

March 20th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting to be held on **Monday, 11th March 2024** at **6:00 pm** in **Boardroom Council Offices Monaghan Row Newry.**

Committee Membership 2023 - 2024

Councillor M Ruane **Chairperson**

Councillor G Kearns **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor T Andrews

Councillor C Bowsie

Councillor P Campbell

Councillor W Clarke

Councillor K Feehan

Councillor C Galbraith

Councillor G Hanna

Councillor C King

Councillor A McMurray

Councillor S Murphy

Councillor A Quinn

Councillor J Tinnelly

Councillor J Truesdale

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet : Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism - Committee Meeting Monday 12 February 2024

For Approval

[DRAFT ERT Action Sheet - 12 February 2024.pdf](#)

Page 1

Notices of Motion

4.0 Notice of Motion C/042/2024 - Peatlands

For Decision

[ERT Report - Notice of Motion C 042 2024 Peatlands.pdf](#)

Page 2

Economy Growth & Tourism

5.0 Artisan Markets

For Decision

[ERT Report - Artisan Markets.pdf](#)

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6.0 PeacePlus Theme 1.1

For Decision

[ERT Report - PeacePlus Theme 1.1.pdf](#)

Page 9

[Appx 1 PeacePlus - Minutes of Partnership Meeting 14 Dec 2023.pdf](#)

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[Appx 2 PEACEPLUS EOI theme 1 report.pdf](#)

Page 14

[Appx 3 PEACEPLUS EOI theme 2 report.pdf](#)

Page 16

7.0 Tourism Strategy 2024-2029 Draft

For Decision

[ERT Report - Tourism Strategy 2024 - 2029 Draft.pdf](#)

Page 18

[Appx 1 Tourism Strategy Consultation Analysis.pdf](#)

Page 21

[Appx 2 Tourism Strategy 2024-2029 Executive Summary.pdf](#)

Page 31

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

8.0 Artist in Residence and Arts Bursary Schemes 2024-25

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 **ERT Report - Artist in Residence & Artist Bursary Scheme for 2024.2025.pdf** **Not included**

9.0 Labour Market Partnership Business Case

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 **ERT Report - Labour Market Partnership 24-25 Action Plan.pdf** **Not included**

📄 **Appx. Labour Market Partnership Business Case 24-25.pdf** **Not included**

10.0 Service Level Agreements / Letters of Offer 2024/25

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 **ERT Report - Service Level Agreements 2024-2025.pdf** **Not included**

11.0 Tourism Events Programme

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 **ERT Report - Tourism Events Programme 2024-25 Final.pdf** **Not included**

📄 **Appx. Tourism Event Programme 24-25.pdf** **Not included**

12.0 Tourism Events Procurement

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 *ERT Report - Tourism Events Procurement.pdf*

Not included

13.0 Ballykinlar Hut Relocation

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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.

📄 *ERT Report - Ballykinlar Hut Relocation.pdf*

Not included

ACTION SHEETECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETINGMONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024

| Minute Ref | Subject | Decision | Lead Officer | Actions taken/ Progress to date | Remove from Action Sheet Y/N |
|--------------|--|---|--------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| ERT/014/2024 | Action sheet Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Meeting held 10.01.2024 | It was agreed to note the action sheet | C Mallon | No Action required | Y |
| ERT/015/2024 | Financial Assistance Call 2 | It was agreed to proceed with the Financial Assistance Call 2. | S Burns | Call being prepared to open | Y |
| ERT/016/2024 | LDP Open Space Strategy | It was agreed to approve the Business Case, and Council proceed to procure professional services to prepare an open space strategy within the district. | J McGilly | Work in progress on procurement | Y |
| ERT/017/2024 | Grade A Tourist Accommodation | It was agreed to note the contents of the report | S Burns | No Action required | Y |
| ERT/018/2024 | DFC Flood Recovery | It was agreed to note the contents of the report | M Boyle | No Action required | Y |
| ERT/019/2024 | DoF Consultation – Energy Efficiency & Building Regulations | It was agreed to note the contents of the response on behalf of NMDDC | J McGilly | No Action required | Y |
| END | | | | | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Report to: | Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday 11 March 2024 |
| Subject: | Peatlands |
| Reporting Officer (Including Job Title): | Conor Mallon Director, Economy, Regeneration & Tourism |
| Contact Officer (Including Job Title): | Aveen McVeigh Head of Regeneration and Business Development |

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

| For decision | For noting only | x |
|--------------|--|---|
| 1.0 | Purpose and Background | |
| 1.1 | <p><u>Purpose</u> To note the ongoing work of Council in the protection of peatlands and reduction of use of peat-based compost.</p> <p><u>Background</u> A Notice of Motion (C/042/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – PEATLANDS) was brought forward by Councillor J Truesdale and seconded by Councillor C Enright in February 2024.</p> <p>"That this Council believes peatlands are a critical part of our ecosystems, regulating the water cycle, purifying water and supporting biodiversity; further recognises that peatlands store more carbon for long periods than any other ecosystem worldwide; and therefore, resolves to protect peatlands and to end its purchase and use of peat-based compost by the end of 2024."</p> | |
| 2.0 | Key issues | |
| 2.1 | <p>Council is delivering a range of actions for The Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONBs; and the Strangford Lough, Murlough and Carlingford Lough MPAs. The function of AONB and MPA management is primarily to mitigate against and/or manage negative impacts on the AONB and MPA created by forces for change.</p> <p>The district has a diverse range of ecosystems, including peatlands, which serve as vital carbon sinks. By preserving/protecting these peatlands, we not only contribute to the global fight against climate change by mitigating carbon emissions but also safeguard the geological and ecological integrity of the District.</p> <p>Council is working with a wide range of stakeholders in the development of a potential PEACEPLUS project focusing on Peatlands under the theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better-Connected Future.</p> | |

| | |
|------------|--|
| | <p>This investment area will promote cross-border co-operation to facilitate the recovery of selected peatland habitats and species across the Programme Area.</p> <p>Working in partnership with Monaghan County Council Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Newry Mourne and Down District Council; East Border Region Ltd; Ulster Wildlife; Louth and Meath County Councils were successful in securing Shared Island Local Authority Development funding to progress the Feasibility Of Restoring A Necklace of "Peace LANDS – Peatlands" along the East Border Region, this work plans proposes to develop a plan for how to restore peatlands in the region; delivering quantifiable emission reduction targets and areas of degraded peatlands in improving ecological condition.</p> <p>Resulting in prioritised sites for peatland/wetland restoration forming an investment proposal to deliver benefits for biodiversity, climate and people.</p> <p>Council uses approximately 2.2 tonnes of peat-based compost for amenity planting. There have been other mediums tried such as natural world products compost from waste, however it is acknowledged that certain planting needs peat-based compost to establish.</p> |
| 3.0 | Recommendations |
| 3.1 | That's Council continues to advance projects and partnership working through the AONB and Geopark team in respect of the protection of peatlands through both Peace+ and Shared Island Unit. |
| 3.2 | Council continues to consider the use of alternatives to peat based produce and works to reduce the use of peat-based compost. |
| 4.0 | Resource implications |
| 4.1 | No resource implication. |
| 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>Rationale:</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 type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| 7.0 | <p>Appendices</p> <p>N/A</p> |
| 8.0 | <p>Background Documents</p> <p>N/A</p> |

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|---|--|
| Report to: | Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday 11 March 2024 |
| Subject: | Artisan Markets in Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry and Warrenpoint |
| Reporting Officer (Including Job Title): | Aveen McVeigh Head of Regeneration and Business Development |
| Contact Officer (Including Job Title): | Louise McVeigh Regeneration, Business Support and Development Officer |

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

| | For decision | x | For noting only | |
|------------|-------------------------------|----------|------------------------|---|
| 1.0 | Purpose and Background | | | |
| 1.1 | | | | <p><u>Purpose</u> To provide an update on the Artisan Markets which are delivered in Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry and Warrenpoint.</p> <p><u>Background</u> Council operates monthly Artisan Markets across the district.</p> <p><i>Schedule and locations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcastle, 1st Saturday month of the month located outside Newcastle Centre • Newry, 2nd Sunday of the month located in Newry Variety Market • Downpatrick, 3rd Saturday of the month located at St Patrick’s Square • Warrenpoint, 4th Saturday of the month located in Warrenpoint Municipal Park <p>All markets operate from 11.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m. and are subject to weather conditions.</p> |
| 2.0 | Key issues | | | |
| 2.1 | | | | To note the attendance and trader figures for the Artisan Markets held across the district from April 2023 – December 2023. |

| | Downpatrick | | | Newcastle | | | Newry | | | Warrenpoint | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | Visitors | Traders | No. Markets | Visitors | Traders | No. Markets | Visitors | Traders | No. Markets | Visitors | Traders | No. Markets |
| April | 719 | 19 | 1 | 721 | 17 | 1 | 597 | 28 | 1 | 588 | 30 | 1 |
| May | 804 | 18 | 1 | 756 | 15 | 1 | 437 | 21 | 1 | 8258 | 66 | 2 |
| June | 770 | 16 | 1 | 941 | 17 | 1 | 540 | 21 | 1 | 1555 | 28 | 1 |
| July | 252 | 15 | 1 | 0 | weather cancellation | 0 | 335 | 15 | 1 | 0 | weather cancellation | 0 |
| August | 422 | 11 | 1 | 920 | 14 | 1 | 610 | 23 | 1 | 3400 | 77 | 3 |
| September | 602 | 18 | 1 | 1660 | 17 | 1 | 636 | 18 | 1 | 1500 | 28 | 1 |
| October | 630 | 19 | 1 | 2835 | 27 | 2 | 2586 | 56 | 2 | 569 | 27 | 1 |
| November | 0 | weather cancellation | 0 | 610 | 17 | 1 | 529 | 35 | 1 | 900 | 27 | 1 |
| December | 556 | 16 | 1 | 550 | 15 | 1 | 420 | 22 | 1 | 0 | weather cancellation | 0 |
| January | Winter Break | | | | | | | | | | | |
| February | Winter Break | | | | | | | | | | | |
| March | Market still to take place | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 4755 | 132 | 8 | 8993 | 139 | 9 | 6690 | 239 | 10 | 16770 | 283 | 10 |
| Total Avg. | 594 | 17 | 1 | 999 | 15 | 1 | 669 | 24 | 1 | 1677 | 28 | 1 |

There are 4 markets scheduled for March 2024. The visitor and trader numbers will be updated.

