



February 10th, 2025

Chairperson: Alderman A Grehan

Vice Chairperson: Alderman A G Ewart MBE

Aldermen: J Baird and M Gregg

Councillors: J Gallen, A Gowan, J Harpur, C Kemp, J Lavery BEM, D Lynch, U Mackin, A Martin, C McCready, T Mitchell and N Parker

Ex-Officio: The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson
Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin

Notice Of Meeting

A meeting of the Regeneration and Growth Committee will take place on **Thursday, 13th February 2025 at 6:00 pm** in the **Council Chamber and Remote Locations** for the transaction of business on the undernoted agenda.

A hot buffet will be available in the Members Suite from 5.15 pm for those Members who have confirmed in advance.

DAVID BURNS
Chief Executive
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Agenda

1.0 APOLOGIES

2.0 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

- (i) Conflict of Interest on any matter before the meeting (Members to confirm the specific item)
- (ii) Pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest (Member to complete the Disclosure of Interest form)

📎 *Disclosure of Interests form Sept 24.pdf*

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3.0 REPORT FROM HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025 - 2030

For Decision

📎 *1 Tourism Strategy (Feb 2025) Final.pdf*

Page 3

📎 *Appendix 1a LCCC Draft Tourism Strategy (Amended 07-02-25) (1).pdf*

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📎 *Appendix 1b - Responses to consultation (6.2.25).pdf*

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📎 *Appendix 1c - EQ Screening - Tourism Strategy.pdf*

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📎 *Appendix 1d - Rural Needs Assessment.pdf*

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3.2 NI Enterprise Support Service: Go-Succeed

For Decision

📎 *2. Comm-NIESS-Go-Succeed Future Funding - Final.pdf*

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3.3 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme funded by DAERA under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI)

For Noting

📎 *3. TRPSI LoO (Noting) - Final.pdf*

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📎 *Appendix 3a January 2025 - Assessment Panel Recommendations.pdf*

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📎 *Appendix 3b TRPSI - Equality Screening 2024-25.pdf*

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4.0 REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING & CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Access to justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention (a call for evidence)

For Decision

📄 **4. NI call for evidence access to justice - in relation to the Aarhus convention - Final.pdf**

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📄 **Appendix 4 Access to justice in relation to the Aarhus convention.pdf**

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5.0 REPORT OF HEAD OF ASSETS

5.1 Bells Lane - Dunmurry Gospel Hall

For Decision

📄 **5. Bells Lane Gospel Hall Use Jan2025LV Final.pdf**

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📄 **Appendix 5 LCCC parks open spaces screening Jan 2025.pdf**

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6.0 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION & GROWTH

6.1 2025/26 Tourism Major Events

For Decision

Confidential due to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council holding that information)

📄 **1confd Tourism Major Events (003) Final (2) 3.pdf**

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6.2 Extension to Leases

For Decision

Confidential due to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council holding that information)

 ***2confd Extension to leases.pdf***

Not included

7.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

MEMBERS DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

1. Pecuniary Interests

The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors under Section 6 requires you to declare at the relevant meeting any pecuniary interest that you may have in any matter coming before any meeting of your Council.

Pecuniary (or financial) interests are those where the decision to be taken could financially benefit or financially disadvantage either you or a member of your close family. A member of your close family is defined as at least your spouse, live-in partner, parent, child, brother, sister and the spouses of any of these. Members may wish to be more prudent by extending that list to include grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces or even close friends.

This information will be recorded in a Statutory Register. On such matters **you must not speak or vote**. Subject to the provisions of Sections 6.5 to 6.11 of the Code, if such a matter is to be discussed by your Council, **you must withdraw from the meeting whilst that matter is being discussed**.

2. Private or Personal Non-Pecuniary Interests

In addition you must also declare any significant private or personal non-pecuniary interest in a matter arising at a Council meeting (please see also Sections 5.2 and 5.6 and 5.8 of the Code).

Significant private or personal non-pecuniary (membership) interests are those which do not financially benefit or financially disadvantage you or a member of your close family directly, but nonetheless, so significant that could be considered as being likely to influence your decision.

Subject to the provisions of Sections 6.5 to 6.11 of the Code, you must declare this interest as soon as it becomes apparent and **you must withdraw from any Council meeting (including committee or sub-committee meetings) when this matter is being discussed**.

In respect of each of these, please complete the form below as necessary.

Pecuniary Interests

Meeting (Council or Committee - please specify and name):

Date of Meeting: _____

Item(s) in which you must declare an interest (please specify item number from report):

Nature of Pecuniary Interest:

Private or Personal Non-Pecuniary Interests

Meeting (Council or Committee - please specify and name):

Date of Meeting:

Item(s) in which you must declare an interest (please specify item number from report):

Nature of Private or Personal Non-Pecuniary Interest:

Name:

Address:

Signed:

Date:

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*If you have any queries please contact David Burns, Chief Executive,
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council*



Committee:	Regeneration & Growth
Date:	13 February 2025
Report from:	Head of Economic Development

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025 - 2030
1.0	<p><u>Background</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Council appointed Runda Hospitality & Tourism Solutions in September 2023 to review, revise and update the LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for 2025-2030.2. The emerging LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 has been developed following a structured consultation process, workshops with Members and industry, a period of research, analysis, and now a public consultation exercise. <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An eight-week consultation period of the draft Strategy and Action Plan concluded in November 2024.2. As part of the consultation process a special one-off event was arranged for 8 November 2024, at Hinch Distillery that allowed industry stakeholders an opportunity to find out more about the strategic priorities and action plans for delivery. Over 50 industry representatives attended and shared their feedback either on the day, or via an online survey.3. In total there were 17 formal responses from key stakeholder organisations including Tourism NI, Visit Belfast, and Historic Royal Palaces. A summary of the main points raised is appended to this report. In general, the comments were supportive of the draft Strategy and Action Plan with only minor suggested changes which have been incorporated.4. Other feedback included prioritising political tourism, waterway tourism, reference to gyms and studios, linkages to Active Travel Delivery Plan. Some of these items are included as part of work programme on broader priority themes within the Strategy but not overtly as a strategic objective.5. The proposed Strategy and Action Plan places an emphasis on the local Tourism Industry and Destination Development, whilst continuing to support the infrastructural investment and developmental work such as the Destination Royal Hillsborough programme and highlights some potential for growth in key areas such as luxury tourism.6. The new strategy proposes a 33.6% increase in revenue generation via tourism in Lisburn and Castlereagh throughout the 6-year lifespan, representing a 5.6% per annum increase each year. It is proposed that these targets be included in the

	<p>Councils KPI's from the 1 April 2025. Preceding years performance is likely to be published in Q2 in following year.</p> <p>7. The Strategy attached is produced as an internal framework to guide and align a programme of coherent activities and product development to realise the ambition set out in the document. It is acknowledged that the activities and the programme within the action plan will be dependent on external factors including grant availability, private sector co-operation/collaboration and the wider resource as well as the economic climate.</p> <p>8. The Service will summarise its key performance indicators within the Corporate Management Framework which is subject to an annual review. In addition the Head of Service will report to Committee at periodic intervals, as appropriate, progress on the action plan.</p> <p>9. A launch event for the Tourism Strategy is planned for 11 April 2025 in Hillsborough Castle. It is proposed that a summary of the Strategy and Action Plan is created in hard copy with the full Strategy available in soft copy (pdf) on the visitlisburncastlereagh.co.uk website as well as the Council's corporate website for referencing purposes.</p>	
2.0	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that the Committee approves the final version of the LCCC Tourism Strategy with the associated Action Plan 2025 -2030.</p>	
3.0	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>An allocation is included in the Tourism Development budget estimates to cover the cost of the Strategy.</p> <p>Provision also exists in the Tourism Development budget estimates for a number of actions and projects which will be considered by the Committee on a case-by-case basis.</p>	
4.0	<p><u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u></p>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	Yes
4.2	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out</p> <p>It is not anticipated that the Tourism Strategy Policy will impact adversely on any Section 75 group, but instead, through an open and transparent consultation process with all shareholders, will promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p>	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	Yes
4.4	Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.	

	Tourism Strategy Policy benefits the tourism and hospitality industry from both rural and urban areas of the Council area.	
Appendices:	Appendix 1a– LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 Appendix 1b – Feedback report from 8-week consultation Appendix 1c – Equality/Good Relations Screening Appendix 1d – Rural Needs Assessment	



Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030



Position	Innovate	Collaborate	Nurture	Grow
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1.1. Summary and Context

The Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 is a [strategic roadmap](#) for raising the profile of Lisburn & Castlereagh as an exemplary, sustainable, and socially inclusive tourism destination with a vibrant community spirit at its heart.

The [ambition](#) of this strategy is to position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a renowned tourism destination with a [unique identity](#) and [unparalleled experiences](#) like Royal Hillsborough – Northern Ireland’s only designated Royal residence. The [purpose](#) of this plan is to [maximise social and economic benefits](#) for tourism providers and communities across urban and rural areas in city, town, villages and hamlets.

To achieve success a [twofold approach](#) is recommended that applies [equal value](#) to

1	<p>Infrastructural investment and development: i.e., the curation of high-quality tangible infrastructure that has been a core responsibility for Lisburn & Castlereagh’s tourism team to date and will remain so for the future.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Securing +£26million investment for the development of Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village• Installation of the Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest: ten giant sculptures created by leading artists that encourage exploration supported by an augmented reality digital app• Installation of the Guess How Much I Love You trail: celebrating the author and Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney who wrote the international bestseller <i>Guess How Much I Love You</i> <p>Looking to the future, this will encompass further projects such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• attracting investment for the development of quality accommodation• scoping the potential for<ul style="list-style-type: none">- new tourism product: e.g., Hillsborough Castle & Gardens, Ulster Aviation Society, Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB- an annual tourism event to grow domestic and international visitors e.g., a food-themed festival, Christmas markets
2	<p>Tourism industry and destination development: this is essential for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• maximising social and economic opportunities• sustainable tourism development• achieving a return for investments made on tangible infrastructure• meeting the expectations of the visitor who seeks to forge a deep connection with a destination and its people <p>Activity encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building a robust collaborative framework<ul style="list-style-type: none">- between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council’s tourism team and local tourism and hospitality providers- across Lisburn & Castlereagh’s tourism industry- between Lisburn & Castlereagh and external stakeholders that can support the destination including Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investing in new experience development: curating experiences delivered by local providers that reveal the story of people and place• Championing tourism product and experiences that are unique to Lisburn & Castlereagh: e.g., Ulster Aviation Society, the Linen Museum, Royal Hillsborough, visitor experiences that showcase diverse aspects of the destination's story e.g., scenic beauty, food, linen design• Enterprise development: supporting tourism businesses to maximise economic opportunities
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This twofold approach to tourism development will require careful consideration so that the brief Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team is responsible for throughout 2025-2030 and beyond a) has the full support of council and b) is appropriately resourced to achieve social and economic success along with the growth targets set out in this plan.

This plan follows the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 (the first tourism strategy coordinated by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council since its establishment as a local authority in Northern Ireland in 2015) and is set out in two key parts:

- **Strategic Analysis:** a summary of the research and outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030
- **Action Plan 2025-2030:** defining the strategic pillars and associated actions for the next five years

Across these two parts, the plan has three sections:

1. Summary and Context
2. Where We Are Now
3. The Way Forward: Action Plan 2025-2030

1.2. Vision and Value Proposition

The vision statement and value proposition form the foundation for all activities conducted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council in collaboration with tourism businesses, key stakeholders and partners.

While the vision statement summarises the destination's ambition, the value proposition is created from the visitor's perspective.

Strategic plans, annual plans, and actions must align to the vision statement and value proposition. They are ideally used when engaging with tourism stakeholders and procuring services such as PR, marketing and advertising so that the destination's tourism offering, aims, and objectives are understood.

The vision statement and value proposition have been created following consultation with Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry, communities, and key stakeholders.

1.2.1. Vision statement

The vision of this strategy is to position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading tourism destination distinguished by innovative tourism experiences, places of immense natural beauty, a rich built and cultural heritage, a vibrant food and drink scene and a deep sense of community that champions social inclusion bound by a collaborative spirit and a sustainable ethos that benefits people, planet and pocket at its heart.

1.2.2. Value proposition

Stretching from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south, Lisburn & Castlereagh is bordered by six of Northern Ireland's 11 district council areas within easy reach of Belfast and Dublin.

Home to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens (Northern Ireland's only designated *Royal* residence) and the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (Northern Ireland's only Regional Park), Lisburn & Castlereagh is unparalleled as a tourism destination in Ireland.

Characterised by a deep sense of community and a leisurely pace of life where welcoming people have time to engage in conversation across urban and rural neighbourhoods, an annual calendar of experiences and events inspire visitors to explore:

- **Culture and Heritage:** from being the home of Royal Hillsborough village with its remarkable Georgian architecture, art galleries and stately homes to the Ulster Aviation Society with 30+ historic aircrafts and craft design ranging from handmade linen to fine art ceramics
- **Food and Drink:** a celebrated destination for food and drink with gastro pubs, restaurants and farmer's markets that champion local produce complemented by experiences in private homes, cookery schools as well as Hinch Distillery and Hilden Brewery that are beloved locally

- **Adventure and Activities:** a haven for walkers and hikers - Lagan towpath walk connects Lisburn to Belfast; biking, boating, falconry, horse-racing and horse-riding, parkland golf courses, and Ireland's largest aqua park at Let's Go Hydro
- **Events and Festivals:** year-round community and large-scale events include the Down Royal Racing Festival that takes place annually in November - with a heritage dating back to 1865, this racecourse is the only one in Northern Ireland to host jump and flat racing

Complimented by restaurants, cafes, bars and accommodation from glamping, caravanning, self-catering cottages, B&Bs and guesthouses to stately homes, castles and hotels, Lisburn & Castlereagh is naturally suited to domestic and international leisure visitors including individuals and groups, couples, families, soft adventurers, golfers, inter-generational travellers and enthusiasts of nature, culture & heritage, food & drink, and the great outdoors.

For business tourism, Lisburn & Castlereagh is home to outdoor spaces and indoor venues including the Eikon Exhibition Centre (Northern Ireland's largest events venue with 10,000 SQMs of indoor event space on a 55-acre site), historic buildings and hotels for meeting, conference, events and incentive groups from 10 to 10,000 delegates.

As a collaborative and responsible community, we welcome everyone who shares our commitment to social inclusion and a sustainable ethos that benefits people, planet and pocket.



Castlereagh Hills Golf Course

1.3. Creating the Plan

The scope requested of the Lisburn & Castlereagh Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025 - 2030 is:

- provide strategic guidance to
 - raise the profile of the district as a tourism destination
 - achieve economic growth that benefits the district's tourism businesses and local economy
 - leverage tourism to raise pride and identity, generating social and wellbeing benefits
 - provide guidance on offline and online marketing
- make recommendations about the opportunity to develop new tourism products and experiences
- review the former Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, noting that the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 requires a fresh approach in the context of a post Covid-19 and Brexit era
- identify potential sources of funding to enable implementation of this Tourism Strategy
- provide guidance about how to maximise the role and the potential of the district's Visitor Servicing function, analysing gaps and new opportunities (e.g., digitalisation)

Guided by this direction, this plan is informed by consultations, an analysis of the provision of Visitor Services, a product audit, in-destination site visits and desk research:

- **Consultations:**
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) officers
 - LCCC tourism and hospitality businesses
 - LCCC elected representatives
 - Tourism Northern Ireland
 - Tourism Ireland
 - Visit Belfast: leisure and business tourism representatives
 - Professional travel buyers (leisure and business tourism) in Ireland and abroad, including the ITOA and ETOA associations
 - Disability Federation Ireland
 - Ulster University Economic Policy Centre
 - Climate action experts
 - Leave No Trace
 - Independent data intelligence and international benchmarking organisations
- **In-destination site visits:** an in-person assessment of signature tourism products that are unique to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district including:
 - [Hillsborough Castle and Gardens](#): Northern Ireland's royal residence
 - [Ulster Aviation Society](#): 30+ historic aircrafts and exhibits celebrating Northern Ireland's aviation heritage, expertly curated by passionate volunteers

- **Down Royal racecourse:** the only racecourse in Northern Ireland to host both jump and flat racing, with a heritage dating back to 1865
- **Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (4,200 acres):** Northern Ireland's only Regional Park with rich biodiversity and heritage
- **Maze Long Kesh:** a 347-acre site that is home to the Ulster Aviation Society and the 5,000m2 EIKON exhibition venue and exhibition facility renowned for hosting events such as the Balmoral Show (Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event with +100,000 visitors in May annually)
- **Places to dine, visit and stay:**
 - places to dine including gastro pubs and restaurants
 - places that offer food & drink experiences with tours and tastings such as distilleries and breweries
 - places to stay: e.g., glamping, caravanning, self-catering cottages, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels
- **Product Audit:** an analysis of existing tourism products and experiences to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities under the following categories:
 - Natural assets: places of natural beauty
 - Experiences: culture & heritage; adventure & activities; food & drink; wellness and sustainability
 - Accommodation providers
 - Events and festivals
 - Exclusive Venues
- **Visitor Services review:**
 - site visits and consultations were conducted with Visitor Services teams in Dublin, Belfast, Newry Mourne Down and Derry ~ Londonderry
 - reports and visitor services models from Ireland, Scandinavia and Germany were studied



Lagan Towpath: a scenic walking route along the river and 18th-century canal system from Lisburn to Castlerêagh

- **Desk Research:** reports and analyses relevant to LCCC’s tourism strategy including regional Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) strategies, national strategies and independently published reports

This plan including all recommendations and actions aligns with regional and national policies and strategies:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (LCCC):	National Strategies and Policies	Visit Belfast related reports	Independent reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LCCC Tourism Strategy 2018-2022• LCCC Community Plan 2017-2032• LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028• LCCC Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024• LCCC Local Development Plan 2032• Hillsborough Tourism Masterplan• Hillsborough Castle and Heritage Village Outline Business Case June 2021• Royal Hillsborough Sustainability Report• LCCC Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report 2021-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism NI’s Draft Tourism Strategy 2024-2034• 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• Lagan Valley Regional Park Five Year Management Plan 2023-2028• Tourism Ireland Marketing Plans• Department for the Economy Economic Strategy• Department for the Economy 10 Year Tourism Vision and Action Plan: Productivity, Regional Balance, Good Jobs, Decarbonisation. Department of Culture, Arts and Heritage: A Way Forward• DAERA Northern Ireland Food Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LCCC and Visit Belfast Regional Tourism Partnership 2022-2023• Visit Belfast Business & Operational Plan 2022-2023• Visit Belfast Draft Strategy 2024-2027• Visit Belfast Business Plan 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• United Nations Climate Change reports• World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism) reports• Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report 2023• Disability Federation of Ireland Advocacy Plan 2024-2026• Future.TI (Destination Germany) 2020• Food NI’s <i>Our Food the Power of Good</i>



1.4. Tourism Priorities: past and future

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council has been extremely successful in the [development of tourism infrastructure](#) for which the council's tourism team has been instrumental. Examples of high profile projects:

- **+£26 million investment secured for Royal Hillsborough village:** home to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens and Hillsborough Forest, this investment will support [the development of Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village](#).

The funds represent a combined investment made by Belfast Region City Deal, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)

- **Completion of tourism infrastructure projects:**
 - [Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest](#): encompassing ten giant sculptures created by leading artists that encourage exploration supported by an augmented reality digital app
 - [Guess How Much I Love You trail](#): celebrating the author and lifelong Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney who wrote the international bestseller *Guess How Much I Love You* in 1994 (selling more than 55 million copies worldwide), this Public Art and Literature Trail is accessible through a digital app or offline map

- **+£52 million investment for Dundonald International Ice Bowl:** development of a state of the art facility featuring an [Olympic-sized ice rink](#), 24-lane bowling alley and catering facilities

Opening in 2027, it is estimated that the ice bowl will welcome more than 700,000 visitors annually by contrast with existing annual visitor numbers of 500,000

Other notable achievements following the inception of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 include

Elevating the food and drink offering: a key theme in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising the profile of the rich food and drink heritage and innovative producers as a primary motivator for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district that is home to gastro pubs, restaurants, and quality artisan industries • developing an annual programme of farmers markets alongside food & drink related themed events • raising the profile of local destinations that champion quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair that takes places in August annually in the Moira village
Events and festivals	Supporting the development of an annual programme of community and larger scale events across the district to drive visitor footfall e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balmoral Show that takes place in the Eikon Exhibition Centre Lisburn, welcoming more than 120,000 visitors in May annually • Down Royal Festival of Racing in November annually
Integrated Marketing campaigns	A key theme in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, successes include delivering an annual Integrated Marketing Campaign to increase awareness and footfall to the district

Looking to the future: going forward the tourism team will continue to focus on the above outlined activity to include

- positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading destination for food and drink
- supporting events, festivals and farmers markets
- delivering integrated marketing campaigns
- tourism infrastructure development: ensuring that the management of any such projects is handed over to the appropriate operational experts upon completion.

Additionally, to maximise social and economic opportunities Lisburn & Castlereagh will place a priority focus upon

- building a robust collaborative framework that connects
 - tourism industry business providers: developing partnership opportunities
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry with the local community
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team with local tourism business providers and all stakeholders that can support the development of this tourism destination including Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast
- curating tourism experiences that share the story of people and place
- enterprise development: delivering training and mentoring supports that can help local tourism providers maximise opportunities individually and collectively
- embedding a culture of sustainable and regenerative tourism and social inclusion within all activity
- promoting Lisburn & Castlereagh as a leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences
- maximising opportunities that can deliver a return on investment for the destination's tourism infrastructure projects

As this activity brings increased responsibilities, a refocus will be required to appropriately resource the Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team to achieve success and the growth targets outlined in this plan.

The requirement for this renewed focus is evident throughout the Key Findings outlined in the following section.

1.5. Key Findings

This section highlights the key outcomes that have emerged to inform the growth target and strategic priorities in this plan under the following ten headings

- I. Positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination
- II. Travelling across boundaries and understanding the visitor's perspective
- III. Regional Partnership: Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
- IV. An assessment of the tourism offering and destination
- V. Lough Neagh Partnership
- VI. Dispersion across all tourism businesses and the destination
- VII. Sustainability, regeneration, climate action and biodiversity
- VIII. Placing inclusion, collaboration and community at the heart of tourism development
- IX. Supporting livelihoods and the economy: commercial and data analytics development
- X. The future of Visitor Services in Lisburn & Castlereagh

I. Positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination

From the outset of the consultation process, the debate arose among tourism businesses about whether Lisburn & Castlereagh is a) a tourism destination with its own identity and character or b) a suburban destination that is an extension of Belfast.

This uncertainty about the positioning of the Lisburn & Castlereagh area manifests in council reports too. For example, the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Interim Corporate Plan 2021-2024 states that *"there can be a perception of Lisburn & Castlereagh as a suburb of Belfast rather than somewhere to live and work."*

Ultimately [the balance of opinion landed on positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination with its own character](#) that offers the added convenience of being easily accessible to Belfast. The strong sentiment expressed is that the Lisburn & Castlereagh area is differentiated by

- **a slower pace of life:** described as a destination "at ease," an ideal place for visitors to unwind in the company of welcoming people who have the time to engage in conversation
- **a deep sense of community:** this aligns with the sentiment of Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017-2032: *"Local identity is important. People identify strongly with the towns, villages, and neighbourhoods they live in..."*
- **an accessible geography:** with a broad variety of experiences possible within easy commuting distance a) within the district and b) outside the district: e.g., it is possible to walk from Lisburn to Belfast along the Lagan towpath in 2-3 hours

Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination with its own unique character that offers the convenience of being accessible to other places, including Belfast

[Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry has asked for ambition](#), calling out the potential to achieve more by increasing the profile of the destination's unique tourism offering across the full breadth of the geography in urban and rural areas. The Lisburn & Castlereagh Community

Plan 2017/2032 in turn acknowledges the potential to achieve more, stating that the tourism opportunity has not yet reached its' full potential and is still "underdeveloped."

Through consultations, stakeholders have emphasised how this is a compelling, must-visit destination particularly for

- **families:** with lots to do from Dundonald International Ice Bowl, Lagan Valley LeisurePlex and Lets Go Hydro to outdoor activities and forest trails
- **culture and heritage enthusiasts:** 745 archaeological sites and monuments, six Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, Ulster's rich industrial heritage in fine linen
- **food and drink enthusiasts:** with vibrant farmer's markets (e.g., in the historic Royal Hillsborough village), excellent places to eat from pubs to restaurants, Hinch Distillery and Hilden Brewery (Ireland's oldest independent brewery)
- **soft adventure enthusiasts:** parkland golf courses with idyllic views to breathtaking landscapes for walking and cycling such as the Lagan Valley Regional Park (4,200 acres and 11 miles of riverbank), Hillsborough Forest, open parkland at Moira Demesne
- **luxury tourism:** home to Royal Hillsborough - renowned for striking architecture, old-world charm and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the destination is a natural fit for visitors who appreciate exclusive experiences
- **business tourism:** a prime location to meet the needs of corporate meetings, conferences, incentives, and events:
 - Eikon Exhibition Centre: Northern Ireland's largest events venue with 10,000 SQMs of indoor event space on a 55-acre site
 - Hillsborough Castle and Gardens
 - Unique venues such as Hilden Brewery and Hinch Distillery
 - outdoor spaces such as Lagan Valley AONB (4,200 acres)
 - in-destination hotels: while the supply of accommodation in Lisburn & Castlereagh is limited, additional rooms can be sourced from neighbouring areas such as Belfast

II. Travelling across boundaries and understanding the visitor's perspective

When positioning the tourism offering of any destination, it is important to be aware that visitors from the domestic and international marketplace are not concerned with district council or geographical boundaries. Instead, they travel from one compelling location to another in search of memorable experiences that reflect the story (traditions, customs, values, way of life) of local communities.

In the context of Lisburn & Castlereagh it is essential to be mindful of this given the district's

- **location:** stretching from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south, the district is bordered by six of Northern Ireland's council areas
 - Belfast: population of approximately 348,000
 - Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon: population of approximately 220,000
 - Newry Mourne and Down: population of approximately 182,000
 - Ards and North Down: population of approximately 164,000
 - Mid Ulster: population of approximately 151,000
 - Antrim and Newtownabbey: population of approximately 146,000

- **regional partnership:** a formal agreement whereby Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council works in partnership with Visit Belfast to support the promotion of tourism businesses in Lisburn & Castlereagh

Within this framework, the strategic approach for Lisburn & Castlereagh needs to

- focus upon raising the profile of the district's tourism offering so that local businesses (individually and collectively) stand out to win domestic and international visitors and maximise dwell time
- maximise opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh by
 - targeting the 1.3+ million people (70% of Northern Ireland's population) who live in Lisburn & Castlereagh (population of approximately 149,900) and within 6 neighbouring district council areas (combined population of approximately 1.2+ million including 348,000 in Belfast) for day trips and short stays
 - targeting the wider Northern Ireland marketplace
 - targeting the Republic of Ireland marketplace, noting that County Dublin (with a population of 1.4+ million) is within easy reach of the district
 - targeting international market opportunities in markets prioritised by Tourism Ireland: North America, Great Britain, France and Germany.
- work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities

Noting that Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering is dually promoted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council under the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh brand and by Visit Belfast under the Belfast Plus brand, the industry in Lisburn & Castlereagh has asked for promotion of the tourism offering in their destination to be amplified across domestic and international markets over the next five years. The success of this activity can be measured against the growth targets outlined in this plan.

Leverage Lisburn & Castlereagh's prime location and strategic partnerships to maximise opportunities via the local, national and international marketplaces

III. Regional Partnership: Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

The consultation process raised ambiguities about how tourism is promoted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast. Noting that clarity was requested in this regard, the partnership between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast along with their associated roles are outlined below.

Visit Belfast	<p>Visit Belfast operates as a not-for-profit Destination Marketing Management Organisation (DMMO) supported by Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland to provide marketing, sales and visitor servicing activity with the purpose of delivering on city-wide and national tourism strategies.</p> <p>Visit Belfast's remit is thereby to create and service domestic and international visitors across leisure, business and cruise tourism for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast • Regional tourism partners: bound by a Service Level Agreement, this includes Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council • Destination Northern Ireland • developing an established annual programme of farmers markets alongside food and drink related themed events
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raising the profile of local destinations that champion quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair that takes places in August annually in the Moira village
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	<p>Lisburn & Castlereagh District Council's tourism team operates at a localised level with priorities encompassing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of tourism infrastructure such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trails: e.g., the Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest and the Guess How Much I Love You trail large scale projects: e.g., securing investment and supporting the development of Royal Hillsborough (£26 million) and Dundonald International Ice Bowl (£52 million) food and drink product offering: e.g., the development of farmer's markets and raising the profile of the diverse quality of places to eat and drink across the district promotion of the district's tourism offering: primarily to Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland leisure tourism visitors via digital marketing and in-destination Visitor Services

Regional partnership between Visit Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Since the Greater Belfast Regional Tourism Partnership was first set up in 2006, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Visit Belfast have engaged in a collaborative partnership bound by a [Service Level Agreement](#) whereby Visit Belfast promotes the Lisburn & Castlereagh district via marketing, sales and Visit Belfast-operated visitor services.

Lisburn & Castlereagh is marketed under [Belfast Plus](#) with the purpose of a) highlighting the district's proximity to Belfast and b) the breadth of experiences and services located here that meet the needs of leisure, business, and cruise tourism visitors.

Under the Belfast Plus brand, [activity conducted by Visit Belfast includes](#)

- promotion via
 - Belfast Plus web pages and social media channels
 - Belfast City & Region Guide
- inclusion in targeted marketing campaigns that prioritise the domestic, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain markets
- visitor services across the following locations with dedicated Belfast Plus branding: Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, Belfast International Airport and George Best Belfast City Airport (travel advisory services, literature distribution, event information, ticketing service and accommodation booking)
- Belfast industry engagement programme: raising the profile of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district's tourism offering to generate referral bookings via Belfast-based tourism and hospitality businesses
- Cruise Belfast website and Cruise Terminal Visitor Servicing: March-October
- Visit Belfast Business Events website and conference guide
- representation at consumer and trade shows for leisure and business tourism in Ireland and internationally

The future opportunity, metrics and neighbourhood tourism

Looking to the future, by working in partnership with Visit Belfast there is [an opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh to leverage Belfast's brand recognition](#) as a tourism destination and Northern Ireland's capital city to a) achieve measurable promotional and economic opportunities for tourism businesses and b) increase dwell time in Lisburn & Castlereagh.

Noting that Visit Belfast's Business Plan 2024-2025 has set a KPI to achieve 780,000 visits across overnight trips (250,000), day trips (200,000), cruise tourism (296,000) and corporate delegates (24,000), [it is recommended that an updated Service Level Agreement \(SLA\) with clear objectives, actions and KPIs are agreed](#) for Lisburn & Castlereagh over a defined period (e.g., 3 or 5 years) and that [the success of this SLA is assessed via agreed KPIs and metrics](#).

Visit Belfast's focus on neighbourhood tourism

Within the SLA, the context for "[neighbourhood tourism](#)" outlined as a strategic focus in Visit Belfast's Strategy 2024-2027 also needs consideration. As neighbourhood tourism champions engagement with local people and places, this opportunity is especially relevant for Lisburn & Castlereagh with a variety of neighbourhoods across urban and rural areas.

