

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 9 June 2025 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row

Chairperson: Councillor D Lee-Surginor

**Committee Members
in attendance:** Councillor T Andrews Councillor W Clarke
Councillor K Feehan Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A Lewis Councillor A Quinn
Councillor M Ruane Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor H Young

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:** Councillor C Galbraith Councillor O Hanlon

**Non-Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:** Councillor C Bowsie

Officials in attendance: Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/052/2025

APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

No apologies were received.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. He asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

ERT/053/2025

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrews declared an interest in Item 12 on the agenda due to his role as a member of SEUPB.

ERT/054/2025

ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 12 MAY 2025

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 12 May 2025 (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 12 May 2025.

ERT/022/2025 - Ballykinlar Hut Removal update

Councillor Andrews enquired whether an update was available in respect of above. Mr Mallon advised that progress was continuing and he hoped that agreements would be in place soon.

ERT/055/2025**TO AGREE START TIMES FOR ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2025-26****Read:**

Proposed Start Times for Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meetings 2025-26 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, the start times for Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meetings 2025-26 were agreed.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION**ERT/056/2025****OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – OUTDOOR REVAMP OF DELAMONT COUNTRY PARK****Read:**

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Outdoor Revamp of Delamont Country Park. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the development plans for Delamont and acknowledged the existing recommendations and progress made. He proposed a third recommendation to commission market research, including costings, to assess the viability of a major outdoor adventure experience at Delamont, with a focus on provision for secondary school-aged users. As Councillor Bowsie was not a member of the Committee, Councillor Hanna proposed this on his behalf, this was seconded by Councillor Lewis.

Councillor Ruane queried the impact of this proposal, given the completion of the existing business case. Mr Mallon clarified that the proposed research would need to be a separate piece of work, potentially running alongside the current Masterplan, although its cost was not yet known.

Councillors Andrews and Hanlon supported the proposal, suggesting that the scope be broadened to include all age groups and wider outdoor recreation. Councillor Bowsie agreed, while emphasising the need to address the gap in teenage provision.

Mr Mallon confirmed that officers would progress the proposal if agreed by members. He noted that while the research was not currently budgeted, it could be added to the consultant commission with costs brought back for approval.

Following discussion, Councillor Hanna proposed, and Councillor Lewis seconded, that market research be commissioned to assess the viability and cost of developing a major outdoor adventure experience at Delamont Country Park, identifying gaps in current provision.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Lewis, the following was agreed:

- **To note the progression against delivery of the Delamont Country Park – Masterplan that seeks to deliver against the vision that Delamont Country Park is developed as a landmark outdoor tourist attraction and "Window to Strangford Lough"**
- **Members agreed to proceed with the project as set out in the Masterplan and Business case presented to SFWG on the 20th May 2025, subject to capital funding approval at SPR on 12 June 2025.**
- **To commission a market research study, including detailed costings, to assess the viability of developing a major outdoor adventure experience at Delamont Country Park and identify gaps in the current market.**

ERT/057/2025

ERT BUSINESS PLANS

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding ERT Business Plans. (**Copy circulated**)

Mr Mallon presented the reports and asked for consideration and approval.

Councillor Young commended the growth in tourism and the economy, while highlighting the importance of protecting the natural environment. She noted that outdoor adventure, food and drink, heritage, and culture were identified as key attractions, and raised concerns about environmental impacts—particularly waste. She enquired about potential measures required, including the need for additional rangers and bins and queried whether ranger roles should focus more on education or enforcement.

Ms Smyth stated that there had been increased community engagement efforts to promote awareness and conservation of local environmental assets, supported by tourism and Geo Park initiatives.

Councillor Feehan asked when the new tourism branding would fully replace the old. Mr Mallon advised that the department were delivering against the tourism strategy with final branding design to be completed later in the year and launched ahead of the next tourism season.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2024 – 25 and the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26.

ERT/058/2025

DBEC BUSINESS CASE FOR MARKETING

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding DBEC Business Case for Marketing. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the attached business case, and to approve the procurement and appointment of a communications and engagement partner to support DBEC brand development and event delivery.

ERT/059/2025

GEOPARK INTERPRETATION MASTERPLAN

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Geopark Interpretation Masterplan. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Smyth reported that the Forever Mourne partnership had developed a new interpretive plan for the Geopark. Section 2.1 of the report outlined key findings and next steps. The plan aimed to standardise visitor interpretation across tourism sites. Members were asked to consider adopting it as a framework for future interpretation, with no additional costs anticipated.