Summary of key findings for 23/24

- Total number of markets held to date – 37 (4 cancelled due to the weather conditions. There are 4 markets scheduled for March 2024.
- Total number of visitors April 23 – Dec 23 - 37,208
- Average attendance per market – 1,006

Comparison of key findings from 22/23 to 23/24

- 22.5% reduction in traders attending Newry Artisan Market from 22/23 – 23/24

Artisan Market Trader Survey

Council conducts an annual trader survey to monitor activity and receive feedback. Surveys were conducted during October/November 2023. Summary of findings below:

- 90% of respondents attending Newry Artisan Market expressed an interest trading at Twilight Markets
- 50% of the respondents attending Newry Artisan Market expressed an interest in trading at events/festivals in Newry.
- 17% of the respondents attending Newry Artisan Market expressed an interest in trading at the variety market.
- Traders in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Warrenpoint would like to extend trading hours during the summer months to 4.00 p.m.

A Notice of motion in respect of revitalising Newry Market has been referred to S&E committee, officials will await the outcome of that Notice of Motion and work with colleagues in S&E to implement any recommendations.

| | |
|------------|--|
| 3.0 | Recommendations |
| 3.1 | Members agree: To note the attendance figures at the artisan markets. |
| 3.2 | That officers liaise with the Tourism, Culture and Events department to identify opportunities for Newry Artisan Markets e.g. Arts, Halloween, Christmas etc. |
| 3.3 | To offer Artisan Market traders a pitch at Newry Variety Market (trading Thursday and Saturday) as an alternative to the Sunday market. |
| 3.4 | To extend the trading hours of the markets in July and August to 4.00 p.m. |
| 4.0 | Resource implications |
| 4.1 | There is provision in the 24/25 budget. |
| 5.0 | Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections) |
| 5.1 | <i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.2 | <i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/> The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.3 | <i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> 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"/> |

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| | <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 | Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply) |
| 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 type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| 7.0 | Appendices |
| | N/A |
| 8.0 | Background Documents |
| | N/A |

| | |
|---|---|
| Report to: | Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday 11 th March 2024 |
| Subject: | PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1 |
| Reporting Officer (Including Job Title): | Sonya Burns – Head of Programmes |
| Contact Officer (Including Job Title): | Sarah McClory – Project Coordinator |

| | For decision | X | For noting only | |
|------------|--|---|-----------------|--|
| 1.0 | Purpose and Background | | | |
| 1.1 | <p><u>Purpose</u> To seek Committee approval for Recommendations as outlined in 3.0 within the report.</p> <p><u>Background</u> The PEACEPLUS programme comprises six themes and encompasses 22 investment areas. Theme 1 focuses on Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities. Under this theme, Investment Area 1.1 supports the creation of Co-Designed Local Community Peace Action Plans. This enables and empowers local community partnerships to self-determine and deliver priority projects on a cross-community basis; which will result in improved, shared, and inclusive local services, facilities and spaces; and make a significant and lasting contribution to peace and reconciliation.</p> <p>The Newry, Mourne & Down District Council (NMDDC) Action Plan ‘Thriving Together’ has been developed by the PEACEPLUS Partnership, utilising a co-design approach involving comprehensive engagement with the local community and other key stakeholders including statutory providers, public bodies, businesses, and Council DEA (District Electoral Area) Forums.</p> <p>Delivered over a three-year period (2024 – 2027), the Plan will be supported by a budget of approx. €8.6 million (or approx. £7.5 million). Across this period 8,646 participants will be engaged in the delivery of the Action Plan.</p> | | | |
| 2.0 | Key issues | | | |
| 2.1 | <p>In November 2023, SEUPB changed their guidance and requested that all capital elements of the Action Plans include named projects. This required us to complete an Expression of Interest process (in line with our Financial Assistance process) to identify capital projects to be included in the resubmission of the action plan by their final closing date of 28th March 2024.</p> <p>This is not a grants programme as Council will be required to manage the technical requirements and procurement process on behalf of the successful applicants.</p> | | | |

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| | <p>The Expression of Interest themes were: Theme 1 - Development of new or enhanced facilities within existing buildings, which will enable increased levels of cross community interaction and service provision. Theme 2 - Development of new or enhancement of existing shared outdoor spaces which enable increased levels of cross community interaction and where possible capitalise upon natural assets.</p> <p>The call was opened on the 8th of January and closed 19th February 2024. A total of 25 applications were received under theme 1, using a scored and ranked process 11 projects have been selected with a reserve list of 6 projects. Under Theme 2, a total of 23 applications were received, using a scored and ranked process, 14 projects were selected with a reserve list of 3.</p> |
| <p>3.0</p> | <p>Recommendations</p> |
| <p>3.1 3.2 3.3</p> | <p>Members to accept the recommendations of the Peace Partnership to proceed with</p> <p>Theme 1 – To include the 11 projects and 6 reserve projects in the Local Authority Co-designed PEACEPLUS resubmission.</p> <p>Theme 2 – To include the 14 projects and 3 reserve projects in the local Authority Co-Designed PEACEPLUS resubmission.</p> <p>Resubmission of the Co-design Local Authority Action Plan to SEUPB.</p> |
| <p>4.0</p> | <p>Resource implications</p> |
| <p>4.1</p> | <p>Revenue/Payroll: 100% funding by SEUPB</p> <p>Capital: 100% funding by SEUPB Theme 1 - £1,072,494.48 Theme 2 - £774,449.02 all project budgets are inclusive of design fees, Optimum Bias, engagement programme and launch event.</p> |
| <p>5.0</p> | <p>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</p> |
| <p>5.1</p> | <p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> 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 type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> |

| | |
|------------|--|
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| 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 | Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply) |
| 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 type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| 7.0 | Appendices |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PEACEPLUS Partnership minutes 14th December 2023 2. EOI report theme 1 3. EOI report theme 2 |
| 8.0 | Background Documents |
| | N/A |

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

12

**MINUTES OF PEACEPLUS PARTNERSHIP MEETING
Thursday 14th December 2023 @ 12pm
MS Teams**

CHAIRPERSON: Cllr Terry Andrews

Others Present:

Nicholas McCrickard, CDRCN
Janice Cooke, SERC
Andy Hall, Social Partner
Lynda Vladeanu, SE Trust
Thelma Thompson Little, Social Partner
Gerard Rocks, SHSCT
Claire Crainey, NIHE
Breige Jennings, CDRCN
Sonya Burns, NMDDC
Sarah McClory NMDDC
Justyna McCabe NMDDC
Elaine Carr NMDDC
Julie-Anne Harte NMDDC

Apologies:

Paul Yam, Social Partner

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES:

Cllr Terry Andrews chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance. Apologies noted.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 16th November 2023

Proposed – Andy Hall

Seconded – Nicholas McCrickard

4. Expression of Interest guidance notes and process

Members advised all Local Authorities met with the Executive Office the week previous, and again this week, to raise their concerns on the proposed changes to submission rules around Capital projects. The Executive office is meeting with SEUPB today to discuss these concerns.

Planning around the worst-case scenario where capital projects must be named, guidance notes and an application form will be drawn up based on Council Financial Assistance process and should be ready for next week. The call would need to open on 08th January 2024 with workshops booked and advertised.

Guidance notes will advise projects have to be 'spade ready' with either planning or building control applied for. The decision panel must be run in line with Council process, but a Partnership member can attend in observational capacity. Minimum threshold for Theme 1 is £50k - £100k and Theme 2 is £10k - £50k.

Action:

- Add additional question on sustainability into application.
- Nominations from Partnership for member to sit on panels:

Proposed: Andy Hall

Seconded: Breige Jennings

Members will be kept updated on the process and asked to think about who could sit on the scoring/ranking panel. Sarah McClory will share panel information with members and advised it could be several days depending on volume of applications received.

5. AOB

None.

6. DATES AND VENUES OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting: Monday, 04th March, MS Teams



PEACEPLUS Expression of Interest Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

To select projects to be included in the PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1 Co-designed Local Authority Action Plan.

Theme 1: development of new or enhanced facilities within existing buildings, which will enable increased levels of cross community interaction and service provision.

25 Applications received.

11 Applications recommended for selection

6 applications on the reserve list

44% of applications selected

Budget for selected projects

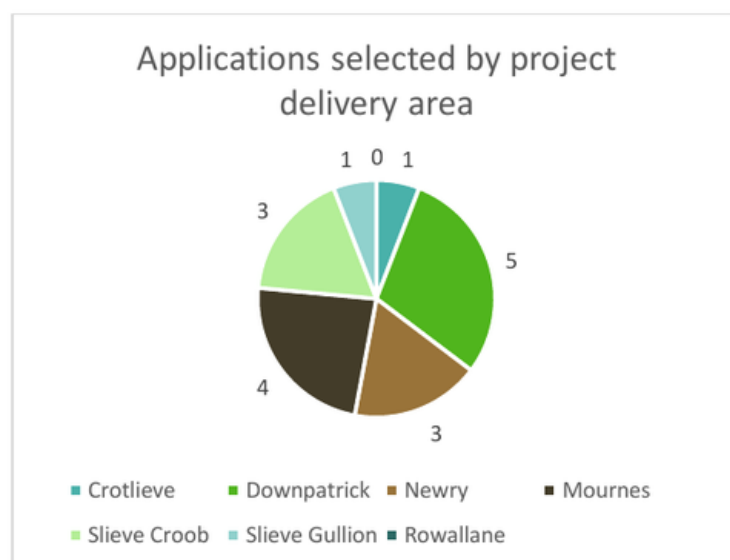
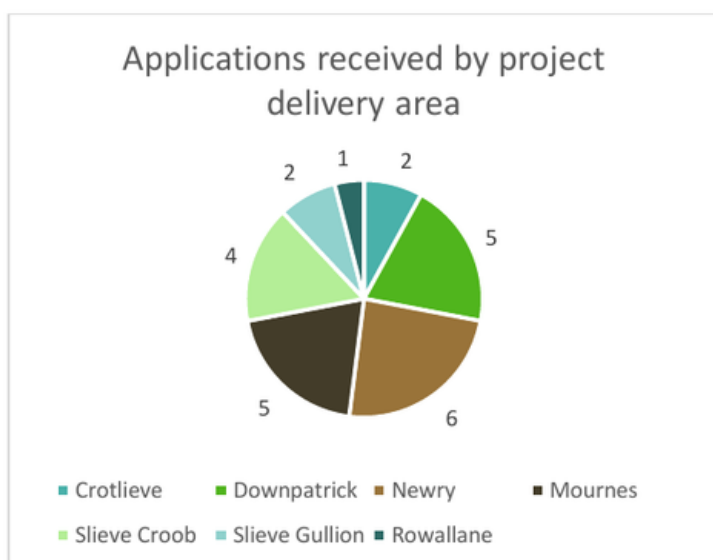
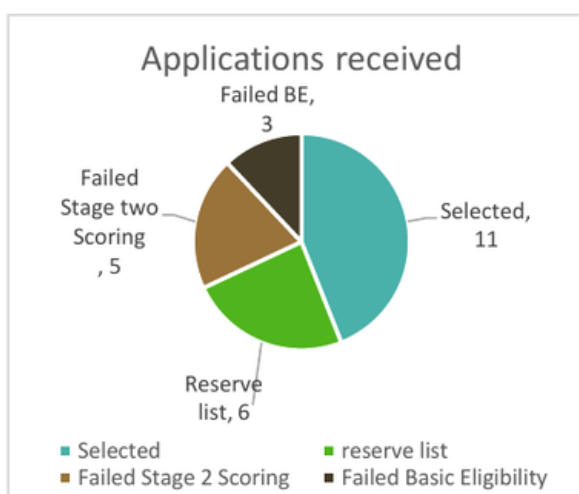
£1,072,494.48