Notably, the importance of "*neighbourhoods*" where "*local identity is important*" is widely referenced across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council plans, including the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council: maximising opportunities

To maximise opportunities via the Visit Belfast collaboration and beyond this collaboration, this plan recommends that the council

- regularly [engages with Visit Belfast to ensure that agreed actions and associated KPIs are achieved](#), strengths are optimised and challenges are addressed
- continues with the [integrated marketing campaigns](#) delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism team that target Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland visitors
- [proactively develops partnerships with key tourism stakeholders](#) including Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland
- [proactively develops partnerships with professional travel buyers](#) across leisure and business tourism, noting that the buyers consulted for this plan welcomed learning more about Lisburn & Castlereagh as a tourism destination
- actively engages with local tourism businesses to [foster a culture of cross collaboration](#) across the destination
- [develops alliances that can benefit Lisburn & Castlereagh](#), for example with Visit Belfast visitor services representatives and Belfast-based accommodation providers that can refer visitors
- [reviews targeted marketing campaigns conducted by Visit Belfast](#) that prioritise the domestic, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain markets to
 - assess the opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh
 - ensure that duplications across Lisburn & Castlereagh and Visit Belfast's marketing activity are avoided
 - measure the success of Visit Belfast-led campaigns for Lisburn & Castlereagh via robust data collation and analysis
- [reviews initiatives such as those provided by Visit Belfast, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland](#) to determine opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh

Continue to partner with Visit Belfast, alongside targeting opportunities at a local, regional and national level

IV. An assessment of the tourism offering and destination

To ensure that the Lisburn & Castlereagh’s tourism offering is communicated with clarity over the next six years, the key categories for promotion have been identified as

- **natural assets:** places of natural beauty (e.g., Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB) and hub communities across the district’s urban and rural landscapes: city, town, villages and hamlets
- **culture and heritage:**
 - experiences and services that share the story of people and place
 - tangible heritage: e.g., Hillsborough Castle and Gardens
 - cultural heritage: traditions inherited over generations such as fine linen making
- **outdoor recreation, adventure and activities:** from land and water based activities (e.g., walking, hiking, biking, boating, golfing and horse-riding) to fun for all ages at locations such as Let’s Go Hydro, Down Royal Racecourse
- **food and drink:** quality tourism experiences with local providers such as
 - immersive experiences: e.g. learn how to make a local dish or how a local beer or whiskey is crafted
 - guided trails: showcasing local food and drink provenance and suppliers with insights provided by an expert
- **events and festivals:** from community to large scale events
- **places to eat and drink:** from gastro pubs to restaurants and farmer’s markets
- **places to stay:** encompassing all categories such as caravanning, camping and glamping, self-catering, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels
- **exclusive venues:** for private and corporate occasions

Table 1 summarises key outcomes from the product audit conducted for this plan raising the following points

- **an opportunity to curate experiences that share the story of people and place:** for example, while there are 133 places to eat and drink such as cafes, pubs and restaurants, there are only 5 food and drink tourism experiences delivered by local providers
- **an opportunity to increase experiences bookable by independent visitors:** a low proportion of tourism experiences and activities are available to book on dates calendared across the season - limiting the potential for public promotion and the supply of experiences for independent visitors and small groups
- **a low availability of quality accommodation:** 6 out of 94 accommodation providers listed are hotels. A high proportion of providers are not officially graded
- **abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and adventures:** Lisburn & Castlereagh is well positioned to target visitors interested in the great outdoors including via golf, equestrian, water sports activities, walking and biking trails

Table 1: summary product audit outcomes

Category	Notable outcomes
Natural assets	Lisburn & Castlereagh has natural assets that are ideal for outdoor recreation including Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, Hillsborough Forest, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, Wallace Park and Portmore Lough.
Culture, history and heritage attractions and experiences	17 providers in this category: visitor attractions (12) and experiences (5). While all 17 service private bookings, just 6 of the 17 provide services bookable by independent visitors.
Outdoor recreation, adventure and activities	43 in this category: golf (7), equestrian (8), water sports (7) and farm activities (6). While all 43 service private bookings, < 50% provide services bookable by independent visitors.
Food and drink experiences and activities	5 in this category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 tours: Hilden Brewery, Hinch Distillery, Coca Cola Visitor Experience • 2 cookery schools <p>The above are largely available subject to request for private bookings. There is low availability of experiences for this theme that is a priority for Lisburn & Castlereagh and an absence of experiences such as guided walking trails that share insights into local provenance and producers.</p>
Places to eat and drink	177 listings: cafes, pubs, bars and restaurants – Lisburn & Castlereagh benefits from a quality food and drinking offering.
Places to stay	94 listings across hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and self-catering: a high proportion of providers operate ungraded accommodation: i.e., quality standards are not certified by Tourism Northern Ireland Across a total availability of 1477 beds, the allocation per accommodation provider category is summarised below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 690: 3 and 4 star graded hotels • 606: self-catering (majority have no official grading) • 181: guesthouse (majority have no official grading)

The audit combined with feedback from the consultation process has raised important points addressed in the following sections

- A. Meeting the visitor demand for experiential tourism
- B. Promoting signature tourism offerings that are unique to Lisburn & Castlereagh
- C. Availability of accommodation
- D. Tourism events, festivals and funding

A. Meeting visitor demand for experiential tourism:

Visitor expectations have been changing in recent years with a rising demand for experiential tourism. This is acknowledged in Tourism Northern Ireland communications emphasising how the contemporary visitor seeks authentic and engaging experiences (known as *immersive experiences*) that delve into the uniqueness of an area. The expectation is that these experiences

- **are rooted in place:** i.e., they share the story of local people and their community
- **offer an opportunity to learn something new:** e.g.,
 - a skill such as playing an instrument or learning a craft
 - an insight into a local tradition, a moment in history, a local hidden gem
- **are compelling and memorable:** e.g.,
 - a walking experience with a local guide showcasing breathtaking views
 - learning how to bake or cook a new recipe in a local chef's kitchen
 - hearing how a local craft whiskey is made, ending with a guided tasting
 - crafting a piece of wood, glass or clay with a master crafts person
 - following a themed trail (e.g., food and drink) that shares the provenance of local ingredients and insights into local producers
 - discovering new places, ways of living and communities on foot, or bike or boat
- **provoke thought and emotion:** i.e., they offer a fresh perspective and can stir a wide range of emotions such as excitement or happiness

Responding to the demand for experiential tourism, Tourism Northern Ireland launched the [Embrace A Giant Spirit destination experience brand](#) in 2019 with the cited promise of “*sharing the giant spirit of Northern Ireland and awakening the giant spirit in our visitors.*” The brand hallmarks known as inspirers are summarised below:

- **Big heartedness:** defining the warm, friendly and down-to-earth nature of people in Northern Ireland
- **Legends and stories:** untapping the legends, myths and history of Northern Ireland to showcase how exciting and inspirational culture and creativity is
- **Originality:** showcasing Northern Ireland's pioneering spirit
- **Land, water and sea:** sharing the natural beauty of Northern Ireland while preserving and nurturing this so it can be enjoyed by future generations

As the product audit has raised the opportunity for Lisburn & Castlereagh to curate experiences that meet the needs of visitors seeking experiential tourism, this plan recommends that this is prioritised via bespoke enterprise development programmes to curate a compelling collection of experiences delivered by local people across the following themes:

Curate authentic experiences that share the story of people and place, ensuring that these are available to book on a scheduled and private basis

- culture & heritage
- adventure & activities
- food & drink

To reach the widest possible audience, [these experiences need to be bookable online \(for independent visitors\)](#) and [on a private booking basis \(for private bookers and groups\)](#).

B. Promoting signature tourism offerings unique to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

Lisburn & Castlereagh is in the fortunate position of having signature tourism attractions that are unique to this destination. These include

- Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens
- Ulster Aviation Society
- EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh
- Down Royal Racecourse
- Dundonald International Ice Bowl
- Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB

The outcomes for each noted attraction are addressed below along with recommendations to increase their profile and maximise opportunities.

Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

As previously noted, £26 million investment has been secured for the development of Royal Hillsborough village (widely known as Hillsborough) that because it has retained many of its original features is characterised by a distinctive sense of place.

To safeguard the village for future generations along with improving the quality of life for residents and the experience for visitors, the noted investment will be used to

- upgrade public realm across the streetscape and square, including the historic Courthouse
- address upgrades required at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

Apart from Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the village is home to accommodation providers and quality places to eat and drink making it an ideal destination for visitors.

Noting that consultations with professional travel buyers made it clear that there is a desire to learn more about this offering and how it can be used for diverse requirements from luxury to corporate and from general to special interest visitors, the ambition is to raise the profile of this attraction during the lifetime of this plan so that it enters the league of [top 10 paid visitor attractions as defined by Northern Ireland's Statistics and Research Agency- NISRA](#) (joining other attractions such as Titanic Belfast, Mount Stewart, Marble Arch Caves and Saint Patrick's Centre).

Raise the profile of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens so it enters the league of top 10 paid visitors' attractions in Northern Ireland

Aligned with this ambition, this plan recommends the [curation of a\) a collection of experiences that share Royal Hillsborough's unique story](#) (e.g., experiences delivered by Hillsborough Fort Guards) and [b\) communications that clarify the services and venues available to meet the needs of leisure and business tourism visitors](#).

Position Royal Hillsborough as part of the wider tourism offering, ensuring that social and economic opportunities spread across the district

Importantly, as outlined in the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028, Royal Hillsborough should not be presented as the sole reason for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district, but rather as a visitor attraction that is part of a wider tourism offering that draws the visitor “to a range of other historic and natural attractions in the area.”

Ulster Aviation Society

Unlike anything else in Ireland, 30+ historic aircrafts and exhibits celebrating Northern Ireland’s aviation heritage are displayed in two hangars that are listed buildings within the 347-acre Maze Long Kesh site in Lisburn. The exhibition is curated by passionate volunteers, many of whom are mechanics, engineers and pilots devoted to the maintenance of the aircrafts that are presented in working order and pristine condition.

With tours (available subject to pre-booking) delivered by volunteer guides who are knowledgeable and passionate, the experience feels like walking on to a movie set where aircraft usually only seen in photographs are accessible to view and touch.

As an experience, the Ulster Aviation Society has potential to be further developed to attract leisure and business tourism visitors seeking an original venue. To realise this opportunity, bespoke supports are required so that the Ulster Aviation Society is equipped with the commercial and operational know-how to achieve success.

Provide bespoke support so that the Ulster Aviation Society can maximise promotional and commercial opportunities

EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh

Maze Long Kesh is a 347-acre open space that houses two tourism-relevant sites: the Ulster Aviation Society and the 5,000m² EIKON exhibition centre. Known for hosting the Balmoral Show (+100,000 visitors- Northern Ireland’s largest agri-food event), EIKON is the largest exhibition centre in Northern Ireland.

The venue functions well on a practical level with ample internal and external spaces, car and coach parking with easy access to accommodation in Lisburn & Castlereagh and neighbouring areas such as Belfast.

Target commercial opportunities for EIKON supported by a strategic plan and explore the potential for tourism at Maze Long Kesh

Noting that consultations conducted for this plan have confirmed interest in exhibition spaces that avoid the hassle of traffic-heavy urban areas, there is the potential to increase Lisburn & Castlereagh’s reputation for the delivery of exhibitions for which a targeted commercial and operational strategic plan that champions a sustainable ethos (including sustainable travel solutions for reaching the exhibition centre) is required.

Considering the expanse of the Maze Long Kesh site, a separate study should be conducted to assess if and how the site can be further developed for the benefit of local communities and tourism.

Down Royal Racecourse

Located in County Down (approximately 20 minutes outside of Belfast), the Down Royal Racecourse stages some of the most prominent races on the Irish racing calendar. Renowned for being the only racecourse in Northern Ireland to host both jump and flat racing, Down Royal promises a [compelling experience](#) for visitors and a novel way to connect with local people.

With numerous private suites to avail of throughout the racecourse, this plan recommends that Down Royal is positioned as part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering to target [leisure and business tourism visitors](#).

Dundonald International Ice Bowl

Set for an investment of £52 million and a target (post redevelopment) to welcome more than 700,000 visitors, Dundonald International Ice Bowl will boast an Olympic-sized ice rink, 24-lane bowling alley and extensive catering facilities.

A key function of a tourism visitor attraction is to create a compelling and memorable experience that shares a unique insight into the story of people and place, with the power to attract visitors - thus increasing in-destination dwell time that benefits the local economy.

Within this context, in its current format Dundonald Ice Bowl reads as a sports and recreational offering rather than as a fit for tourism.

Assess if and how Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned as part of the tourism offering

This plan thereby recommends that an assessment is conducted to determine [if and how Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned as an integral part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering and strategy](#).

The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB

The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB is [a precious natural asset that is Northern Ireland's only Regional Park and one of nine designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland](#). Encompassing 4,200 acres and 11 miles along both sides of the River Lagan, the park bridges the urban hubs of Lisburn and Belfast connecting the cities via a towpath.

Home to a rich biodiversity and heritage, the park is characterised by an array of outdoor spaces including smaller parks, farmlands, woodlands, and meadows. Following a site visit of the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, it became clear that it has the [potential to be developed](#) to meet the needs of leisure and business tourism visitors. Some of the ideas raised included a safari-style exploration by jeep accompanied by Park Rangers that would be unique in Ireland.

While one third of the park's expanse is in the Belfast City Council area, two thirds are in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area. The value of the Lagan Valley Regional Park is recognised across Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies including the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032 that references the park as a unique *"tourism/recreation asset that requires protection for future generations."*

As the opportunities that the park presents are variable and vast, [this plan recommends that an independent study is conducted](#) to include an assessment of

- how the park can be best positioned as a tourism asset with a sustainable and regenerative ethos at its heart
- potential for Greenway and Blueway development on the Comber Greenway, with a focus on
 - connecting the Lagan towpath to Royal Hillsborough
 - animating the Lagan towpath with services including places to eat and drink (e.g., cafes), sustainable travel rental services (e.g., bike hire), compelling tourism experiences (e.g., exploring the area with a Park Ranger), signage and wayfinding
- what kind of experiences and services can be developed to meet the needs of the local community, leisure and business tourism customers in Ireland and internationally
- what kind of events can be curated
- what kind of customers and markets are suited to the offering
- how can the park generate social and economic benefits as a tourism offering
- what kind of communications are required for tourism purposes
- what kind of supports are required to achieve success

Conduct an independent assessment to determine how best to position the Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB as a quality sustainable tourism offering that benefits the local community and visitors

As the park is jointly funded by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Belfast City Council, this study would be ideally conducted in partnership with both councils.

C. Availability of accommodation

The product audit conducted for this plan confirms that there are 587 bedroom units with a total capacity of 1477 beds available across the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

More than 50% of the available rooms are in Lisburn, the district's only city. A further 17% of available rooms are concentrated in the historic villages of Royal Hillsborough and Moira, with the balance largely spread throughout Aghalee, Ballynahinch, Carryduff and Dundonald.

The total of 1477 available beds are spread across the following accommodation provider categories:

- **690:** 3 and 4 star graded hotels with the 4-star La Mon Hotel & Country Club (a total of 280 beds) and the 3-star Premier Inn Lisburn (a total of 180 beds) providing the highest proportion of inventory
- **606:** self-catering (the majority have no official grading)
- **181:** guesthouse (the majority have no official grading)

Considering the destination's capacity to attract luxury visitors, there are no 5-star options and a significant proportion of accommodation providers are ungraded.

While the destination has benefited from new openings in recent years including the Haslem Hotel in Lisburn (2020) with 45 bedrooms and Arthurs Townhouse in Royal Hillsborough (2023) with 12 bedrooms, the low availability of quality accommodation is widely referenced including in the Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan 2017/2032: *"the estimated number of overnight stays was the lowest across all councils [...]. There is a lack of hotel accommodation in the area and in general the number of beds in licensed accommodation."*

While Lisburn & Castlereagh's location means that it can benefit from the wider availability of accommodation in neighbouring areas such as Belfast, [the low availability of accommodation can impact dwell time](#) running the risk that Lisburn & Castlereagh attracts a high proportion of day trippers rather than longer stays.

This in turn means that visitors have less opportunity to choose staying in this district area in a destination that offers a slower pace of life by comparison with Belfast.

This plan accordingly recommends scoping the potential to develop [sustainable accommodation solutions across all accommodation categories: e.g., self-catering, glamping, caravanning, guesthouses and hotels](#).

Maximise opportunities for increased dwell time by exploring the potential for investment in sustainable accommodation solutions

Considering the destination profile and the presence of The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB, it is recommended that the potential for [luxury lodge style accommodation that works in harmony with the natural environment](#) is explored.

D. Tourism events, festivals and funding

Supporting the development of an annual programme of major and community events to drive visitor footfall has been a priority focus for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. Examples of major events supported by the council include

- Hillsborough Castle & Gardens Honey Fair: August annually
- Down Royal Festival of Racing: November annually

The product audit conducted for this plan highlighted twelve events defined as small or major events. However, not all these events (e.g., Northern Ireland International Cross Country – October annually) are relevant for the purposes of tourism.

[A tourism event should showcase a destination's culture, people and place](#) in a way that **a)** enriches the visitor experience, **b)** welcomes visitors from the local community and Northern Ireland marketplace, and **c)** proactively targets and generates new money via external visitors (e.g., from the Republic of Ireland and international markets) into the economy.

Importantly, the event must have a [strong concept](#) and should ideally take place during [low season months when the economic benefits are most needed](#). Appendix 1 summarises examples of successful tourism events in Ireland.

Within this context, [it is recommended that a new event is identified](#) with the potential to attract domestic and international visitors. This event should draw upon Lisburn & Castlereagh's unique identity and strengths: e.g., food and drink, Christmas markets. It should also be rooted in a compelling concept and innovative programming.

Curate the concept and delivery of one successful tourism-focused festival during the lifetime of this plan

Once concepts and programming are identified, it is further recommended that the council should consult with Tourism Northern Ireland for guidance, noting that there are two funding options currently available (national and international).

If Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council proceeds with a new event, it is recommended that investment via [Tourism Northern Ireland's national event fund](#) is initially sought. Once this event establishes a strong track record and a demonstrated ability to win external visitors, the potential to apply for the [international event fund](#) can be determined.

As part of this activity, the opportunity to support the development of events as the Linen Biennale that shares Lisburn's linen heritage and industry should be considered

V. Lough Neagh Partnership

The Lough Neagh Partnership is a stakeholder organisation that was established in 2003 to help manage and protect Lough Neagh. The board of the partnership is comprised of key stakeholders, elected representatives, landowners, fishermen, farmers, local communities. The Lough Neagh Partnership is the primary organisation responsible for the sustainable development of Lough Neagh.

Core funding for this partnership is provided by all councils that surround the lough. This includes Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council where a 3-mile stretch along the lough's shoreline (with two sand refineries and a private marina) is part of this jurisdiction.

Explore the potential for Lough Neagh to be positioned as part of Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism offering

This partnership facilitates the potential for

- **new experience development:** delivered by providers on the stretch of Lough Neagh that is part of the Lisburn & Castlereagh district
- **collaborations:** with tourism providers that represent Lough Neagh
- **profiling Lough Neagh** as part of the Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism offering

VI. Dispersion across all tourism businesses and the destination

While positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination that is home to unique visitor attractions and experiences, it is essential to ensure that opportunities are maximised across the district for all tourism and hospitality businesses, their associated communities, and local economies.

Via the consultation process, Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism businesses have asked that signature visitor attractions with extensive capacity for visitors are

- promoted as part of the wider collection of tourism experiences and services
- leveraged to benefit all tourism businesses along with all urban and rural communities across city, town, villages, and hamlets

Focus on promoting the full tourism offering and dispersion so that all tourism providers and communities across Lisburn & Castlereagh benefit

This approach is essential for sustainable tourism development that encourages year-round travel and dispersion. [Showcasing the full breadth of what the destination can offer is also key for a\) appealing to diverse visitor interests and b\) creating reasons to repeat visit.](#)

This plan thereby recommends that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council stays abreast of the full catalogue of market-ready tourism experiences and services that are ready for promotion during the lifetime of this plan and beyond across the following categories:

- **Culture, history and heritage:** e.g., historic visitor attractions and museums, guided walking trails, craft experiences (e.g., ceramics, textiles)
- **Outdoor recreation, adventure and activities:** e.g., activity centres, guided walking, hiking, boating and biking experiences, golfing, horse riding
- **Food and drink experiences and activities:** e.g., guided food and drink trails, cookery experiences and guided tours (Hilden Brewery and Hinch Distillery)
- **Places to eat and drink:** places such as gastro pubs and restaurants that champion local provenance, produce and producers
- **Places to stay:** all accommodation types- self-catering, glamping, caravanning, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels
- **Exclusive venues:** exhibition centres, hotels, stately homes, eateries, visitor attractions and places like Castlereagh Golf Club and Drumbo Park Greyhound Stadium with spaces for semi-private and private hire



Hilden Brewery: oldest independent brewery in Ireland

VII. Sustainability, regeneration and climate action

While sustainable and regenerative tourism is not referenced in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, it is prioritised in other Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies. For example, the Local Development Plan 2032 references “*sustainable tourism development*” that benefits local people, the local economy and visitors and the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028 champions the promotion of sustainable tourism along with “the use of our asset base to increase sustainability” under Strategic Theme No 3 – Planet.

[Sustainability will be a key priority for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030](#), aligning with existing council policies and the *Department for the Economy's recent Tourism*

Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan's vision to establish Northern Ireland as a destination with “*sustainability at its core.*”

Accordingly, the intention is to **ingrain a culture of sustainability** so that the destination's landscape, built heritage and cultural heritage is celebrated and preserved for future generations. Accordingly, tourism activity will demonstrate a holistic commitment to

- safeguarding the environment
- championing local communities
- supporting livelihoods and the local economy

While this approach brings wide-ranging benefits to local people, it also meets the expectations of visitors as **national and independent reports confirm a rising demand for sustainable tourism destinations.**

Whereas **sustainable tourism seeks to minimise harm, regenerative tourism aspires to actively heal and nurture.**

Within tourism lexicon, the term *sustainability* is often used to reference both sustainable and regenerative tourism practices. However, as regenerative tourism development can achieve more and there is a growing understanding of its greater impact, Lisburn & Castlereagh needs to be transparent about both sustainable and regenerative activity alongside the associated outcomes.

During the period 2025-2030, key activity will include:

- working with tourism and hospitality businesses to ingrain a culture of sustainability, maximising all associated social and economic benefits
- instilling and promoting measures that safeguard the environment and reduce emissions, ensuring that outcomes are visible and measurable based on pre-determined baselines
- curation of sustainable tourism experiences and products that authentically represent people and place
- promoting existing and future sustainable travel solutions (e.g., on foot, by bike, boat, or public transport), routes (e.g., Lagan towpath) and itineraries
- considering the prevalence of quality places to eat and drink, working with experts to provide guidance about what ingredients are sustainable for promotion on menus
- providing guidance for tourism businesses and communities about how to support visitors so that they engage respectfully within the destination
- raising awareness by communicating activity across offline and online channels
- aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals and the VICE model for sustainable tourism

Sustainable and regenerative tourism is a strategic priority 2025-2030.

A culture of sustainability will be ingrained that demonstrates an evidence-based commitment.

- **Visitors:** welcoming, involving and delighting visitors
- **Industry:** achieving a profitable and prosperous industry
- **Community:** engaging and benefiting host communities and showcasing/respecting their unique identities and culture
- **Environment:** being mindful of the collective impact of visitors, industry and community on the environment and the importance of nurturing and protecting this

VIII. Placing inclusion and collaboration at the heart of tourism development

Inclusion has arisen as a key pillar for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 encompassing accessible tourism development, social inclusion, community engagement and collaboration as priorities. This aligns with the Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan that identifies inclusion as a key pillar.

In the context of the Lisburn & Castlereagh District, this ambition is explained further below under the following headings: collaboration; community; accessible tourism development and social inclusion

Collaboration: this was [a key pillar of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022](#), prioritising the development of partnerships with

- stakeholders such as Visit Belfast and Tourism Northern Ireland
- tourism businesses and sites with the capacity to welcome large visitor numbers such as the Historic Royal Palaces and the Ulster Aviation Society
- stakeholders that can support investment in tourism accommodation
- businesses to create packaged experiences, including food and drink

Going forward, the strategy will build on this approach to include establishing a robust collaborative foundation across tourism and hospitality businesses in the Lisburn & Castlereagh district. As collaboration is the foundation of all successful tourism destinations, this is a key step to achieving the increased promotion and growth set out in this plan. Led by the Lisburn & Castlereagh Councils' tourism team, activity will include

- **direct engagement** with Lisburn & Castlereagh Councils' tourism team and local tourism and hospitality businesses
- **an annual calendar of events** organised by Lisburn & Castlereagh Council's tourism team:

- **one annual forum:** one full day in-person event when tourism industry-relevant updates are delivered, ending with a networking event
 - **networking events:** two half day in-person events where businesses meet each other and establish the potential for partnership opportunities
 - **familiarisation trip:** min. one annual day trip empowering businesses to make new connections and experience the destination on a firsthand basis
- **capability supports:** designed to a) connect local businesses, b) increase collaborative and networking skillsets, c) generate referral opportunities across businesses and d) raise awareness of how the Lisburn & Castlereagh offering sits within the wider Northern Ireland context and the Embrace A Giant Spirit destination experience brand

Community: noting that community is at the heart of all Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council policies and that [community is at the heart of sustainable tourism development](#), this plan recommends that Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry and offering connects with community.

This can be addressed in multiple ways including by

- making the community aware that as tourism shares the story of people and place, it shares their unique story
- making visitors aware of ways they can directly engage with community: e.g., via golf clubs, horse racing events, farmers markets, events and festivals
- empowering community representatives to become local experts with the know-how to guide visitors and support sustainable tourism
- promoting the profile of tourism experiences, products and hospitality services to residents and businesses, including how these support local livelihoods and the economy
- identifying if there are community representatives from non-tourism backgrounds with the skillsets required to transition into tourism – e.g., to deliver tourism experiences

Accessible Tourism Development and Social Inclusion: the intention is to build a culture and infrastructure that promotes accessibility for all people.

Guided by experts, relevant stakeholders, organisations and local industry experts, all sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry will be supported to be responsible and proactive about addressing diverse human needs including via communications, product, experience and service delivery.

This will include the promotion of Universal Design along with no and low-cost solutions that can improve accessibility within tourism businesses and infrastructure

Inclusion and collaboration is a strategic priority 2025-2030:

- creating a robust collaborative framework for local tourism providers
- connecting the local community with tourism
- establishing partnerships with key stakeholders
- recognising and addressing the needs of all people

IX. Supporting livelihoods and the economy: commercial development and data analytics

Aligned with sustainable tourism development, [this plan advocates for livelihoods, job creation and the local economy ensuring that benefits spread across the full breadth of the destination](#). This aligns with the LCCC Corporate Plan and Ambitions 2024/2028 that references the following benchmarks for success:

- an increase in job numbers, including via start-up activity
- an increase in the number of visitor trips and visitor spend per annum

While the starting point for economic success is rooted in collaboration whereby tourism and hospitality businesses work together and in partnership with the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, additional supports are required to maximise economic development opportunities. These include

- **strategic capabilities:** empowering tourism businesses to make smart choices about which opportunities to target to achieve growth
- **data collation and analysis:** promoting how data collation and analysis is essential for achieving sustainable, stable and profitable revenue generation

To achieve the growth targets in this plan, the delivery of commercial and data analytics enterprise development supports are recommended to help businesses and the local economy thrive.

Data collation and analysis: challenges, benefits and processes

Tourism businesses advise that it is challenging to assess business performance and trends at a local level. While there is useful information and data available at a national level via Tourism Northern Ireland (largely informed by NISRA data), the industry seeks a) destination-specific insights and b) consolidated data: i.e., one report that captures performance and trends.

- Devising a local data capture mechanism will take time and present challenges. These include
- *collating data across diverse sectors:* accommodation, visitor attractions, experience & activity providers, festivals, places to eat, drink & socialise
 - *inconsistent data collation:* not all businesses have processes in place to record data – e.g., some will not be able to advise what percentage of their visitors come from the domestic and international marketplace.
 - *Covid-19:* the pandemic disrupted the collation of tourism data

- Conversely, robust data collation can deliver significant benefits. These include:
- *an empowered industry:* via quality data capture, LCCC (businesses and destination) can indicate strengths and challenges to optimise economic performance
 - *grant aid and funding:* robust data can support funding applications strengthening the opportunity to achieve funding for LCCC (businesses and destination)

Mindful of challenges, it is recommended that Lisburn & Castlereagh develops a two-way approach:

Tourism businesses	Support education and awareness building an industry understanding of a) why data collation is essential for growing business opportunities, b) what data to collate and c) how to analyse this data to maximise opportunities
Destination	<p>Plan for LCCC-wide data capture beginning with a survey questionnaire that a) can be completed anonymously by tourism businesses, b) includes all businesses - those with robust and weaker data capture processes and c) is easy to complete – i.e., a short number of relevant questions: visitor numbers, country of origin, channels (how visitors make their bookings)</p> <p>Using the outputs from this questionnaire and relevant insights available to LCCC (e.g., footfall at events), Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland data, generate an annual overview of performance and trends to share with industry</p>

The following fields should be considered for inclusion in the survey questionnaire:

1.	Business Category	A. Accommodation provider B. Visitor Attraction C. Experience & Activity providers D. Events & festivals E. Venues (places to eat, drink and socialise)		
2.	Numbers	<i>Accommodation</i> : total bed nights <i>Business category B-E</i> : total visitors' numbers		
3.	Markets include the option to tick the percentage of visitors per market	ROI NI GB	US France Germany	Spain Italy Other
4.	Channels include the option to tick the percentage of visitors per market	Website Social Media	Referral: e.g., a local partner Direct: e.g., phone, email)	Travel Buyer Other
5.	Track unavailable data	For data capture requests 2-4, include a field entitled "data is unavailable." This will enable a) tourism businesses with incomplete data to participate and complete what they can and b) LCCC to assess gaps in data collation and annual progress in this regard		

X. The future of Visitor Services in Lisburn & Castlereagh

The provision of guidance about how to maximise the role and the potential of the district's Visitor Servicing function was an ask of this plan to include assessing gaps and new opportunities. This task is explored in this section under the following headings:

- A. Existing Visitor Services
 - Lisburn & Castlereagh
 - Visit Belfast and Northern Ireland Visitor Information Centres
- B. Learnings: the provision of Visitor Services for the future
- C. Recommendations for Visitor Servicing in Lisburn & Castlereagh 2025-2030

The outcome confirms that [the future of Visitor Servicing is a hybrid model that seamlessly integrates human resources with digital solutions.](#)

A. Existing Visitor Services

Lisburn & Castlereagh

With the core purpose of providing visitors with quality insights about things to do and places to see, eat and stay in the district and across Northern Ireland, Lisburn & Castlereagh operates one fixed [Visitor Information Centre known as the Lisburn Visitor Information Centre](#) located (since March 2022) in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum. This centre offers

- communications that support visitors:
 - printed materials: free maps along with flyers and brochures that promote businesses and the destination
 - website research via reception staff
- booking assistance including emailing and printing tickets
- a gift store, with locally made products championed
- printing and photocopying services (available at a small charge)
- parking, including accessible parking
- comfort services, including accessible toilets

In addition, the district operates a [mobile Visitor Information service](#) in the form of a pop-up trailer seven days a week in the carpark of Hillsborough Forest Park during the high season period from April to September. This trailer facilitates one staff member to manage information requests and to distribute the stocked printed communications (maps, flyers, brochures) to visitors.

[Visitor Information services provided by Lisburn & Castlereagh are in high demand](#) with 30,000 enquiries serviced by staff members in 2023. Key challenges and viewpoints that have emerged regarding existing services offering are:

- **Services are print-reliant:** printed communications such as maps, flyers and brochures are the key sources of information for visitors
- **The layout of the Lisburn Visitor Information Centre could function more effectively to engage the visitor:** for example to include a welcome desk visible upon arrival, large screens with rolling content, inspiring window displays, and compelling communications that showcase the local tourism offering
- **Lisburn & Castlereagh would benefit from a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park:** the existing mobile Visitor Information service located at Hillsborough Forest Park attracts +600,000 visitors annually.

The district would benefit from a permanent Visitor Information service centre in this location that can encourage visitation across the district

- **The mobile (trailer) Visitor Information service could function more effectively:**
 - power points and WIFI access could be added so that additional work such as social media management can be conducted during quieter times
 - destination branding could be added on the exterior to include QR codes with compelling content and a photographable map
 - with a fixed location for the Visitor Information service centre at Hillsborough Forest Park, this trailer offers the flexibility of basing Visitor Information services in diverse locations throughout the destination
- **Digital marketing:** the Visitor Information services team would benefit from a dedicated resource for digital marketing

Visit Belfast and Northern Ireland Visitor Information Centres

Lisburn & Castlereagh is additionally promoted via Visit Belfast services:

- **Visit Belfast Welcome Centre:** the main resource and information hub, located in the heart of Belfast City
- **Cruise Welcome hub:** working closely with Belfast Harbour in a Cruise Destination Management role to promote Belfast and neighbouring areas such as Lisburn & Castlereagh to cruise passengers (+300,000 in 2023)
- **Visitor touch points:** e.g., airports with self-service information

Just as the Lisburn Visitor Information Centre provides information relevant to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district as well as throughout Northern Ireland, Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism businesses can benefit from referrals from Visit Belfast and other Visitor Information Centres throughout Northern Ireland.

B. Learnings: the provision of Visitor Services for the future

Apart from assessing the Visitor Information service centres in Lisburn & Castlereagh, as part of the research for this plan

- site visits and consultations were conducted in Dublin, Belfast, Newry Mourne Down and Derry ~ Londonderry
- visitor services models from Ireland, Scandinavia and Germany were analysed

The consensus is that the key purpose of Visitor Servicing is to **inspire** visitors to see more and do more, in turn supporting the local economy. Visitor Services must thereby meet the needs of the contemporary visitor who seeks to

- connect with people who live locally
- intimately understand the destination, from a local perspective
- find recommendations that match their unique interests while bypassing the requirement to research high volumes of online and offline content

Further outcomes emphasised the need for

- **a hybrid model approach:** aligning the personal contact provided by Visitor Services teams with the digital solutions that support their work.
- **quality training:** supporting Visitor Services teams to a) meet the needs of the contemporary visitor and b) promote a sustainable and accessible tourism ethos
- **innovation:** for example by
 - **extending the Visitor Services function:** working with local tourism providers (e.g., hotels), non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents) and trained volunteers so that visitors are supported across a wider integrated framework
 - **adopting flexible solutions:** e.g., providing Visitor Services through alternative methods (on foot or by bike) rather than solely within buildings
- **KPI-led performance management:** collation of qualitative and quantitative data that measures Visitor Services performance so that strengths are optimised, and challenges are swiftly addressed

C. Recommendations for Visitor Servicing in Lisburn & Castlereagh: 2025-2030

Following this research, the following table summarises the key recommendations for Lisburn & Castlereagh to consider regarding the delivery of Visitor Services:

- 1. Address the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) located in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum giving equal consideration to**
 - a. the provision of customer-centric VIC services and
 - b. the delivery of a quality visitor experience via the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum as a visitor attraction

As part of this work, consider how

- the **Visitor Information Centre** can be modernised to engage the visitor and maximise opportunities for Lisburn & Castlereagh
- the **Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum** can be developed and reconfigured to a) share the heritage of fine-linen design and b) maximise social and economic opportunities for the district

- other services could be positioned here that align with the ethos of services offered in the building: e.g., City Centre Management and Community Services

In addition,

- assess the costs of installing a welcome desk visible upon arrival, large screens with rolling content, inspiring window displays, and compelling communications that showcase the local tourism offering

Once costs are finalised, consult with the Visitor Services team to determine what should be prioritised based on their potential to generate increased opportunities

2. In the immediate term, address the mobile Visitor Information service (trailer):

- install a power point and WIFI so that work can be conducted during quiet times
- brand the exterior so that it promotes the destination and compelling content – with local tips and maps inc. via QR codes
- once visitor servicing at Hillsborough Forest Park is addressed, use the trailer as a flexible VIC that be based on diverse locations across the district

3. Install a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park:

identify a building convenient to Hillsborough Forest Park where a permanent Visitor Information service centre can be placed to service the +600,000 visitors to the park and raise awareness about the tourism offering in Royal Hillsborough and (importantly) throughout the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

4. In the immediate term, manage and reduce printed material:

- regularly audit printed material to ensure that only essential communications are stocked
- where possible, rely upon communications that can be photographed by visitors to reduce paper waste

5. Think hybrid – combine human and digital power:

- ensure that the service provided champions engagement with team members that is valued by visitors, blended with the convenience of digital solutions
- invest in a dedicated digital marketing resource – this is essential for maximising opportunities

6. Think flexibility and innovation: particularly during high demand periods and events, consider alternative methods for Visitor Servicing – for example, delivered by a cyclist on a branded bicycle

7. Lean on the wider community to extend services: engage with local tourism and non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents, public transport providers) to create a wider Visitor Services network by delivering a **Local experts programme** whereby

- tourism and hospitality providers are informed about how to refer and grow opportunities for the destination

- **non tourism businesses** that interface with visitors (e.g., retail stores, places to eat and drink) are informed about how to refer and grow opportunities for the destination
- **volunteers** are trained to support visitor services activity, particularly during high demand periods

8. Invest in training and robust data collation:

- ensure that the Visitor Services team receive ongoing training to meet the needs of the contemporary visitor to maximise opportunities for the destination
- work with the team to identify easily collated metrics that can measure performance along with processes for regular assessment of same



1.6. Growth Target and Key Strategic Pillars

In the contemporary context international tourism is in an uncertain place following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevalence of international economic and geopolitical unrest.

