MOURNE GULLION STRANGFORD
IRELAND'S TRUE NATURE



Tourism Proposition FAQs

About the project

Q What is the Mourne Gullion Strangford Tourism Proposition?

A The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is a £1 billion investment agreement between the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and six councils - including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. It is the largest investment deal ever secured for the Belfast region.

The Deal was agreed in 2021 between UK Government, the NI Executive and six partner councils to drive inclusive economic growth - through innovation, tourism, regeneration, digital and skills investment. Under the tourism pillar Belfast Region City Deal will deliver world class visitor attractions that provide a year-round destination that can stand out in international markets.

Under the tourism pillar and subject to approvals, up to £29.2 million would be used to support the delivery of the Mourne Gullion Strangford tourism proposition from this fund. This programme is about how we make the case for investing it. To unlock the funding, the Council will develop and then progress an Outline Business Case (OBC) informed by evidence, costings and community voice.

Q What is an Outline Business Case (OBC)?

A An Outline Business Case (OBC) is an important stage in developing the project. It brings together the evidence, costs and other information needed to make the case for how the £29.2 million tourism allocation could be invested.

The Council is currently preparing an OBC. This includes developing the proposals, gathering evidence, undertaking technical work and engaging with businesses, communities and the wider public.

The current ambition is to complete an OBC which is the next step in progressing the project through the BRCD process.

Q Why were Kilbroney Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Delamont Country Park selected?

A The three sites are established visitor destinations with distinctive landscapes, experiences and opportunities for further tourism development.

Importantly, they can act as three anchor destinations within Mourne Gullion Strangford, helping visitors discover more of the wider area. Investment at the three sites can build on the district's strengths in outdoor recreation, natural heritage and visitor experiences, while encouraging people to stay longer, explore further and spend more locally.

Together, the three sites also provide an opportunity to create a connected tourism journey from Carlingford Lough to Strangford Lough. *Scenery, heritage and people are core drivers for visitor motivations to visit Ireland (Tourism Ireland 2025 Research)

Q What is being proposed at the three sites?

A Proposals are being developed to enhance the visitor experience at Kilbroney Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Delamont Country Park, building on the unique character and strengths of each location.

Kilbroney Park – A new visitor hub, Narnia-inspired experiences, outdoor attractions, trails and accommodation.

Slieve Gullion Forest Park – An all-weather amphitheatre, immersive storytelling, digital experiences and enhanced trails.

Delamont Country Park – New heritage and nature experiences, viewpoints, trails and accommodation.

The proposals are still being developed. Feedback from communities, businesses and the wider public, alongside technical work and evidence, will help shape the next stage of the project.

Q Why is investment focused on these locations and how will the wider district benefit?

A The three sites are intended to work together as anchor experiences within the wider Mourne Gullion Strangford destination, rather than as three standalone attractions.

The aim is to encourage visitors to stay in the district for longer and explore more of the surrounding towns, villages, attractions and businesses.

The three anchor sites have the potential to encourage visitors to explore their surrounding areas, helping to spread visitor activity and economic benefits more widely across Newry, Mourne and Down.

Funding and decision making

Q Have final decisions been made about the project?

A No. The Council is currently developing the proposals and preparing an OBC.

The work taking place now is about developing and testing the proposals and building the case for how the BRCD tourism allocation could be invested.

Feedback from communities, businesses and the wider public will help inform the proposals before design decisions are finalised.

Q How much funding is available and where is it coming from?

A Subject to approvals, up to £29.2 million from the Belfast Region City Deal would be used to support the delivery of the proposals for tourism investment in Newry, Mourne and Down. The funding remains subject to completion of an OBC and the relevant approval processes.

The Council is currently preparing an OBC, which will make the case for how this investment could be used. Completion of an OBC is the next step in progressing the project through the BRCD process.

Q Why is this funding being invested in tourism rather than other services and infrastructure?

A The £29.2 million allocation is specifically for tourism investment through the BRCD.

The purpose of the investment is to strengthen the district's visitor economy by developing experiences that encourage visitors to stay longer, explore more of the district and spend more locally.

The funding is therefore intended for tourism investment and cannot simply be redirected to other services or infrastructure priorities.

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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

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Q Why is investment being made in tourism when existing facilities, trails and other infrastructure also need investment?

A The Council recognises the importance of maintaining and improving existing facilities, trails and infrastructure, and this has also been raised through engagement to date.

The BRCD tourism investment is intended to build on and enhance the district's existing tourism assets. As the proposals develop, the Council is considering the overall visitor experience at the three anchor sites, including existing facilities and infrastructure, accessibility, wayfinding and how people use and move around each location.