Of the 25 applications:

3 failed basic eligibility = 12%

5 Failed stage 2 scoring = 20%

17 Passed stage 2 = 68%



Breakdown of Applications per stage and final selection

Stage 1 = 3 Fail

| Group | Passed basic eligibility |
|--------|--------------------------|
| PP1002 | No |
| PP1007 | No |
| PP1021 | No |

Stage 2 = 5 fail

| Group | Passed basic eligibility | Stage 2 |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| PP1001 | Yes | No |
| PP1003 | Yes | No |
| PP1011 | Yes | No |
| PP1015 | Yes | No |
| PP1017 | Yes | No |

Stage 1 & 2 = 17 Passed: 11 Recommended for selection and 6 reserved.

* Please note all budgets are inclusive of design fees, OB, engagement programme and launch event.

| Group | Passed basic eligibility | Stage 2 | Recommended Amount |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| PP1004 | Yes | Yes | £104,580.00 |
| PP1005 | Yes | Yes | £61,981.70 |
| PP1006 | Yes | Yes | £74,229.73 |
| PP1010 | Yes | Yes | £92,839.65 |
| PP1012 | Yes | Yes | £100,900.00 |
| PP1013 | Yes | Yes | £104,005.00 |
| PP1016 | Yes | Yes | £101,780.90 |
| PP1018 | Yes | Yes | £94,460.00 |
| PP1020 | Yes | Yes | £117,000.00 |
| PP1024 | Yes | Yes | £103,775.00 |
| PP1025 | Yes | Yes | £116,942.50 |
| PP1008 | Yes | Reserve list | £97,178.60 |
| PP1009 | Yes | Reserve list | £93,143.25 |
| PP1014 | Yes | Reserve list | £114,700.00 |
| PP1019 | Yes | Reserve list | £96,012.50 |
| PP1022 | Yes | Reserve list | £81,350.00 |
| PP1023 | Yes | Reserve list | £105,500.00 |
| Total for selected projects (exclusive of reserve) | | | £1,072,494.48 |

END



PEACEPLUS Expression of Interest Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

To select projects to be included in the PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1 Co-designed Local Authority Action Plan.

Theme 2: development of new or enhancement of existing shared outdoor spaces which enable increased levels of cross community interaction and where possible capitalise upon natural assets.

23 Applications received.

14 Applications recommended for selection

3 applications on the reserve list

61% of applications selected

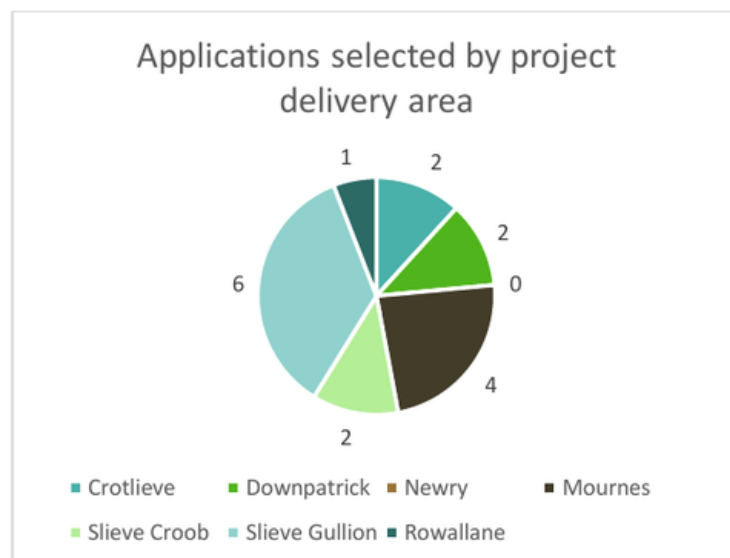
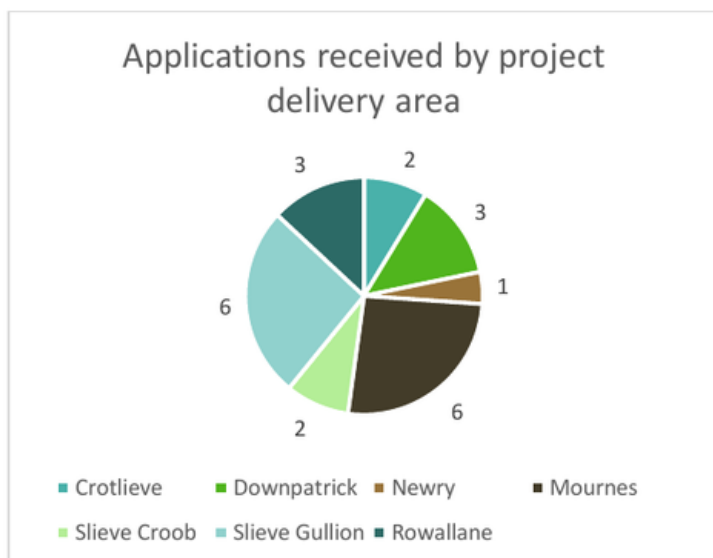
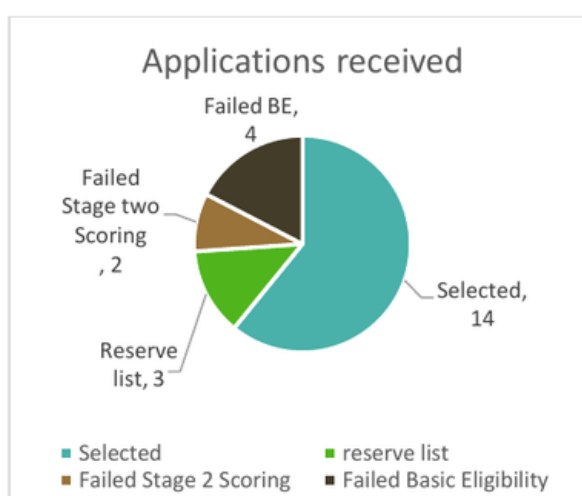
Budget for selected projects
£774,449.02

Of the 25 applications:

4 failed basic eligibility = 17%

2 Failed stage 2 scoring = 9%

17 Passed stage 2 = 74%



Breakdown of Applications per stage and final selection

Stage 1 = 4 Fail

| Group | Passed basic eligibility |
|--------|--------------------------|
| PP2001 | No |
| PP2012 | No |
| PP2022 | No |
| PP2023 | |

Stage 2 = 2 fail

| Group | Passed basic eligibility | Stage 2 |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| PP2013 | Yes | No |
| PP2015 | Yes | No |

Stage 1 & 2 = 17 Passed: 14 Recommended for selection and 3 reserved.

* Please note all budgets are inclusive of design fees, OB, engagement programme and launch event.

| Group | Passed basic eligibility | Stage 2 | Recommended Amount |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| PP2002 | Yes | Yes | £59,500.00 |
| PP2003 | Yes | Yes | £53,865.00 |
| PP2004 | Yes | Yes | £59,500.00 |
| PP2005 | Yes | Yes | £54,742.45 |
| PP2007 | Yes | Yes | £59,500.00 |
| PP2008 | Yes | Yes | £43,572.50 |
| PP2009 | Yes | Yes | £57,216.68 |
| PP2010 | Yes | Yes | £47,869.59 |
| PP2011 | Yes | Yes | £56,265.05 |
| PP2014 | Yes | Yes | £47,183.50 |
| PP2018 | Yes | Yes | £57,775.00 |
| PP2019 | Yes | Yes | £58,465.00 |
| PP2020 | Yes | yes | £59,494.25 |
| PP2021 | Yes | yes | £59,500.00 |
| PP2006 | Yes | Reserve list | £53,807.50 |
| PP2016 | Yes | Reserve list | £47,827.50 |
| PP2017 | Yes | Reserve list | £33,533.00 |
| Total for selected projects (exclusive of reserve) | | | £774,449.02 |

END

| | |
|---|---|
| Report to: | Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Monday 11th March 2024 |
| Subject: | Tourism Strategy 2024 – 2029 |
| Reporting Officer (Including Job Title): | Michelle Boyle Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience |
| Contact Officer (Including Job Title): | Michelle Boyle Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience |

| For decision | x | For noting only | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|--|
| 1.0 | | | Purpose and Background |
| 1.1 | | | <p><u>Purpose</u> The purpose of this report is to note the consultation analyses and approve the Tourism Strategy 2024-2029</p> <p><u>Background</u> At the ERT Committee meeting in March 2023 the draft Tourism Strategy was approved subject to a 12-week consultation process.</p> |
| 2.0 | | | Key issues |
| 2.1 | | | <p>Public consultation on the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s draft Tourism Strategy Action Plan began on the 1 September 2023 for a twelve-week period.</p> <p>The consultation was advertised on council’s social media channels and emailed to the Councils tourism industry database. 34 responses were received including 2 email responses.</p> <p>The Tourism Strategy clarifies the goals, objectives and strategic priorities that can maximise opportunities and position NMD as a leading tourism destination in Ireland.</p> |
| 3.0 | | | Recommendations |

| | |
|------------|--|
| | That Members agree: |
| 3.1 | To note the consultation analyses recommendations in Appendix 1 |
| 3.2 | Approve the Tourism Strategy 2024 – 2029 as Appendix 2 |
| 4.0 | Resource implications |
| 4.1 | The budget requirement for delivery will be included within Councils capital and revenue programme where applicable and through securing external funding. |
| 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> |
| 5.2 | <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> |
| 5.3 | <p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></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> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| | <i>Rationale:</i> |
| 6.0 | Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply) |
| 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> |
| 7.0 | Appendices |
| | <p>Appendix 1 – Consultation Analysis – NMD Draft Tourism Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Tourism Strategy Executive Summary</p> |
| 8.0 | Background Documents |
| | N/A |

Appendix 1: Consultation analysis – draft Tourism Strategy 2024-2029

Background

Public consultation on the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's draft Tourism Strategy Action Plan 2023-2029 began on the 1 September 2023 for a twelve-week period.