While the challenges are clear, in the current environment these co-exist with optimistic forecasts. Both the Department of the Economy’s Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland – 10 Year Plan and Tourism Ireland project growth in the value of tourism in Northern Ireland:

- The *Department for the Economy’s Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan* (2024) 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* (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.

Following research and consultations including with Ulster University’s Economic Policy Centre, a target has been set to increase revenue generation via tourism in Lisburn & Castlereagh by 34% in 2030 compared with 2020: i.e., 5.6% per annum over six years 2025-2030.

This target serves to provide a benchmark against which tourism businesses can assess their performance and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council can assess destination-wide performance.

Integrating all outcomes that have emerged, all activity over the next six-years will be guided by five strategic pillars:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Position	Innovate	Collaborate	Nurture	Grow

While the following table summarises the key focal points for these pillars, the Action Plan 2025-2030 under section three outlines the objectives and stepwise actions to address under each pillar.

The Action Plan 2025-2030 under section 3 of this plan itemises the objectives and associated actions that apply to each of these pillars that need to be addressed over the coming years to achieve the vision, ambition and targets set out in this strategy.

Table 3: key focal points for the five strategic pillars 2025-2030

Strategic pillar	Key focal points
Position	<p>Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as an exemplary sustainable and socially inclusive tourism destination that is unlike any other, defined by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a leisurely pace of life • close-knit communities, deeply connected with their homeplace • welcoming people who take time to engage in conversation with visitors • attractions and experiences that are impossible to experience anywhere else in Ireland inc. Northern Ireland's only Royal Residence, the Ulster Aviation Society and The Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB • vibrant hubs across city, town, villages and hamlets • a place to enjoy nature and the great outdoors • a place that meets diverse visitor needs and interests: culture and heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure and activities, food and drink • accessible geographical location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bordered by 6 of Northern Ireland 11 district council areas - within easy reach of Belfast: including by foot along the Lagan towpath that connects Lisburn with Belfast - within easy reach of Dublin
Innovate	<p>Be a frontrunner in innovation, ensuring this is a hallmark of all activity inc. by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investing in quality tangible infrastructure: including the successful completion of the Royal Hillsborough development plan • investing in the development of authentic immersive experiences that share the unique story of people and place (ensuring that these experiences are bookable by individuals and groups) across the following themes: culture, history & heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure & activities; food & drink • promoting services and experiences that share Lisburn & Castlereagh's unique tourism offering via communications • curating a signature tourism-relevant event/festival during the lifetime of this plan with an innovative concept and programming that has the potential to attract domestic and international audiences • the delivery of Visitor Services: e.g., incorporating flexible solutions (on foot, by bike or boat), sharing insights and gems directly from local people • seeking investment in sustainable accommodation solutions that are in-keeping with the destination and align with its ethos
Collaborate	<p>Be a champion of collaboration by embedding a collaborative framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within the destination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create a robust network that connects all tourism and hospitality businesses across city, town, villages and hamlets so that they know, support and refer each other to include the delivery of a) one annual forum sharing industry-relevant updates, followed by networking, b) two half day networking events and c) min. one annual familiarisation trip - promote engagement with the tourism destination offering and associated businesses among local communities - provide tourism businesses and community members with the opportunity to become an extended part of Visitor Services • outside the destination: proactively develop partnerships with stakeholders that can support, promote and maximise opportunities inc. Visit Belfast, The Lough Neagh Partnership, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and professional travel buyers

Strategic pillar	Key focal points
Nurture	<p>Promote Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination defined by integrity and thoughtful hospitality, making this evident in all activity including by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ingraining a sustainable and regenerative tourism ethos with evidenced based outcomes • caring for all people including those with physical, mental and intellectual needs by a) supporting education and awareness and b) providing guidance and communications that empower visitors to make sound choices about how to experience the destination • championing and supporting tourism and hospitality providers • placing community and local people at the heart of the tourism offering • guiding visitors so that they behave responsibly in the destination • curating experiences that celebrate cultural heritage, preserving traditions (e.g., linen craft) inherited from the past for future generations • preserving built heritage for future generations by investing in quality destination development that enriches the lives of local communities and the experience for visitors • safeguarding the natural environment and biodiversity: e.g., Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB
Grow	<p>Support local livelihoods, economic growth and enterprise development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver supports for industry to a) expand commercial capabilities, b) promote collaborative and cross-referral opportunities and c) instil robust data collation and analysis processes, ensuring that benefits spread across the Lisburn & Castlereagh's geography. • Apply a dual approach to data collation and analysis by a) supporting tourism businesses to improve their data collation processes and b) investing in destination-wide metrics encompassing local data (inc. data collated via a survey issued to tourism businesses, counter data at visitor attractions, footfall data from events and festivals) and data available via Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and NISRA. • Adopt a proactive and goal-focused approach to achieve success, targeting opportunities that are best suited to Lisburn & Castlereagh: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer segments: individuals and groups, couples, families, soft adventurers, golfers, inter-generational travellers and enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities - Markets: Northern Ireland (local, neighbouring locations and wider NI), ROI, North America, Great Britain, France, Germany - Opportunities: leisure tourism (including luxury leisure) as a priority and business tourism for relevant providers • Invest in visitor services to maximise opportunities • In the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review refocus LCCC's tourism team to maximise social and economic opportunities, giving due consideration to resourcing the following activity: product and partnership development, digital marketing

2. Where We Are Now

This section explores the status of tourism in Lisburn & Castlereagh following the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 and outcomes relevant for the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025 - 2030 under the following three headings:

- **The Past:** an overview of the vision, ambition and priorities in the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022
- **Current Position:** the status of tourism post the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 and prior to the initiation of the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025-2030
- **The Future:** outcomes that inform the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025-2030

2.1 The Past

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 sets out a vision for Lisburn & Castlereagh to achieve 10% growth in staying visitors and revenue spend by advancing as a “*confident, vibrant and successful [...] quality tourism destination*” that offers “*authentic quality experiences.*”

Outlining how Lisburn & Castlereagh enjoys a prime eastern location close to the urban centres of Belfast and Dublin, two international airports, M1 and A1 roads, rail links and accessible port links, five cornerstones were identified as key for tourism development:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
The Gemstone	Refine	Collaborate	The Foundations	Broadening the Charm

The Gemstone

This cornerstone focuses on investing in Royal Hillsborough to position the village that encompasses Hillsborough Forest and Hillsborough Castle and Gardens (the only location in Northern Ireland with Royal status) as the leading must-see visitor attraction in the Lisburn & Castlereagh district.

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 references financial investments secured to develop the village, castle, gardens, forest, Old Fort and Courthouse to deliver a programme of works under the Hillsborough Tourism Master Plan encompassing

- **public realm scheme for the heart of the village:** a series of works focused on enhancing the quality of the village to include the streetscape, footpaths and access to them, traffic flow, street dressing and wayfinding, lighting and street furniture
- **enhancing and upgrading the village’s tangible assets for the benefit of the local community and visitors:** 17th century Hillsborough Old Fort, 18th century Old Courthouse, 18th century Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, Hillsborough Forest (in cooperation with the Northern Ireland Forest Service)

Emphasising the historic and contemporary importance of Royal Hillsborough, the plan states how Royal Hillsborough

- is the gemstone that sets the Lisburn & Castlereagh District apart from anywhere else
- is key for positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a world-class tourist destination that will inspire further tourism growth across the whole council area
- is a prime location for world-class events and festivals that can attract domestic and international visitors
- will require investment in quality accommodation to realise its tourism potential

Refine

This cornerstone defines ways Lisburn & Castlereagh can be positioned as a quality tourism destination including through

- **food:** supporting the speciality food sector to establish the district as a leading culinary destination renowned for provenance, quality produce and exceptional producers
- **events:** supporting a calendar of vibrant events that share the story of people and place, including the Balmoral Show and Horse Racing that is synonymous with the district
- **Lisburn:** supporting the district's only city by
 - championing the Lisburn Historic Quarter
 - developing a new city centre hotel
 - emphasising the creative industries synonymous with Lisburn such as the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
- **Hub communities:** championing the full breadth of the district across urban and rural areas encompassing charming towns, villages and hamlets and a compact city that is easy to navigate

Collaborate

A key cornerstone of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, the approach focuses on developing relationships with private, public and community partners including ambitions such as

- **Maze Long Kesh:** exploring the tourism potential at Maze Long Kesh alongside the Ulster Aviation Society and Eikon Centre that are located here.
- **Development of tourism packages:** working with tourism industry partners and stakeholders to develop tourism packages
 - with Hillsborough Castle and Gardens to encourage visitation at Royal Hillsborough village and the wider environs
 - between local tourism and hospitality businesses, including to emphasise the quality food and drink offering
- **Investment in accommodation:** working with stakeholders and investors to achieve investment and development opportunities for quality accommodation across the district
- **Partner** with all stakeholders and organisations such as Tourism Northern Ireland that can support tourism activity conducted by Lisburn & Castlereagh

The Foundations

This cornerstone focuses on infrastructure to improve the quality of life for local people and the experience for visitors. It references the enhancement and development of roadways and waterways alongside regeneration projects within hub communities such as the West Lisburn Master Plan with a new spatial framework encompassing the revitalisation of Market Square, enhancing connectivity, commercial and retail development

Broadening the Charm

This cornerstone recommends promoting the Lisburn & Castlereagh district as a series of boutique offerings across urban and rural areas to include

- highlighting the vibrancy and uniqueness of the region's hub communities across city, towns, villages and hamlets
- leveraging Royal Hillsborough to emphasise the unique character of the district
- working closely with community to ensure that the district's tourism development plans benefit local people as a priority, alongside the visitor
- showcasing how culture, heritage and the arts are intrinsic to the district's story
- considering how signature leisure facilities such as the Dundonald International Ice Bowl can be positioned to attract domestic and international visitors

2.2 Current Position

The Tourism Strategy 2018-2022 was the first tourism strategy coordinated by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council since its establishment as a local authority. Soon after the initiation of this strategy, the world experienced [unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic](#) from 2020 to 2022 that stopped or limited domestic and international travel.

Despite significant challenges, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council adopted a goal-focused approach that has led to achievements upon which the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025 - 2030 can build.

These include:

Despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a robust foundation of successes has been achieved

- **Multiple tourism infrastructure projects:** for example
 - [Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village](#): securing a+£26million investment to develop / enhance public realm and historic buildings
 - [Digital sculpture trail in Hillsborough Forest](#): ten giant sculptures created by leading artists supported by an augmented reality digital app
 - [Guess How Much I Love You trail](#): celebrating the author and lifelong Lisburn resident, Sam McBratney, writer of the international bestseller *Guess How Much I Love You* (1994)
- **Elevating the food and drink offering:**
 - raising the profile of the rich [food and drink](#) heritage, innovative producers and quality eateries [as a primary motivator for visiting the Lisburn & Castlereagh area](#)
 - developing a [successful annual programme of farmers markets](#)

- championing communities that champion provenance and quality Northern Ireland food and drink produce: e.g., the Speciality Food Fair in Moira (August annually)
- consider expanding the Royal Hillsborough and Historic Moira tourism and hospitality business cluster to include a dedicated food and drink narrative
- **Securing investment in accommodation:**
 - **The Haslem Hotel in Lisburn (2020):** 45 rooms and 7 apartments, with restaurant, bar, meeting and function space
 - **Arthur's Royal Hillsborough (2023):** 12 luxury boutique rooms and café / restaurant
- **Events and festivals:** an annual programme of major and community events to drive visitor footfall such as the Balmoral Show (+120,000 visitors in May annually) and the Down Royal Festival of Racing (November annually)
- **Integrated Marketing campaigns:** delivering an annual Integrated Marketing Campaign to increase awareness and footfall to the Lisburn & Castlereagh district

Expectations of the contemporary visitor:

The world has changed since the pandemic. As outlined by Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland, the contemporary visitor seeks sustainable destinations that champion the environment and local people. These visitors

- are interested in authentic experiences that share the story of people and place
- make considered choices about the services and destinations they invest in
- are mindful of their impact on people, planet and pocket

Balancing infrastructure development with tourism industry development

The resources of the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team to date have leaned toward the development of tourism infrastructure.

Going forward to meet the needs of the contemporary visitor, this approach will need to be rebalanced so that the team is additionally supported to proactively invest in

Sustainable tourism development: working with tourism businesses and key stakeholders to ensure that all activity is underpinned by an ethos and practices that promote

- safeguarding the environment
- championing local communities
- safeguarding livelihoods and the local economy

Experience development: the curation of experiences that showcase the story of local people and across urban and rural communities across the following themes:

- culture, heritage and the arts
- food and drink
- outdoor recreation, adventure and activities

Economic development: the delivery of enterprise development supports that empower tourism businesses to make smart choices about where to invest their resources (time, human and financial) to

- maximise social and economic benefits
- benefit local livelihoods and the economy

Collaborations, relationship building and partnerships: embedding a deep-rooted, multi-layered collaborative framework between Lisburn & Castlereagh's

- tourism and hospitality business providers
- tourism industry and the local community
- tourism team with the local tourism industry and stakeholders that can support tourism development inc. Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast

Communications: creation of compelling offline and online communications that present with clarity the destination's unique story and tourism offering:

- positioning Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination with its own character differentiated by
 - a slower pace of life, a deep sense of community, an accessible geography
 - unparalleled experiences: e.g., Royal Hillsborough, Ulster Aviation Society
 - immense natural beauty and vibrant hub communities with people who have the time to engage in conversation
- highlighting all relevant categories of tourism and hospitality business including
 - accommodation providers: e.g., hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, caravanning, glamping and self-catering
 - visitor attractions: e.g., Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
 - experience and activity providers
 - events and festivals
 - places to eat and drink
 - venues: for private and corporate occasions

Opportunities for growth

In May 2023, the World Health Organisation declared that the Covid-19 pandemic no longer represented a international health emergency. Since then, challenges continue to manifest including

- the cost-of-living crisis as a primary concern among domestic and international markets
- evidence of the erosion of Northern Ireland's value for money rating
- the trend toward last-minute booking making it more difficult to predict future performance
- limited hotel capacity, curbing the potential to increase dwell time and maximise commercial opportunities

While these challenges are significant, there is optimism regarding tourism development in Northern Ireland. The *Department for the Economy's Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan (2024)*: projects an increase in the value of tourism to the Northern Ireland economy by 50% -75% compared to 2019 (growth of 4%-6% per annum). The *Tourism Ireland Marketing Plan (2024)* projects tourism revenue growth in Northern Ireland of +6.5% year-on-year to 2030.

To achieve its fair share of growth, Lisburn & Castlereagh will need to adopt a twofold approach by continuing to progress tourism infrastructural development while nurturing tourism industry and destination development.

2.2.1 Strengths and Considerations

The following chart summarises the key strengths and considerations based on the current environment that Lisburn & Castlereagh need to be aware of and address in all future activity:

Strengths

- Passionate tourism industry and communities, eager to raise the profile of their destination
- Prime eastern location with easy accessibility to Dublin and Belfast and wider exploration
- Variety of city, town, villages and hamlets, each with their own character
- Vibrant communities with a deep sense of identity across urban and rural areas
- New product development: Royal Hillsborough, Dundonald International
- Strong tourism product: golf, horse racing, visitor attractions
- Product that is unparalleled in Ireland: e.g., Royal Hillsborough, Ulster Aviation Society
- Ability to meet diverse visitor interests: culture & heritage, food and drink, adventure & activities
- Scenic beauty: home to Lagan Valley Regional Park, NI's only Regional Park
- Quality and diversity of scenery: Lough Neagh (west), hills above Dundonald (east), Belfast hills (north), River Lagan (south)
- Renowned for exceptional food and drink offering
- Year-round calendar of community, larger scale events & festivals and farmers markets
- Integrated Marketing Campaigns: raising the destinations' profile in NI and ROI
- Visit Belfast partnership: expanding the potential to target new domestic and international visitors

Considerations

- A need to position L&C as a destination with a unique identity, rather than as a suburb of Belfast
- A need to drive tourism dispersion across the destination across urban and rural areas
- While rich in tourism product, there is a lack of immersive experiences delivered by local people
- Low supply of experiences bookable by independent visitors
- A lack of accommodation to achieve dwell time and a high proportion of ungraded accommodation
- Tourism industry reporting a need for greater collaboration
- A need for LCCC's tourism team to apply a balanced approach supporting a) infrastructure development and b) the tourism industry with collaborative and economic development opportunities
- While there are champions of sustainable and accessible tourism, this is not consistent across industry
- A lack of data capture making it challenging to measure performance
- In the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review, an opportunity to refocus LCCC's tourism team to maximise social and economic opportunities, inc. by resourcing the following functions: product & partnership development, digital marketing

2.3 The Future: Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2025-2030

Taking stock of the situational analysis and the findings summarised in the executive summary, the following is a checklist of activity that is integral to the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030 so that opportunities are maximised for Lisburn & Castlereagh:

Apply a balanced approach	Adopt a twofold approach that blends a commitment to a) the development of quality tourism infrastructure and b) tourism industry and destination development
Infrastructure Development and Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing tourism infrastructure so that it benefits the local community and visitors Successfully manage the development of projects that are underway (e.g., Royal Hillsborough) ensuring to promote these to generate benefits for the local community and visitors.
Experience Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver enterprise development supports to curate experiences that authentically share the story of local people across urban and rural communities to meet the expectations of contemporary visitors Ensure that these experiences are bookable by independent visitors and private bookings to maximise opportunities
Food and drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to champion LCCC as a destination renowned for quality food and drink, places to eat and drink Additionally, craft and promote food and drink-related experiences that allow for a deeper exploration of this priority theme
Commercial Development	<p>Deliver enterprise development supports to maximise social and economic benefits by empowering LCCC's tourism and hospitality industry to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make strategic choices about which sales channels, markets and customer segments to engage in master data collation and analysis to assess progress, mitigate challenges and identify opportunities
Collaborative Framework	<p>Build a robust collaborative framework, noting that this is the foundation for all successful tourism destinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council departments between Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's tourism team and local tourism and hospitality providers across Lisburn & Castlereagh's tourism industry between Lisburn & Castlereagh and external stakeholders that can benefit the destination including Visit Belfast, Lough Neagh Partnership, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland

Sustainable Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed an ethos of sustainable and regenerative tourism development, ensuring that this informs all activity • Apply a dual approach a) led by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland policies and b) industry-led: empowering tourism providers to adopt and promote Leave No Trace principles
Social Inclusion & accessibility	Place social inclusion at the heart of all activity and champion accessible tourism development
Invest in accommodation	Proactively seek investors to develop quality sustainable accommodation that is suited to LCCC's profile, to include luxury lodge style accommodation
Events and festivals	Continue to champion the annual community and large-scale events programme while curating a signature festival with an innovate concept and programming that can generate opportunities during the low season, potentially by expanding LCCC's Christmas markets across December and into the New Year
Investigate Tourism Potential	<p>Work with key stakeholders to support the development of experiences that are unique in Ireland including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal Hillsborough • Ulster Aviation Society • EIKON exhibition centre and Maze Long Kesh • Down Royal Racecourse • Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB: jointly funded by LCCC and Belfast City Council
	Noting that Dundonald International Ice Bowl (DIIB) in its current format reads as a sports and recreational offering rather a tourism offering, assess if and how DIIB can be positioned and developed as part of LCCC's wider tourism offering
Integrated Marketing Campaigns	Continue with the management of campaigns conducted by LCCC's tourism team that have been successful in raising the district's profile and driving footfall from the NI and ROI markets
Data collation and analysis	Collate an annual report (2025-2030) so that progress is visible and measurable to include NISRA, Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland data; in-destination visitor counter data; local market research data; data collated via a survey issued to tourism businesses

Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as a place apart with its own unique identity and character that is home to authentic and unparalleled experiences• Consider how a) LCCC can benefit from Visit Belfast's approach to "neighbourhood tourism" and b) if/how LCCC should continue to be branded by Visit Belfast under the Belfast Plus brand in the future <p>Promote the tourism offering across the following categories to encompass visitor attractions, activity and experience providers, events and festivals, places to eat, drink and stay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- natural assets: i.e., places of interest and natural beauty- culture and heritage- outdoor recreation, adventure and activities- food and drink experiences- events and festivals: community and large-scale events- places to eat and drink: e.g., restaurants, gastro pubs, cafes- places to stay: e.g., hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, self-catering			
Be strategic	<p>Ensure that all activity targets the opportunities that are most suited to LCCC including</p> <table><tr><td>Customers:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• individuals, groups• couples, families• inter-generational travellers• soft adventurers, golfers• enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities</td><td>Markets:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NI• ROI• North America• GB• France• Germany</td><td>Tourism<p>Leisure tourism: a priority</p><p>Luxury tourism</p><p>Business tourism</p></td></tr></table>	Customers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• individuals, groups• couples, families• inter-generational travellers• soft adventurers, golfers• enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities	Markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NI• ROI• North America• GB• France• Germany	Tourism <p>Leisure tourism: a priority</p> <p>Luxury tourism</p> <p>Business tourism</p>
Customers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• individuals, groups• couples, families• inter-generational travellers• soft adventurers, golfers• enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities	Markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NI• ROI• North America• GB• France• Germany	Tourism <p>Leisure tourism: a priority</p> <p>Luxury tourism</p> <p>Business tourism</p>		
Visit Belfast	<p>Continue to partner with Visit Belfast via an agreed SLA to maximise opportunities via NI, ROI and international markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- agree metrics so that outcomes can be measured- assess the SLA after a defined period (e.g., 3-5 years) to decide how best to proceed into the future			
Lough Neagh Partnership	<p>Explore the following opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• potential for new experience development• potential collaborations with LN tourism providers• how to profile LN as part of the district's tourism offering			
Spread social and economic benefits	<p>Leverage the promotion of signature attractions such as Royal Hillsborough. ensuring that this promotion maximises social and economic benefits for urban and rural communities</p>			

<p>Address Visitor Services</p>	<p>Enhance the Visitor Information Services (VIC)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> At the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum give equal consideration to the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provision of customer-centric VIC services and delivery of a quality visitor experience via the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum as a visitor attraction
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Address the mobile Visitor Information service (trailer) currently based at Hillsborough Forest Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> installing services such as a power point and WIFI in the trailer so that work can be conducted during quiet times adding external communications to include QR codes, local tips and maps to maximise promotional opportunities using the trailer as a flexible VIC in the future that can be placed anywhere in the district as required to maximise opportunities
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Install a permanent Visitor Information Centre at Hillsborough Forest Park to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> service the +600,000 visitors to the park raise awareness about the tourism offering in Royal Hillsborough and (importantly) throughout the Lisburn & Castlereagh district
	<p>Across all Visitor Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the use of print materials Adopt a hybrid approach: noting that the contemporary visitor wants to a) meet a person who can share local insights seconded by b) information provided by digital communications Invest in training and robust data collation to maximise opportunities and achieve measurable success Think innovation: e.g., during high demand periods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extending visitor services on bike or by foot recruiting and training volunteers to support visitor services training tourism businesses (e.g., accommodation providers) to extend the work of VIC's by generating referral and packaged opportunities for the district
<p>Refocus LCCC's tourism team</p>	<p>To achieve the ambition and growth target outlined in this plan, refocus LCCC's tourism team in the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review by considering how to resource the following functions: product and partnership development, digital marketing</p>

Action plan 2025-2030

The Action Plan in Section 3 identifies the activity that needs to be addressed to achieve the vision, ambition and growth target set out in this plan under the following five strategic pillars:

1	Position	Position Lisburn & Castlereagh as an exemplary, sustainable and socially inclusive tourism destination
2.	Innovate	Be a frontrunner in innovation, ensuring that this is a hallmark of all activity
3.	Collaborate	Be a champion of collaboration by embedding a collaborative framework within the destination and developing strategic partnerships outside the destination
4.	Nurture	Promote Lisburn & Castlereagh as a destination defined by integrity and thoughtful hospitality
5.	Grow	Support local livelihoods, economic growth and enterprise development across urban and rural areas and communities



3. The Way Forward: Action Plan 2025-2030

The objectives and actions outlined in this plan align with the recommended [twofold approach](#) to be adopted by Lisburn & Castlereagh’s tourism team with the support of council to maximise social and economic benefits as outlined below

- 1. Infrastructural investment and development:** i.e., the curation of high-quality tangible infrastructure that has been a core responsibility for Lisburn & Castlereagh’s tourism team over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy 2018-2022, and will remain a priority over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030
- 2. Tourism industry and destination development:** that will be an additional core priority over the lifetime of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030

The Action Plan outlines the timebound actions to target under the following seven objectives:

- 1. Embed a collaborative framework in the destination
 - 2. Invest in tourism product, new experience and events & festival development
 - 3. Invest in enterprise development and data analysis processes
 - 4. Invest in communications, positioning L&C as a destination with a distinct identity
 - 5. Embed a culture of responsible tourism in all activity
 - 6. Reimagine Visitor Services to inspire visitors
 - 7. Work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities

While the plan recommends actions to address, this list is not exhaustive and will be expanded upon during the lifetime of this plan in line with industry innovations and as new initiatives and opportunities arise aligned with the ambition of this plan.

TIMING OF ACTIONS WITHIN THIS PLAN

- Immediate Term (IT): 2025 Year 1 / Y1
- Short-term (ST): 2026-2027 Years 2-3 / Y2, Y3
- Medium-term (MT): 2028-2029 Years 4-5 / Y4, Y5
- Long-term (LT): 2030 Year 6 / Y6

For each noted action the relevant strategic pillar/s that applies is indicated:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Position	Innovate	Collaborate	Nurture	Grow

While Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will lead this plan, its success is dependent upon proactive engagement from the district’s tourism industry and the support of stakeholders here noted:

Acronym	Stakeholder
AIPCO	Association of Professional Conference Organisers
AVEA	Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions
BCC	Belfast City Council
IAAT	Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism
IGTOA	Irish Golf Tour Operators Association
ITOA	Irish Tour Operators Association
LC	Local Chamber
LCCC	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
LCIND	Lisburn & Castlereagh tourism industry
LCCOM	Lisburn & Castlereagh communities
LNP	Lough Neagh Partnership
LNT	Leave No Trace
PS	Private Sector
TNI	Tourism Northern Ireland
TI	Tourism Ireland
VB	Visit Belfast



Embed a collaborative framework in the destination: Objective 1 / O1

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Invite industry and key stakeholders to an event to a) learn about the outcomes of this plan, b) set the context for the future and c) emphasise how collaboration will be key for success					LCCC	LCIND, TNI, TI, LNP, VB, LNP	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Min. 50 guests
1.1	Explain how this is day 1 of an annual collaborative network framework to include: A. 1 industry forum (in-person): industry / stakeholder update, speakers, networking B. 2 half day events (in-person): industry-relevant topic/s followed by networking C. One annual industry FAM Trip: this can include other stakeholders such as Visit Belfast visitor information team members D. A suite of enterprise development supports that will be scheduled to support economic growth E. Account Management: to include annual meetings with a member of the LCCC tourism team								
1.2	Explain that this collaborative framework will promote the development of connections, partnerships and information sharing a) across industry (accommodation, visitor attractions, experience/activity providers, festival organisers, places to eat, drink & socialise), b) between industry and stakeholders and c) between industry and community								
1.3	Promote the dates for all events in year one, outlining the focus topics for each year (taking inspiration from the list below)- advising industry that they are welcome to share their views on topics they would like to explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability and regeneration Leave No Trace Accessible Tourism Sharing the story of people & place through exceptional services & compelling experiences Tourism-relevant capital grant aid/funding Data capture: industry and destination 								
1.4	End with a networking event and meal showcasing local produce								
2	Establish the account management process a) assigning one LCCC team member to each local business, b) ensuring that each business is informed of their assigned team member and contact details, c) that an annual process is initiated whereby min. 2 meetings take place annually to catch up on progress and needs					LCCC	LCIND	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Each tourism business is assigned one dedicated account manager
2.1	Continue this process annually								

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
3	Ensure that the role of tourism and how it aligns with community (sharing the story of people and place) is promoted throughout all communications including policies and strategies so that a) the value of tourism and how it generates social and economic benefits is valued and b) the community is encouraged to promote and support local tourism services and experiences					LCCC	LCCOM	Collaborate Nurture Grow	Encourage the local community to be champions of tourism
4	Foster a collaborative culture between LCCC tourism team and external stakeholders					LCCC		Collaborate Nurture Grow	Collaborate with stakeholders that can support the growth of tourism in L&C
4.1	Work collaboratively with Visit Belfast across to ensure that there is clarity about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ambition and vision to position Lisburn & Castlereagh (L&C) as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences the product offering in the L&C district and how to promote same 					LCCC	VB		
4.1.1	Arrange annual meetings with Visitor Services Information teams to ensure they have up to date communications and product knowledge. Invite team members on the annual industry FAM trip								
4.2	Work collaboratively with Tourism Northern Ireland to ensure that there is clarity about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ambition and vision to position L&C as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences product offering in the L&C district desire to avail of all TNI opportunities that can maximise opportunities for L&C in the domestic and international marketplace availability of funding and enterprise development supports that can benefit L&C 					LCCC	TNI		
4.3	Work collaboratively with Tourism Ireland to ensure that there is clarity about the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ambition and vision to position L&C as a renowned leading tourism destination with a unique identity and unparalleled experiences product offering in the L&C district desire to avail of all TNI opportunities that can maximise opportunities for L&C particularly in the GB, North American, German and French markets 					LCCC	TI		
4.4	Collaborate with professional leisure tourism travel buyers that are best suited to L&C: a) introducing these buyers to L&C tourism businesses that meet their needs, b) ensuring that the buyers have a key point of contact in the LCCC tourism team, c) responding to buyer queries promptly and d) inviting buyers to attend L&C FAM trip opportunities					LCCC	TNI, TI, ITOA, IGTOA		
4.4.1	As product and opportunities for business tourism expand, engage with travel buyers that are specialists in this field – supported by guidance from national tourism bodies					LCCC	TNI, TI, AIPCO		
4.5	Collaborate with local, regional, national organisations that can support tourism in L&C					LCCC	AVEA, IAAT		
5	Promote a collaborative culture within LCCC ensuring that a) all departments are aware of the value of tourism and b) the LCCC tourism team is made aware of funding opportunities available via other departments and other sources that can support tourism development					LCCC			Maximise opportunities within LCCC to support tourism development
5.1	To achieve the ambition set out in this plan and to maximise social and economic opportunities, refocus LCCC's tourism team within the context of the Economic Development Efficiency Review giving due consideration to resourcing the following functions and activity: product and partnership development, digital marketing								
6	Consider expanding the Royal Hillsborough and Historic Moira tourism and hospitality business cluster to include a dedicated food and drink narrative								

Invest in tourism product, new experience and events & festival development: Objective 2 / O2

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Invest in the development of large-scale tourism products include 1.1 Royal Hillsborough, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens (RHHCG) 1.2 Ulster Aviation Society (UAS) 1.3 EIKON exhibition centre 1.4 Down Royal Racecourse (DRR) 1.5 Dundonald International Ice Bowl (DIIB) 1.6 Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB (LVRP) 1.7 Accommodation growth 1.8 Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	
1.1	Manage the £26 million development of Royal Hillsborough village to include a) upgrading public realm across the streetscape, square and historic Courthouse and b) upgrades at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens – enhancing and preserving this historic area and attraction for future generations					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Nurture Grow	Promote RHHCG as an iconic attraction in a way that maximises social and economic opportunities across L&C
1.1.1	Raise the profile of this attraction so that it enters the league of top 10 paid visitor attractions as defined by NISRA - leveraging the attraction's potential to welcome leisure and business tourism visitors					LCCC	LCIND	Position Grow	
1.1.2	Leverage this iconic attraction to raise the profile of L&C's tourism offering across urban and rural areas to spread social and economic benefits					LCCC	LCIND, TNI, TI, VB	Position Collaborate Innovate Grow	
1.1.3	Determine the potential to curate immersive experiences (e.g., delivered by the Fort Guards) to raise the profile of this attraction and generate new opportunities for L&C					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.2	Ulster Aviation Society: work with the team of volunteers to position UAS as a leading visitor attraction in L&C determining the potential to a) develop bespoke immersive experiences and b) support enterprise development with training and mentoring that empowers UAS to grow leisure and business tourism opportunities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	Support organisations with the potential to grow tourism opportunities in L&C
1.3	EIKON exhibition centre: work with the team to determine the potential to grow L&C's reputation for the delivery of exhibitions and any supports that may be required to achieve this goal such as a communications, commercial and operational plan					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	
1.4	Down Royal Racecourse: work with the team to position DRR as a compelling tourism experience determining the potential to a) develop bespoke immersive experiences (e.g., engaging a local tipster, behind the scenes experiences etc.) and b) support enterprise development with training and mentoring that empowers DRR to grow leisure and business tourism opportunities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Grow	