Councillor Clarke enquired how the business community and wider public would be engaged in the rollout of the Masterplan. Ms Smyth advised that it was developed collaboratively by all contributing partners. Community and stakeholder engagement was to be led by AONB and Geopark teams through their existing and developing networks.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the adoption of the Interpretation Masterplan for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark as the framework for all future interpretation development across the Geopark.

ERT/060/2025

LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Labour Market Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Smyth advised that Council had been delivering the Labour Market Partnership for several years and was entering a new year of delivery. The report outlined the current position and proposed action plan, approved by the Department for Communities (DfC).

Councillor Young enquired if the promotion of green jobs had been considered within the Labour Market Plan. Ms Smyth confirmed that the agreed action plan, included at Appendix 1,

outlined key focus areas and although 'green jobs' were not listed as a specific category, stated that related opportunities were reflected across various elements of the plan.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, the following was agreed:

- **To approve the acceptance of Department for Communities Letter of Offer for Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership, Skills and Employability activities including administration and operational budget as set out in Appendix 2 of the Officer's Report.**
- **To approve the attached business case (appendix 3) for the implementation of Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2025/26.**
- **On acceptance of the Letter of Offer, approval to proceed with the necessary procurements required and appointment of delivery agents to implement the initiatives outlined in attached appendix documents.**

ERT/061/2025

LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Local Economic Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Feehan, the following was agreed:

- **Sign and accept a Letter of Offer for implementation of the Local Economic Partnership.**
- **Sign and accept a Memorandum of Understanding with Department for Economy for the implementation of the Local Economic Partnership.**
- **To commence recruitment of associated secretariat resource.**

ERT/062/2025

PEAT PLUS PROJECT

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Peat Plus Project. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Clarke, the following was agreed:

- **Accept and return the required documentation to Ulster Wildlife/SEUPB, including but not limited to partnership agreement, Letter of Offer and legal**

- **agreements to allow the commencement of Peat Plus.**
- **Commence the recruitment process of 1FTE officer according to the terms and conditions of the Letter of Offer.**
- **Approve the attached business case for implementation and proceed to carry out the required procurement exercises in line with NMDDC and PEACEPLUS procurement policies for the implementation of the project.**

ERT/063/2025

TOURISM TRADE CONSUMER SHOWS 2025/26

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Tourism Trade Consumer Shows 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Smyth presented the report detailing upcoming tourism events scheduled until spring 2026, where the tourism team had planned to promote the district and engage with tour operators. She noted that the selected events had been identified as valuable opportunities to enhance the district's tourism profile.

Councillor Andrews thanked Ms Smyth for the report and expressed appreciation to Council staff for their efforts in showcasing and promoting the district.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to participate in the tourism trade and consumer shows outlined in section 2,1 of the Officer's Report in collaboration with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to support the tourism sector and promote the destination.

ERT/064/2025

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 2 AND 3

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Call 2 and 3. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lewis, the following was agreed:

- **To approve the issue of Letters of Offer to projects as per Council Policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation for each theme.**
- **To approve the pre-letter of offer conditions must be met prior to issue of full letter of offer and where this is not satisfied, budget to be reallocated.**
- **Open a call for Community Capital works and Minor Items in August 2025.**

- Capacity building delivered and pro-forma developed to support the application process for Community Capital works and Minor Items.

Having previously declared an interest, Councillor Andrews left the meeting at this stage – 6.30pm

ERT/065/2025

PEACEPLUS THEME 1.1 PROCUREMENT

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding PeacePlus Theme 1.1 Procurement (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Clarke, the following was agreed:

1. To note the minutes of the PeacePlus Partnership Board meeting of 22 May 2025
2. To approve the attached business cases and procurement for the following elements of the Action Plan:
 - i. Strand 2.4 Cross Community Civic Pride Environmental Programmes
 - ii. Strand 2.4 Community Action Health & Wellbeing
 - iii. Strand 2.7 Social Prescribing Programmes

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised that the exempt appendices were noted, and the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/066/2025

WARRENPOINT FRONT SHORE KIOSKS

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Warrenpoint Front Shore Kiosks. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed that subject to funding approval, Council proceed to undertake the relevant Expression of Interest / Procurement exercise to appoint suitable vendors to take a lease on the kiosks.

FOR NOTING

ERT/067/2025

AONB & GEOPARK UPDATE 2024/25

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding AONB & Geopark Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the 24/25 update on the AONB and Geopark progress.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.42pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 July 2025

Signed: **Councillor D Lee-Surginor**
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: **Conor Mallon**
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
