke, it was agreed that:

a) The contents of the report circulated were noted

b) The following recommendation be considered at SPR:

To proceed with the delivery of the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project as agreed within the BRCD Deal document, the OBC approved by this Council, Department for Economy, and Department of Finance to include the Visitor Centre at Thomas Quarry, Gondola uplift from Donard Park, Base station building at Donard, Park & Ride and associated landscaping.

MMGP/021: AOB

Cllr Truesdale referred to Appendix 4 of the background documents which had been circulated to Councillors on the Project Board on 17th October and requested Officers review inappropriate content.

Cllr Truesdale advised Mrs J Kelly of the pages in question.

Agreed: Mrs J Kelly agreed to forward to Council's Compliance Team as a matter of urgency for review and will advise Cllr Truesdale of outcome as soon as possible.

This concluded the business of the Meeting. The Meeting ended at 5.10pm

**Approved at Mourne Mountains Gateway Project Board Meeting held 8th
February 2024**