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.5	Dundonald International Ice Bowl: with the team to manage the £52 investment to include an Olympic sized ice rink, a 24-lane bowling alley and catering facilities					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	Support DIIB to maximise opportunities and determine if DIIB is tourism-relevant
1.5.1	Achieve the target to welcome 700,000 visitors to DIIB post redevelopment, promoting this experience to the local, NI and ROI markets – embedding data collation processes so that the visitor's location/market of origin can be determined					LCCC	LCIND		
1.5.2	Determine if DIIB can be positioned as a sports and recreation offering and a viable tourism offering with the potential to attract out of state visitors					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.6	<p>Lagan Valley Regional Park AONB: as two thirds of LVRP's expanse is under the jurisdiction of LCCC and one third is under the jurisdiction of Belfast City Council, consider the opportunity to work in partnership to conduct an independent study to assess the potential for tourism development to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how the park can be positioned as a tourism asset with a sustainable and regenerative ethos at its heart what experiences and services can be developed to meet the needs of the local community, leisure and business tourism customers in Ireland and internationally what events can be curated what customer segments and markets are suited to the offering how the park generates social and economic benefits as a tourism offering what communications are required for tourism purposes what enterprise development supports are required to achieve success how LVRP could be best managed via a partnership between LCCC and BCC to maximise opportunities 					LCCC, BCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Determine the opportunity for LVRP to support tourism development in L&C as NI's only National Park
1.7	<p>Explore the potential for Greenway and Blueway development on the Comber Greenway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> connecting the Lagan towpath to Royal Hillsborough animating the Lagan towpath with services including places to eat and drink (e.g., cafes), sustainable travel rental services (e.g., bike hire), compelling tourism experiences (e.g., exploring the area with a Park Ranger), signage and wayfinding 					LCCC	BCC	Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	
1.8	<p>Accommodation growth: create an integrated team to include LCCC's tourism team and representatives from other council departments to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> define communications targeted at potential investors, emphasising an interest in sustainable development across all categories: quality hotels, guesthouses, self-catering (e.g., lodges in nature), caravanning and glamping define if a professional needs to be engaged to support this activity 					LCCC	PS	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Achieve growth to maximise dwell time
1.8.1	Lean on the Collaborative Framework (O1) to promote opportunities along with capital grant and funding programmes among L&C tourism businesses to determine if there are local investors					LCCC	LCIND		
1.9	Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum: reimagine this tourism offering to increase domestic and international visitors aligned with enhancing Visitor Information Services (see O6)								

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2	Deliver three separate programmes focused on the development of new immersive experiences across the following theme categories: culture and heritage; outdoor recreation, adventure and activities; food and drink					LCCC	TNI, LCIND, LCCOM	Innovate Nurture Grow	
2.1	Ensure the programme approach is informed by outcomes that have emerged from this plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NI destination experience branding: experiences must align with NI's EAGS brand L&C branding: experiences must align with L&C you're welcome brand Achieve geographic spread: experience collection must represent urban and rural areas/communities Champion innovation: fresh ideas/new angles that make L&C standout Meet the needs of independent visitors and private bookings/groups: experiences must be bookable a) by independent visitors (online) and b) privately by groups Maximise economic opportunities: the collection must represent year-round experiences; experiences that benefit the day (early morning, daytime) and evening/nighttime economy 					LCCC	TNI, LCIND, LCCOM	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Across all 3 programmes 15 experiences suited for sale in the international / domestic marketplace: min. 5 per theme category
2.2	Create an EOI outlining a) the programme purpose, ambition and conditions, b) sample experiences sought via the programme – emphasising the focus on new experience development, c) who the programme is open to community members (with no/low tourism experience) capable of delivering an experience and tourism businesses with a new idea, d) how to register for a virtual information session to find out more								
2.2.1	Promote the programme across social media channels, tourism industry and via channels open to local stakeholders connected with community								
2.2.2	Deliver a facilitated virtual information session: guiding registrants to understand the expectations and commitment required so that they can make an informed decision about whether the programme is suited to them								
2.3	Once participants are qualified, deliver the programme to include training, mentoring and market testing to verify the quality of experience delivery								
2.4	Post the programme (using acquired learnings) the participants bring their experiences for sale to the market – taking commercial responsibility for their success								
2.5	For participants ready for growth, guide/support their progression onto a) local and/or b) national programmes to expand commercial opportunities								
2.6	Embed experience providers into L&Cs annual collaborative framework								
3	Identify the concept and programming for a signature L&C event & festival, noting that this should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have the capacity to attract out of state visitors align with a theme that is authentic to Lisburn & Castlereagh: e.g., food and drink, heritage, Christmas markets ideally take place during the low or shoulder season to maximise economic advantages when most needed align with TNI's definition of what constitutes a tourism event 					LCCC		Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	Identify a festival with the potential to win domestic and international



No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
3.1	Seek the advice of TNI to ensure that the considered concept/s are of interest and can support the growth of visitors to L&C and NI					LCCC	TNI	Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	visitors to L&C and NI
3.2	Once the event is identified, trial it over a defined period (e.g., 2 years) supporting its promotion and growth					LCCC	TNI, LCIND		
4	As part of this activity, determine opportunities to develop new product and experiences via the Lough Neagh Partnership					LCCC	LNP		

Invest in enterprise development and data analysis processes: Objective 3 / O3

No.	Actions to achieve				IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Lean on the collaborative framework (O1) to determine supports required by industry to maximise opportunities for businesses and destination L&C. These supports could include <ul style="list-style-type: none">Understanding the tourism landscape to maximise opportunitiesCommercial planning across B2C and B2B sales channelsPricing and contracting across B2C and B2B sales channelsHow to align with sustainable and regenerative tourism developmentHow to create communications that are mindful of social inclusionHow to deliver a customer-centric experienceMastering data collation and analysis								LCCC	LCIND	Innovate Collaborate Grow	Empower L&C's tourism industry to make strategic choices that can maximise economic opportunities and support livelihoods
1.1	Engage with TNI to determine if there are national programmes that can help support requirements or if these supports need to be delivered independently by L&C								LCCC	TNI		
1.2	Determine who should attend these supports and (depending on numbers), when these supports should roll out: for example, on an annual basis or every two years								LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.3	Be strategic, ensuring that these supports target the opportunities best suited to L&C								LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Innovate Collaborate Grow	
	Ireland: local market, NI, ROI	International GB, North America, France, Germany	Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">individuals, groupscouples, familiesinter-generational travellerssoft adventurers, golfersenthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, soft adventure and outdoor activities	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Leisure Tourism - a priorityLuxury TourismBusiness Tourism: for relevant businesses								
1.3.1	Raise awareness of the roles of key stakeholders, ensuring that L&C's tourism industry is informed about how to maximise opportunities by leaning on their support								LCCC, LCIND	VB, TNI, TI		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed by the outcomes of this plan, create a questionnaire to capture L&C-wide data, ensuring that this includes businesses with robust and weaker data capture processes Review the data fields that have emerged (business category, visitor numbers, markets, channels) deciding if others should be added – e.g., area (urban, rural, coastal) 					LCCC	LCIND	Innovate Grow	<p>Empower tourism businesses to</p> <p>a) measure growth and b) swiftly identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.</p> <p>Empower L&C to measure performance and to benchmark progress against the growth targets in this plan.</p>
2.1	Decide if this activity should be conducted internally by LCCC or with the support of an independent research agency to include crafting the questionnaire, issuing this to industry, collating outcomes					LCCC	PS		
2.2	At one of the events identified under collaborative framework (O1) ensure that data capture is a theme focus, inviting an expert speaker to guide industry on this topic.					LCCC	LCIND		
2.2.1	Show industry the questionnaire intended to capture this data – advising that it has been designed to a) be as simple as possible, b) include all businesses / organisations across all sectors – including those with limited data collation processes and c) for completion on an anonymous basis – invite feedback.					LCCC	LCIND		
2.2.2	Explain the intention to create an annual performance overview collating outputs from this questionnaire and other LCCC and national sources					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.2.3	Advise that the aim is for this questionnaire to be completed on a quarterly basis: seeking industry feedback in this regard – making a case for this approach by explaining how this would allow for an assessment of seasonal and annual performance					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.2.4	Explain that the proposed data collation process is separate to other processes, emphasising the importance of responding to requests for insights/data at a national level via TNI					TNI	LCIND, LCCC		
2.3	Once the final approach is agreed, initiate the process – issuing the questionnaire and monitoring outcomes					LCCC	LCIND		
2.3.1	By Y4 – aim for this process to be embedded in the tourism culture – repeated annually thereafter					LCCC	LCIND		
2.4	Promote education and awareness - encouraging industry to understand the importance of data capture and how to master this process					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.4.1	For businesses that need assistance, direct them to local and national enterprise development supports that can provide them with expert guidance aligned with their capabilities					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
2.4.2	As responses to the questionnaire will determine the level of businesses with no/low/partial data collation processes, an assessment can be made about whether L&C's industry needs dedicated support to improve data collation capabilities					LCCC	LCIND		
2.5	At the annual industry forum (O1), update attendees on progress and on data capture outcomes, once available					LCCC	LCIND		
2.5.1	Ensure that other relevant insights and metrics available nationally (via TNI, TI) and to L&C (e.g., visitor engagement metrics, user engagement on L&C digital channels) are shared annually					LCCC	TNI, TI		

Invest in communications, positioning L&C as a destination with a distinct identity: Objective 4 / O4

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	<p>Across communications, position L&C as a destination with a unique identity aligned with the plan's vision statement and defined by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a slower pace and quality of life a deep sense of community across urban and rural areas vibrant hubs across city, town, villages and hamlets people who take the time to welcome visitors and engage in conversation natural beauty rich architectural and cultural heritage experiences that are unparalleled in Ireland, inc. Ireland's only Royal Residence a vibrant calendar of events, festivals and farmer's markets a prime east coast location with easy access to Belfast and Dublin the unexpected: e.g., the opportunity to walk from Lisburn to Belfast via a towpath a destination that champions responsible tourism 					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Motivate visitors to engage by positioning L&C as a destination with a compelling tourism offering and a distinct identity
2.	<p>Ensure that communications speak to visitors who are best suited to L&C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individuals, groups, couples, families, inter-generational travellers soft adventurers (walkers, cyclists, boaters) and golfers enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, outdoor activities leisure and luxury tourism business tourism 								
3.	<p>Ensure that the full breadth of L&C's tourism offering is promoted across the following categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> natural assets: places of natural beauty across urban and rural landscapes culture, history and heritage outdoor recreation, adventure and activities food and drink events and festivals places to eat and drink places to stay exclusive venues 								
4.	<p>Ensure that key stakeholders are clear on how L&C is positioned and the ask by local industry to position L&C as a unique destination with its own identity and story – ensuring that relevant stakeholder platforms are updated accordingly</p>					LCCC	VB, TNI, TI		
5.	<p>Align communications with regional and national branding</p> <div>   </div>					LCCC	LCIND		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
6	Develop itineraries that showcase how to experience L&C over diverse time periods: 24 hours, 48 hours, 72-hours, 5 days, 7 days so that the destination's compelling tourism offering, and geography is understood by visitors starting from the holiday research phase					LCCC	LCIND	Position Innovate Collaborate Nurture Grow	Inspire visitors via captivating communications, emphasising the full breadth of the destination to encourage exploration
6.1	Ensure that L&C communications – inc. these itineraries – share tips from a local perspective, with insights into locally known gems and beloved spots for exploration					LCCC	LCIND, LCCOM		
7	Ensure that communications reflect the full breadth of L&C's geography across urban and rural areas: from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to the source of the River Lagan in the south					LCCC	LNP		

Embed a culture of responsible tourism in all activity: Objective 5 / O5

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	<i>Sustainable and regenerative tourism</i> : support education and awareness, aligning activity with UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the VICE model for sustainable tourism					LCCC	LCIND, TNI	Position Nurture Grow	<p>LNT training:</p> <p>Y2: 2 X 15 pax: 30 in total</p> <p>Y3: 3 X 15 pax: 45 in total</p> <p>Y4: 2 X 15 pax: 30 in total</p> <p>Y5: 1 X 15 pax: 15 in total</p> <p>Y6: 1 X 15 pax: 15 in total</p> <p>By Y6: 135 LNT champions</p>
1.1.	Use the collaborative network framework (O1) to promote education and awareness					LCCC			
1.1.1	Programme inspiring speakers (industry and stakeholders) who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are champions of this ethos and approach: sharing practical guidance and learnings can share best practice communications: how to make sustainability visible 					LCCC			
1.2	Embed Leave No Trace ethos and principles across industry - creating an industry of LNT champions through an annual education awareness training programme					LCCC	LCIND, LNT		
1.2.1	Consult with LNT to identify a suitable LNT trainer					LCCC	LNT		
1.2.2	Liaise with LNT to deliver an introductory information session for the tourism industry to learn about this positive, proactive and ground-up approach before training initiates					LCCC	LNT		
1.2.3	LCCC to advise that LNT awareness training will be delivered for industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the aim is for one team member per business to become an LNT champion – promoting the ethos across the business and wider L&C community commitment: training takes place over one day in an indoor/outdoor location (6hr period) process: invitation extended via email with places filled on a first come first serve basis 					LCCC	LCIND, LNT		
1.2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver LNT training Collate feedback via evaluation forms to gauge satisfaction and gain learnings 					LNT	LCCC		
1.3	Make sustainability visible across L&C and industry tourism channels					LCCC	LCIND		
1.3.1	Add compelling sustainable tourism communications across the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh website: refreshing content with new updates on an annual basis					LCCC			
1.3.2	Identify L&C champions of sustainable and regenerative tourism - promote their practices, experiences and stories through LCCC channels					LCCC	LCIND		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.4	Deliver industry-wide training on how to craft effective and compelling communications online and offline: inc. sustainability pledge, policy, core values, customer/visitor tips					LCCC	LCIND	Position Nurture Grow	By Y3, succeed in embedding an industry-wide understanding
1.5	Encourage industry to engage with national Climate Action programmes and initiatives					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
1.6	Promote sustainable travel solutions and opportunities to explore L&C sustainably inc. on foot and by bicycle					LCCC	LCIND		
2	<i>Accessible tourism development and social inclusion</i> : promote education and awareness across industry: what is meant by accessible tourism, who is the accessible tourism visitor, why is this market important, what are the needs and how can these be addressed					LCCC	LCIND		
2.1	Promote awareness of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Equality Act and its role in tourism businesses					LCCC	LCIND		
3	Use the collaborative network framework (O1) to promote education and awareness					LCCC	LCIND, TNI		
3.1	Programme inspiring speakers (industry and stakeholders) who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are champions of this ethos and approach: sharing practical guidance and learnings can share best practice communications: how to guide accessible tourism visitors; how to share this ethos / approach online and offline have experience of accessible design: a) Universal Design and b) no / low-cost ideas solutions 					LCCC			
3.2	Make accessibility visible across L&C and industry tourism channels					LCCC	LCIND		
3.3	Include communications across the Visit Lisburn & Castlereagh website: refreshing content with new updates on an annual basis					LCCC	LCIND		
3.4	Identify L&C champions of accessible tourism development - promote their practices, experiences and stories through L&C channels								
3.5	Deliver industry-wide training on how to craft accessible communications: inc. how to communicate when an environment is/is not accessible – providing clear/thoughtful guidance so visitors can make informed decisions					LCCC	LCIND		
4	Support the needs of non-English speakers translating content where possible for key markets (Germany and France) – leaning on the convenience of QR code					LCCC	LCIND		

Reimagine Visitor Services to inspire visitors: Objective 6 / O6

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Scope the potential to fund the enhancement of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) in the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum to include a) improving visitor services, b) addressing the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum so that it becomes a leading attraction and c) determining other services (e.g., community services) that can be located here.					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	
1.1	<i>Improve Visitor Services:</i> consider the outcomes in this plan inc. a) moving the welcome desk to greet visitors upon arrival, b) installing large screens with rolling content to promote L&C and occupy the visitor during high demand periods, c) installing compelling window displays that promote L&C and inspire the visitor, d) installing compelling communications inc. QR codes and photographable content, e) addressing shelving – ensuring that the entire space is well laid out, visually pleasing and uncluttered					LCCC			Reimagine the VIC, Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum to maximise social and economic opportunities
1.2	<i>Address the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum so that it becomes a leading attraction:</i> develop a masterplan so that a) L&C's heritage and expertise in fine linen making is celebrated and preserved for future generations and b) this tourism offering can achieve growth across domestic and international markets, generating social and economic benefits					LCCC			
1.3	<i>Determine other services that can be positioned here:</i> such as City Centre Management and Community Services – ensuring that these services are positioned in a way that is mindful of a) growing tourism and b) inspiring and providing clarity for visitors who are specifically interested in tourism services					LCCC			
2	Address the mobile Visitor Information Service (trailer) currently located at Hillsborough Forest a) ensuring that the trailer is equipped to optimise staff productivity, b) adding compelling communications to the exterior and c) determining how this trailer can be used as a mobile service that benefits all communities in L&C on the basis that a permanent VIC is installed at Hillsborough Forest					LCCC			Address the mobile VIC to maximise productivity and inspire visitors to explore the full breadth of L&C's geography. Develop a fixed VIC at HF to service 600,000 visitors
2.1	<i>Ensure that the trailer is equipped to optimise staff productivity:</i> install a power point and WIFI so that work (e.g., social media management) can be conducted during quiet times					LCCC			
2.2	<i>Add compelling communications to the exterior:</i> branding and compelling content (QR codes, local tips, maps) to inspire visitors during open and closing hours					LCCC			
2.3	<i>Determine how this trailer can be used as a mobile service:</i> decide if a) the mobile VIC can be retained as a flexible option that can be positioned throughout the destination on the basis that b) a permanent VIC can be installed at Hillsborough Forest (HF) to service the 600,000 annual visitors at this site					LCCC			
3	Scope the potential to develop a permanent VIC at Hillsborough Forest (HF)					LCCC			
4	Minimise paper communications at all VICs: a) conduct a monthly audit to ensure that only essential paper communications are stocked and b) engaged with suppliers to encourage the					LCCC			Champion sustainability

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
5	Ensure that services champion a hybrid model: combining human interaction with the convenience of digital supports					LCCC		Position Innovate Grow	Invest in VIC training to maximise opportunities for L&C, ensuring that performance is tracked to measure outcomes.
5.1	Invest in training so that VIC staff are equipped to meet visitor needs to maximise promotional and economic opportunities for L&C. Ensure that this training includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> guiding visitors about making strong choices based on their unique needs and interests how to promote L&C's unique identity and unparalleled experiences how to make recommendations to spread economic advantage across large- and small-scale experiences throughout L&C how to guide the visitor to behave responsibly while in the destination 								
5.2	To maximise opportunities via digital channels, invest in a dedicated digital marketing resource that is key for optimising opportunities for L&C's industry and economy.								
5.3	To ensure that the VIC achieves a strong return on investment, determine KPIs against which performance can be measured to include tracking the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of annual visitor engagements revenue generated via bookings spread of revenue generated across the destination number of bookings achieved offline versus online increase in followers via social media channels digital analytics <p>Ensure that this data is recorded via a quarterly summary report so that strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats can be swiftly addressed</p>								
6	Collaborate with other VICs (inc. Visit Belfast) on a consistent basis to ensure that L&C is top on referral list to maximise economic opportunities					LCCC	VB		Collaborate to maximise opportunities for L&C
7	Encourage the VIC to work closely with local tourism businesses that interface with visitors to maximise referral opportunities. Ensure that the VIC team attends annual networking events to build relationships.					LCCC	LCIND		
8	Particularly during high demand periods, consider the benefit of investing in flexible visitor information services delivered (e.g.,) on a branded destination bike or by foot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess costs and who should deliver this service: e.g., a VIC staff member or community representative provide relevant supports according to the chosen solution 					LCCC	LCCOM		Be creative by considering a) flexible VIC services and b) including community in the delivery of VIC services
9	Consider the benefits of widening VIC services by including non-tourism businesses (e.g., newsagents), working with providers that are relevant for this initiative to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote L&C's tourism offering to the local community and visitors display tourism-relevant communications: e.g., QR codes and photographable maps 					LCCC	LCCOM		

Work in partnership with Visit Belfast to maximise opportunities: Objective 7 / O7

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
1.	Create a revised SLA with Visit Belfast over a mutually agreed duration of between 3 and 5 years					LCCC	VB	Position Innovate Collaborate Grow	Create a clearly define SLA so that responsibilities and metrics are pre-determined to maximise opportunities
1.1.	Ensure that this SLA clearly defines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the objectives, actions and KPIs that Visit Belfast is responsible for achieving on behalf of LCCC: including the baselines and metrics against which progress can be measured commitments that LCCC is responsible for 								
1.2	As part of the SLA, define <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how L&C should be positioned via communications how L&C can benefit from Visit Belfast's approach to "neighbourhood tourism" if L&C should continue to be promoted under the Belfast Plus model or via another mechanism the opportunities that Visit Belfast commits to target on behalf of L&C e.g., B2C, B2B, leisure and business tourism opportunities in Ireland and internationally the channels, markets and customer segments that Visit Belfast commits to target on behalf of L&C across online and offline opportunities all benefits that Visit Belfast can bring to L&C such as referral opportunities via Visit Belfast's VICs and tourism providers located in Belfast 								
1.3	Agree a process for reviewing the SLA and associated activity and metrics: e.g., quarterly, annually								
1.4	Before embarking on a new SLA, decide if any amendments are required for this agreement								
2	Ensure that there is clarity about how opportunities can be maximised via a dual approach via activity conducted by a) LCCC's tourism team and b) LCCC's tourism team in collaboration with Visit Belfast					LCCC	VB		

No.	Actions to achieve	IT	ST	MT	LT	Lead	Partner	Pillar	KPI
2.1	Noting that LCCC's tourism team is responsible for targeting leisure tourism in the NI and ROI marketplaces, ensure that targeted Integrated Marketing Campaigns are conducted to maximise promotional and commercial opportunities via visitors across local, national and ROI markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individuals, groups, couples, families, inter-generational travellers • soft adventurers (walkers, cyclists, boaters) and golfers • enthusiasts of nature, culture and heritage, food and drink, outdoor activities • leisure and luxury tourism 					LCCC			Target opportunities in a targeted, goal-focused and solution driven manner to maximise opportunities
2.2	Noting that Visit Belfast is responsible for targeting the NI, ROI and international marketplaces, work with VB to maximise B2C promotional and commercial opportunities via leisure visitors across local, national and ROI and priority markets (North America, Great Britain, France and Germany)					LCCC	VB		
2.3	Work with Visit Belfast to maximise B2B promotional and commercial opportunities via leisure tourism professional travel buyers to grow international opportunities					LCCC	VB		
2.3.1	Proactively target B2B opportunities by developing relationships with professional travel buyers and inviting buyers that are best suited to L&C on FAM trips					LCCC	VB, TNI		
2.4	Work with Visit Belfast to maximise promotional and commercial opportunities for business tourism inc. via B2B professional travel buyers					LCCC	VB		
2.4.1	Proactively target B2B opportunities by developing relationships with professional travel buyers and inviting buyers that are best suited to L&C on FAM trips					LCCC	VB, TNI		
2.4.2	Raise the profile of L&C's business tourism offering among local non-tourism businesses to encourage bookings from the local marketplace					LCCC, LCIND	LC		
3	Work closely with Visit Belfast and national tourism agencies so that they can support L&C to grow targeted opportunities					LCCC	VB, TNI, TI		

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of successful Tourism Events in Ireland

Name	Location	Dates	Concept
Tradfest	Temple Bar, Dublin	January	A joyful celebration of Irish music and culture. Experience live music in the best pubs and music venues
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Belfast	April/May	An annual festival of music, comedy, theatre, art and literature over an 11-day extravaganza with +100 events across +20 venues.
Listowel Writers Festival	Kerry	May/June	An internationally acclaimed literary festival devoted to bringing writers and audiences to innovative events in the historic and intimate surroundings of Listowel.
Féile an Phobail	Belfast	August	Ireland's biggest community arts festival provides a programme of inclusive arts, cultural and community-based activities throughout the year, with its flagship festival, the August Féile a calendar highlight.
Open House Festival Bangor	Bangor	August	A festival that believes that music, art and culture are the regenerative force that will transform Bangor from its seafront dereliction and failed retail sector into a modern, progressive seaside town.
Galway International Oyster & Seafood Festival	Galway	September	The oldest oyster festival in the world. Deemed one of Europe's longest running food extravaganzas, sampling the renowned native Galway Oysters is a key highlight.

Name	Location	Dates	Concept
Kilkenny Animated	Kilkenny	September/ October	A feast of visual storytelling, incorporating cartoons, animation and illustration set against the backdrop of Kilkenny's medieval streets. Hosted by four times Academy Award nominated animation studio, Cartoon Saloon.
Puca Festival	Boyne Valley	October	Celebrate the Celtic New Year with the Spirits of Halloween
Derry Halloween	Londonderry	October	A Samhain gathering, with ancient spirits welcoming you to join an awakening
Mayo Dark Sky Reserve Festival	Mayo	November	Celebrate all facets of Mayo's natural dark skies by joining the communities around the gold tier accredited Dark Sky Park – Newport, Mulranny and Ballycroy.

Consultation Feedback

An eight-week public consultation period of the draft Strategy and Action Plan concluded in November 2024.

As part of the consultation process a special one-off event was arranged on 8 November 2024, at Hinch Distillery that allowed industry stakeholders an opportunity to find out more about the strategic priorities and action plans for delivery. Over 50 industry representatives attended and shared their feedback either on the day, or via an online survey.

In addition, an email was sent out to all the local tourism and hospitality sector requesting feedback by way of the consultation questionnaire that linked to the draft Strategy and Action Plan.

Overall, responses to the consultation questionnaire were positive with a few additional comments made. A summary of comments has been listed below.

1. The ambition

Overall, all respondents agreed with the ambition of the Strategy, and the following is a summary of additional responses:

Summary of comments	Council Response
Consider adopting successful models from other NI councils such as Food and Drink Cluster like “Taste Causeway” or BCC “Food and Drink Network”.	Agreed, and can be considered as part of branding current Food and Drink offer.
By incorporating exceptional local producers and restaurants like Hannans and McCartneys in Moira into the LCCC strategy, we can enhance tourism development and showcase the regions culinary strengths effectively.	Will continue to explore ways to expand RHHM programme, along with Moira Speciality Food market each August.
The council must take a proactive approach in bringing strategic plans to life, the ongoing commitment to further engagement will be critical to delivery.	Agreed - Council will re-introduce a 6 monthly tourism forum that can foster ongoing engagement and support within industry.
LCCC should actively support Waterway-Led regeneration to enhance both town and rural areas, promoting the development of heritage, sports, leisure activities, and improving overall wellbeing and health benefits.	Reference to outdoor tourism is included in the Strategy alongside opportunities for greenway development.
Increased investment in marketing and promotion will be key to delivering the ambitious growth target of 34% in tourism revenue generation by 20309.	Agreed, and increase in 2025/26 Tourism Development budgets will make a start on this.

The ongoing commitment to further engagement will of course be critical to delivery.	Agreed – to be addressed as part of the forum and Council e-zine.
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2. Strategic Pillars

Overall, all respondents agreed with the strategic pillars of the Strategy, and the following is a summary of additional responses:

Summary of comments	Council Response
Create a distinction between our innovative food and drink producers setting LCCC apart from BCC.	Agreed, further work to be done on positioning, branding and promoting the LCCC Food and Drink offer.
Connect towns and villages, market them as a brand, not as individual destinations.	Action plans include more support and collaboration with community tourism initiatives including buy-in, story telling and outlining benefits of tourism. An objective is to have an authentic experience and therefore local communities may wish to differentiate themselves through brands but the Council will have a single tourism brand.
Connect through our waterways/towpaths/through the creation of cycle paths.	Agreed. Promotion of existing trails, greenways and waterways can be explored for improved exposure.

3. Vision and Value Proposition

Overall, all respondents agreed with the Vision and Value Proposition of Strategy, and the following is a summary of additional responses:

Summary of comments	Council Response
Create tourism through our waterways (canals, rivers and towpaths).	Not a priority project for tourism.
Envision the Moira planning project for a Heritage and Canoe centre.	Not Agreed but excellent idea for the private sector.
Imagine a Blue Way from Moira to Lisburn.	Not agreed -outside of the scope of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan but taken forward as part of the wider regeneration programme.

Include the residents as part of the consultation process as this could provide key insights.	The consultation was shared with all the local tourism and hospitality industry, stakeholders, and promoted on the Council website seeking feedback. It was available for comment from anyone, including residents.
The value proposition would perhaps benefit from being linked/matched to markets.	Priority markets are listed as NI and ROI, with other opportunities in GB, North America, France and Germany.

4. Express your view

The following is a summary of responses received expressing unprompted feedback:

Summary of comments	Council Response
Build upon the Hillsborough and Moira markets, reflect the food of the region. Develop food trails and experiences.	Agreed, with further promotion and budget dedicated for RHHM.
Invest in the collaboration between local tourism providers and the commitment to infrastructure development.	Agreed - it is proposed to deliver two tourism forums per year which will encourage collaboration with local tourism industry.
Create reference to social enterprise businesses.	Agreed - opportunities for cross team working with Go Succeed and the Council's Business Solutions team.
Disused towpaths should be brought back to life.	Agreed - will be included as part of the linkages with the regeneration plans for greenways and blueways where viable and affordable.
The provision of visitor services could be expanded by developing digital learning apps and guides along our towpaths.	Agreed - will be investigated as part of the wider digitisation of the Council's visitor servicing function.
Recognise and enhance the role of volunteers.	Agreed - opportunities exist for certain aspects of the tourism product to enhance the role of volunteers eg Welcome Host.
Turn the Ballance House into a cultural visitor attraction in LCCC.	Not agreed – outside the scope of the Strategy. Viability and sustainability issues need to be addressed before being put through a Council's standard governance arrangement.
Collaboration and social inclusion are integral to the action plan and will be	Agreed – form part of the Council's deliberations in determining its decision making.

fundamental to successful delivery of authentic and innovative experiences.	
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5. Equality

The following is a summary of additional responses which has been discussed with our Equality Officer:

Summary of comments	Council Response
LCC could build good relations through the food and drink reputation of the region.	Agreed – it should be noted that all events will be subject to equality screening / integration with our Good Relations action plan.
Enhancing media posts to include more diverse events that celebrate various cultures, religions, and genders would foster a more inclusive atmosphere.	Agreed – the Council’s programme is subject to equality screening and we aim to represent and support the demographic of both visitors and residents.
Embracing the changes in our demographics over the past decade could help Lisburn evolve positively and reflect the vibrant community it has become.	Agreed – the Council strives to be inclusive in all its events and promote cultural diversity in line with our equality obligations.
We’ve noticed a growing demand for welcoming spaces for neurodiverse individuals. This is an expanding tourism market that deserves attention.	Agreed – the Council will continue to make provision for facilities and services within our programmes.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template

Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened

Name of the activity/policy/project

Strategies and Action Plans within Tourism

Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?

Revised – the new emerging LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2029 is being developed with the last strategy finished in December 2023. An Equality Screening exercise was carried out on this project for the previous Strategy and Action Plan is being reviewed for this next version.

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?

The overall aim is to revise and update the 2018-2022 Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. The revised Tourism Strategy and Action Plan will attempt to proactively address and support the areas tourism needs. The revised Tourism Strategy and Action Plan should be closely aligned with key existing strategies, policy documents, action plans and draw out opportunities/actions presented for the LCCC area. The subject of sustainable tourism is becoming more of a priority and measures should be taken into consideration when developing the new Tourism Strategy. The revised Tourism Strategy and Action Plan will demonstrate clear links to driving the local economy forward.

Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.

The new Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is intended to be a road map for delivery of tourism initiatives to ultimately drive visitor trips, overnight stays, and tourism revenue into the Council area. It is anticipated that all nine of the Section 75 categories could potentially benefit from this policy. For example, it is anticipated that it will benefit those of different ages, religion, as well as those with disabilities and those with dependents who use the services of LCCC.

This policy will be open equally across the Council Area. The strategies and plans commissioned will be accessible to all organisations in the participating council area

and LCCC will work to ensure that it is particularly accessible to those considered as marginalised or vulnerable within the participating LCCC.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

Tourism Development Unit in LCCC

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

Owned by LCCC Service Transformation Directorate; implemented by the Tourism Development Unit

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project?

If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.

Financial - The delivery of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2029 will be dependent on the annual budget estimates process. Some activity may require additional budgets.

Legislative: Tourism development is a non-essential service.

Other: Tourism Development supports economic development, generating jobs and economic wealth to the local area.

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable

Staff - all LCCC staff involved in the deliver or Tourism.

Service users - wide range of local and out of state visitors.

Other public sector organisations - Tourism NI, Forest Service, DAERA

Voluntary/community/trade unions

Other – including Elected Members

Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Hillsborough Master Plan	LCCC
LCCC Corporate Plan 2024-28	LCCC
Visit Belfast Tourism Strategy 2024-2027	Visit Belfast
Tourism Strategy for NI 10 year plan	Tourism NI
Forest Service NI Business Plan	DAERA
NI Economic Strategy – Vision for 2030	Department for the Economy
LCCC Equality Scheme and associated equality action plans and policies	LCCC

Available Evidence

What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.

In developing the draft LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029, a wide range of information, research and expert advice was considered.