The consultation was advertised on council's social media channels and emailed to the Council's tourism industry database. 34 responses were received including 2 email responses.

The Tourism Strategy clarifies the goals, objectives and strategic priorities that can maximise opportunities and position NMD as a leading tourism destination in Ireland.

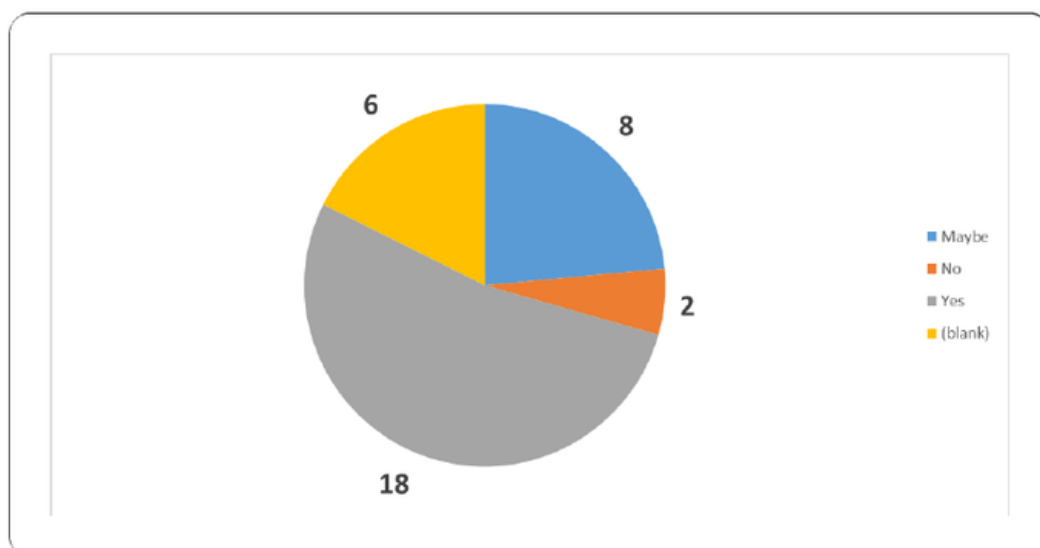
Findings

1. Ambition

With regard to the Ambition of the Tourism Strategy, respondents were asked if the three key ambitions are the right ones for the next five years?

Key Principles

- Raising the profile of this destination as a
 - a fully ratified UNESCO Global Geopark as of May 2023
 - the home of three designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Mourne, Ring of Gullion, Strangford and Lecale
 - landmark tourism destination with world-class authentic experiences that define the destination including culture/heritage, food/drink, outdoor activities and adventure, wellness and events/festivals
 - premium outdoor activity/adventure destination
- Empowering tourism providers in the destination to achieve sustainable livelihoods, create employment and spread economic benefits into the wider community
- Engaging the local resident and business communities in the destination’s tourism industry and offering



53% of respondents agreed
 6% of respondents disagreed
 23% of respondents thought maybe
 18% of respondents left blank

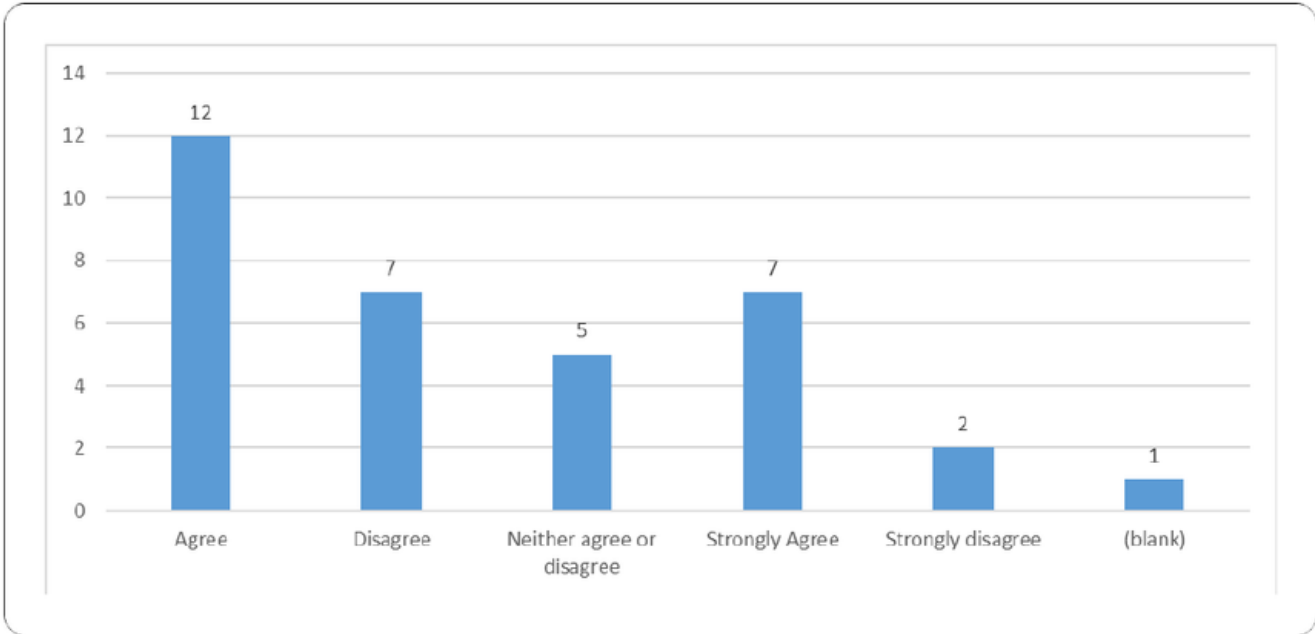
Respondents were then given the opportunity provide further comments in relation to the above. Comments included the following:

- Reduction of the VAT Rate.
- Investment and opening hours of basic facilities such as toilet provision.
- Welcome the priority for safeguarding the environment, great emphasis on active travel.
- Traffic Management and managing visitor numbers.
- Importance of the landscape and benefit of the Geopark to reduce overdevelopment.
- Focus on St. Patrick.
- Develop a project in conjunction with Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) to open section(s) of its Newry Canal as a Blueway and working on various locks with the local chapter.
- The Mournes are internationally recognised and no need for a Gondala
- Tourism-related jobs are badly paid and often seasonal with limited career opportunities, livelihoods and the local economy would be better served by supporting the development of locally based businesses, via such initiatives as business parks and training.
- To ensure the affordable housing for permanent residents, whether currently living in the district or wishing to move here, 'Council needs to impose a hefty rates levy on 2nd and 3rd homes'.

2. Strategic Priorities

Next respondents were asked about the 5 strategic priorities that have emerged and if they are correct:

- Strategic Priority 1: Invest in Communications
 - Strategic Priority 1.1: Redefine a New Destination Brand for NMD
- Strategic Priority 2: Invest in NMD's Community and Partners
- Strategic Priority 3: Maximise Commercial Capability
- Strategic Priority 4: Engage in Data Collation and Analysis
- Strategic Priority 5: Prioritise investment in tourism-related infrastructure



56% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed
 26% of respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed
 15% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed
 3% of respondents left blank

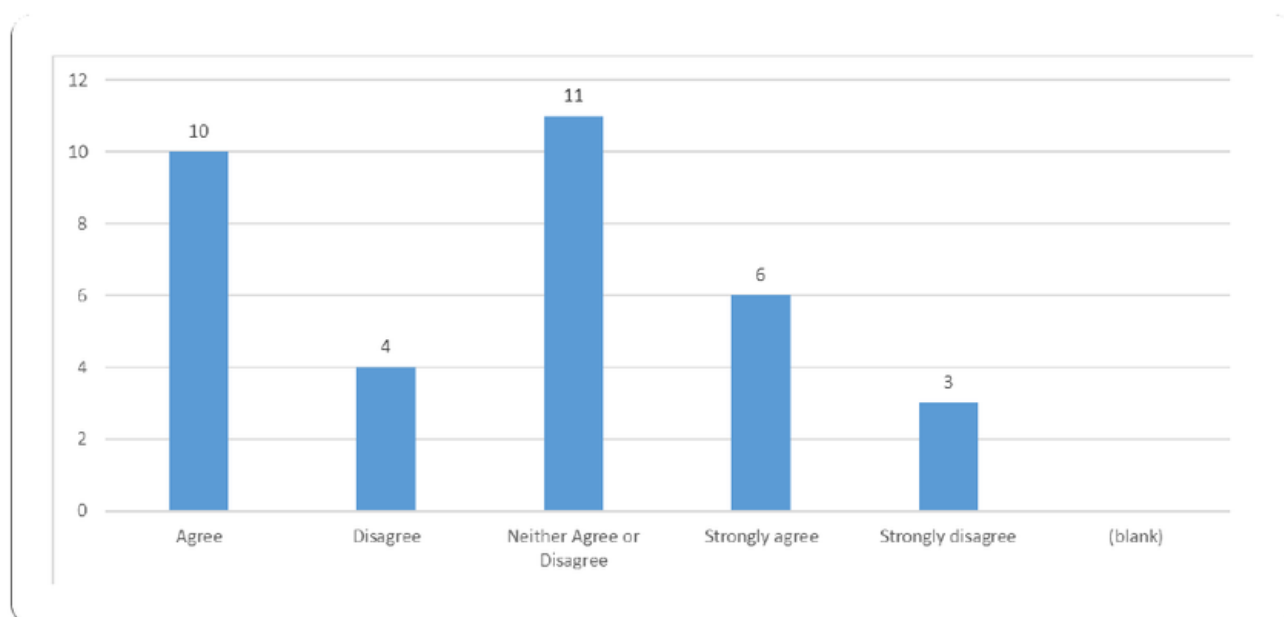
Respondents were then given the opportunity provide further comments in relation to the above. Comments included the following:

| No. | Priority | Comments |
|-----|--|---|
| 1 | Invest in Communications and New Destination Brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'No need to redefine the brand, enhance what we have'. • The tourism branding for NMD becomes an extension of Failte Ireland's marketing and the Ancient East region. • TNI would advise that it would be preferable for NMD to consider the development of a Destination Proposition for the area, setting out NMD's Unique selling Proposition in the context of the wider Embrace a Giant Spirit Brand |
| 2 | Invest in NMD's Community & Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of Savour Visit Mourne should be added • Opportunities to explore greater linkages with Ards & North Down BC |
| 3 | Maximise Commercial Capability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of France as a key market |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | Engage in Data Collection & Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More data collection around caravan pitches and the need for facilities and utilities to be adequately provided |
| 5 | Investment in tourism-related infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of hotels bed is a barrier to increasing visitor number and investment in the District, in particular locations such as Downpatrick • Supportive of investment in 4 & 5 Star accommodation however be more open to the type of accommodation we are trying to attract and not be restricted to hotels • Investment in key infrastructure projects such as the Narrow Water bridge, coastal path development, Newcastle Harbour and the Mourne Gateway project • 'I strongly disagree with prioritising investment in tourism infrastructure can all too often kill marvellous natural attractions, witness your terrible Mourne Gateway's Visitor Centre and Gondola' • Tourism related infrastructure should prioritise walking and cycling connectivity throughout the district. • Investment in Newcastle Rock Pool, Community Cinema and leisure centre should be prioritised. • Investment in carparking near Newcastle. |

3. Vision and Value Proposition

Do you feel vision and value proposition within the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028, is as it should be?



41% of respondents agreed
 26% of respondents disagreed
 33% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed

Respondents were then given the opportunity provide further comments in relation to the above. Comments included the following:

- 'to describe us as 'earthy' is a strange choice of words and to cite our long history with no mention of fishermen or maritime explorers seems amiss'
- Hard to argue with, but also impossible to avoid the contrast between the vision and values set out here and the dreadful damage threatened by the gondola project
- Agreed that attracting tourists who are interested in culture/food/outdoor activities is a good thing. Increasing off-season attraction indoor attractions should be encouraged.
- The Vision Statement focuses almost exclusively on native Irish history and traditions ignoring Normans, Scots-Irish and other ethnic groups.
- 'Tourism is a massive contributor to climate change, we should be scaling it back rather than increasing it'.
- The vision statement does not reflect that the first summit level canal in all of GB and Ireland was Newry Canal built in the 1730s.

- More should be made of the Geopark status.
- The vision statement should be further simplified and summarised so it is more succinct.

4. Express your view

Express any views, comments, recommendations or insights regarding the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028

Comments included the following:

- There should be more infrastructure that attracts high quality visitors to the area but in sustainable numbers.
- 'The Gondola proposal for Newcastle must be rejected for many reasons - it will bring too many people with nothing to do, it will have an adverse environmental impact, it will be financially unviable and will create a lot of frustration and dissent within the local population - potentially creating a negative relationship between tourists and locals.'
- Free local events should be targeted at ratepayers in Newry, Mourne & Down.
- Reduce the focus on activity-based holidays and recreation and improve the focus on our cultural attractions.
- Connect to work done by the Council in other areas such as Active Travel
- The Strategy should focus on what makes this area unique within Ireland and the British Isles. That is the rich Ulster-Scots heritage in County Down'.

5. Are you aware of any equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs implications associated with the draft Strategy

Comments included the following:

- Better tracks and pathways interlinking natural assets.
- Invest in reviving active travel by encouraging more public transport.

The majority of responses were positive with consultees 'agreeing to strongly agreeing' to the ambitions and strategic priorities of the plan.

Council response:

Ambitions

- In terms of reduction of the VAT Rate this is something Council can lobby through the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance
- Investment in toilet provision is considered as part of the Councils Strategy on the subject area
- The Strategy will incorporate greater reference to the opportunity for Active Travel
- The Geopark Action Plan will be key on delivering Sustainable Tourism for the District and is a key component of the Draft strategy
- A Focus on St. Patrick, the Strategy incorporates all aspect of culture/heritage as a key proposition and the Strategy already notes St. Patrick is an important element of the Story of the Destination.
- In terms of developing a project in conjunction with Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) to open section(s) of its Newry Canal as a Blueway and working on various locks with the local chapter, currently work is underway on assessing requirements of Lock No. 6 and it is a recommended a Feasibility Study is undertaken to consider a Blueway Development ahead of identifying it as a Strategic Priority for the Council.
- In terms of the Mourne Gateway Project feedback has been both supportive and unsupportive, this is a project which is a Strategic Priority for the Council and project development will include extensive consultation.
- In terms of Tourism-related jobs are offering limited career opportunities and poor wages, Council will continue to engage with HATS (Hospitality and Tourism Skills) on promoting Hospitality as a rewarding career choice
- In terms of Rates levy on 2nd and 3rd homes this is a wider Government issue.

Priorities

- In terms of Brand following market research it has been agreed the new destination tourism brand for the District will be Ireland's True Nature as the over-arching tourism brand essence, with Mourne Gullion Strangford as the geo-locator for the tourism offer. These elements will be used in different hierarchy and scale relationships, depending on audience and context.
- Collaboration across a range of agencies including neighbouring Local Authorities such as Ards & North Down BC will continue to be a priority for the Council and is included within the Strategy.
- France is a priority market for the Destination, however further work needed with industry on language skills development to maximise the opportunity for European markets such as France.
- Data associated with the caravan sector will part of Data Collection and Analysis priorities included within the Strategy.
- Investment in visitor accommodation will be extended to include a broader range of accommodation.

- Investment in walking & cycling will be prioritised as part of the incorporation of the Active Travel Masterplan & Action Plan in the Tourism Strategy as a priority for delivery.
- Investment in facilities such as Newcastle Rock Pool, Leisure Centre and Community Cinema will be referred to Active & Health Communities for consideration.
- Investment in Newcastle Harbour will be considered as part of the Council Conservation plan for the location and Narrow Water Bridge and Mourne Gateway project are currently strategic priorities which are being progressed.
- In terms of coastal path development, a feasibility study had been completed and identified a number of significant challenges around land ownership. The priority will be smaller sections of development as part of the Active Travel Masterplan
- With regard improved carparking associated with Newcastle, parking will be considered as part of the Mourne Gateway project.

Vision Statement & Visitor Proposition

- The coastline has been outlined as a defining characteristic of the Destination, which includes Maritime as a key element.
- Increasing off-season attractions, the Strategy will seek to encourage year-round indoor and outdoor activities.
- The Vision Statement focuses almost exclusively on native Irish history and traditions ignoring Normans, Scots-Irish and other ethnic groups. The Strategy will be updated to reflect the 5 keys themes of the Draft NI Tourism Strategy of Inclusive, Collaborative, Attractive, Innovative and Sustainable.
- 'Tourism is a massive contributor to climate change, we should be scaling it back rather than increasing it'. Sustainable Tourism underpins delivery of the overall Strategy. Tourism supports local livelihoods and economy. The increasing emphasis in terms of delivery tourism products and experiences is on the basis of the principles of leave no trace. The emphasis in terms of Experience Development is to encourage a respect for local communities and traditions with an emphasis on local food, drink, walking, cycling, wellness etc. The Strategy will emphasise more work needed with communities to outline the ethos and importance of the Geopark and its role in supporting sustainable tourism.
- The vision statement does not reflect that the first summit level canal in all of GB and Ireland was Newry Canal built in the 1730s. The Strategy recognises investment in Newry as NMD's only city, this will highlight the importance of Newry Canal to the Destination in terms of overall development of the Canal and the Action plan will include a Feasibility Study into the Blueway concept.

Recommendations and actions:

- To update the Strategy with recommendations as outlined above with the Strategy timescale to be amended to 2024-2029

Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

2024-2029

FLOURISH

Communications | Community | **Economy** | Measure | Invest

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down and South Armagh



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this plan is to provide a clear roadmap and practical guidelines to maximise opportunities for the Newry Mourne and Down district (NMD) as a tourism destination for the period 2024-2029. This plan follows the Tourism Strategy 2017-2021 that represents the first tourism strategy coordinated by Newry Mourne Down District Council (established as a local authority in Northern Ireland in 2015). Within this period, there have been significant widespread achievements ranging from the curation of over 40 world-class market-ready experiences to promote the district and hosting leading tourism events (e.g., the annual IAAT Conference,¹ November 2022) to the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark being ratified by the UNESCO Executive Board in May 2023.

The successes of the Tourism Strategy 2017-2021 have been acknowledged via stakeholder engagement conducted for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, with feedback from NMD's tourism industry confirming that significant ground has been broken in raising the destination's profile in Ireland and globally. Looking to the future, over the next five years the expressed aim is to build upon the hard work and strong foundations that have been laid to date so that NMD can flourish, supported by an ambitious strategy that can achieve increased measurable economic and social benefits.

The Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 clarifies the goals, objectives and strategic priorities that can maximise opportunities and position NMD as a leading tourism destination in Ireland. To that end, this plan is set out in two parts:

- **Strategic Analysis:** a summary of the research and recommendation outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029
- **Action Plan 2024-2029:** outlining the strategic priorities and associated actions that should be undertaken over the upcoming years

Across these two parts, the plan includes six sections as follows:

- Vision statement and value proposition
- Summary review of NMD's tourism strategy 2017-2021
- Summary outcomes for NMD's tourism strategy 2024-2029
- Action plan 2024-2029
- Appendices

1.1. Creating the Plan

To inform the creation of this plan, the following work was undertaken:

1. Consultations with
 - Newry Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) officers
 - NMD tourism businesses, stakeholders, organisations, and networks
 - NMD community representatives and organisations

¹ IAAT: Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism

- NMD elected members
- Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI)
- Tourism Ireland (TI)
- professional travel buyers: leisure and business tourism
- independent data intelligence and global benchmarking organisations
- Ulster University Economic Policy Centre

2. Desk research including reports and analysis relevant to NMD’s tourism strategy.

This plan including all recommendations and actions align with regional/national policies and strategies including those noted below:

| Newry Mourne Down District Council (NMDDC): | National Strategies and Policies |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMDDC Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy 2022- 2027 • NMDDC’s Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2022-2025 • NMDDC Corporate Plan 2021-2023 • NMDDC Village, Towns and City Masterplans • Newry City Centre Masterplan – October 2011 • NMDDC - Tourist Accommodation Scoping Study for Destinations Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion & Strangford Lough • NMDDC Active Travel Masterplan • Living Well Together A Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down to 2030 • Mourne Gullion Strangford Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark – Ten Year Masterplan 2020 – 2030 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department for the Economy’s Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan • Together Building a United Community Strategy • Rural Needs Act • Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act • Tourism NI 2022-23 operating plan • Tourism NI Annual Report 2020 • Tourism Ireland Marketing Plans • Department for the Economy Economic Strategy • Department for the Economy Economic Vision (2024): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good jobs: increase the proportion of working-age people in good jobs - Regional Balance: address economic disadvantage to ensure that all people have the same opportunity to earn a living - Raise Productivity: increase outputs per worker - Net Zero: build a green economy and measurably reduce climate emissions • Department of Culture, Arts and Heritage: A Way Forward |

Across all Newry Mourne Down District Council policies, there is a commitment to creating opportunities for local communities to thrive by supporting sustainable economic growth

over time and helping people to lead fulfilling lifestyles under five core values that underpin this plan:

1. We will be citizen focused and actively encourage citizen and community engagement, as well as being a listening and responsive Council.
2. We will be accountable and make decisions based on an objective assessment of need and operate in a transparent way as well as openly reporting on our performance.
3. We will be collaborative and actively encourage and pursue working in partnership, and at all levels, to deliver for our district.
4. We will be sustainable and will take into account the social, economic and environmental impacts of our decisions on current and future generations.
5. We will be fair at all times and will proactively target actions at those who are marginalised within our community.

As an output from the research conducted, five overarching key strategic priorities and a growth target for tourism revenue generation have been established for the upcoming period 2024-2029.

These five strategic priorities, goals and associated actions have been consciously created in a way that aligns with NMD's ethos of placing sustainability and social inclusion at the heart of all decision-making.

1.2. Sustainability, Strategic Priorities and Goals

Sustainability is an inherent hallmark of NMD as emphasised in NMDDC's core values and the Tourism Strategy 2017-2021, championing a balanced and holistic approach that prioritises:

- safeguarding the environment
- supporting the local community
- supporting livelihoods and the economy

This approach, which is fundamental to the vision, ambition and aims of this plan is outlined below in further detail under the following headings

- The framework for sustainable tourism development
- Sustainable travel solutions
- People, place and the local economy
- Aligning strategic priorities with sustainable tourism development

The framework for sustainable tourism development

The Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark – Ten Year Masterplan 2020 – 2030 provides the framework for sustainable and regenerative tourism development, outlining how achieving UNESCO Global Geopark status “provides a significant impetus in developing the region as a leading sustainable tourism destination.” This plan states that while the

three designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Mourne, Gullion and Strangford) are mainly focused on the management of the landscapes and the communities within their respective catchments, the UNESCO Global Geopark takes a more holistic approach (including via sustainable tourism development) across the unified Mourne Gullion Strangford geography.

Within this context, the plan advocates for the development of a sustainable tourism destination and industry through a range of sites, authentic experiences, activities, accommodation and events which complement and enhance the unique character of the Geopark's geological landscape. The plan emphasises that this development must happen in a responsible way that champions conservation and education so that the destination's tourism assets, landscape, built heritage and cultural heritage can be

- celebrated and appreciated by contemporary generations
- protected, preserved and celebrated by future generations

This plan and the sustainable tourism development strategy for the destination is thereby mindful of its responsibility to care for both the environment and local communities by keeping abreast of challenges such as

- managing visitor volumes
- promoting responsible tourism practices by visitors
- addressing sustainable travel solutions and itineraries

Sustainable travel solutions:

The Newry, Mourne and Down Active Travel Plan specifically addresses the provision of infrastructure and communications to promote sustainable travel solutions such as walking, cycling and public transport for the benefit of local people and visitors. The recommended methodology for achieving this includes using road spaces and railways more efficiently along with improving connectivity across the region and to key tourism sites.

The Active Travel Plan also sets out the ambition to further develop greenways in the destination. An example includes the Newry to Dundalk Greenway that has been identified for development as a 42 kilometre route encompassing the spectacular shoreline of Carlingford Lough (with some phases already completed and other sections currently under development). Additionally, the consultation process for this plan has requested investment in a feasibility study to consider a Blueway development on Newry Canal.

The Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 fully aligns with the intentions expressed in the Newry, Mourne and Down Active Travel Plan and the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark – Ten Year Masterplan 2020 – 2030. This will manifest in many ways, including by

- promoting existing and future sustainable travel solutions to explore the destination, including via existing and future greenways and blueways
- supporting tourism providers with
 - the development of sustainable experiences that attract responsible visitors

- the delivery of experiences so that visitors are advised about how to engage respectfully within the destination
- creating itineraries for visitors that champion sustainable experiences and sustainable travel solutions

People, place and the local economy:

While the vision noted below for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark – Ten Year Masterplan 2020 – 2030 highlights the importance of place (a place “born of fire and shaped by ice”) and people (“cared by its people and shared with others”), the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 will be equally mindful of supporting livelihoods and the local economy within the context of sustainable tourism development.

Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark-born of fire and shaped by ice, cared by its people and shared with others.

Today’s visitor seeks experiences that share the unique story of local people (including their customs, traditions, and interests) and the place they come from across urban and rural destinations. Quality tourism experiences are thereby delivered by people from all walks of life including from farmers and fishermen to musicians and weavers. Accordingly (depending on the experience offering), tourism can either fully or partially support a livelihood, benefiting the local economy while allowing the provider to stay in their homeplace. With reports published by national tourism bodies emphasising a rising demand for sustainable tourism destinations where money spent goes back to local communities, this approach benefits the region, destination Northern Ireland and the visitor.

Aligning strategic priorities with sustainable tourism development:

For the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, each of the five strategic priorities outlined below are positioned within the destination’s sustainable tourism development framework. Via the consultation process, it was strongly noted that sustainable and regenerative tourism practices have been an integral part of NMD’s strategy for more than a decade. For many NMD tourism businesses, a sustainable and regenerative approach is naturally ingrained into their operations.

Going forward, NMD will amplify communications regarding its long-standing commitment and performance in this regard. The vision is to position NMD as a global leader and advocate for sustainable tourism within a destination that is home to more than

- 100 miles (160 kilometres) of coastline
- 600 square miles (1,600 kilometres) of premier outdoor landscape

As part of this process, tourism businesses will be equipped with the knowledge, support, metrics and roadmap that can enable them (individually and collectively) to represent NMD as confident communicators of the sustainable and regenerative tourism approaches practiced in this destination. Taking care to adopt a multi-layered approach (working at tourism business level, community level and council level), the aim is to ensure that NMD’s goal of becoming a recognised leader in sustainable tourism is fully realised.

1.3. Social Inclusion

Just as this plan places sustainability at the heart of all tourism development, social inclusion is a key pillar that similarly underpins all strategic priorities. The commitment to social inclusion is evident throughout all NMDDC's strategies including the Living Well Together A Community Plan for Newry, Mourne and Down to 2030, NMDDC Active Travel Masterplan and the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark – Ten Year Masterplan 2020 – 2030 that emphasises as a key aim the “promotion of inclusion in all processes from governance to implementation activities, thus providing an equality of access and opportunities for citizens of and visitors to the Geopark.”

Noting that Inclusion is also a key stated priority in The Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan, the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 commits to positioning NMD as a sustainable and socially inclusive tourism destination that is mindful of the needs of all, including visitors with physical, mental and intellectual difficulties.

Guided by experts, relevant stakeholders, organisations and local tourism businesses with established social inclusion practices, all sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry will be supported to be proactive about responding to the needs of visitors including via communications, experience and service delivery.

1.4. Five Key Strategic Priorities

Noting that sustainable tourism development and social inclusion underpin all ambitions and actions within the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, the five strategic priorities for the duration of this plan are

1. Invest in communications and
 - 1.1 Raise the profile of NMD's new destination brand
2. Invest in NMD's community
3. Maximise economic advantage
4. Engage in data collation and analysis
5. Prioritise investment in tourism related infrastructure

The principles behind these five priorities are summarised below. The objectives and associated actions that have emerged for each noted strategic priority are outlined under part two of this plan, entitled Action Plan 2024-2029.

Strategic Priority 1: Invest in Communications

It is clear that NMD has matured and grown in confidence as a tourism destination over the past five years. To advance that success in the upcoming years, communications have emerged as a high priority with key actions to include:

- the creation of a new Vision Statement and Value Proposition that defines NMD's offering as a tourism destination

- ensuring that NMD emerges as a landmark tourism destination, rather than as a gateway to other locations (e.g., Dublin and Belfast)
- continued investment in experience development (defined as a destination game changer for the period 2017-2022) to include
 - developing a dedicated collection of outdoor activities and adventure experiences
 - maintaining the focus on experiences that
 - connect authentically with the local community
 - showcase themes that are intrinsic to NMD such as mountains, maritime and legends
 - function as a collective to maximise opportunities for NMD across themes encompassing food and drink, culture and heritage, outdoor activities and adventure, and wellness
- maximising opportunities for NMD's tourism offering via clear offline and online communications under the following categories:
 - natural assets: places of interest and natural beauty from land to seascapes
 - experiences, ordered under the following sub-categories
 - culture and heritage
 - food and drink
 - outdoor activities and adventure (including world-class golf)
 - wellness
 - visitor attractions
 - events and festivals
 - accommodation providers
 - places to eat and drink
 - ways to get around: from public to private tourism transport options
- positioning NMD via communications as a
 - global leader for sustainable tourism (ensuring that tourism businesses are equipped with the knowledge, support, metrics and roadmap to act as confident communicators of NMD's sustainable/regenerative tourism ethos and approaches)
 - tourism destination that places social inclusion at its heart
 - primary outdoor, activity and adventure destination in Ireland
- ensuring that communications are used proactively and effectively to connect and promote positive relationships across NMD's
 - tourism industry
 - local community
 - national and global collaborative partnerships
- the adoption of a "ground-up" approach that showcases NMD's tourism industry from the human perspective of local people who work within it

- aligning with the strategic themes in The Department for the Economy's recent Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan: innovation, inclusion, sustainability, attractiveness and collaboration

Strategic Priority 1.1: Raise the profile of NMD's new destination brand

During the consultation process the ask to redefine the destination's brand became clear. As the specific purpose of this plan is to provide strategic guidance that can enable NMD to maximise opportunities as a tourism industry and destination, a separate consultation process was conducted to address the destination's branding.