Day-to-day maintenance and routine repairs are managed separately through the Council's wider services and budgets

Further information on the proposed investment at each site will be shared as the project develops.

Q What approvals are needed before the project can progress?

A The Council is currently preparing an OBC, which will set out the case for how the £29.2 million tourism allocation could be invested.

Following completion an OBC will need to progress through the relevant BRCD approval processes including approvals from the BRCD Executive Board and the relevant government department

Subject to the necessary approvals, the project would then move through further business case development, detailed design, planning and other statutory processes as required.

Benefits and potential impacts

Q How could local businesses and communities' benefit from the project?

A A key aim of the project is to encourage visitors to stay in the district longer and spend more locally.

Longer stays could create opportunities for accommodation providers, food and drink businesses, retailers, activity and experience providers, attractions and other businesses across the visitor economy. The potential benefits of the project will be further defined as we move through the OBC process.

The intention is for the benefits to extend beyond the three anchor sites by encouraging visitors to explore other towns, villages, attractions and experiences across Newry, Mourne and Down.

The project also provides an opportunity to enhance places that are already valued and used by local communities.

How will the project support sustainable and year-round tourism?

The ambition is not simply to attract more people to three individual sites. It is to create a stronger, connected Mourne Gullion Strangford destination that encourages visitors to stay longer, explore more of the district and visit at different points throughout the year.

The project is considering how distinctive visitor experiences, high-quality infrastructure and better connections between destinations can help support a more sustainable and year-round visitor economy.

Q How will the natural environment, wildlife and landscapes be considered?

A The landscapes and natural environment are fundamental to the project and to what makes Newry, Mourne and Down distinctive as a place to live and visit.

Environmental considerations will form part of the development and assessment of the proposals. Relevant environmental studies and assessments will be undertaken as required as the project progresses through design, planning and other statutory processes.

Feedback from communities and the wider public will also help identify environmental issues and priorities that should be considered as the proposals develop.

Q How will issues such as traffic, access and connectivity be considered?

A Access and connectivity are important considerations and will form part of the development of the proposals.

Issues such as accessibility, parking, transport, wayfinding and connections between the three sites and surrounding destinations will be considered alongside the wider visitor experience.

Feedback from local communities, businesses and the wider public will also help identify existing challenges and potential impacts that need to be considered.

Developing the project

Q How does the project build on previous plans, studies and engagement?

A The project is building on previous masterplans and technical studies, existing evidence on visitor patterns, stakeholder discussions and local and cross-border tourism intelligence.

The project team has also looked at other visitor destinations across Ireland to understand what encourages visitors to stay longer, spend more locally and return. Lessons from this work are helping to inform the development of the project.

This existing evidence is being considered alongside new technical work and feedback gathered through the current engagement process.

Engagement and next steps

Q Who has the Council engaged with so far?

A Early baseline engagement has taken place primarily with tourism businesses to help inform the development of the project and the OBC.

As part of this, the Council engaged with tourism businesses via a survey, which was also open to members of the public.

Building on this early engagement, the Council is now engaging more widely with communities, businesses, stakeholders and the public across Mourne Gullion Strangford. This provides an opportunity for people to find out more about the emerging proposals, share their views and help inform the next stage of the project.

Q How will feedback be used?

A Feedback is being gathered to help identify opportunities, challenges and priorities and to inform the development of the proposals and an OBC.

Feedback will be considered alongside technical studies, evidence and other requirements, helping to inform the proposals before design decisions are finalised.

The Council will continue to gather feedback as more detailed proposals are developed.

Q What happens next?

A The Council is currently preparing an OBC which is the next step in progressing the project through the BRCD process. This includes developing the proposals, gathering evidence, undertaking technical work and continuing engagement.

Subject to the necessary approvals, the project would then progress through further business case development, design, planning and statutory consultation before construction could begin.

There will continue to be opportunities for communities, businesses and the wider public to get involved as the project develops.

Q How can I have my say and will there be further opportunities to get involved?

A Engagement is taking place from 12 October to 6 November 2026, providing an opportunity for local residents, communities, businesses and visitors to learn more about the emerging proposals and share their views.

You can get involved by completing the online survey or attending one of our public drop-in events. Details of how to take part are available on the Council website.

Engagement will continue as the project develops, with further opportunities to get involved as the proposals progress.

If you have a question about the project or would like to get in touch with the project team, you can email **BRCDTourism@nmandd.org**.

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