To support this screening document, it was necessary to look at many aspects of work covered by the Tourism Development. The main stages in tourism development planning include: the analysis of previous tourist development; evaluation of the position of tourism in the area including competition; formulation of relevant tourism policy by Government; the defining of a development strategy and the formation of a programme of action.

Tourism development can be defined as creating strategies and plans to increase/develop/encourage tourism for a destination. The fundamental reason behind planning and implementing strategies for developing the tourism sector is primarily to make money and to subsequently increase the GDP of an area or country. The emerging Tourism Strategy commissioned by LCCC provides a Vision and Action Plan, creating a 'road map' to assist the growth in the local tourism offer, maximising tourism opportunities that will in turn increase bed nights, trips and spend. One way to assist in this growth is to support minor and major events, expansion of accommodation provision and providing visitor information centres in the LCCC area.

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council work closely with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to support this objective. Tourism NI's Mission is to build the value of tourism to the local economy, and state, 'Our Vision is to confidently and passionately champion the development and promotion of the Northern Ireland experience'.

Visit Belfast is funded and supported by Belfast City Council, Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI), Tourism Ireland, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, strategic and corporate partners Translink, Belfast One, Diageo

Northern Ireland, Value Cabs, ICC Belfast, Titanic Belfast, Hastings Hotels and Victoria Square. Visit Belfast is a public-private sector partnership that represents over 500 tourism businesses, operators and services.

In the most recent NISRA, June 2019, Local Government Tourism statistics Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council is highlighted as having the least number of bed-nights and visitor trips of any Council. Whilst tourism revenue is slightly better performing this is partly attributed to the strong shopping and retail offer in the Council area. The new LCCC Tourism Strategy looks at ways to address the undersupply in commercial accommodation alongside other initiatives to attract more visitors and associated spend. The staging of events is one such way to steadily grow visitor numbers, especially the day visitor market. Another benefit from events is the positive PR attached to the same.

Feedback on the emerging Tourism Strategy will occur throughout the eight-week consultation period with a questionnaire directed to stakeholders, community and the public that will provide an opportunity for feedback on Section 75 equality and good relations.

We have also considered the most up to date NISRA population data from Census 2021 (published 22/09/22) [Lisburn and Castlereagh Census Data](#)

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious Belief	It is likely that the Council area will be visited by people from all religions and those with no beliefs. The 8-week consultation should provide an opportunity for any issues to be raised and how best to address these.
Political Opinion	There is no evidence of the political opinion of visitors to the Council area. It is likely that the area will be visited by people with different political opinions.
Racial Group	All proposed plans/initiatives/strategies will endeavour to support all visitors from a tourism perspective from across LCCC and beyond.
Age	The 2021 census showed the population in the Lisburn Castlereagh area totalled 149,106. 19% = (0-14 years) 30% = (15-39 years) 33% = (40-64 years) 18% = (65+ years).

	The Council area is visited by people of all ages for leisure and tourism activities, however particularly strong for families, culturally curious, and those interested in food and drink.
Marital Status	We do not have information on the marital status of people who visit the Council area.
Sexual Orientation	We do not have information on the sexual orientation of people who visit the Council area.
Men & Women Generally	We do not have information on the precise gender make up of visitors to the Council area. It is anticipated this will not be an issue raised as part of the feedback from the 8-week consultation.
Disability	Latest Census data (2021) and LGD boundary data (2014) indicates that 18.29% of the population have a disability or long-term health condition. This includes a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory and communication disabilities. The childhood disability figure for Northern Ireland is 5.5%, highest in UK (2017 Research Report, Caring More Than Most, Leeds University on behalf of Contact). Observation and feedback to date suggests that the new sculpture trail is being used by school groups of disabled children.
People with and without Dependants	Evidence suggests the Council area is being visited by people with and without dependants. Evidence in the past would suggest the area is visited namely by family groups, culturally curious and those interested in food and drink.

Needs, Experiences, and Priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious Belief	The tourism product is for all religious beliefs with family attractions and things to do for everyone. It would not be

	anticipated that specific needs are required for differing religious beliefs.
Political Opinion	The tourism offering is for all political backgrounds with no anticipated negative feedback expected.
Racial Group	No issues expected about race once the Strategy and Action Plan go out for consultation, but we are aware that BME residents and visitors to the area may be under-represented as visitors to the Council area. We recognise that there is a need to ensure that people know about the free places to visit. There is a need to ensure that information about all the things to do and see in the Council area are available in other languages for those who do not have English as a first language. This has been taken into account when developing the recent Digital Sculpture Trail at Hillsborough Forest. The App is available in 4 different languages these are: Spanish, French, German and Chinese. We also have collateral literature in these 4 different languages for visitors.
Age	Market research would suggest the LCCC tourism product is more aligned to mature audiences looking to experience culture, short walks, and good food and drink. We would anticipate less of the youth market providing feedback on the emerging strategy.
Marital Status	No issues expected during the eight-week consultation period. The programme will be administered to prioritise equality of opportunity across all categories.
Sexual Orientation	No issues expected during the eight-week consultation period. The programme will be administered to prioritise equality of opportunity across all categories.
Men & Women Generally	<p>No issues raised during consultation in relation to gender. However, council staff are aware of the need to ensure that forest facilities are perceived to be safe for lone visitors (especially females, young people, older visitors). No new issues raised since sculptures have been installed.</p> <p>Although only a small proportion of those who have provided feedback to date have provided negative comments, more negative feedback has been received from females.</p>
Disability	All proposed initiatives will be open to all businesses and organisations across the Council.
People with and without Dependants	Parents with buggies or people who care for those with physical disabilities may have accessibility issues. Parents with young children may visit different attractions within the Council area.

Part 2. Screening Questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

We await feedback from the eight-week consultation to assess and monitor the impact on equality of the emerging LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029.

Section 75 Category	Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none	Level of impact - major or minor* - see guidance below
Religious Belief	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Political Opinion	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Racial Group	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Age	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Marital Status	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None

Sexual Orientation	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Men & Women Generally	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
Disability	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None
People with and without Dependants	No impact for majority of visitors coming into Lisburn & Castlereagh. The emerging Tourism Strategy an Action Plan is striving to be inclusive for all, wherever possible.	None

2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

As feedback is received, consideration will be given to any issue raised before finalising and approving the new LCCC Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 204 – 2029.

Section 75 Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Political Opinion	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Racial Group	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Age	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	

Marital Status	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Sexual Orientation	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Men & Women Generally	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
Disability	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	
People with and without Dependants	Awaiting feedback from eight-week consultation.	

Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025? Yes/No If yes, specify which action.

No, however the policy will be kept under review to ensure that requests for information in various formats are monitored and provided across the Council, i.e. to ensure information is accessible to all.

2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our Disability Action Plan:

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
- to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

No, activities conducted under this policy are available to all, regardless of Section 75 category. Through the consultation exercises disabled people will be targeted proactively for their feedback.

3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative? [if no specific impact identified, say none]	Level of impact – minor/major*
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group	We anticipate a positive impact for all, with an increased number of visitors to the area from all Section 75 groups.	Minor - positive

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group		No, there are no further opportunities to better promote good relations between these groups. All opportunities are currently being addressed.

Multiple identity

Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

We have taken into account the needs of different multiple identities in the development of the emerging Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. For example, children with disabilities or older people with disabilities will benefit from enhanced accessibility measures.

Part 3. Screening decision/outcome

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

- 1) **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
- 2) **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
- 3) **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

Choose only one of these and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

Screening Decision/Outcome	Reasons/Evidence
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]</p>	
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts could be identified in the eight-week consultation, and they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]</p>	<p>The screening has not identified any impacts however will be more strenuously tested during the eight-week consultation period.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p>	

[If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]	
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Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)

Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

Feedback from the eight-week consultation will be considered once approval is granted from Regeneration and Growth Committee to go out for consultation.

Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)

If the activity/policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

Not applicable

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

Effective monitoring will help a public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? Please give details:

The Tourism team will be responsible for monitoring of this project that will involve logging feedback and concerns from stakeholders, community and the public when required. The Council will proactively seek feedback on the emerging Tourism Strategy and Action Plan by way of consultation questionnaires for an eight-week period following agreement from Committee.

Part 5 - Approval and Authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by:	Andrew Kennedy Tourism Development Manager	8.8.24
Reviewed by:	Annie Wilson Equality Officer	08.08.24
Approved by:	Paul McCormick Head of Economic Development	8.8.24

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

- approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
- included with Committee reports, as appropriate
- sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website
- shared with relevant colleagues
- made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Marketing and Promotions

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Marketing and Promotions

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The key aim of this campaign is to promote the LCCC area as a visitor destination across N. Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland and also support the promotion of Lisburn City Centre and its commercial offering (mainly retail and hospitality).

1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

☒

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

☐

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

☐

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

N/A

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

N/A

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

N/A

SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The Marketing and Promotions (including Integrated Marketing Campaign and Visit Belfast) will impact on people in the rural area and it will promote economic investment by:-

- Increasing tourism footfall
- Increasing spend in rural areas
- Increase visitor dwell time in rural areas
- By offering a holistic "end to end" tourism offering to locals and visitors from further afield

The campaign will impact on people in rural and urban areas. The Council are aware that attracting more visitors to these areas will require mitigating any negative impacts this may have. Negative impacts will be considered as part of the collaborative process and mitigated as early as possible in the programme.

The rural share of the NI population is growing. Over the years 2001-2011 the number of people living in rural areas of NI increased by 15% in comparison to a rise of only 4% in urban areas. According to the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), just under half of the population (47.2%) in the L&CCC area live in rural areas. In the last decade to 2016, suburban areas have seen the highest growth rate of 22.1% with five wards alone covering over half of the districts growth – Ballymacross (44.3%), Carrowreagh (9.7%), Maghaberry (7%), Glenavy (6.3%) and Derriaghy (6.2%).

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

Tourism is an expanding area and is being increasingly recognized for its overall contribution to the Northern Ireland economy.

The Marketing and Promotions campaigns will promote all tourism businesses across the whole LCCC area. The campaign will also help build businesses up after the temporary closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The sustainability and stability of businesses is very important in a rural context as these businesses sustain the local community.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

N/A

SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

- Draft Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2016-2021)
- Northern Ireland Economic Strategy – Vision for 2030
- Tourism NI- Operating Plan
- Tourism NI – Northern Ireland Tourism Priorities for Growth
- Forest Service NI Business Plan 2014-15
- OFMDFM – Together; Building a United Community (TBUC)
- OFMDFM – Lifetime Opportunities – Government's Anti-Poverty & Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2020
- Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act
- Hillsborough Tourism Master Plan. 2015
- Hillsborough Forest Economic Appraisal. 2017
- Public consultation and survey in Hillsborough Forest. 2016
- Visit Belfast Strategy 2024-2026

The Socio-economic profile and forecast, Lisburn & Castlereagh (2018-2032) identified the LCCC area as showing marked distinctions between the rural and urban populations. According to the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), just under half of the population (47.2%) in the L&CCC area live in rural areas and the population forecast is set to grow by 8,300 residents between 2018-2032 (0.4% per annum, twice that of the NI equivalent). L&CCC's population growth outlook between 2018-2032 on average will be 1.65% making it the third highest across NI districts and 0.35 points above the NI rate.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

The Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016) has identified the following as key areas:

- Rural Businesses
- Rural Tourism
- Jobs or employment in rural areas
- Education or training in rural areas
- Poverty in rural areas
- Rural development
- Agri-Environment

If the response to Section 3A was **YES** GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The Scheme proposed will have a positive impact on the local rural business community and the Council area as a whole.

According to the Interim Local Rural Development Strategy (2016), just under half of the population (47.2%) in the LCCC area live in rural areas. In the last decade to 2016, suburban areas have seen the highest growth rate of 22.1% with five wards alone covering over half of the districts growth – Ballymacross (44.3%), Carrowreagh (9.7%), Maghaberry (7%), Glenavy (6.3%) and Derriaghy (6.2%).

In Northern Ireland 58% of businesses are based in rural areas. The business base in the region as a whole is predominantly small to medium enterprises with a dominance of micro businesses. In terms of businesses located only in rural areas, 94% are defined as micro (having less than 10 employees). Agriculture plays a more important role in the economy of NI than is the case in the rest of the UK, it generates a higher proportion of total GVA (Gross valued added) in the economy and accounts for a higher proportion of our employment. Furthermore 78% of the total NI land area is in agricultural use. Rural businesses located in NI have particular challenges and need specific solutions. The slow uptake of agriculture and rural enterprises in NI with regards to innovation, the fact that only 67% of rural areas have superfast broadband coverage (98% in urban areas) and 14% of tourism expenditure takes place in rural areas (compared with 86% in urban) are further examples of challenges facing the small rural businesses in Northern Ireland.

In 2018 there were 4,755 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in the L&CCC area (NISRA). The close proximity to Belfast puts the L&CCC area in an advantageous position whereby the population density is a way to generate an increase in sales and revenue.

Considering that almost half of the L&CCC district is rural, the regeneration of the LCCC area, is a key priority for the Council whom over the next 10 years will continue to invest in regeneration initiatives. Economic development initiatives such as the Integrated Marketing Campaign and the marketing carried out by Visit Belfast on the Council's behalf will benefit the local rural population and visitors to the area as well as the urban areas. These projects will contribute towards the Council's overall strategic objective of increasing economic development in the L&CCC area for the benefit of all citizens.

SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **5C**.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

The synopsis of the programme has been identified in Section 2B, fully considering the needs of the rural population. There have been no detrimental impacts identified.

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES** GO TO Section **6A**.

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

☒

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Margaret McAvoy
Position/Grade:	Tourism Development Officer
Division/Branch	Economic Development
Signature:	MARGARET MCAVOY
Date:	08/08/2024
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Andrew Kennedy
Position/Grade:	Tourism Development Manager
Division/Branch:	Economic Development
Signature:	ANDREW KENNEDY
Date:	8/8/24

Committee:	Regeneration and Growth Committee
Date:	13 February 2025
Report from:	Head of Economic Development

Item for:	Recommendation
Subject:	NI Enterprise Support Service: Go-Succeed

1.0 **Background**

1. In October 2023, the Regeneration & Growth Committee agreed the match funding to draw down UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) support for Lisburn and Castlereagh businesses as part of the eleven-council consortium. The new NI Enterprise Support Service was branded 'Go Succeed' and formally launched in November 2023.
2. The UKSPF provides a total of £17 million, including £5 million allocated for business grants. Additionally, each Council contributes independently to the service, with LCCC contribution amounting to £119,250 for the 2024/25 period.
3. The Go Succeed service is designed to support individuals and businesses throughout their start-up and growth journey. It focuses on building connections during the initial stages of business development, fostering the creation of higher-value enterprises, driving growth and innovation in existing businesses, and enabling effective scaling for long-term success.

Key Issues

1. Belfast City Council (BCC), the lead Council for the initiative, has established a Programme Management Office (PMO) to oversee programme delivery, manage contracts, and administer funding. Currently, BCC is engaging with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund on behalf of all Councils to secure a 12-month extension. These discussions are anticipated to reach a conclusion by the end of this financial year.
2. During the interim period, BCC PMO face the risk of losing key personnel due to a lack of committed funds. To address this and ensure the feasibility of any future extension, BCC have requested each Council to contribute £48,000 towards staff costs for programme delivery in 2025/26.
3. While this funding might not be necessary if additional UKSPF funding is secured, the request aims to provide clarity and stability for future provision. Any agreement would be on the basis of a proportionate contribution from all parties.

2.0 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members consider and agree that the Council commit £48,000 for 2025/26 on the basis of proportionality, pending any additional UKSPF funding secured.

3.0	<u>Finance and Resource Implications</u>	
	The Council's current financial commitment to this programme is £119,250 for 2024/25. Any future contributions will depend on the funding secured and will be subject to further Council review. The 2025/26 Economic Development budget estimate process has included provision for this level of expenditure to support an enterprise support service and the commitment of £48,000 will be part of that budget allocation.	
4.0	<u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	YES
4.2	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening was carried out by Belfast City Council on behalf of all eleven Councils. There are no major levels of impact, and no negative impacts have been identified during the screening process. Any issues re ensuring accessibility and equal participation in business support programmes ca proposed for the programmes.</p>	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	YES
4.4	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>No key issues identified - the Go Succeed Programme will not impact differently on businesses in rural areas. Businesses which are eligible may apply for support and benefit regardless of urban or rural location.</p> <p>RNIA for Go Succeed also completed by Belfast City Council (Lead Council)</p>	

Appendices	N/A
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Committee:	Regeneration & Growth Committee
Date:	13 February 2025
Report from:	Head of Economic Development

Item for:	Noting
Subject:	Rural Business Development Grant Scheme funded by DAERA under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI)

1.0	<p><u>Background</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, which is funded by DAERA as part of the TRPSI Programme, aims to help tackle poverty and social isolation within rural communities across Northern Ireland by supporting business growth. The scheme is designed to be delivered by local Councils. 2. The scheme provides rural micro businesses with a capital grant capped at £4,999 at a match funding rate of 50% from DAERA and 50% from participating businesses. The location of the business must be designated as rural under the scheme rules. Capital improvements will remain ineligible for support. The scheme has been successfully delivered for four years by the Programmes Team enabling 98 local businesses to drawdown a total of £281,000 in financial assistance to the LCCC area. <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members are reminded that the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme opened for applications on 16 October 2024. The call closed for applications on 8 November 2024. A total number of 54 applications were received. A number of assessment panels were held during December 2024, with 43 applications scoring above the 65% scoring threshold. 2. The programmes team anticipated receiving a programme budget of approximately £70,000 and £7,000 of administration income, similar to previous years, to support the delivery of the programme in the LCCC area. Following the success of the current call for applications, DAERA were able to source additional funds to allow all applications who scored above the threshold score of 65% to be issued with a Letter of Offer. This resulted in a total grant award of almost £140,000, with an administration income of over £18,000. A summary of all the successful applications is attached (see Appendix). 	
2.0	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that the committee notes the above update and summary.</p>	
3.0	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>DAERA have indicated that an administration income of over £18,000 will be made available to the Council for processing all applications received under this call.</p>	
4.0	<p><u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u></p>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	Yes

4.2	Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out It has been concluded that a detailed equality impact assessment is not necessary as all the potential impacts identified are minor and positive. (see Appendix)	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	Yes
4.4	Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out. The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme has been designed to specifically support rural micro businesses as a method of tackling rural poverty and social isolation.	

Appendices:	Appendix 3a – Summary Appendix 3b - Equality Screening
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ASSESSMENT PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS – RURAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT SCHEME & RURAL BASIC SERVICES SCHEME

Members should note that during December 2024, a number of assessment panels were convened to assess applications received under the application call to the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation.

The Assessment Panel agreed the following recommendations and on Friday 10 January 2025 a Letter of Offer was issued to each of the following applicants, who scored above the threshold score of 65%:

Project Ref: LCCC 20243561 - NI Total Building Services Ltd - Oliver Brogan
Project Location: 3 TEMPLE ROAD, BALLYSCOLLY, BT28 2PD
Project Title: Equipment Upgrade to support Service Expansion
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20243549, G&H Bell (Life & Pensions) Ltd, Michael Mcstay
Project Location: 6D LISBURN STREET, ROYAL HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6AB
Project Title: Enhanced Remote Working
Amount of Funding Offered: £789

Project Ref: LCCC 20243534, Larkfield Structures Ltd, Michael Anthony Gordon
Project Location: 61 BALLINDERRY ROAD, MONEYCRUMOG, BT28 2NW
Project Title: Expansion of in-house steel fabrication
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,901.23

Project Ref: LCCC 20243447, Julie A Robinson Optometrists, Julie Bussey
Project Location: 75 MAIN STREET, MOIRA, BT67 0LH
Project Title: Procurement of Henson 9000 Visual Fields Machine
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,789.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20243414, Evros Energy Services, Michael Press
Project Location: 199 BALLYNAHINCH ROAD, DRUMALIG, BT27 6YJ
Title: Material moving trailer
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,875

Project Ref: LCCC 20243389, Ralphs Moira, Lynne McCabe
Project Location: 65 MAIN STREET, MOIRA, BT67 0LQ
Project Title: Improvement of guest facilities at Ralphs
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,672.07

Project Ref: LCCC 20243382, Sloan Engineering, William Sloan
Project Location: 4C LOUGH ROAD LISBURN, BT28 2PQ
Project Title: Purchase of FMB bandsaw (Metal Cutting)
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,016.86

Project Ref: LCCC 20243369, David Moore TA TGS Landscapes
Project Location: 2 THE OLD ORCHARD, AGHALEE, BT67 0EZ
Project Title: Business expansion and efficiencies
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,809.32

Project Ref: LCCC 20243344, Siren Investments Ltd, Huw Morgan
Project Location: 119 COMBER ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6NA
Project Title: Grounds maintenance
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,499.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20243333, Aethergy Ltd, Gerard Collins
Project Location: 33 LEVEROGUE ROAD, LISBURN, BT27 5PP
Project Title: Computer equipment for Aethergy
Amount of Funding Offered: £616

Project Ref: LCCC 20243247, RARE Grazing NI LTD, Rachel Vance
Project Location: 2B LOUGH ROAD, LISBURN, BT28 2PJ
Project Title: New Coffee Trailer
Amount of Funding Offered: £1,852.10

Project Ref: LCCC 20243225, Sandra Shaw Art, Sandra Shaw
Project Location: 177 BALLYNAHINCH ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6BG
Project Title: Website and technology boost
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,179

Project Ref: LCCC 20243218, RH Home Solutions, Robert Hosseini
Project Location: 236 HILLHALL ROAD, LISBURN, BT27 5JQ
Project Title: Hard landscaping
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,352.17

Project Ref: LCCC 20243210, Nearby Dromara, Raymond McCullough
Project Location: 18 RATHFRILAND ROAD, DROMORE, BT25 2JG
Project Title: New Labelling System
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,250

Project Ref: LCCC 20243204, Carryduff Plumbing Supplies Ltd, Andrew McKibbin
Project Location: 38B CARR ROAD, LISBURN, BT27 6YG
Project Title: Warehouse -Warehouse Optimisation and Expansion
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,644.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20243180, ATTNX LTD, Alastair Luke
Project Location: 14 THE BEECHES MANOR, LISBURN, BT28 3PL
Project Title: Strategic video marketing retainer model growth
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,581.32

Project Ref: LCCC 20243128, Auld House Inns Limited, Stephen Gray
Project Location: 27 CHURCH ROAD, MONEYREAGH, BT23 6BB
Project Title: New Kitchen/Bar Equipment
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,949.98

Project Ref: LCCC 20243052, Montana Real Estate, Robert Montgomery
Project Location: 59 STEPS ROAD, DONAGHCLONEY, BT66 7NZ
Project Title: Enhancing Property Maintenance Efficiency
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20243035, The Pheasant, Frederick William Patterson
Project Location: 410 UPPER BALLYNAHINCH ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6NR
Project Title: Unique Cooking Offer
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,537.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20242981, ALPINE SIGNS, Thomas Andrew McAlpin
Project Location: 1 GRANSHA ROAD, COMBER, BT23 5QA
Project Title: New Roll Over Laminating Table
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20242973, Orion Distribution Limited, Emma McKibbin
Project Location: 3E DRUMALIG ROAD, CARRICKNAVEAGH, BT27 6UD
Project Title: Digital Transformation
Amount of Funding Offered: £1,257.90

Project Ref: LCCC 20242954, Lisnacurran, Lynne McCabe
Project Location: 6 LISTULLYCURRAN ROAD, DROMORE, BT25 1RB
Project Title: Improvement of guest facilities at Lisnacurran
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,692.24

Project Ref: LCCC 20242952, eccountinc (T/N of Crosshill Associates Ltd), Heather Gillen
Project Location: 53 DUNDROD ROAD, CRUMLIN, BT29 4JN
Project Title: New sustainable wooden business signage service
Amount of Funding Offered: £832.92

Project Ref: LCCC 20242943, Pop Culture Printing UK, Mark Curran
Project Location: 3 HELENS DRIVE, KILLOUGH, BT67 0HE
Project Title: Workshop expansion
Amount of Funding Offered: £1,457.94

Project Ref: LCCC 20242841, Hagans Croft Equestrian, Gillian Gordon
Project Location: 11 CARGACREEVY ROAD, LISBURN, BT24 8UG
Project Title: Picnic Tables
Amount of Funding Offered: £1,614

Project Ref: LCCC 20242833, Eagle Eye vet, Steven Baird
Project Location: 128 DROMARA ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6QA
Project Title: Investing in OSA-Vet, an eye surface analyser
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,020.72

Project Ref: LCCC 20242748, Hekoo Ltd, Jonathan Bell
Project Location: 4 COCHRANSTOWN ROAD, CRUMLIN, BT29 4JF
Project Title: Portable Pallet Stacker
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,397.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20242706, Signlines, Fiona McAlpine
Project Location: 286 BALLYGOWAN ROAD, MONEYREAGH, BT23 6BL
Project Title: FULL COLOUR PRINTER
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,747.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20242694, Brite Engineering Ltd, Victoria Greer
Project Location: 56 BALLYCREEN ROAD, BALLYNAHINCH, BT24 8TZ
Project Title: Updating of the compressed air system within Brite
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20242654, Retro NI Ltd, Sinead Gibson
Project Location: 20 ANAHILT GATE, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6GJ
Project Title: Retro NI Game
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20242592, Timothy Johnston Lawn Maintenance, TIMOTHY JOHNSTON
Project Location: 379 COMBER ROAD, LISBURN, BT27 6YE
Project Title: New John Deere Lawn Mower X940
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20242542, Lakeside View Caravan Park, Harold and Isobel Reain
Project Location: 71A MAGHERACONLUCE ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6PR
Project Title: Programme of Modernisation
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20242442, Drum Manor Apartment, Sarah Curran
Project Location: 63 DRUMLOUGH ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6PU
Project Title: Business Sustainability
Amount of Funding Offered: £508.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20242433, The Sound Healing Spa, Tessa Ann Greer
Project Location: Temple Shopping Centre, 88 Carryduff Road, Lisburn, BT276YL
Project Title: Business Expansion - Tourism experience tour
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,994.50

Project Ref: LCCC 20242390, Glebe Farm Produce, Jonathan Mackin
Project Location: 46 GLEBE ROAD, BALLYLINTAGH, BT26 6NG
Project Title: Equipment for Farm Shop
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,686.66

Project Ref: LCCC 20242379, Bay Tree Cottage, Susan Elizabeth McCague
Project Location: 51A EDENTRILLICK ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6PG
Project Title: Reducing running costs to support development
Amount of Funding Offered: £1,640

Project Ref: LCCC 20242287, 3dpix, Colin McMurtry
Project Location: 1 KNOCKNAREA ROAD, LISBURN, BT28 2TA
Project Title: 3dpix Hardware/Software Replacement
Amount of Funding Offered: £2,613.26

Project Ref: LCCC 20242251, Ricks Garage, Richard Henning
Project Location: 8 SCROGGY ROAD, AGHANAMONEY, BT28 2EZ
Project Title: Growth Driven by Advanced Diagnostics
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,215.42

Project Ref: LCCC 20242219, James Kerr Plumbing & Heating, James Kerr
Project Location: 39 NUT HILL ROAD, BALLYKNOCK, BT67 0PH
Project Title: Flail Head attachment
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,150

Project Ref: LCCC 20241982, Fisher joinery and construction, Philip fisher
Project Location: 13 MAGHABERRY ROAD, MAGHABERRY, BT67 0JE
Project Title: Custom made post and parcel delivery boxes
Amount of Funding Offered: £4,999

Project Ref: LCCC 20241791, Maurice Armstrong T/A Rosewood Nursery,
Project Location: 7 FEUMORE ROAD, LISBURN, BT28 2LH
Project Title: Environmental Optimization for Growing Spaces
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,961.58

Project Ref: LCCC 20241752, Drum Manor Bed and Breakfast, Valerie Curran
Project Location: 61 DRUMLOUGH ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6PU
Project Title: Sustainability Continuous Relevance
Amount of Funding Offered: £839

Project Ref: LCCC 20241657, K&M Walker Ltd, MICHAEL WALKER
Project Location: 14 TULLYNORE ROAD, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6QE
Project Title: Online webshop
Amount of Funding Offered: £3,605

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the recommendations of the Assessment Panel as outlined above.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template

Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened

Name of the activity/policy/project

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2024-25

Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?

The scheme has been successfully delivered for four consecutive years by the Economic Development Unit at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. The first four programmes enabled 98 local businesses to drawdown a total of £281,000 in financial assistance to the LCCC area.

DAERA are currently in the process of developing a fifth call for applications under the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme across rural Lisburn and Castlereagh and rural Belfast. It is proposed that the scheme will open for applications on 2nd September 2024 and close 4 weeks later.

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is funded through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme, and will be delivered in partnership with local Councils.

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework's focus is on 'Supporting Rural Communities'. The overall objective when developing this Framework is to ensure that mechanisms remain in place to continue to help improve the quality of life for vulnerable rural dwellers.

The Scheme can provide funding of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a maximum of £4,999. The minimum grant awarded will be £500. The total cost of the capital project must be a minimum of £1,000 and must not exceed £20,000. Applicants must provide the remaining match funding towards the project.

The Scheme's overarching aims are to support rural business development (sustainability and growth), contributing towards the TRPSI's objectives of:

- 1) Alleviate financial poverty by enhancing entrepreneurship and growth
- 2) Alleviate financial poverty by supporting micro businesses in rural areas

The Scheme objectives are:

- 1) To support the sustainability, survival and development of micro rural businesses across Northern Ireland by providing a small capital grant for the business.
- 2) To support participating businesses to grow and develop their business
- 3) To support participating businesses to either maintain or increase pre application staffing levels
- 4) Contribute to the submission of an overall Scheme Evaluation

Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme welcomes applications from applicants across a wide range of backgrounds.

Grants are available to support the recovery, sustainability and development of existing micro businesses based in rural areas.

In order to apply for a Rural Development grant, the following eligibility criteria was set by the DAERA:

- The business is based in a rural area of Lisburn, Castlereagh or Belfast. A rural area is defined as an area with a population of less than 5,000 residents. Applicants are advised to contact LCCC if they are unsure if their business operates in an eligible rural area.
- The business is an existing, registered private Business or Social Economy Enterprise that is actively trading commercially; evidenced by providing self-assessment number or Limited Company details and sales turnover details.
- The business currently employs less than 10 full-time equivalent employees (based on full time 30 hours per week and part time at least 16 hours per week).
- Applicants must be aged 18 or above at the application deadline.
- Only one application can be accepted per business/ legal entity.
- Sports Clubs and Community Groups can only be considered if they are commercially trading and generate sales revenue from selling goods and services to customers who are not exclusively Club or Community Group members. The grant can only be used to support the sustainability, survival and/or development of this commercial element, and not for the club or community group on its own. Projects that can be supported from other funding sources, such as Sport NI, are not eligible to be considered under this scheme.

Who Cannot Apply?

The grant scheme cannot support:

- Businesses based in urban areas.
- New start businesses who have yet to commence trading (all business sectors).
- Farmers, or anyone registered to a Category 1 DAERA Business ID, undertaking mainstream agricultural activity.
- Farm diversification projects where the diversified activity has not started trading.

Are there any expected benefits to the Section 75 categories/groups from this policy? If so, please explain.

N/A the programme is designed to support rural micro businesses regardless of the Section 75 categories of the applicant. The scheme is a competitive process whereby applications are scored based on ability to create employment / export opportunities, demonstrate need and demand and overall benefit to the wider economy.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is owned and funded through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme. The programme is delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Economic Development Unit, however, the final decision regarding eligibility application progression is held by DAERA.

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme is owned and funded through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme. The programme is delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Economic Development Unit.

As the delivery agent, each application will undergo an initial eligibility check and be assessed at an Assessment Panel. Applications must score 65% or above to progress to receiving a Letter of Offer. Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will work alongside applicants to ensure that each individual application is progressing in accordance with the operating rules set by DAERA, and verify claims for expenditure.

As the managing authority, DAERA have the final decision regarding the eligibility of an application and are responsible for administering the grant payment to the applicant.

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project?

Yes.

- Financial:
 - Fixed budget
 - Reliant on match funding
 - Staffing/resources
 - Timeframes and funding regulations

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable

Staff: The Programmes Team within the Economic Development Unit are responsible for delivering the programme on behalf of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Belfast City Council.

Service users: Beneficiaries of this programme - any existing business with less than 10 employees, commercially trading and based in a rural area within Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast are eligible to apply to the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme.

Other public sector organisations: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) are the managing agent of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme and are responsible for administering the grant aid.

Other: Belfast City Council: It was agreed that the LCCC programmes team will continue to deliver the scheme in rural Belfast as well as rural Lisburn and Castlereagh. Belfast City Council would like their residents in the rural areas of Hannahstown and Edenderry to have the opportunity to apply to the scheme however they typically receive only two or three grant applications from rural micro-businesses. They are in a unique position where from a resource

perspective, the benefits of the programme to their ratepayers does not justify the establishment of the programme in their area. Given the history of collaboration between the two councils through previous rural financial assistance schemes, the LCCC were content to accede to this request.

Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
Local Development Plan	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/resident/planning/local-development-plan
LCCC Corporate Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council lccc-corporate-plan-2024-2028-web (lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)
LCCC Equality Scheme and associated plans	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Equality - Lisburn & Castlereagh (lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)
DAERA Rural Policy Framework	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/rural-development
TRPSI Framework	The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework is a rural initiative led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DAERA) https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/tackling-rural-poverty-social-isolation-new-framework
DAERA Equality Screening	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/equality-screening-2021
LCCC Community Plan 2017 – 2032	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Lisburn Castlereagh Community Plan - Lisburn & Castlereagh

Available evidence

What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.