The outcome of this consultation process has defined *Mourne Gullion Strangford* as the geo locator and *Ireland's True Nature* as the overarching tourism brand essence, positioning NMD as an unparalleled destination with a breath-taking natural landscape, people who are genuine and welcoming, a rich cultural heritage, quality food and drink and expansive spaces for outdoor recreation.

With the aim of ensuring that NMD aligns with premier regional destinations in Ireland (e.g., Causeway Coast and Glens, the Burren, Connemara, the Boyne Valley) and globally (e.g., Loire Valley), this brand will be the destination's defining brand for the future.

As the redefined destination brand aligns with Northern Ireland's Embrace A Giant Spirit destination experience brand, which in turn aligns with other Ireland brands including Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin Surprising by Nature, all relevant internal and external stakeholders and authorities (e.g., Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland) will be informed of NMD's revised branding and how to engage with same.

Strategic Priority 2: Invest in NMD's Community and Partners

For the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, NMD's community references:

- tourism industry businesses and entities: including accommodation providers, experience and activity providers, visitor attractions, event and festival providers, places to eat and drink and tourism-relevant transport providers
- the local
 - resident community
 - business community
- tourism agencies: Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland
- engagement with councils in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- visitors from Ireland and global markets
- professional travel buyers: leisure and business tourism
- partnerships and alliances in Ireland and globally that benefit NMD

Stakeholder engagement with tourism businesses confirms that over the past five years a lot has been achieved to promote connections and collaboration. For example, significant progress has been made with developing alliances and partnerships:

- between NMD tourism businesses: e.g., via networking events and professional development programmes
- alliances that benefit NMD tourism businesses: e.g., Strangford Lough cluster
- close collaboration with national tourism agencies: Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, ensuring that their guidance informs NMD's tourism strategy
- cross-council initiatives: e.g., the Memorandum of Understanding with Louth
- between NMD tourism businesses and professional travel buyers: e.g., via attendance at trade events in Ireland and global markets
- global partnerships and alliances: e.g., Atlantic CultureScape intangible cultural heritage experience development global partnership project, led by NMDDC

In the upcoming years, NMD intends to expand on this collaborative approach. For example, via consultation for this plan, NMD's tourism industry has requested to increase partnership opportunities by scheduling networking and familiarisation trips during low season periods.

While maximising opportunities via leisure tourism will remain the primary focus, NMD will additionally explore the destination's potential for business tourism. In this regard, establishing connections with NMD's local business community will be key for securing corporate meetings, conferences, incentives and events from Ireland and global markets.

Engaging NMD's local resident community with the destination's tourism industry and offering will be a key priority over the coming years. The purpose of this action is to raise awareness within the community about

- what NMD's tourism offering is and how it can benefit local people
- the makeup of NMD's tourism industry and how it is comprised of local businesses
- how NMD successfully competes in domestic and global markets
- the expectations of visitors and how to engage with them

Under this priority, initiatives such as Local Experts Programmes should be considered so that community-based networks are created that are

- informed about NMD's tourism offering
- equipped with the know how to
 - share knowledge about NMD's tourism offering
 - interact positively with visitors to NMD
 - engage and partner with representatives from NMD's tourism industry

Strategic Priority 3: Maximise Economic Advantage

Building on the successes achieved to date, the upcoming years 2024-2029 are critical for positioning NMD as a landmark tourism destination in Ireland. While all five strategic priorities in this plan contribute towards achieving this goal, addressing the economic impact of tourism is essential for supporting livelihoods, job creation and the local economy via revenue generation.

In tourism, economic advantages are achieved via targeted commercial strategies where smart choices must align with expertise and resources (time, human and financial). Maximising opportunities that align with sustainable tourism development is about being goal-focused and knowing how to expertly integrate diverse sales channels, markets, customer segments, and commercial functions (e.g., proactive and reactive sales, PR and marketing) to match the profile of the tourism destination and its industry.

Within this framework, via the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, a multi-layered, two-pronged approach is proposed that focuses on maximising commercial capabilities to win leisure and business tourism opportunities by a) empowering NMD's tourism industry with the required skills and expertise while b) NMDDC providing support at destination-level

a. maximise economic advantage within NMD's tourism industry:

- **tourism businesses:** support the creation of tailor-made commercial strategies aligned with the unique resources and expertise of each business
- **tourism industry:** ensure that tourism businesses across NMD collaborate and form partnerships to maximise commercial opportunities
- **tourism industry and the local community:** raise the profile of NMD's tourism offering among the resident and business community to maximise collaborative and commercial opportunities

b. maximise economic advantage at destination level supported by NMDDC

- raise the profile of the destination and its tourism industry (e.g., via branded destination digital channels)
- complement/reinforce the activity of NMD tourism businesses at destination level (e.g., via attendance at domestic and global trade shows generating referral opportunities for NMD businesses)

Under this key priority, NMD will focus activity on growing market share from the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland (ROI) markets. NMD's intention to win share from the ROI market aligns with Tourism Northern Ireland's strategy that sets a target of winning 10% of ROI's market value, equating to £193 million (+€47.2 million and +7.6% CAGR).²

Regarding global market share, for 2024-2029 NMD will focus its priorities on the following:

- Great Britain
- North America
- Nordics and Netherlands

As there is a need to increase capabilities in NMD for the effective management of non-English speaking markets (e.g., by delivering experiences in global languages), the German, French, Spanish and Italian markets that are key for Ireland will be a second tier focus for NMD.

² Tourism Northern Ireland's Republic of Ireland Market Strategy 2021-2026

Throughout 2024-2029 it is recommended that NMDDC supports its tourism industry with a) understanding and addressing the needs of these markets and b) the benefits of engaging with these markets so that

- competencies for engaging in these markets are improved during this plan's lifetime
- opportunities via these markets are maximized 2024-2029
- NMD is placed to win opportunities via these markets beyond this plan's lifetime
- NMD enhances its capacity for welcoming visitors from English and non-English speaking markets that are key for Ireland

Strategic Priority 4: Engage in Data Collation and Analysis

As a key priority for 2024-2029, NMD should embed data collation and analysis in its tourism culture so that whenever possible objectives, goals and targets can be objectively assessed and measured ensuring that

- strengths are identified and maximised
- weaknesses are identified and corrected
- threats are identified and addressed
- opportunities are identified and targeted
- sound data analysis is available to
 - inform future NMD tourism strategies
 - support NMD grant applications
 - attract investment into NMD (e.g., hotel investment)

The status of targets set via NMD will be determined via diverse methods of measurement ranging from community and customer sentiment data to economic and environmental impact data. For 2024-2029, the inclusion of the following data collation sources should be considered:

- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
- Relevant data available to NMDDC such as
 - NMD's resident survey
 - Visitor counter data (e.g., gathered at events and festivals)
 - Market research data (e.g., conducted at events and festivals)
- Tourism Northern Ireland data analytics and reviews
- Tourism Ireland data analytics and reviews
- External data intelligence and global benchmarking (e.g., independent hotel benchmarking)
- Data submitted centrally to NMDDC via NMD tourism businesses according to an agreed mechanism
- Data collated by NMDDC's geopark team that inform and guide the approach for safeguarding the region's environment and reducing emissions

The habit of collating and analysing tourism-relevant data needs to be established a) within independent tourism businesses and b) at destination level via NMDDC. The outcomes of this activity must be used constructively to benefit NMD's tourism industry by

- providing tourism businesses with bespoke supports so that they are informed about
 - what data to collate
 - what mechanisms to use for recording data
 - how to use data to make informed decisions that can maximise opportunities
- providing summary updates (e.g., annually) of data collated centrally via NMDDC so that the tourism industry has a) an objective assessment of the destination's performance and b) robust direction for new and evolving actions and strategies that can benefit tourism businesses and NMD as a destination.

Strategic Priority 5: Prioritise investment in tourism-related infrastructure

While NMD has the clear potential to progress as a tourism destination 2024-2029, to maximise this opportunity continued investment is required in tourism-related infrastructure. Under this strategic priority, NMD should

- **elevate the quality of the tourism offering and infrastructure:** by continuing to invest in similar projects initiated over the past five years: e.g., Tyrella beach, Delamont Country Park, Camlough Lake Recreational Hub, Castlewellan Historic Demesne, Narnia Experience Rostrevor, and Mourne Gateway Project
- **proactively seek investment in sustainable accommodation solutions across all categories** (e.g. self-catering, caravanning and camping, guesthouses and hotels), noting
 - over the past ten years there has been a limited increase in hotel rooms, with NISRA data showing that 33 rooms (providing 70 additional beds) were added between 2015 and 2019 ³
 - hotel accommodation represents just 26% of total bed inventory in NMD: 61% of accommodation is provided by self-catering and guesthouse/bed & breakfast ⁴
 - without this investment, the opportunity to increase visitor dwell time in NMD and associated spends will be significantly curtailed
- **continue to invest in NMD's hub communities** which encompass the destination's city, towns, villages, and rural communities. This action should include:
 - continued investment in the design and delivery of public realm improvements ⁵

³ NISRA Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics 2013-2019

⁴ NISRA Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics Newry Mourne Down 2019

⁵ NMDDC's Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2022-2025

- integrating the hub communities with the wider tourism offering: e.g., by enabling residents and non-tourism businesses to understand and refer local tourism experiences and places of interest
- ensuring that NMD can achieve its ambition to become a landmark tourism destination by improving the quality of the visitor experience in Newry as NMD's only city: this action has been called out strongly via consultations, for example via professional travel buyers

As part of this ambition, the plan recommends investment in a feasibility study to consider a Blueway development on Newry Canal alongside raising the profile of the historic Newry Canal (1742) that is the first summit level canal to be built in Ireland or Great Britain.