In Northern Ireland 58% of businesses are based in rural area, yet rural businesses account for less than a quarter (21%) of employees and around a quarter (25%) of total business turnover (DAERA, 2023). The business base in the region as a whole is predominantly small to medium enterprises with a dominance of micro business. In terms of businesses located only in rural areas, 94% are defined as micro (having less than 10 employees). Rural businesses located in NI have particular challenges and need specific solutions. These include the slow uptake of agriculture and rural enterprises in NI with regards to innovation, the fact that only 67% of rural areas have superfast broadband coverage (98% in urban areas) and 14% of tourism expenditure

takes place in rural areas (compared with 86% in urban) are further examples of challenges facing the small rural businesses in Northern Ireland.

In 2023 there were 5,240 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in the L&CCC area (NISRA). The close proximity to Belfast puts the L&CCC area in an advantageous position whereby the population density is a way to generate an increase in sales and revenue.

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious Belief	<p>We do not have information on the religious belief of eligible business owners.</p> <p>The 2021 NI Census recorded the following statistics with regard to religious belief in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% Protestant (or other Christian) • 27% Catholic • 4% Other • 13% None
Political Opinion	<p>We do not have information on the political opinion of eligible business owners.</p> <p>The 2021 NI Census recorded the following statistics with regard to political opinion in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area; 41% indicated that they had a British only national identity, 16% had an Irish only national identity and 21% had a Northern Irish national identity.</p>
Racial Group	<p>We do not have information on the racial background or nationality of eligible business owners.</p> <p>The 2021 NI Census recorded the following statistics with regard to racial groups in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area; 4% were from an ethnic minority population and the remaining 96% were white (including Irish Traveller).</p>
Age	<p>We do not have information on the age demographics of eligible business owners.</p> <p>In 2021 NI Census statistics with regard to age in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area were recorded to inform the Corporate plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19% Children were aged 0-14 years • 30% of people aged 15 -39 years • 33% aged 40 – 64 years • 18% aged 65+ years and older
Marital Status	<p>We do not have information on the marital status of eligible business owners.</p>

	<p>The 2021 census records the following statics with regard to the marital status of persons over the age of 16 for the LCCC area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single – 33% • Married or in civil partnership– 52% • Same-sex civil partnership – 0.1% • Separated– 3% • Divorced or formerly in civil partnership– 6% • Widowed or surviving partner in civil partnership– 6%
Sexual Orientation	<p>We do not have information on the sexual orientation of eligible business owners.</p> <p>ONS figures (2016) suggest at least 2% of the NI population identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bi-sexual. However, LGB support groups suggest this is a significant under-estimate based on lack of willingness/confidence to identify as LGB and the fact sexual orientation categories is now more inclusive of other categories and is referred to as LGBTQIA+</p> <p>Government Equalities Office research suggests over 4% of the 18-25 year age group identify as LGB, confirming that younger people are more likely to be open about sexual orientation.</p>
Men & Women Generally	<p>In general, women tend to be underrepresented as entrepreneurs/in business. However, during previous calls, there has been a good balance of applications from males and females. This would suggest no need to develop specific promotional material targeting men and women separately.</p> <p>The 2021 NI Census report the population of Lisburn and Castlereagh Local Government District at 149,106, of which 49% were male and 51% were female.</p> <p>There is no official statistic on the number of people in N Ireland who identify as Transgender, non-binary or part of the LGBTQIA+ population but referrals to advice services are increasing year on year which suggests a growing minority.</p> <p>During a Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) human rights, equalities and diversities workshop (April 2021) some of the main findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women constitute 79% of the part time workforce. • 1/3 of working age women are economically inactive. • In 2019/20 70% of apprenticeships were male, Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLA's) are 69%. • Occupational segregation is problematic; men tend to be more involved in engineering, manufacturing and construction. Women more involved in business, administration and law. One possible related solution is women only training programmes in non-traditional sectors, i.e., construction and engineering.

Disability	<p>We do not have information on the disability status of eligible business owners.</p> <p>The rate of disability in Northern Ireland is higher than the other UK regions with the exception of Wales. The rates of disability among older age groups is higher than other regions of the UK. The 50-64 year old age group accounts for 33.4% of our disabled population compared to 26.9% of the UK disabled population as a whole. The most striking finding was that 60.2% of disabled people in Northern Ireland are economically inactive while the comparative figure for the UK as a whole stands at 42.5%. At 55.8% Lisburn and Castlereagh has the highest employment rate for Northern Ireland.</p>
Dependants	<p>There is no specific information available but eligible business owners will likely reflect the general population. Dependants can include children, older people and those with disabilities.</p> <p>12.51% of people in the 2011 Census stated that they provided unpaid care to family, friends, neighbours or others. On that basis, people with dependants are less likely to be employed or face greater barriers when seeking employment.</p> <p>According to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, lone parents, 91% of whom are women, also experience occupational segregation in employment, with lone parents with dependent children mostly employed in 'Personal Service' and 'Elementary' occupations. Caregiving has been identified as one factor influencing occupational segregation with women and lone parents choosing occupations.</p>

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

As this scheme is open to applications from anyone who has a rural micro business, there is the potential for applicants to come from a wide range of backgrounds.

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious Belief	No different needs identified – the scheme is open to eligible business owners regardless of their religious belief / community background.

Political Opinion	No different needs identified – the scheme is open to eligible business owners regardless of their political opinion.
Racial Group	There may be applications from people who do not have English as a first language or who are new to the LCCC district. People who are from a minority ethnic background may face difficulties understanding the programme operating rules. The application notes and forms may need to be translated for someone who does not have English as a first language.
Age	No different needs identified by age. It is open to eligible business owners regardless of their age. Applicants must be aged 18 or above in order to apply.
Marital Status	No different needs identified by marital status. It is open to eligible business owners regardless of their marital status.
Sexual Orientation	No different needs identified in relation to sexual orientation. It is open to eligible business owners regardless of their sexual orientation.
Men & Women Generally	No different needs identified. It is open to eligible business owners regardless of their gender and no issues have been identified in the previous programme.
Disability	Disabled applicants may find aspects of the process more challenging or inaccessible and may require reasonable adjustments. For example, some disabled people may need to have information about the scheme provided in different formats as a reasonable adjustment.
Dependants	No different needs identified. The scheme is open to eligible business owners regardless of their dependants.

Part 2. Screening questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 Category	Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none	Level of impact - major or minor* - see guidance below
Religious Belief	No differential impact identified. The services are available to all current existing micro-enterprises in a rural location, they are eligible to apply regardless of their religious belief.	None
Political Opinion	As above – no differential impact	None
Racial Group	Provided the process and availability of funding are well promoted, no differential impact	Minor
Age	No differential impact	None

Marital Status	No differential impact	None
Sexual Orientation	No differential impact	None
Men & Women Generally	No differential impact – previous programme has resulted in balance of applications	None
Disability	No negative impact as adjustments will be made available to anyone who needs one	None
People with and without Dependents	No differential impact	None

*See Appendix 1 for details.

LCCC Programmes will be delivered with a view to benefitting all eligible businesses and/or individuals.

2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Equality of opportunity is already built into the Scheme.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council provides an advisory service to potential applicants under the scheme. All potential applicants are advised to contact the Programmes Team who will provide advice and guidance on the application process, eligibility, review procurement documentation and assist with any queries with regards to the application form / online portal. Contact details are published on promotional material (telephone numbers and email address).

The advice provided to applicants aims to ensure there are no hidden or avoidable barriers. Applying for government funding can be a complicated process, especially for a business who has limited experience managing grant applications. On that basis, the Programmes Team will assist each applicant equally. Applicants must attend a funding workshop prior to submitting an application. This provides each applicant with an opportunity to discuss their application on an individual basis with a member from the Programmes Team. They are also provided with contact details should they require additional advice. In order to ensure we are providing equality of opportunity, LCCC hold a combination of virtual and in person workshops over a range of dates to ensure equality of access.

Section 75 Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief		None identified through this screening but can be kept under review.
Political Opinion		None identified through this screening but can be kept under review.
Racial Group	Yes, the application documents can be translated if necessary for anyone who does not have English as a first language.	

	Promotion / information/ targeted advice for people who may need it. Make sure no barriers to information.	
Age		None identified
Marital Status		None identified
Sexual Orientation		None identified
Men & Women Generally		None identified
Disability	Yes, we are able to make reasonable adjustments for disability. The application documents can be provided in alternative formats to ensure accessibility for people with certain disabilities.	
People with and without Dependants		None identified

Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025?

No

2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our [Disability Action Plan](#):

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
- to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

Yes, indirectly. This programme is owned by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) who have conducted their own equality screening exercise for each year that this Scheme has opened. As part of research undertaken by the Department, all Section 75 groups were surveyed prior to the implementation of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. As part of their ongoing processes, the circulation of surveys includes disabled people, who are consulted with in order to ensure that their views and opinions are taken into account when finalising the Scheme.

Should any specific comments from applicants to LCCC arise surrounding exclusion, these will be processed and fed back to DAERA accordingly.

3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative? [if no specific impact identified, say none]	Level of impact – minor/major*
Religious Belief	This is a financial assistance scheme for eligible businesses. It is not relevant to promotion of good relations and no impact identified through this screening exercise	None
Political Opinion	As above	None
Racial Group	As above	None

*See Appendix 1 for details.

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief		No opportunities identified as this is a financial support scheme for businesses which does not lend itself to the promotion of good relations.
Political Opinion		As above
Racial Group		As above

Multiple identity

Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

LCCC recognises that all individuals are not exclusive to just one designated group and “Multiple identity” has been given consideration within this screening exercise.

The Programmes Team at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council are contactable by email / telephone to assist any potential applicants with any queries and deal with the needs of individual applicants.

Part 3. Screening decision/outcome

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

- 1) **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
- 2) **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
- 3) **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

Choose only one of these and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

Screening Decision/Outcome	Reasons/Evidence
Option 1 Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]	
Option 2 Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]	<p>Section 75 considerations have been embedded in the delivery and strategic development of all Business Support programmes to date, as required by DAERA compliance.</p> <p>Equality screening of the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme has concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary. No</p>

	<p>negative impacts have been identified and no other significant impacts have been identified for any equality group. However, we are proposing a number of mitigation measures to address potential issues.</p> <p>It is therefore considered that the undertaking of an EQIA is not necessary at this time.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p> <p>[If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]</p>	

Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)

Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

The focus is on ensuring that access to the scheme is available to all potential businesses and to ensure that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged by the scheme's administrative processes. As some applicants may experience difficulty understanding or accessing the online portal, additional efforts will be made to help to ensure they are not disadvantaged. This is the same for any applicant who is having difficulty uploading their application or who requires advice and clarification surrounding the procurement of the items requiring grant funding.

Translation and advisory support / assistance will be provided if required. We will make reasonable adjustments for people with certain disabilities as required. For example, the application documents can be provided in accessible formats as requested/required.

Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)

If the activity/policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

N/A

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

Effective monitoring will help a public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

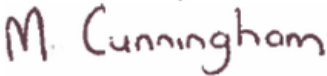

What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? Please give details:

Any comments and feedback from the public [applicants or others] will be noted. The programme is subject to an evaluation report to measure the successes and limitations of the programmes which are fully considered by DAERA prior to the development of a new Scheme.

The Programmes Team will be responsible for monitoring data by collating feedback from previous applicants. This will include a combination of successful and unsuccessful applicants. This will be reviewed by the Head of Economic Development on an annual basis. LCCC are always ensuring that our admin processes provide fairness and equality of opportunity and we are prepared to make changes to Scheme delivery to ensure equality of opportunity, providing they are in accordance with DAERA’s Contract of Funding.

The collection of Section 75 data is completed by DAERA.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by: Melissa Cunningham 	Programmes Officer	25/06/2024
Reviewed by: Annie Wilson	Equality Officer	26/06/2024
Approved by: Paul McCormick 	Head of Economic Development	25/06/2024

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

- approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
- included with Committee reports, as appropriate
- sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website
- shared with relevant colleagues
- made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix 1 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact

*Major impact:

- a) The policy/project is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality matters are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Minor impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

No impact (none)

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Committee:	Regeneration & Growth Committee
Date:	13 February 2025
Report from:	Head of Planning and Capital Development

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	Access to justice in relation to the Aarhus convention (a call for evidence)

1.0 Background

1. The purpose of this Call for Evidence from the Department of Justice (the Department) is to seek views from those with an interest in the provisions of the Aarhus Convention regarding legal challenges in relation to environmental matters.
2. The Department explain that one of the Convention's core aims is to ensure access to justice in environmental matters. The Convention's monitoring body, the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (ACCC), has found the UK to be non-compliant with the Convention and has made several recommendations, which have been adopted as decisions by the Meeting of the Parties (MoP), about matters on which the UK must take action to bring its policies into compliance with the Convention.
3. The call for evidence at Section 3 seeks views on these recommendations and the issues arising to determine the best way to reach compliance. The issues are presented under the following headings:
 - a) Costs protection on appeal
 - b) Types of claims covered
 - c) Cross-undertakings for damages
 - d) Costs for procedures with multiple claimants
 - e) Costs orders against or in favour of interveners
4. The time limits for Judicial Review and the implications for making a claim are dealt as a separate issue at Section 4 of the Call for Evidence.
5. A total of 19 questions are asked by DOJ in the call for evidence specific to the issues identified under each of the above headings. The deadline for the Council to respond is 28 February 2025.

Key Issues

1. The UK is one of 47 parties to the Aarhus Convention, officially known as "the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters", an international treaty adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in 1998. The UK ratified the Aarhus Convention in 2005. The Convention sets out obligations on Parties to make provision for the public to access environmental information, to participate in environmental decision-making, and to access justice when challenging environmental matters.

2. Decision VII/8s2, adopted by the MoP in October 2021, includes a number of recommendations on ways in which the UK can bring itself into compliance with the Convention with regard to the access to justice provision under Article 9 (see Annex C of the appended consultation document).
3. Some of these recommendations relate to costs protection in environmental legal challenges and there is also a recommendation relating to the time limit for bringing a judicial review within the scope of the Convention. These issues are relevant to this jurisdiction and the Department have asked a number of questions as part of the process of gathering evidence on whether the Costs Protection (Aarhus Convention) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (and subsequent revision in 2017) need to be changed.
4. This Council has not had any Aarhus claims but has agreed to a voluntary cost cap in several planning judicial reviews. Many of the questions asked in the call for evidence are framed based on the case being agreed as an Aarhus case and previous experience of using the Costs Protection Regulations. There is little or no opportunity for this Council to respond to the issues described at (a) to (e) above or to questions 01 to 15 in the call for evidence.
5. In respect of Section 4 the Department highlights relevant case law and the flexibility already available to judges in allowing cases to proceed after the existing time limits are expired.
6. The following response is recommended to Section 4 of the consultation:

It is the experience of this Council that cases are normally brought without delay and that it may only be in an exceptional circumstance where a judge may require flexibility. This issue, however, is wider than the costs protection regulations and it is recommended that caution is exercised as making any change has wider implications for Judicial Review. These potential implications are not engaged in this call for evidence. A further and more wide-ranging review is required of Aarhus as a means of securing access to justice. We recommend that the Department consult more widely and beyond the narrow scope of Costs Protection Regulations.

2.0	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the request for the call for Evidence and note the limitations on the ability of the Council to engage constructively in the consultation process. 2. Agree that a response is issued to Section 4 of the call for evidence as outlined above in this report. 	
10	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>No finance or resource implications are identified.</p>	
11	<p><u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u></p>	
11.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	No

11.2	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out</p> <p>This is a report regarding a Call for evidence questionnaire on the access to justice in relation to the Aarhus convention - EQIA not required.</p>	
11.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	No
11.4	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>This is a report regarding a Call for evidence questionnaire on the access to justice in relation to the Aarhus convention - RNIA not required.</p>	

Appendices:	Appendix 4 – From the Department of Justice- Access to justice in relation to the Aarhus convention (a call for evidence) and questionnaire
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Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention

A Call for Evidence

**This Call for Evidence begins on Friday 20 December 2024 and closes on
Friday 28 February 2025**

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1. Purpose of this Call for Evidence

Why are we issuing this Call for Evidence?

- 1.1 The purpose of this Call for Evidence is to seek views from those with an interest in the provisions of the Aarhus Convention regarding legal challenges in relation to environmental matters. This may include, but is not limited to, the judiciary, the legal profession, developers and environmental groups.
- 1.2 One of the Convention's core aims is to ensure access to justice in environmental matters. The Convention's monitoring body, the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, has found the UK to be non-compliant with the Convention and has made several recommendations, which have been adopted as decisions by the Meeting of the Parties, about matters on which the UK must take action to bring its policies into compliance with the Convention. This call for evidence seeks views on these recommendations and the issues arising to determine the best way to reach compliance.

Responding to the Call for Evidence

- 1.3 The Call for Evidence will run for a period of ten weeks, from **Friday 20 December 2025 to 5pm on Friday 28 February 2025**. Please note that it is unlikely that responses will be accepted after this date.
- 1.4 The list of those notified of this Call for Evidence is contained at **Annex A**. The list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive, and responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in, or views on, the matters covered by this Call for Evidence.
- 1.5 If you wish, you can respond to the Call for Evidence using the questionnaire which is provided separately on the Department's website (see <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-aarhus>). Responses to the Call for Evidence should be submitted by email to: DoJCivilJusticeandJudicialPolicyDivision@justice-ni.gov.uk

- 1.6 An electronic copy of this document is available to view and download from the Department of Justice's website. However, hard copies of the document and copies in other formats, such as Braille, large print etc., may be made available on request. If it would help you to have to this document in a different format or in a language other than English, please let us know and we will do our best to assist you.
- 1.7 If you require any further information on this Call for Evidence, please contact us by email: DoJCivilJusticeandJudicialPolicyDivision@justice-ni.gov.uk

Privacy, confidentiality and access to Call for Evidence responses

- 1.8 All responses to this Call for Evidence may be published on the Department's website except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity, e.g. a member of the public. All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. Where relevant, email addresses and telephone numbers will be removed from responses. However, apart from this, they will be published in full. For more information about how personal data is handled, please see the Department's consultation privacy notice at **Annex B**.
- 1.9 Your response, and all other responses to this Call for Evidence, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA") and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR"). However, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.
- 1.10 If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, you should explain in your response which particular section(s) of your response is confidential and why it should potentially be withheld (please refer to the Information Commissioner's Office's guidance on the application of the section 41 exemption (Information provided in confidence)).¹ This will form part of the

¹ [information-provided-in-confidence-section-41.pdf](#)

consideration should the Department receive a request for the information under FOIA or EIR.

Complaints

- 1.11 If you have any concerns about the way in which the Call for Evidence process has been handled, please email us at: Governance.Unit@justice-ni.gov.uk.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The UK is one of 47 Parties to the Aarhus Convention, officially known as “the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters”, an international treaty adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in 1998. The UK ratified the Aarhus Convention in 2005. The Convention sets out obligations on Parties to make provision for the public to access environmental information, to participate in environmental decision-making, and to access justice when challenging environmental matters.
- 2.2 The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (“the ACCC”) was set up by the Convention’s decision-making body, the Meeting of the Parties (“the MoP”), to monitor compliance with the Convention. The ACCC reviews alleged instances of a Party’s non-compliance, which are normally raised by members of the public or environmental NGOs and determines whether there has been non-compliance. In cases of non-compliance, the ACCC makes recommendations to the MoP about how the Party concerned can remedy the issue.
- 2.3 **Decision VII/8s**², adopted by the MoP in October 2021, includes a number of recommendations on ways in which the UK can bring itself into compliance with the Convention with regard to the access to justice provision under Article 9 (see **Annex C** for the text of Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention in full). Some of these recommendations relate to costs protection in environmental legal challenges and there is also a recommendation relating to the time limit for bringing a judicial review within the scope of the Convention.
- 2.4 Specifically, Decision VII/8s endorsed and reaffirmed the earlier **Decision VI/8k**, noting progress towards compliance made since that decision but requested further steps to:

² [ECE/MP.PP/2021/42 \(unece.org\)](https://unece.org/ece/mp/pp/2021/42)

- ensure that the allocation of costs in all court procedures subject to Article 9, including private nuisance claims, is fair and equitable, and not prohibitively expensive;
- further consider the establishment of appropriate assistance mechanisms to remove or reduce financial barriers to access to justice;
- further review its rules regarding the time-frame for the bringing of applications for judicial review in Northern Ireland to ensure that the legislative measures involved are fair and equitable, and amount to a clear and transparent framework; and
- establish a clear, transparent and consistent framework to implement Article 9(4) of the Convention.

2.5 The following parts of this Call for Evidence set out in turn the ACCC recommendations underpinning the MoP decision, alongside the background to each of these.

2.6 Respondents are asked to consider the ACCC's recommendations and having regard to the likely benefits and potential risks, to indicate whether each recommendation should be implemented or whether there are suitable alternatives which could deliver the desired outcome of bringing these areas into compliance.

2.7 This Call for Evidence focuses on the compliance issues for Northern Ireland. The UK Government and the Scottish Government are responsible for how the relevant compliance issues are addressed in England and Wales and Scotland. However, we are working closely with them to ensure the UK meets its international law obligations under the Aarhus Convention.

3. The Costs Protection (Aarhus Convention) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

History of the Costs Protection Regulations

- 3.1 As a Party to the Aarhus Convention, the UK is required, amongst other things, to make sure that there is a clear, transparent and consistent framework for members of the public to access environmental justice, and that the costs of bringing environmental challenges are not 'prohibitively expensive'. When the UK ratified the Aarhus Convention, it was still a member of the European Union. Elements of the Aarhus Convention have been implemented via EU Directives, which means that some non-compliance issues were subject to the EU's legal and infraction procedures when the UK was a Member State.
- 3.2 In 2013, the Department of Justice ("the Department") made *The Costs Protection (Aarhus Convention) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013* ("the Costs Protection Regulations") for Northern Ireland. The Regulations, as introduced, fixed the maximum costs that a court can order an unsuccessful claimant to pay to other parties for judicial reviews and statutory reviews, which fall within the scope of the Aarhus Convention.³ The costs caps were set, at the outset, at £5,000 (for individual claimants), £10,000 (where the applicant is a legal person or applying in the name of a legal entity or unincorporated association) and £35,000 (for respondents).
- 3.3 The European Court of Justice ("the CJEU") gave a judgment in 2014 in which it found that the costs regime for environmental judicial review cases which had been in place in the UK in 2010 (before the Costs Protection Regulations were in operation) had not properly implemented the 'not prohibitively expensive' requirement of the Aarhus Convention, as required by the Public Participation Directive (2003/35/EC).⁴

³ "An Aarhus Convention case" is defined at regulation 2 of the Costs Protection (Aarhus Convention) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

⁴ C-530/11 European Commission V. UK [2014] 3 WLR 853

3.4 In light of this judgment and other judgments of the CJEU⁵ and the UK Supreme Court⁶, the Department consulted on proposed amendments to the Costs Protection Regulations in 2015 and subsequently made *The Costs Protection (Aarhus Convention) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017*⁷, which introduced several new provisions, including the following:

- giving the courts the power to vary the default costs cap downwards for an applicant to avoid prohibitive expense and to increase the cap for a respondent to, again, avoid prohibitive expense to the applicant;
- in deciding whether the cap is prohibitively expensive, the court must take into account the applicant's financial means;
- a separate costs cap to apply to an appeal within the scope of the Convention in the Court of Appeal;
- clarification that only applicants who are members of the public (and not public bodies) are entitled to costs protection; and
- a direction to the court to apply certain principles when considering whether or not to require an undertaking in an application for an interim injunction in a case within the scope of the Convention.

3.5 As it has been some time since the costs caps came into operation and the Costs Protection Regulations were subsequently amended, the Department believes now is the right time to review these in detail, including how they operate in practice.

⁵ C-260/11 *Edwards V. Environment Agency* [2013] 1 W.L.R. 2914

⁶ *R (Edwards) V. Environment Agency (No.2)* [2014] 1 W.L.R. 55

⁷ [The Costs Protection \(Aarhus Convention\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2017](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) (legislation.gov.uk)

Question 1: How effective are the Costs Protection Regulations in ensuring that Aarhus Convention cases are not prohibitively expensive to bring?

Question 2: Please provide data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved since February 2017 and their outcomes.

Question 3: Please provide data on the impact, if any, of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved.

Costs Protection Regulations Compliance Issues

Overview

- 3.6 This section sets out the compliance issues for Northern Ireland identified by the ACCC. In each instance we have summarised the ACCC's concerns and set out some issues for further consideration. The Department would be grateful for respondents' views on the issues raised and any supporting evidence.
- 3.7 Decision VII/8s, adopted at the MoP to the Aarhus Convention in October 2021, concerns several different UK Aarhus compliance issues.⁸ This part of the Call for Evidence considers the compliance issues raised in that decision insofar as they relate to the Costs Protection Regulations or other costs provisions, and associated procedural issues.
- 3.8 Decision VII/8s followed on from Decision VI/8k, which was made on 14 September 2017, and following which the UK reported on progress towards compliance in annual reports submitted to the ACCC in 2018, 2019 and 2020.⁹ The ACCC issued a final report in 2021 providing detailed consideration of the issues regarding costs protection and indicating where some concerns remain.

⁸ See Decision VII/8s: [Decisions adopted by the Meeting of the Parties, advance edited copy \(ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1\) | UNECE](#).

⁹ The UK's first progress report (in October 2018) on the implementation of Decision VI/8k is available here: [frPartyVI8.k_01.10.2018_first_progress_report.pdf \(unece.org\)](#). The UK's second progress report (in September 2019) on the implementation of Decision VI/8k is available here: [frPartyVI.8k_30.09.2019_2nd_progress_report.pdf \(unece.org\)](#). The UK's third and final progress report (in September 2020) on the implementation of Decision VI/8k is available here: [frPartyVI8.k_30.09.2020_final_progress_report.pdf \(unece.org\)](#).

This report was submitted to the MoP in October 2021 and underpins the new Decision VII/8s.¹⁰ Accordingly, for the purpose of this Call for Evidence and consideration of the Costs Protection Regulations, we refer to the specific issues addressed by the ACCC in Part I of the report on Decision VI/8k, as listed below (while some recommendations discussed were directed towards other UK jurisdictions, they have read across to Northern Ireland):

- (a) costs protection on appeal;
- (b) types of claims covered;
- (c) cross-undertakings for damages;
- (d) costs for procedures with multiple claimants; and
- (e) costs orders against or in favour of interveners.

(a) *Costs protection on appeal*

3.9 The issue: The ACCC considers that the Costs Protection Regulations fail to ensure sufficient costs protection for claimants in environmental legal challenges where there is an appeal.

3.10 ACCC comments: Although the ACCC final compliance report on Decision VI/8k noted comments made by some environmental groups that the 2017 amendments to the Costs Protection Regulations in Northern Ireland have, to date, operated reasonably well in practice, they recommended that the costs to be ordered on appeal, including any possible costs caps, “must recognise that the requirement not to be prohibitively expensive applies to the procedure as a whole, encompassing all stages of the procedure” (see paragraph 115 in Part I of the report on Decision VI/8k).

3.11 Commentary: The Costs Protection Regulations, as amended, already provide for separate costs caps in appeals in Aarhus cases and for the appeal court to

¹⁰ See the ACCC’s final report to the Meeting of the Parties on Decision VI/8k (Part I): [ECE/MP.PP/2021/59 \(unece.org\)](#); and Part 2: [ECE_MP.PP_2021_60_E.pdf \(unece.org\)](#). Part I reviews the progress made by the UK in implementing paragraphs 2, 4 and 6 of Decision VI/8k; Part II review the UK’s progress in implementing paragraph 8 of Decision VI/8k.

have the same power as the original court to decrease this amount. They also provide that the appeal court retains its power to make an order as to the costs of the proceedings in the original court, subject to the prescribed costs caps and any order of that court varying these. Taken together, this may give the appeal court sufficient powers to ensure the proceedings, as a whole, are not prohibitively expensive. However, the Department notes the concern raised by the ACCC and welcomes any evidence in relation to this issue.

Question 4: Can you provide examples of occasions when appeal costs have proved to be prohibitively expensive to continuing with an appeal in an Aarhus case?

Question 5: Do the Costs Protection Regulations require to be clarified to ensure Aarhus cases that go to appeal are not prohibitively expensive? What are the likely benefits and risks of doing so?

(b) *Types of claims covered*

3.12 The issue: In its final report on Decision VI/8k, the ACCC suggested that the scope of the Costs Protection Regulations should be extended to cover private nuisance claims.

3.13 ACCC comments: In particular, the ACCC in its final report on Decision VI/8k found that, by excluding private law claims such as private nuisance from the scope of costs protection, the requirements of paragraph 2 (a), (b) and (d) of Decision VI/8k have not been met yet. The MoP endorsed this recommendation (in Decision VII/8s) and requested that, as a matter of urgency, the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures should be taken to ensure that the allocation of costs in all court procedures subject to Article 9, including private nuisance claims, is fair and equitable, and not prohibitively expensive.

- 3.14 **Commentary:** The Department notes the ACCC position that a lack of costs protection for private nuisance claims is presenting a barrier to justice in environmental matters in practice and would welcome any evidence on this issue.
- 3.15 There have been two cases in the Court of Appeal in England and Wales in which costs protection orders for private nuisance claims were sought and refused since the UK acceded to the Aarhus Convention: *Austin v Miller Argent*¹¹ and *Morgan v Hinton Organics (Wessex) Ltd*¹². In the Austin case the Court stated that such a claim for private nuisance could come within the scope of Article 9(3) provided the nature of the complaint has a close link with the environmental matters regulated by the Convention and the claim if successful would confer significant public environmental benefits. Both parties in each case then raised a communication with the ACCC. [in the form of ACCC/C/2013/85¹³ and ACCC/C/2013/86¹⁴].
- 3.16 The Department is not aware of any judgments considering the application of the Aarhus Convention in private nuisance claims in this jurisdiction but would welcome any examples of a Northern Ireland court considering this issue.
- 3.17 As it currently stands, the Costs Protection Regulations only apply to applications brought by a member of the public for judicial review or for review under the provision of any statutory provision as defined by regulation 2 of the Costs Protection Regulations. There may be a concern that extending the Regulations to include private nuisance claims runs the risk of increasing legal challenges

¹¹ Original private nuisance case *Austin v Miller Argent* [2011] EWCA Civ 928, the costs of those proceedings were later appealed in *Austin v Miller Argent* [2014] EWCA Civ 1012. In the Austin case, the applicant brought a claim in private nuisance alleging that she was affected by noise and dust pollution from the respondent's mining operations. The Court noted that the obligation to impose a Protected Costs Order (PCO) under court rules was limited to Aarhus Convention claims that were judicial review cases, but that there was also a discretionary power to order a PCO under general case management powers. Whilst a PCO was refused on the facts of the case, the Court of Appeal considered whether the Aarhus Convention has any application to private nuisance claims.

¹² Original private nuisance case from Queen's Bench Division in E&W A2/2008/0038, and then later appealed in *Morgan v Hinton Organics (Wessex) Ltd* [2009] EWCA Civ 107

¹³ [ACCC/C/2013/85 United Kingdom | UNECE](#)

¹⁴ [ACCC/C/2013/86 United Kingdom | UNECE](#)

between private persons which have only a tenuous link to the environment or to wider public environmental benefit.

3.18 The Department also notes that parties can choose to resolve private nuisance claims outside of the courts in Northern Ireland. This can be achieved through other dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation, which helps parties avoid the time, cost and stress of adversarial court proceedings.

3.19 If the Costs Protection Regulations were to be extended to private nuisance claims, one option could be to make such protection available only at the court's discretion, where the court considers a particular dispute to be sufficiently closely connected to an environmental matter. Additionally, provision could be made for the court to consider any wider public interest raised by the case. This would be similar to the approach of the English Court of Appeal in the *Austin v Millar Argent* case.

Question 6: Please provide any data or information you hold on the costs involved in pursuing a private nuisance claim with an environmental component.

Question 7: Please provide any experience you have in a case in which costs protection measures were sought for private nuisance claims.

Question 8: Please provide your views on the courts using judicial discretion to determine whether a private nuisance claim should benefit from the Costs Protection Regulations. What are the likely benefits and potential risks of doing so?

Question 9: What particular private nuisance claims should benefit from costs protection under the Aarhus Convention?

Question 10: Please provide your views on mediation or other forms of dispute resolution as a means to resolve private nuisance disputes.

(c) Cross-undertakings for damages

3.20 The issue: In its final report on Decision VI/8k, the ACCC stated that, based on a lack of data before the Committee, it was not clear whether the courts in Northern Ireland still in practice require cross-undertakings for damages when an injunction is sought in an Aarhus claim. They considered that this uncertainty fails to meet the requirement in Article 3(1) for a clear, transparent and consistent framework to implement the Convention's provisions.

3.21 ACCC comments: Further to the above, the ACCC sought up-to-date data regarding '(a) the number of Aarhus claims in which an interim injunction was sought; (b) whether a cross-undertaking was required; and (c) if so, the amount required'.

3.22 Commentary: Cross-undertakings may typically be required to compensate the respondent to an application for an injunction for any loss or damage they might suffer if an interim injunction is granted but the application is later refused. There is no rule in Northern Ireland which stipulates that such an undertaking will be required, rather it is at the court's discretion. Under the Costs Protection Regulations (see regulation 5), the court is required, when making a cross undertaking, to consider the terms of the order overall, so as not to make the case prohibitively expensive for the applicant. As of 9 June 2023, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service record the number of Aarhus cases. Following a manual examination of a random sample of such cases, no record of an order for a cross-undertaking for damages was found.

3.23 The Department would welcome further evidence as part of this review.

Question 11: Please provide any data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved where an interim injunction was sought and whether the issue of a cross-undertaking in damages arose, in particular:

- (a) the number of Aarhus claims in which an interim injunction was sought**
- (b) whether a cross-undertaking was required; and**
- (c) if so, the amount required.**

(d) *Costs for procedures with multiple claimants*

- 3.24 **The issue:** The ACCC sees no basis for a rule requiring separate costs caps for each claimant, in particular, where the claimants make the same legal arguments on the same factual basis. Although the ACCC recommendation refers specifically to England and Wales, the recommendation applies equally to Northern Ireland where a similar rule is in place.
- 3.25 **ACCC comments:** In its final compliance report on Decision VI/8k, the ACCC commented: ‘the ACCC does not agree that it is undesirable for claimants to be able to share the costs burden for challenges within the scope of the Convention’.
- 3.26 **Commentary:** The Civil Procedure Rules in England and Wales stipulate that the costs caps in the Environmental Costs Protection Regime apply only to individual claimants and/or defendants, and ‘may not be exceeded, irrespective of the number of receiving parties.’ (CPR 46.26(4)). The Costs Protection Regulations in Northern Ireland (in regulation 3) set costs caps for applicants and respondents respectively but do not make any specific provision in regard to costs in cases of multiple claimants raising the same issues on a similar factual basis and legal argument. It is acknowledged that additional claimants may lead to increased costs of proceedings. The viability of a separate ‘shared claimant’ default costs cap could be considered (including, for example, if a second claimant is only raising the same legal argument). As an example, caps could be set at one and a half times the default individual claimant cap (e.g., £7,500, if there are two claimants who are individuals and £15,000 for two claimants otherwise), but crucially still retain the potential for variability. This would allow claimants to share the costs burden, if they wished to do so, but also reflect the fact that multiple claimants can increase the administration and complexity of legal arguments. This could be considered a positive development without undermining the principles of the current Costs Protection Regulations. The Department would welcome views on this issue including any risks associated with a shared claimants costs cap.

Question 12: Would you support a default shared claimant costs cap, and, if so, what form should that take and should any conditions apply (for example, only where a second claimant is raising the same legal arguments)?

Question 13: What are the likely potential benefits and risks of a default shared claimant costs cap?

(e) Costs orders against or in favour of interveners

3.27 The issue: The ACCC considers that members of the public who join proceedings as interveners *in support of* the claimant should also be entitled to benefit from the Convention's requirement that proceedings must not be prohibitively expensive. Although this ACCC recommendation refers specifically to England and Wales, it applies equally to Northern Ireland where similar rules are in place.

3.28 ACCC comments: The ACCC's position is that costs protection should be afforded to interveners during proceedings. The ACCC considers that 'members of the public who join proceedings as interveners in support of the claimant are also entitled to benefit from the Convention's requirement that proceedings must not be prohibitively expensive'. They find that the UK has not yet achieved compliance on this point.

3.29 Commentary: The Department is not aware of any Aarhus case in which costs were sought or imposed against an intervener. Further views on this issue are welcomed.

Question 14: Please provide any data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved where it has been appropriate for interveners to intervene to support claimants and whether there has been uncertainty as to costs liability. Did this uncertainty dissuade an intervener from taking part in the claim?

Question 15: The ACCC's position is that costs protection should be afforded to interveners during proceedings. Should interveners in support of an Aarhus claim have any additional protection from costs beyond the current position? What are the likely benefits and risks of doing so?

4. Judicial Review Time Limit

Current position in Northern Ireland

- 4.1 Court rules in Northern Ireland currently provide that an application for leave to bring a judicial review must be brought within three months from the date when the grounds for the application first arose unless the court considers that there is good reason for extending that period.¹⁵ Previously a leave application had to be brought “promptly” and in any event within three months but the promptitude requirement was removed in 2017 following a public consultation.
- 4.2 Regarding when “the grounds for the application first arose”, case law has established that this is generally the date on which the decision under challenge was taken.

Compliance issue

- 4.3 Paragraph 2(c) of Decision VII/8s “requests the UK to, as a matter of urgency, take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to:

(c) Further review its rules regarding the time frame for the bringing of applications for judicial review in Northern Ireland to ensure that the legislative measures involved are fair and equitable and amount to a clear and transparent framework”.
- 4.4 Whilst welcoming the removal of a promptitude requirement, in its final report on Decision VI/8k the ACCC found that, by failing to establish clear time limits within which claims may be brought and to set a clear and consistent point at which time starts to run, i.e. the date on which a claimant knew, or ought to have known, of the act, or omission, at stake, Northern Ireland has still not complied with the requirement in Article 9, paragraph 4, that procedures subject to Article 9 are fair and equitable.

¹⁵ The Rules of the Court of Judicature (NI) 1980 Order 53 rule 4 [RsCJ formerly RSC](#)

Commentary

4.5 Judicial review is a constitutionally important mechanism which allows an individual or organisation affected by a decision taken by a public body to challenge that decision in court. The time limits for bringing a claim are intended to strike a balance between the need for legal certainty and the right of access to justice. This was recently summarised by Mr Justice Scofield *In The Matter Of An Application By William Bannon For Leave To Apply For Judicial Review*¹⁶ in which he stated:

“The courts have frequently emphasised the importance of legal certainty in the context of judicial review time limits since [O’Reilly v Mackman [1983] 2 AC 237], including for example in this jurisdiction in Re Turkington’s Application [2014] NIQB 58 (at para [33], Treacy J referring to good administration requiring “decisiveness and finality” in the absence of compelling reasons); and Re Musgrave Retail’s Application [2012] 109 (at para [13], Maguire J referring to the “need for speed” in the initiation of judicial review decisions and it being “important that a point in time is arrived at which it can confidently be said that a public law decision is beyond question”). Where time is to be extended, it is well established that there should be a good reason for doing so; and an onus lies upon an applicant seeking such an extension to account for all relevant periods of delay.”

4.6 As noted above, provision already exists in the rules to allow the court to use its discretion to extend the three-month time limit where there is good reason to do so. The question of when the claimant knew (or ought to have known) enough information to make an application for judicial review will be a relevant factor, which is material to the question of whether an extension of time should be granted.

4.7 Changing the position so that the time limit is calculated from the date the decision became known to the public and not from the date that the contested

¹⁶ Paragraph 17 [2024] NIKB 25

decision was taken, was not considered in the 2017 consultation which resulted in the removal of the promptitude requirement. Therefore, the Department would welcome views on the likely benefits and potential risks associated with the implementation of this recommendation as a means of ensuring that the judicial review regime in Northern Ireland meets the UK's obligations under the Aarhus Convention.

- 4.8 The Department understands that the aim of the ACCC's recommendation is to ensure that an individual or organisation seeking to make an Aarhus Convention claim can take full advantage of the time limit. Respondents are asked to indicate whether they consider that this change should be made in Northern Ireland in order to ensure compliance or whether there is an alternative that might be more effective in enabling us to meet our obligations under the Convention.
- 4.9 The Department has identified two possible options to implement the ACCC's recommendation. Both would involve changing the rules so that the time limit starts from when a decision is made public rather than when it was taken. The first option would be to define in legislation 'when a decision is made public' as the date when that decision was published. The second would be to leave it to the court to establish the test as to when a decision is considered to have been made public, or when a claimant knew or ought to have known about that decision. While the first would provide for greater certainty as to when an eligible judicial review claim may be made, the latter could provide judges greater flexibility to consider the specific circumstances of each case when determining whether a claim was made in time.
- 4.10 The Department would welcome views from the judiciary, legal practitioners and other stakeholders on how the ACCC's recommendation ought to be implemented, with particular regard to how it might impact the operation of the courts.

Question 16: What are the likely benefits of changing when the time limit for bringing an Aarhus Convention claim starts to run as suggested by the ACCC?

Question 17: What are the potential risks of changing when the time limit for bringing an Aarhus Convention claim starts to run as suggested by the ACCC?

Question 18: If legislative provision was to be made so that the time limit starts when a decision is made public, should 'when a decision is made public' be defined as the date when that decision is published or should this be left open for the courts to determine?

Question 19: Are there other approaches which could better address the non-compliance finding regarding judicial review time limits in Northern Ireland?

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Department intends to publish a response as soon as practicable following the closing date of this Call for Evidence. Any screening and impact assessments will be completed as part of the Department's response to this Call for Evidence and ongoing policy development in this area.

6. Summary of Questions

We welcome responses to the following questions, which refer to the specific issues raised in the sections above. You do not need to answer every question. Please give reasons for your responses, including examples and data from cases.

Costs Protection Regulations

Question 1: How effective are the Costs Protection Regulations in ensuring that Aarhus Convention cases are not prohibitively expensive to bring?

Question 2: Please provide data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved since February 2017 and their outcomes.

Question 3: Please provide data on the impact, if any, of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved.

(a) Costs protection on appeal

Question 4: Can you provide examples of occasions when appeal costs have proved to be prohibitively expensive to continuing with an appeal in an Aarhus case?

Question 5: Do the Costs Protection Regulations require to be clarified to ensure Aarhus cases that go to appeal are not prohibitively expensive? What are the likely benefits and risks of doing so?

(b) Types of claims covered

Question 6: Please provide any data or information you hold on the costs involved in pursuing a private nuisance claim with an environmental component.

Question 7: Please provide any experience you have in a case in which costs protection measures were sought for private nuisance claims.

Question 8: Please provide your views on the courts using judicial discretion to determine whether a private nuisance claim should benefit from the Costs Protection Regulations. What are the likely benefits and potential risks of doing so?

Question 9: What particular private nuisance claims should benefit from costs protection under the Aarhus Convention?

Question 10: Please provide your views on mediation or other forms of dispute resolution as a means to resolve private nuisance.

(c) Cross-undertakings for damages

Question 11: Please provide any data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved where an interim injunction was sought and whether the issue of a cross-undertaking in damages arose, in particular:

- (a) the number of Aarhus claims in which an interim injunction was sought;
- (b) whether a cross-undertaking was required; and
- (c) if so, the amount required.

(d) Costs for procedures with multiple claimants

Question 12: Would you support a default shared claimant costs cap, and, if so, what form should that take and should any conditions apply (for example, only where a second claimant is raising the same legal arguments)?

Question 13: What are the likely potential benefits and risks of a default shared claimant costs cap?

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Question 19: Are there other approaches which could better address the non-compliance finding regarding judicial review time limits in Northern Ireland?

List of Recipients

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

Bar Library of NI

Belfast City Council

Belfast Solicitors' Association

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Committee on the Administration of Justice

Departmental Solicitors Office

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Environment and Planning Law Association of Northern Ireland

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Infrastructure NI

Lady Chief Justice Northern Ireland

Law Centre (NI)

Law Society of Northern Ireland

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Mid Ulster District Council

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

NI political party leaders

Northern Ireland Environment Link

Northern Ireland Executive Ministers and NI Executive Secretariat

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister

Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland

PILS Project

Planning Appeals Commission

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Northern Ireland

Royal Society of Ulster Architects

Royal Town Planning Institute Northern Ireland

Rural Community Network

School of Law - The Queen's University of Belfast

Shadow Civil Justice Council

The Law School at the University of Ulster (Jordanstown)

The River Faughan Anglers Ltd

Tidy Northern Ireland

Tourism NI

Translink

Ulster Farmers' Union

Woodland Trust

World Wildlife Fund, Northern Ireland

Annex B

Privacy Notice – Consultations (DoJ)

Data Controller Name: Department of Justice

Address: Knockview Buildings, Stormont, BELFAST, BT4 3SG

Email: AtoJ.Consultation@justice-ni.gov.uk

Data Protection Officer Name: DoJ Data Protection Officer

Telephone: (028) 9037 8617

Email: DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.gov.uk

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how we may use personal data is a key element of the Data Protection Act and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”). The Department of Justice (“the Department”) is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy.

Purpose for processing

We will process personal data provided in response to consultations for informing the development of our policy, guidance or other regulatory work in the subject area of the request for views. We may publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents but will include the names of organisations responding.

Lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity as a Government Department.

We will only process any special category personal data you provide, which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious belief, health, disability or sexual life/orientation when it is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest under Article 9(2)(g) of GDPR, in the exercise of the function of the Department and to monitor equality.

How will your information be used and shared?

We process the information internally for the above stated purpose. For the time that we are processing this data, it will be held on a secure IT system and access to it will be controlled. We do not intend to share your personal data with any third party. Any specific requests from a third party for us to share your personal data with them will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the data protection laws.

How long will we keep your information?

We will retain consultation response information until our work on the subject matter of the consultation is complete and in line with the Department's approved Retention and Disposal Schedule.

What are your rights?

You have:

- the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being processed and access to your personal data;
- an entitlement to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete;
- a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing in specific circumstances;
- the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data in specific circumstances;
- the right to data portability in specific circumstances; and
- rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

How to complain if you are not happy with how we process your personal information

If you wish to request access, object or raise a complaint about how we have handled your data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office:

Information Commissioner's Office
 Wycliffe House
 Water Lane
 Wilmslow
 Cheshire
 SK9 5AF
 Tel: 0303 123 1113
 Email: casework@ico.org.uk
<https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Annex C

**Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in
Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**

Article 9

Access to Justice

1. Each Party shall, within the framework of its national legislation, ensure that any person who considers that his or her request for information under article 4 has been ignored, wrongfully refused, whether in part or in full, inadequately answered, or otherwise not dealt with in accordance with the provisions of that article, has access to a review procedure before a court of law or another independent and impartial body established by law.

In the circumstances where a Party provides for such a review by a court of law, it shall ensure that such a person also has access to an expeditious procedure established by law that is free of charge or inexpensive for reconsideration by a public authority or review by an independent and impartial body other than a court of law.

Final decisions under this paragraph 1 shall be binding on the public authority holding the information. Reasons shall be stated in writing, at least where access to information is refused under this paragraph.

2. Each Party shall, within the framework of its national legislation, ensure that members of the public concerned

(a) Having a sufficient interest

or, alternatively,

(b) Maintaining impairment of a right, where the administrative procedural law of a Party requires this as a precondition,

have access to a review procedure before a court of law and/or another independent and impartial body established by law, to challenge the substantive and procedural legality of any decision, act or omission subject to the provisions of article 6 and, where so provided for under national law and without prejudice to paragraph 3 below, of other relevant provisions of this Convention.

What constitutes a sufficient interest and impairment of a right shall be determined in accordance with the requirements of national law and consistently with the objective of giving the public concerned wide access to justice within the scope of this Convention. To this end, the interest of any non-governmental organization meeting the requirements referred to in article 2, paragraph 5, shall be deemed sufficient for the purpose of subparagraph (a) above. Such organizations shall also be deemed to have rights capable of being impaired for the purpose of subparagraph (b) above.

The provisions of this paragraph 2 shall not exclude the possibility of a preliminary review procedure before an administrative authority and shall not affect the requirement of exhaustion of administrative review procedures prior to recourse to judicial review procedures, where such a requirement exists under national law.

3. In addition and without prejudice to the review procedures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, each Party shall ensure that, where they meet the criteria, if any, laid down in its national law, members of the public have access to administrative or judicial procedures to challenge acts and omissions by private persons and public authorities which contravene provisions of its national law relating to the environment.
4. In addition and without prejudice to paragraph 1 above, the procedures referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 above shall provide adequate and effective remedies, including injunctive relief as appropriate, and be fair, equitable, timely and not prohibitively expensive. Decisions under this article shall be given or recorded in writing. Decisions of courts, and whenever possible of other bodies, shall be publicly accessible.

5. In order to further the effectiveness of the provisions of this article, each Party shall ensure that information is provided to the public on access to administrative and judicial review procedures and shall consider the establishment of appropriate assistance mechanisms to remove or reduce financial and other barriers to access to justice.



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

Access to Justice in relation to the Aarhus Convention

A Call for Evidence

The Call for Evidence seeks views from those with an interest in the provisions of the Aarhus Convention regarding legal challenges in relation to environmental matters.

Responding to the Call for Evidence

Please use this questionnaire to tell us your views.

The closing date for receipt of responses is **5pm on Friday 28 February 2025**.

Please note that it is unlikely that responses to the Call for Evidence will be accepted after this date.

Please send your response by email to:

DoJCivilJusticeandJudicialPolicyDivision@justice-ni.gov.uk

Privacy Notice

All responses to this Call for Evidence may be published on the Department's website except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity, e.g. a member of the public. All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. Where relevant, email addresses and telephone numbers will be removed from responses. However, apart from this, they will be published in full. For more information about how personal data is handled, please see the Department's consultation privacy notice at Annex B of the Call for Evidence paper.

Your response, and all other responses to this Call for Evidence, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA") and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("EIR"). However, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, you should explain in your response which particular section(s) of your response is confidential and why it should potentially be withheld (please refer to the Information Commissioner's Office's guidance on the application of the section 41 exemption (Information provided in confidence). This will form part of the consideration should the Department receive a request for the information under FOIA or EIR.

Consultee Details

Please enter your details below:

Full Name:	
Title:	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Dr <i>(please tick as appropriate)</i>
Organisation:	
Job Title: <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Address, including Postcode:	
Email Address:	

Question 1:

How effective are the Costs Protection Regulations in ensuring that Aarhus Convention cases are not prohibitively expensive to bring?

Question 2:

Please provide data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved since February 2017 and their outcomes.

Question 3:

Please provide data on the impact, if any, of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved.

Question 4:

Can you provide examples of occasions when appeal costs have proved to be prohibitively expensive to continuing with an appeal in an Aarhus case?

Question 5:

Do the Costs Protection Regulations require to be clarified to ensure Aarhus cases that go to appeal are not prohibitively expensive? What are the likely benefits and risks of doing so?

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Please provide any data or information you hold on the costs involved in pursuing a private nuisance claim with an environmental component.

Question 7:

Please provide any experience you have in a case in which costs protection measures were sought for private nuisance claims.

Question 8:

Please provide your views on the courts using judicial discretion to determine whether a private nuisance claim should benefit from the Costs Protection Regulations. What are the likely benefits and potential risks of doing so?

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- a) the number of Aarhus claims in which an interim injunction was sought;
- (b) whether a cross-undertaking was required; and
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Would you support a default shared claimant costs cap, and, if so, what form should that take and should any conditions apply (for example, only where a second claimant is raising the same legal arguments)?

Question 13:

What are the likely potential benefits and risks of a default shared claimant costs cap?

Question 14:

Please provide any data on the number of Aarhus claims in which you have been involved where it has been appropriate for interveners to intervene to support claimants and whether there has been uncertainty as to costs liability. Did this uncertainty dissuade an intervener from taking part in the claim?

Question 15:

The ACCC's position is that costs protection should be afforded to interveners during proceedings. Should interveners in support of an Aarhus claim have any additional protection from costs beyond the current position? What are the likely benefits and risks of doing so?

Question 16:

What are the likely benefits of changing when the time limit for bringing an Aarhus Convention claim starts to run as suggested by the ACCC?

Question 17:

What are the potential risks of changing when the time limit for bringing an Aarhus Convention claim starts to run as suggested by the ACCC?

Question 18:

If legislative provision was to be made so that the time limit starts when a decision is made public, should 'when a decision is made public' be defined as the date when that decision is published or should this be left open for the courts to determine?

Question 19:

Are there other approaches which could better address the non-compliance finding regarding judicial review time limits in Northern Ireland?

Committee	Regeneration and Growth Committee
Date:	13th February 2025
Report from:	Head of Assets

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	Bells Lane – Dunmurry Gospel Hall

1.0 **Background**

1. Bells Lane car park is situated off Bells Lane and Queensway, Lisburn. The park provides access to the public for walking and leisure purposes and comprises 49 car park spaces.
2. There is access via a gate to one side of the car park, to the BMX Track which is located to the rear of the park. The BMX Club has its' own car park, which is accessed via the gate and when hosting large events patrons will often use the Bells Lane car park also.
3. The Council have been approached by Dunmurry Gospel Hall for permission to erect a temporary portable building on the car park in order to facilitate gospel meetings from late August through September 2025.
4. The event, if approved, will require Council temporarily setting aside the Byelaws which prohibit the following activities to preach, lecture or take part in any meeting for political, religious or any purpose or take part in any public show, performance or demonstration, except with the prior consent of the Council and in such part of the facility as may be set aside for that purpose.
5. If minded to support this request then with Council's approval, this Byelaw can be set aside for the duration of the event. The organisers will then be required to engage with the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and comply with all usual booking requirements such as providing adequate insurance details and necessary Risk Assessments.

Key Issues

1. The proposed building will measure 9 metres by 15 metres and additional portable toilet facilities will also be provided. The proposed term is four to five weeks from Saturday 30th August 2025 until approximately 11th October 2025. Gospel meetings will be held Monday to Friday daily from 8:00pm until 9:00pm and Sunday 4.30pm to 5.30pm.
2. The Gospel Hall will provide its own security and insurance cover.
3. It is proposed that permission will be granted via a licence agreement. Any licence agreement will reflect the Council's bye laws. In addition, the grouping will require to have regard, as per Council events, for the Statutory Advisory Group (SAG) recommendations for hosting events. It is proposed that there is no

	<p>financial consideration as part of the licence and the Church are obliged to make good any disruption or damage caused.</p> <p>4. There are a limited number of car parking spaces within the car park. The building should be located in a position which causes the least impact to the number of spaces and still allows access to the BMX Club gate.</p> <p>5. Both the BMX Club and the neighbouring Aberdelghy Golf Club have been consulted and have no major planned events during this period. It is therefore anticipated there will be minimal conflict between potential car park users.</p> <p>6. The car park closes each evening at 9:00pm and it is proposed that the Gospel meetings be moved forward to ensure the park is clear by this time.</p>	
	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that Members approve the request to utilise Bells Lane car park to erect a temporary portable building for Dunmurry Gospel Hall to facilitate gospel meetings and that the Council approve the setting aside of the Byelaws to enable this request to progress.</p>	
3.0	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Not applicable.</p>	
4.0	<p><u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u></p>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	Yes
4.2	<p>A recent Equality Screening has been screened out with mitigations in place. This screening has been recently approved at the Community and Wellbeing Committee 4th February 2025. This incorporates for all Parks and Amenities sites. This is included within the Appendices.</p> <p>Disabled access to the footpath has been considered and will not be impacted given the location in which the temporary building will be situated.</p> <p>Officers will engage with the event organisers regarding the required mitigations.</p>	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	No
4.4	This is a temporary use to facilitate church outreach meetings which will have no impact on the rural community.	

Appendices:	Appendix 5: Parks Open Spaces Equality Screening February 2025
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Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template

Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened.

All Council owned parks & open spaces within the remit of Parks & Amenities Service Unit are being considered under this process. These spaces are used by members of the public, contractors, 3rd party event organisers and our own Council staff.

The facilities managed by the Parks and Amenities unit include **Parks/open spaces** incorporating Childrens play areas, Outdoor gyms, Multi Use Games Areas, Bike and pump tracks, indoor tennis, Caravan pitches, Dog exercise areas.

Sports turf Senior Football, Junior football pitches, Baseball diamond, Gaelic pitch, Cricket Square, Cross country course, Golf course, Outdoor Bowling greens.

Facility users

Allotments: Allotment holders, Disability groups, Horticultural workshops

Cemeteries: funeral directors, cemetery visitors

Council events Mayors' parade and Family fun day. Park life, Music /Jazz Twilight night, Christmas lights, Teddy bear picnic, ceremonial events. Colour runs. Biodiversity projects, Woodland and Bat walks.

Externally organised events have included car show meets, institutions and community sector events, , food festivals, IFA Disability football, IFA Grassroots football, Dawn church services, corporate days, Park runs, schools' sports days, Football league and family fun events

Name of the activity/policy/project

Parks & Amenities parks & open spaces

Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?

This is a revised policy

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?

To ensure that our parks & open spaces have taken consideration of S.75 equality and good relations. Many of our open spaces are utilised by 3rd party event organisers and therefore consideration must be given to this process.

Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.

Council owned/managed open spaces and amenities are intended for everyone to enjoy. This includes residents and visitors to the district. Our aim is to provide amenities and facilities that will be attractive and accessible to all ages and categories, including the Section 75 categories. Open spaces provide opportunities to all for informal recreation, physical activities and events along with areas for relaxation. LCCC park and open spaces include a variety of activities/sites such as gym, events, open space, allotment, walking & cycling routes, sport, cemeteries and Allotments. It has been proven that the use of open green spaces can provide physical and mental health benefits to users, no matter which section 75 group they belong to. The Council recognise that facilities must be promoted so that everyone will wish to use them, feel safe and have access to the site based on the principles inclusion. For constituted groups using the parks they will be asked to promote equality of opportunity and good relations

Open spaces within the Council area will particularly benefit certain groups whose needs have been considered, in terms of accessibility and inclusion. Many parks, trails and greenways have been designed with particular groups in mind, for example they are suitable for those with mobility issues, including those who look after or care for children using buggies/pushchairs, those who have disabilities and older people who are using rollator walking aids or walking sticks. The council are keen to continue this in the future, taking consideration of certain Section 75 group needs, in the design and construction of new open spaces.

In local equipped areas for play, any new play equipment will be introduced for children with disabilities, so that they have the ability to use the same equipment as those without disabilities e.g. accessible ground level trampolines.

The Council wish to make green open spaces as accessible for as many section 75 groups as possible. At a number of sites, where it is appropriate, tactile maps and braille signs will be installed. This means that many more sites will be accessible for those who are blind and partially sighted. Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play and Local Equipped Areas for Play will be installed in local communities, so that residents can access these areas in their own community. This will have a positive effect on those with particular political opinions, within racial groups and who have differing religious beliefs. These sections of the community can access open spaces which are convenient to them, without having to travel into another community where they may not feel comfortable to play or carry out physical activity.

The Council recognises the need for creating accessible places for everyone to experience the great outdoors. Where opportunities arise the Council will explore new ways to access the countryside. If this is through obtaining formal planning permissions or permissive path agreements, with local land owners, the Council will pursue all avenues, to create new trails which are accessible to all.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

Community & Wellbeing management team

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council owns the activity.

Parks & Amenities Service Unit within Communities & Wellbeing Directorate will implement the activity.

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project?

Yes

If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.

Limited budget, unsuccessful funding bids, government policy including planning restrictions.

Groups using the parks for events without relevant consents

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the schedule will impact upon? Delete if not applicable.

External Customers –

Other public sector organisations –

Voluntary/community/trade unions –

Other

Staff	Yes.
Service Users	Yes. Particularly those with access issues.
Other Public Sector Organisations – please list	Yes. Belfast City Council Lagan Valley Regional Park. Athletics NI, Belfast hills, Lough Neagh partnership
Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions – please list	Yes. The voluntary and community sector who wish to use open spaces and 3 rd party event organisers.
Other – please list (eg, Elected Members, delivery partners, contractors, etc)	Elected Members, delivery partners and contractors during construction works.

Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Community Planning Partners
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Corporate Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Regional Development Strategy	NI Executive
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Connect, Invest, Transform investment Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Local Development Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
LCCC Open space strategy	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Health & Safety Policies	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
LCCC local Biodiversity Action Plan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Pitch strategy	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Available evidence

What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.

The Council recognises the importance of creating a healthy, active and accessible environment connecting places and people. We also recognise that as part of this, biodiversity, conservation and adapting to climate change are

key. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a huge upsurge in people exercising outdoors. This, coupled with a desire from Council for more local DEA projects, has increased the opportunities for the development of open spaces for recreation throughout the Council area.

We have engaged with partners such as RNIB to identify areas for improvement in our Parks and then sought to avail of grant opportunities through the Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme to install tactile maps and braille signs. More recently we have been working with our local deaf community to ensure walks and talks are accessible for them.

The Council's Customer Care interface provides a regular source of useful user feedback, which we consider, when making changes to open space areas.

Most up to date NISRA population data from Census 2021 (published 22/09/22) [Lisburn and Castlereagh Census Data](#)

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information												
Religious Belief	2021 Census data indicates that 27% of the LCCC population were brought up in the Catholic religion while 73% were brought up in the Protestant & Other Christian religion												
Political Opinion	<p>The Local Government Election in May 2023 demonstrated the following weighting in the Borough’s political opinion. Note: only 52% of those eligible submitted a vote.</p> <table><tr><th>DUP (%)</th><th>Alliance (%)</th><th>UUP (%)</th><th>SF (%)</th><th>SDLP (%)</th><th>Ind (%)</th></tr><tr><td>35</td><td>32.5</td><td>15</td><td>10</td><td>5</td><td>2.5</td></tr></table>	DUP (%)	Alliance (%)	UUP (%)	SF (%)	SDLP (%)	Ind (%)	35	32.5	15	10	5	2.5
DUP (%)	Alliance (%)	UUP (%)	SF (%)	SDLP (%)	Ind (%)								
35	32.5	15	10	5	2.5								
Racial Group	Using the same Census/boundary data indicates that just over 4% of the population were from an ethnic minority group												
Age	<p>The population in 2021 totalled 149,106:</p> <p>28,331 (0-14 years)</p> <p>44,731 (15-39 years)</p> <p>49,205 (40-64 years)</p> <p>26,839 (65+ years)</p>												

Marital Status	For the 16+ population in relation to marital and civil partnerships: 33% single 52% married or civil partnership 3% separated. 6% Divorced or formerly in a civil partnership. 6% Widowed or surviving partner from a civil partnership
Sexual Orientation	The Census 2021 data indicates that 91% identified as Straight or heterosexual, 2% of the household population in identified as Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexual orientation, while 7% Prefer not to say or not stated.
Men & Women Generally	The LCCC population (2021) was 51% female and 49% male. This reflects the overall NI position
Disability	Using the same census data as above indicates that 32% of the population had a long-term health problem or disability. Several studies have shown a positive association between access to natural environments and increased rates of physical activity for all ages. Physical activity can help reduce obesity, improve mental health and overall health and well-being. We need to make sure that our open spaces are inclusive to all.
People with and without Dependents	In 2021, of the 60,143 households in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City council area 14.4% (8,661) had dependent children. 10.98% of the population on average provide unpaid care, with 3.4% providing more than 50 hours per week.

Needs, experiences and priorities.

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in

relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious Belief	Accessibility to open spaces in their own, local community, where they feel safe.
Political Opinion	Accessibility to open spaces in their own, local community, where they feel safe. The Council recognises the diverse community celebrations and cultural traditions within Northern Ireland. For all events, Council takes a positive action approach, working with communities, agencies, and individuals to address any potential environmental or social impacts of planned events as appropriate and to ensure community cohesion. All community celebrations/events will be considered and assessed in line with event booking process. Groups will also be asked to ensure they apply community cohesion principles to ensure a welcoming space. The good neighbour principle should be applied also to ensure people close to open spaces are advised on significant events
Racial Group	Accessibility to open spaces in their own, local community, where they feel safe. Some ethnic minorities, who are new to the area, may need access to translation of information, and their knowledge of open spaces may be limited.
Age	Some older people may be less mobile than others and will need safe level surfaces in order to use open spaces. They may also need rest areas (seating or shelter) and well-lit areas, where they will feel safe. Accessible toilets will also be required for some older people. Young children and those in prams are considered to ensure that as far as possible there is access to accommodate needs
Marital Status	No particular needs identified for people of different marital status

Sexual Orientation	No particular needs identified for people of different sexual orientation, but with any open space it is about promoting accessibility and safety
Men & Women Generally	Need for safe spaces with areas which are well-lit, especially at night.
Disability	Paths, trails and greenways accessible for wheelchair users and those with other mobility conditions. . Signage and information available in formats that those with visual/hearing impairments can access. Accessible toilet provision. Other disabled people (for example neurodivergent people, those with mental health conditions) may also benefit from the provision of more quality open spaces that are convenient to where they live.
People with and without Dependents	Carers of children/older people/disabled people need accessibility for buggies/wheelchairs/walking aids so that they can enjoy open spaces as a family group. The Council recognises the diverse community celebrations and cultural traditions within Northern Ireland. For all events, Council takes a positive action approach, working with communities, agencies, and individuals to address any potential environmental or social impacts of planned events as appropriate and to ensure community cohesion.

Needs

The main need is for accessibility for all. This includes those with disabilities, those with dependents and those who are older. People in these groups often have different needs from other groups. They may find access to the countryside difficult or limiting. If paths have steps, steep gradients, gates or small entrances, those in wheelchairs, using walking sticks, partially sighted, using pushchairs or those who are unsteady on their feet would find these obstacles difficult to overcome. Traditionally parks have been designed for able-bodied children. It has been recognised that there is also a great need for play equipment for those children who have disability so that they too can access this play space.

There is also a need for some communities to access open spaces in their local area. If those with particular religious beliefs, political opinions or racial

groups find it difficult to go into areas where people have different beliefs, opinions or are a different race, the council works with key stakeholders to promote and encourage an inclusive safe space. Combined with this the council has endeavoured to introduce Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play and Local Equipped Areas for Play. These play areas are usually convenient to residential areas. The council will ensure that the strategy provides equitable open space provision across all communities and supports community cohesion towards celebrations in line with normal event booking practices. Open spaces convenient to residential areas, also provides space for children and young people to play, who may not have access to transport.

The Council realise that appropriate path provision is necessary, so that people with disabilities, those with dependents and older people, also have access to the countryside and a place to exercise. Due care has been taken by the Council to consider these groups and many new open spaces have been designed with these groups in mind. There has also been a focus on opening local walking paths and trails. This has enabled those living in cities and towns to walk to the open space that they wish to use for exercise. This also has a positive effect on climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of individual households. Where appropriate, tactile maps and braille signs have been installed in parks to provide improved access for those who are visually impaired.

The Council also recognises a need on occasions to support some event organisers that use our open spaces with certain infrastructure, such as barriers, toilets and Gazebos.

Experiences

The experience of those with disabilities, buggies/pushchairs or rollators is that at many open space areas, they may not have full access to a site due to poorly planned walkways or barriers to using them. The Council wants to avoid this, and so all greenways, paths and parks have been carefully pre-planned to take all end users into account. Tactile maps and braille signs have also been installed at a number of sites to enable access for those who are partially sighted. Children with disabilities have experienced a lack of play equipment that is suitable for their use, in traditional playparks.

Priorities

The priorities of the groups that could be affected by access (as stated in the table above), will be full accessibility to open spaces within the council area, so that they can achieve the same benefits as those who are not in these groups.