- **continue to improve wayfinding and signage in NMD** so that places of interest and can be easily found and opportunities can be maximised for tourism businesses

It is important to note that investment in tourism-related infrastructure provides wide-ranging benefits that encompass

- improving the experience for visitors
- maximising opportunities for NMD's tourism industry
- improving the quality of life (including the generation of social and economic benefits) for NMD's local community
- contributing toward the achievement of the growth target set out in this plan
- attracting and retaining high-spend customers
- increasing dwell time and spend by visitors in NMD
- achieving NMD's ambition to become a landmark tourism destination

1.5. Growth Target

At the time of writing this report, the global tourism industry is in an uncertain place due to a wide variety of factors ranging from the unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to global economic and geopolitical unrest.

Within Northern Ireland and NMD, diverse challenges are manifest including

- the cost-of-living crisis emerging as a primary concern among customers ⁶
- evidence of the erosion of Northern Ireland's value for money rating ⁷
- the trend toward last-minute booking, making it difficult to predict future performance
- limited hotel capacity in NMD, impacting the potential to increase dwell time and maximise commercial opportunities
- the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the collation of data, including via NISRA

⁶ Tourism Northern Ireland Consumer Sentiment NI Market April 2022 Report

⁷ Tourism Northern Ireland Tourism 360° July 2022

While the challenges are clear, in the current environment these co-exist with more optimistic considerations including

- Both the Department of the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland – 10 Year Plan and Tourism Ireland emphasise future growth in the value of tourism in Northern Ireland:
 - The **Department for the Economy's recent Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan** sets out the strategic aim of increasing the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50% -75% compared to 2019, or growth of 4%-6% per annum.
 - The **Tourism Ireland Marketing Plan** (issued 2024) sets targets of driving tourism revenue growth in Northern Ireland by +6.5% year-on-year to 2030. This is compared to targeted island of Ireland growth of 5.6% average year on year growth to 2030.
- World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2022
 - predicting a strong decade of growth
 - estimating that the sector's performance in Europe could surpass 2019's level in 2024 when Travel & Tourism contribution to the region's GDP could reach 4.1% above the pre-pandemic amount
- NMD is well placed to reap the benefits of proactively promoting the destination's profile over the last five years. For example
 - via extensive engagement with travel trade: e.g., via trade shows and familiarisation trips
 - by consistently promoting offers and things to do through digital sales channels: e.g., via the destination's website and social media channels
 - by partnering with organisations that can raise NMD's profile: e.g., Ireland's Association of Adventure Tourism Conference November 2022 and Taste of Tourism February 2023 in association with the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation
 - by positioning NMD as a new tourism destination offering in Ireland that (following its first ever tourism plan 2017-2021) is undergoing a growth phase, with leverage to escalate growth during 2024-2029 and beyond

Bottom line

At this point in time nobody can predict with confidence what will happen in the future. While reports and opinion vary, NMD's tourism industry has asked for ambition. Conscious of rising inflation, the industry has also cautioned against standing still. Instead, they have emphasised the need to

- maximise opportunities for NMD via continued promotion in Ireland and globally
- achieve the revenue generation required to a) maintain existing tourism jobs and b) drive new job creation

Following an analysis of historic data collated by NISRA combined with diverse consultations (including Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and the Ulster University’s Economic Policy Centre), NMD has set a target to increase revenue generation via tourism by 34% in 2029 compared with 2019.

The below chart indicates how this target can potentially translate for overnight stay revenue generation in NMD.

Table: Revenue Generation via Overnight Stays 2019 versus 2029

| Heading | 2019 | 2029 |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Revenue Generation ⁸ | £84,000,000* | £112,760,000 |
| <p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This measurement is based on revenue generation via overnight stays in NMD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - *£84,000,000 equates to 1.6m bed nights • The chart serves for comparison purposes only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - any potential future changes to hotel inventory (e.g., via investment that increases bed capacity) are not factored in • Data source: NISRA 2019 statistics | | |

Data collation

Under *Strategic Priority 4: Engage in Data Collation and Analysis*, the collation of data in NMD will be proactively encouraged at a) tourism business level and b) at destination level, via NMDDC. Therefore by 2029

- individual tourism businesses in NMD can assess performance against this target
 - including accommodation providers, experience and activity providers, visitor attractions, event and festival providers, places to eat and drink and tourism-relevant transport providers
- NMD as a destination can assess performance against this target via data centrally collated by NMDCC
- NMD will have a record of district-specific data and trends that can reliably inform future growth and targets

1.6. Benefits of the Plan

The benefits that can flow from this Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029 are

- maximising opportunities for NMD, generating economic and social benefits
- positioning NMD as
 - a landmark tourism destination with a
 - wealth of natural assets

⁸ Revenue generation 2019: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

- beautifully crafted, market-ready authentic experiences across the themes of food and drink, culture and heritage, activity and adventure and wellbeing
 - vibrant annual events and festivals calendar
 - vibrant hub communities: city, towns, villages, and rural communities
- an integrated tourism offering with a team NMD approach that connects accommodation providers, experience and activity providers, visitor attractions, event and festival providers, places to eat and drink and tourism-relevant transport providers under a defined brand
- global leader and advocate for sustainable and regenerative tourism supported by tourism businesses that are confident communicators of NMD's ethos
- a primary outdoor, activity and adventure destination in Ireland
- maximising social, promotional and economic opportunities and benefits via a
 - targeted communications and commercial strategy
 - strong alliances and collaboration
 - within NMD's tourism industry
 - between NMD's tourism industry and local community
 - via national and global collaborative partnerships
- enabling NMD to make informed strategic decisions based on sound data
- improving the quality of living standards for the local community and the experience for visiting customers
- putting NMD in a position to attract investment

2. Vision & Value Proposition

The vision statement and value proposition form the foundation for all activities conducted by NMD in collaboration with tourism stakeholders.

While the vision statement summarises what the destination represents and what it intends to become in the future, the value proposition is created from the visitor's perspective. Accordingly, the value proposition serves to

- identify the benefits that NMD can deliver for its customers
- differentiate NMD and its tourism offering in the marketplace
- clarify NMD's target customers and markets

Strategic plans, annual plans, and actions must align to the vision statement and value proposition. They are ideally used when engaging with diverse stakeholders (e.g., domestic/global tourism associations and partners) and procuring diverse services (e.g., PR opportunities and advertising) so that the destination's offering, aims, and objectives are clearly understood.

The vision statement and value proposition noted below have been created following consultation with NMD's tourism industry. These are working documents and can change over time as the destination evolves and as the external environment changes.

2.1 Vision Statement

As a warm and welcoming people, we are proud to live in a destination of outstanding natural beauty with more than 100 miles (160 kilometres) of coastline and 600 square miles (1,600 kilometres) of premier outdoor landscape.

Situated in a prime north-eastern location mid-way between Dublin and Belfast, our community encompasses the people, vibrant hubs, land and seascapes of counties Down and Armagh, with awe-inspiring expansive panoramas from the Mourne Mountains and Ring of Gullion to Strangford and Lecale.

Abundant with a sustainable rich cultural heritage, outdoor and adventure experiences, locally crafted artisan food and drinks, world-class golf, and a vibrant calendar of year-round events and festivals, our home is captivating.

Our story is like no other. As a people, we are earthy, grounded, creative and resourceful. The hallmarks of who we are today have evolved over centuries through repeated significant moments in history. These include

- Ireland's earliest farmers who chose to settle in our community more than 5,000 years ago due to an abundance of fertile soil and pure water

- Saint Patrick who in 432AD, chose our community to establish his first church in Ireland, singling us out as the cradle of Christianity
- the poets, musicians and storytellers of Oriel who in the 18th and 19th centuries ignited a cultural renaissance in Ireland
- the stone masons who with their bare hands, achieved the remarkable feat of building the 22 mile long (35-kilometre) granite Mourne Wall across 15 different mountains (1904- 1922)

Building on the legacy of our ancestors, our modern rhythm of life is defined by a rich heritage, authenticity, resilience, and integrity. Collectively, we work hard for our achievements and are united in our goal for our home to become a renowned year-round destination with sustainability and social inclusion at its heart for our local community, partners, leisure, and business visitors.

2.2. Value Proposition

Through tourism, we share the story of people and place. This tourism destination thereby firstly represents and serves the local community while extending the warmest of welcomes to visitors from Ireland and global countries.

Encompassing counties Down and Armagh, with three designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Mourne, Ring of Gullion, Strangford and Lecale) this visibly beautiful place has its own natural rhythm of life founded on traditions, authenticity, sustainability, resilience, and a giant-hearted spirit that champions social inclusion.

To inform and inspire our community, visitors and partners our brand essence is defined as *Ireland's True Nature* to mark our unparalleled destination that is home to the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark.

Within 600 square miles (1,600 kilometres) of premier outdoor landscape and 100 miles (160 kilometres) of coastline, our home offers a wide menu of activities and tourism experiences for locals and visitors including

- **culture and heritage:** from being the beating heart of Saint Patrick's story to the Ulster Scots who settled here, crafts, farming, music, sports, and language
- **food and drink:** from Ireland's first craft chocolate factory to award-winning breweries, distilleries and a cidery, clover farms and beekeepers, world class chefs, bakers, and foragers
- **adventure/outdoors:** from walking, biking, hiking, and horse-riding to world-class golf and water activities
- **wellness:** from mindfulness experiences to luxury spa escapes

- **events and festivals:** a year-round calendar of community and large-scale events

Complimented by a wide range of private and public transport options, restaurants, cafés, bars and accommodation from high-quality glamping, self-catering cottages, B&Bs and guesthouses to 3, 4 and 5-star hotels, this destination is naturally suited to the leisure traveller including individuals, couples, families, adventurers, golfers, culture and heritage enthusiasts, foodies, special-interest, and inter-generational groups.

The destination is also ideally suited for business tourism travellers – with event spaces for up to 700 delegates and capacity for small meetings, conferences, and incentive groups for between 8 and 300 people.

For the local community, leisure, and business tourism visitors, this destination promotes social inclusion and sustainability as core destination hallmarks through a balanced and holistic approach that

- safeguards the environment
- supports the local community
- supports livelihoods and the economy

We welcome everyone who shares our ethos and values.