Part 2. Screening questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 Category	Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none	Level of impact - major or minor* - see guidance below
Religious Belief	Positive – people can access open spaces which are convenient to where they live and safe.	Minor
Political Opinion	Positive – people can access open spaces which are convenient to where they live and safe.	Minor
Racial Group	Positive – people can access open spaces which are convenient to where they live and safe.	Minor
Age	Positive – more older people, particularly those with mobility issues, will be able to safely access and use open space areas, due to enhanced accessibility measures. Children will have access to open spaces which are convenient to where they live, encouraging participation in physical activity.	Minor

	Teenagers will be able to access open spaces designed with their needs in mind – pump parks, skate parks.	
Marital Status	No differential impact identified	None
Sexual Orientation	No differential impact identified	None
Men & Women Generally	No differential impact identified	None
Disability	<p>Positive - People with certain disabilities, including those who are wheelchair users, use mobility aids, and who are visually impaired will find open spaces more accessible.</p> <p>Those who are visually impaired, can use tactile maps and braille signage.</p> <p>Those who have mental health disabilities can access safe open spaces where they can relax and feel close to nature.</p>	Minor
People with and without Dependants	Positive - People with dependants, including those who use buggies or wheelchairs, will find open spaces easier to use. Open spaces will have improved facilities which whole families can enjoy – with this comes social benefits.	Minor

* See Appendix 1 for details.

2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Generally this will be undertaken when planning physical infrastructure, existing access, programming and inclusion to promote a safe and welcoming place for all. Mitigations will include working with our users and key stakeholders to achieve this and aim to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Section 75 Category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Political Opinion		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Racial Group		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Age		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Marital Status		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Sexual Orientation		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
Men & Women Generally		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.

Disability		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.
People with and without Dependents		No opportunities identified in relation to this policy for any of these groups.

Open spaces have been designed to promote inclusion for all S.75 groups. LCCC owned spaces aim to create shared spaces and not specifically aimed to accommodate one particular S.75 group over another. Sometimes, however there may be times when an event is specific to a particular section of the community and at these times a good neighbour principle should be applied. No further opportunities have been identified at this time as the needs of different groups have been considered fully in this activity. However, if further issues arise, they will be addressed.

Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025? Yes/No If yes, specify which action.

No

2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our Disability Action Plan:

1. to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

Open spaces will allow improved access so that more people with disabilities will be able to use the Council's parks and greenways. Through this, there will be more interaction between disabled people and non-disabled people, and so this may work towards promoting more positive attitudes towards disabled people. There is also the potential for use of images of disabled people in promotional material for council facilities and spaces, which will also raise awareness and promote positive attitudes.

2. to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

LCCC open spaces encourage the participation of disabled people in public life, by providing opportunities for those with disabilities to enjoy outdoor spaces, by giving them access to these spaces. When planning new sites and refurbishing existing sites, the views of those with disabilities will be sought, to ensure improved accessibility.

3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative? [if no specific impact identified, say none]	Level of impact – minor/major*
Religious Belief	Should have a positive impact as open spaces will provide a safe and secure environment.	Minor
Political Opinion	Should have a positive impact as open spaces will provide a safe and secure environment.	Minor
Racial Group	Should have a positive impact as open spaces will provide a safe and secure environment.	Minor

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief	Encouraging delivery of programme to promote inclusivity across all categories.	
Political Opinion		
Racial Group		

Multiple identity

Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

The Council recognises that no individual sits in one group and this has been given consideration.

Increased accessibility may particularly benefit older people with disabilities, younger people with disabilities, people who have dependent children or dependants who are disabled.

The development of the Council's open spaces may be considered to be designed with people with disabilities, dependents and older people in mind, however these areas can be used by anyone in the community. Is it also recognised that those using parks, trails and greenways, for example those with disabilities, will fall into other groups. They may be young or old, male or female or from a specific religious background.

Part 3. Screening decision/outcome

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

1. **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
2. **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate.
3. **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups, so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

Choose only one of these and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

Screening Decision/Outcome	Reasons/Evidence
Option 1 Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]	
Option 2 Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts identified but they	This policy will be screened out with mitigation. We have concluded that the impacts will be minor and should

can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]	generally be positive for all groups. However, in developing plans for open spaces, due consideration will be given to some issues identified, including accessibility and inclusion.
Option 3 Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) [If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]	

Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)

Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended, or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

Mitigation factors – the geography of the council area will be studied closely and open spaces will be designed taking into account path width, path incline, seating provision and rest places at points around open spaces. Entrances to parks and greenways are designed to be accessible for wheelchair users and those pushing buggies. New playparks, and those which are being refurbished, will be designed to provide play equipment for those in wheelchairs. The allotment site provides access for those with disabilities, in terms of accessible raised beds and potting benches and accessible toilets.

The screening has identified some needs and potential positive impacts on the following three groups – those with dependents, those with disabilities and those in the older age category. The impacts on these groups are now taken into consideration during construction works and the redevelopment of open spaces, and those impacts are minor or none. All measures have been taken to mitigate any potentially negative impacts on these groups.

For any event taking place, the good neighbour principle should be applied if applicable. For example if the site is to be closed, traffic considerations, loud music, litter accumulation etc then local residents should be communities with. Any event organiser will be encouraged to promote good relations and community cohesion.

Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)

If the activity/policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

N/A

Part 4. Monitoring

Two elements to monitoring:

1. Monitoring the activity generally as part of normal review and evaluation or service improvement

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

Effective monitoring will help a public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

Where possible ‘Access Counters’ will be fitted to monitor footfall and use of the open spaces.

Periodic spot surveys will also take place to gather qualitative feedback from users and to gather comments for further improvement. This can take place at Council organised events etc.

The Council’s Customer Care policy is advertised on all Park signage to encourage feedback – good or bad. All communication is responded to.

2. What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? Please give details:

Play equipment for those with disabilities will be monitored and kept in working order. Weekly and quarterly inspections by Assets unit followed up full independent annual inspection with report.

Accessibility to facilities will be constantly reviewed and improved when identified.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by: William Torrens	P&A Manger	21 Jan 2025
Reviewed by: Annie Wilson	Equality Officer	22 Jan 2025
Approved by: Gareth Lennox	HoS P&A (Acting)	22 Jan 2025

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

- Approved and 'signed off' by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy.
- Included with Committee reports, as appropriate.
- Sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting, and publishing on the LCCC website.
- Shared with relevant colleagues.
- Made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix 1 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact

*Major impact (none)

Minor impact (none)

No impact (none)

Updated Template @ Oct 2022

Committee:	Regeneration & Growth
Date:	13 February 2025
Report from:	Director of Regeneration and Growth

Confidential Report

Reason why the report is confidential:	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council holding that information).
When will the report become available:	
When will a redacted report become available:	Post consideration and agreement at Council
The report will never become available:	

Item for:	Decision
Subject:	2025/26 Tourism Major Events

Background

1. Each year the Council supports third party event organisers (up to £10,000 per event) by way of a Tourism Major Events funding programme to help support the staging of a variety of tourism events across the Council area. The events make a positive contribution to the visitor economy by bringing day visitors, bed-nights, tourism spend and positive publicity for the area.
2. Following discussion at the April 2024 Regeneration and Growth Committee the suggested reporting methodology for the outcome of the assessment of grant applications was approved for implementation from the final quarter in 2024/25 onwards.
3. It was agreed in April 2024 that the following additional information be provided to the Committee:
 - Event Promoter
 - Brief Event Description
 - Event target outputs
 - Total number of applications received
 - the number of unsuccessful or withdrawn applications, with high-level general summary narrative as to why they were unsuccessful or withdrawn
4. In addition, Officers have required event organisers to make all reasonable endeavours to conduct all event related activity in Council area, ie event dinner, accommodation of judges/staff etc. On advice from Internal Audit, claims for expenditure incurred during the grant period will not be accepted if received more than 3 months after the grant period. These two points have been accommodated within the 2025/2026 funding guidance.

5. The full complement of guidance documents, including the application form, assessment criteria, scoring matrix, and post-event evaluation form are appended to this report. The agreed current governance arrangements are also appended (see Appendices).
6. For information, the amount of total grant paid to the four successful third-party applicants in 2024/25 was circa £27,000.

Key Issues

1. There have been 6 applications for 2025/26 Tourism Major Events grants and, following assessment of each application, the total spend, should all events receive their full allocation will be £33,450. The following events have applied for and been assessed to receive funding:

Event Promoter	Event	Funding Allocated
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total		£33,450

More detail on the above events is appended to this report.

2. As part of the review of the Major Grants policy it was agreed that a summary of the evaluation outcomes of the previous year's Major Events Programme is also reported to the Committee for noting. This summary for the 2024-2025 events is attached.
3. It should be noted that no event applications were withdrawn or unsuccessful.

3.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Members consider and:

1. Note the proposed recipients for funding support for the 2025/26 Tourism Major Events programme,
2. Note the evaluations of recipients for 2024/25 Tourism Major Events programme.
3. Agree, in lieu of all the background appendices, to accept a summation of outcomes of both planned and past grant recipients in future presentations of this report.

3.0 Finance and Resource Implications

An allocation of £33,450 has been included in the 2025/26 Tourism Development budget estimate.

4.0	<u>Equality/Good Relations and Rural Needs Impact Assessments</u>	
4.1	Has an equality and good relations screening been carried out?	Yes
4.2	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out</p> <p>LCCC does not anticipate that the Tourism Events Funding Policy will impact adversely on any Section 75 group, but instead, through an open and transparent application process for funding requests, will promote equality of opportunity and good relations.</p>	
4.3	Has a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) been completed?	Yes
4.4	<p>Brief summary of the key issues identified and proposed mitigating actions <u>or</u> rationale why the screening was not carried out.</p> <p>Considering that almost half of the L&CCC district is rural, the economic benefits of tourism development will be realised across all the LCCC area. Economic development initiatives such as the Tourism Major and Minor Events Funding programme will benefit the local rural population and visitors to the area. The programme will contribute towards the Council's overall strategic objective of increasing economic development in the L&CCC area for the benefit of all citizens.</p>	

Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1a - Current Guidance Document</p> <p>Appendix 1b – Application form</p> <p>Appendix 1c – Current Governance Arrangements</p> <p>Appendix 1d – Scoring matrix/Assessment criteria</p> <p>Appendix 1e – Post evaluation</p> <p>Appendix 1f – Tourism Major Events 2024/25 summary</p> <p>Appendix 1g - Tourism Major Events 2025/26 summary</p> <p>Appendix 1h - Equality/ Good Relations Screening</p> <p>Appendix 1i – Rural Needs Assessment</p>
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**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR
TOURISM MAJOR EVENTS
(£1,000 - £10,000)**

**APPLICANT GUIDANCE
MANUAL**

Updated October 2024

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for organisations applying for financial assistance from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. It is inevitable that a guidance manual cannot cover every single aspect of funding therefore potential applicants are encouraged to discuss individual applications with the relevant council officer if they are uncertain about their eligibility.

This guidance document sets out the funding programme and describes the process for making an application. It is only relevant to Tourism Major Events Funding (from £1,000 to £10,000). The Council also has other grant funds available from other departments. For more information on these see www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

In addition to the criteria used, the Council will also consider a range of other factors to determine whether grants should be paid and at what level. These will include Council's strategic priorities, the number and range of applications received and the amount of funding available. These factors will vary from year to year and it does not follow that something which the Council funds one year may be funded in subsequent years.

Most evidence/documents will only be requested if an application is successful, although applicants are asked to ensure these are available when they apply.

All major event organisers will be encouraged to apply for Tourism NI event funding as well as Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council funding.

All applications must be submitted by **12 noon on Friday 13th December 2024**

The initial point of contact for financial assistance is:

Margaret McAvoy, Tourism Development Officer

Tel: 07500 066282

E-mail: Margaret.mcavoy@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

2. Application Timetable

The timetable for calls for applications for events taking place during the 2025/2026 financial year is as follows:

Item	Date
Grant promoted on Lisburn Castlereagh City Council's website. Previous 3 years applicants sent notification that the grant is open	w/c 11 November 2024
Applications to be submitted by:	12 Noon, Friday 13 th December 2024
Assessment of Applications	w/c Monday 16 th December 2024
Letters of Intent Issued	w/c Monday 6 th January 2025 (subject to sufficient budgets being approved as part of Council estimates process)
Letters of Offer Issued	February 2025 (if sufficient budgets are approved by Council)

3. Who Can Apply for Financial Assistance?

Applications will be considered from organisations who meet ALL of the following criteria:

- A. Attraction of out-of-state visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.
- B. Attraction of domestic visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.
- C. Generation of at least 50 'bed-nights' in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.
- D. Attract at least 1,250 visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

- E. Generation of positive publicity for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area strengthening the areas credibility as a tourist and visitor destination.
- F. Attraction of positive media coverage outside the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.
- G. Requires Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council assistance to ensure the overall success of the event.
- H. Have not received funding during this financial year for another event.

Council **will not** consider applications for events which:

- Do not have a financial shortfall
- are for charities or events being predominately ran for a charity;
- have no significant benefit to the Council area;
- provide no potential benefit to the public, either in the short or long term;
- could be carried out on a commercial basis;
- have already taken place or are already under way at the time of the assessment;
- are of a party political nature;
- promote a particular religion;
- go against Council policy.

4. Submitting Your Application

The following are important matters in relation to submitting your application:

- The deadline for receipt of all applications is **12noon on Friday 13th December 2024**, any applications received after this time will be deemed ineligible.
- It is essential that you avoid trying to e-mail your application at the last minute as any holdups may result in a late submission and your application therefore being deemed ineligible.
- All electronic applications must be sent to Margaret McAvoy, Tourism Development Officer on Margaret.mcavoy@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk.
- All hard-copy applications should be in an envelope clearly marked 'Application for Financial Assistance' and posted or delivered to:

Margaret McAvoy
Tourism Development Officer
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
The Island Civic Centre
Lisburn
BT27 4RL

5. Assessment Process

Assessment will be carried out by officers using a standard assessment process and will be scored against the assessment criteria (see scoring matrix Appendix 2).

5.1 Decisions

The assessment process will produce one of three outcomes:

1. An application may be rejected if it fails to meet ALL the criteria, has failed to reach the pass score, or has not scored a sufficiently high mark when a programme is oversubscribed. In such cases officers will set out the reasons for the rejection and the applicant will receive these in writing.
2. If it is clear there was a lack of clarity on the information requested in the Application Form, a decision will be made to review the project after more information is obtained. In this case the applicant will receive a request in writing asking for additional information and setting a time limit for this process. Failure to meet the time limit would result in an automatic rejection.

Assuming the information is returned within the time limit the project will be reassessed using the standard process. By this stage the applicant would be offered a grant or rejected.

3. A successful application would be given a Letter of Offer in writing setting out the amount of funding, the targets and outcomes associated with this, monitoring and evaluation requirements and any other conditions that apply. Acceptance of this would trigger the need for proof of other key documentation prior to release of grant.

5.2 Appeals Process

Following the decision to reject an application, the applicant will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the decision. The applicant may request a review of the decision, in writing, within 7 working days. The Formal Review will provide an independent process through which the applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate in writing to the Review Panel why they object to the assessment decision (see point 12).

5.3 Payment of Grant

Any groups who are successful in their application will not receive any money until:

- All previous year's paperwork has been supplied and any outstanding monies have been returned. This includes satisfactory evidence of how previous grants have been spent (vouching) and a completed post-event evaluation form.
- If successful, no grant will be paid out to an organisation if there is outstanding paperwork from any previous year's funding.
- All documentation requested within the Letter of Offer has been provided eg Event Management Plan, SAG forms and insurance documents.

The Tourism events funding will be paid in 2 parts. 50% on receipt of an invoice, providing the signed letter of offer and any other documentation has been received. The remaining 50% post event on receipt of the post event evaluation detailing that all targets, aims and objectives set were achieved.

If the event is cancelled, for any reason, no grant will be paid to the applicant and any grant already paid, in relation to the event, will be expected to be returned to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

In the event that the targets, aims and objectives have not been met these will be looked at on an individual case basis and the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome and the remaining amount to be paid.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council reserves the right to withhold the final Grant payment should the event break-even or make a profit.

Should the event make a profit amounting to more than the agreed Grant then all Grant monies already paid must be repaid to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

Claims for expenditure incurred during the Grant Period will not be accepted if received more than 3 months after the Grant Period.

6. Acknowledging a Grant Award

If running an event you must invite the Chairman and/or Mayor to attend. Occasionally you may be asked to attend a photo call/launch event. If your organisation is successful in securing financial assistance from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, it is mandatory to acknowledge this support by including the Council logo on all promotional material (both print and non-print). The logo in its various forms and logo usage guidelines are available upon request from: Corporate Communications, Civic Headquarters, Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn, BT27 4RL.

When the Council logo is printed on publications (eg flyers/booklets) produced by your organisation, you must include the following statement:

This publication is grant-aided by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. The views expressed herein are not necessarily shared or endorsed by the council. The council does not accept any responsibility for these views.

Failure to acknowledge funding in this way may result in your organisation's award being withdrawn, which in turn may affect future applications. The Council must agree all artwork with council logo before it is printed.

You must invite the Mayor or Chairman to attend the event and any related photo calls or launch events.

7. Guidance for Branches of Larger Organisations

We expect groups who wish to apply for financial assistance to have a constitution (or rules/standing orders/bye-laws) in their own name. However, we recognise this may prove challenging for local branches of regional or national organisations.

If a branch of a larger organisation does not have a constitution in the name of the branch, then the branch has one of two options:

Option 1:

If the branch:

- i. has its own management committee;
- ii. has a UK bank or building society account in the name of the branch and,
- iii. produce their own annual accounts

then the group can apply in their own name providing they get a letter of undertaking from the parent body (see required format below). The letter of undertaking states that ultimate legal and accounting responsibility for the grant will lie with the parent body.

Option 2:

Where Option 1 is not possible, then the group should get the parent body to apply on their behalf.

Letter of Undertaking

The letter of undertaking from the parent body must take the following form:

To: The Tourism Development Manager.

I confirm that *[write name of organisation applying]* is a branch of *[write name of bigger organisation]* and I am authorised to sign this letter on its behalf.

My organisation supports the application from this branch and I understand that ultimate legal and accounting responsibility for the grant will lie with us as the parent organisation.

I confirm that the answers in the application form submitted by the branch are true and accurate and that both the parent organisation and the branch will comply with the Council's terms and conditions of grant.

Signed:

Date:

Name:

Job title:

8. Council Priorities

Lisburn Castlereagh Draft Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030

Any financial assistance provided by Council must further the delivery of its Draft Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, and be consistent with its contents. This document sets out a comprehensive vision, mission and values for tourism within the area. Applicants should consider this document and should be prepared to explain how their application can help further Council's objectives. **This document can be downloaded at:** www.visitlisburncastlereagh.com

9. List of Required Policies and other documents

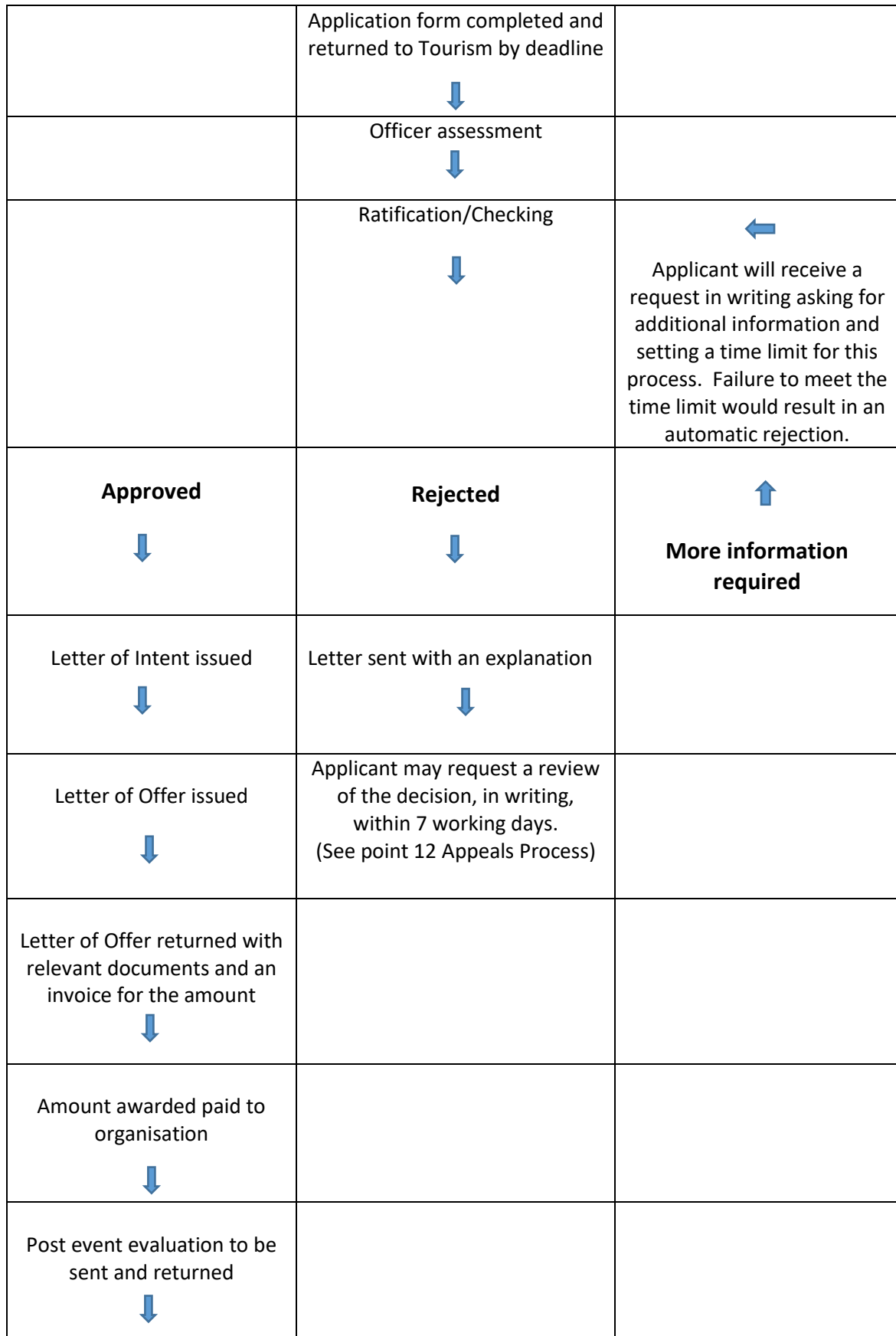
Essential Policies and Documents

Any significant organisation receiving funding from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council should be expected to have the following as a minimum. Discretion will be used to determine how necessary each of these are depending on the size of the organisation and the nature of their work.

- A Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection Policy and/or Vulnerable Adults Policy – depending on audience profile)
- Health & Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Traffic Management Plan
- Appropriate insurance cover. This may include:
 - Employer's liability insurance (if staff are employed).
 - Public liability insurance (including cover for volunteers).
 - Specific event insurance (to include cancellation cover)

Also detail in this section any court judgements against the organisation and any criminal or civil proceedings pending.

10. Application Process Diagram



11. Completing the Application Form

a. Section 1 – Applicant Details

Please ensure the accuracy of the contact details for the Contact Person. If the Contact Person changes during the application process or you know the Contact Person will not be contactable during that period, you must provide us with an Alternative Contact Person. In the event that we need to seek clarification on your application we will contact both persons named but if we cannot make contact with either person, your application will be rejected.

The organisation name on the application form **must** be exactly the same as the name on the constitution you will provide.

b. Section 2 – Applicant Experience

Please complete this section by letting the Council know **how many years relevant experience the organisation has in the management of events**. Events in their first year will receive a higher level of funding than those which have been established for many years.

We need to be confident your group will be able to deliver the proposed project. Please tell us if:

- a) Your group has delivered such a project before and how often
- b) You have members on your committee or in your group who have specific skills and experience of managing and delivering projects, even if your group has not delivered such a project in the past
- c) You plan to seek advice and support from outside your organisation to help deliver the project
- d) Your group has experience of managing grants before of a similar size?

A link to the Tourism Strategy is available at Section 8. You need to tell us which priorities your event contributes to and describe how your event helps deliver these. **Please do not just list the Council priorities**. If you fail to describe how your project meets specific priorities it is unlikely to be funded.

You should assume the Officers assessing your application know nothing about your event and therefore how it will meet the programme objectives.

c. Section 3 – Event Background

Evidence of need: how do you know your project is needed?

- a) Are there published statistics which show a need?
Have you carried out any market research/held a focus group and what evidence did this produce?
Have you run this event before and each time attendance has increased?
- b) Officers will use your answer here when assessing the need for the project. In addition, officers will also assess whether there is a financial need for funding based on information given elsewhere in the application form or supporting documents.

d. Section 4 – Marketing

Please tell us in this section how you propose to market the event, which channels you will use and why. Also include how the Council can be branded/promoted at the event or in any pre-event promotional material or events.

Who the event is targeted at and an estimate of how much you will spend on this and a breakdown of costs.

Failure to enclose a full Marketing/PR Plan for the event will result in your application being rejected.

e. Section 5 – Finance

Detail all the costs of your event and how much funding you are applying for:

- Indicate the amount of funding you require (this must not exceed the maximum and should be the minimum amount necessary to make your event happen). It should be noted that the Council may choose to fund less than you request.
- Be as specific as possible and detail all costs associated with the event.
- Ensure your costings are realistic – get quotes and do not guess amounts.
- Detail each specific cost on a separate line. Rather than writing in one line 'Family fun day' you must detail the specific costs of the family fun day each on a separate line (eg bouncy castles [line 1], toilet hire [line 2], first aid cover [line 3], advertising [line 4]) giving a cost for each separate item.
- If you are not requesting for 100% of the gap fund, we need to know where you are planning to get the balance of the money from. This could be from another funder or from your own funds. Only financial shortfalls will be considered, not in-profit events.

- You must declare if you are planning to charge an entry fee for the event, how much this will be and the total predicted income.
- The amount of funding will be reduced the longer the event has been running.
- Please note: you can only avail of a grant from one Council department in each financial year.

f. Section 6 – Economic Impact of Event

This section should provide sufficient detail to enable council officers to understand how the event will impact the economy. Therefore, we require you to tell us how many participants and spectators you expect. Also give details of any expenditure in relation to the event.

How many bed nights are anticipated? We are trying to understand the economic benefit of your event to the Council area e.g. if 100 people stay over in the Council area for 1 night that equates to 100 bed nights, if 100 people stay over for 3 nights, that equates to 300 bed nights. It is encouraged and recommended that all efforts are made to promote accommodation in the local area to participants and visitors.

Please note; All reasonable endeavours should be made to conduct event related activities inside the Lisburn Castlereagh City Council area. i.e. accommodation and formal dinners etc required by officials and/or staff of the event.

g. Section 7 – Event Management

Your organisation must confirm the list of statements detailed in this question by circling yes or no for each. All statements must be answered to be able to submit an application. We will no longer ask you for any evidences of these by default but Council may choose to spot check these and reserves the right to withhold grant should any declaration prove to be inaccurate or the documents are not available.

h. Section 8 – Declaration

It is important that you read this section very carefully before you sign. Online applicants will be asked to agree the declaration on behalf of the organisation. Please ensure you give your name, position in the organisation and date signed.

12. Appeals Process

The following information provides guidance as to how organisations can make an appeal against an application that has been rejected.

Grounds of Appeal

Organisations may only appeal against any application, which is unsuccessful on one or more of the following grounds:

- Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council failed to follow published procedures when considering the application or making its decision;
- If the application is rejected on the grounds that it failed to meet or impact significantly against Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council criteria and this is disputed by the applicant;
- That the assessment panel misunderstood or failed properly to take into account relevant information, which was included as part of the original application;
- Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council took into account irrelevant material of a significant nature when making its decision;
- That the decision was unlawful;
- That officers involved in the assessment process have had a clear Conflict of Interest and have failed to declare this in the appropriate manner.

No Grounds for Appeal

There is no right of appeal against the amount of funding awarded under the match funding application process, unless one of the grounds of appeal noted above applies. In addition there is no right of appeal against a decision that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council made in relation to another organisations' successful application.

Submitting an Appeal

Following the decision to reject an application, the applicant will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the decision. The applicant may request a review of the decision, in writing, within 7 working days. The formal review will provide an independent process through which the applicant organisation will have the opportunity to demonstrate in writing to the Review Panel that either:

- the decision was wrong because the Council failed to take into account the information contained within the written application or took into account information that was not contained within the written application;

and/or

- there was a failure in adherence to procedures and guidance issued with the call for applications or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

or

- that officers involved in the assessment process have had a clear Conflict of Interest and have failed to declare this in the appropriate manner.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered. It should also be noted that no additional supporting documentation will be permitted at this stage.

Requests for a review must be made in writing by the applicant within 28 days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of your application for financial assistance.

All applicants who applied to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will receive a letter, indicating if the applicant has been successful or otherwise in their application. If they have been unsuccessful brief reasons will be cited in the letter indicating why the application was rejected. The letter will also include a statement on the group's right to appeal.

If an applicant wishes to appeal the decision made by the assessment panel the procedure adopted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is as follows:

- Appeals must be lodged in writing, addressed for the attention of the **Head of Economic Development**, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Civic Headquarters, Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn, BT27 4RL (**Clearly marked Major Events Funding Appeal**), within 7 days of receipt of the letter communicating the decision not to make a grant or award. We advise that this is sent recorded delivery.
- Applicants must clearly outline the basis for the appeal and give a detailed reason for the grounds of the appeal.
- Any documents which the applicant would like to present as evidence to the appeal panel should accompany the appeals letter. These documents constitute the appeal submission from the applicant and cannot be added to once the appeal has been submitted.
- Applicants **should not** submit the original funding application being appealed against or its' supporting material. These will be provided by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to the Appeals Panel to ensure consistency in the papers reviewed by both the assessment and the Appeals Panel. If the applicant needs to refer to sections of their original application this should only be presented in part within the context of the supporting documentation accompanying the appeals letter.
- Appeals will not be accepted outside the time period stipulated unless the Appeals Panel is satisfied that it was not reasonable / practicable for the appeal to be made within this period.

What happens once an appeal has been made?

All appeals will be presented to the Appeals Panel, who will determine whether the grounds for appeal are substantiated. If so, the Appeals Panel will reconsider the application and make a decision. The Appeals Panel will advise the applicant of the outcome, with reasons, in writing. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Office use only	
Name of event	
Amount awarded	

Application Form for Tourism Events funding from £1,000 - £10,000

The Tourism Development Unit of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council will give consideration to financially supporting events that can provide evidence of supporting **ALL** of the following:

A/ Attraction of out-of-state visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

B/ Attraction of domestic visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

C/ Generation of at least 50 'bed-nights' in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

D/ Attract at least 1,250 visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area, if government guidelines permit this number at the time of the event.

E/ Generation of positive publicity for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area strengthening the areas credibility as a tourist and visitor destination.

F/ Attraction of positive media coverage outside the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

G/ Requires Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council assistance to ensure the overall success of the event.

H/ Has not received funding during this financial year for another event.

G/ The event must be held in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

Where the main purpose of an event is to raise money for a charity and/ or charities, financial assistance **will not** normally be provided.

Event organisers should make all reasonable endeavours to conduct all event related activity in Council area, i.e. event dinner, accommodation of judges/ staff etc.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council **will not** fund events taking place on the same date as one of their own organised events.

It is encouraged and recommended that all efforts are made to promote accommodation in the local area to participants and visitors.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council would encourage early application for support by offering to feature the event in our promotional material where appropriate.

SECTION 1: APPLICANT DETAILS

Title of Event:

Location of Event:

Date(s) of Event:

Name of Applicant/Organisation/Club:

Official address:

Type of Applicant:
(Please Select)

Individual	
Association/Group	
Promoter	
Private company	
Charity	
Other* (please state)	

What year was the organisation established/incorporated?

Is the organisation VAT registered?
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If you are an organisation, do you have a constitution?
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If so, please enclose a copy, If not, please enclose details of your committee and office bearers

What is the legal status of your organisation, if any?
(E.g. *charity, Limited Company*)

If members/officers of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council are nominated onto your board/committee, please provide details:

Contact Name:
(*The person responsible for the project*)

Position in the organisation:

Contact Address:
(*If different from above*)

Tel No:

Mobile No:

E-mail:

Alternative Contact Name:
(The person responsible for the project)

Position in the organisation:

Contact Address:
(If different from above)

Tel No:

Mobile No:

E-mail:

SECTION 2: APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

Do you or your organisation have previous relevant experience in the management of events?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If appropriate, detail your experience of relevant work in the management of events:

Has your organisation/company been operating for 3 years or more?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If so, please attach up to date accounts for the last 3 years.

Does your organisation/company engage in activities other than the event to which this application relates?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

For new ventures, please attach an up-to-date Curriculum Vitae (CV) detailing previous employment experience.

SECTION 3: EVENT BACKGROUND

Event Title:

Event Date(s):

Location(s):

Please give a brief summary of the event.

(This should be a clear concise explanation of the event, and ensure it provides an understandable explanation to those who may have no prior knowledge of the event.)

Is this an annual event?
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

What year is this event in?
(E.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc)

Provide a brief history of the event (if appropriate)

Please list the specific aims and objectives of the event.

AIMS	OBJECTIVES

Detail how you propose to measure your success in meeting the above objectives when the event is completed.

--

How will Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council benefit from supporting this event?

--

SECTION 4: MARKETING

Who is the event targeted at?
(E.g. Families, Young Couples, Males etc)

Briefly outline how the event will be publicised and marketed.
(E.g. pre-event publicity such as advertising, leaflets, programmes, banners, posters plus media coverage both during and after the event i.e. local/national press, radio, television, magazines etc.)

Outline your estimated Marketing Expenditure

METHOD/MEDIA	AMOUNT

Briefly outline what opportunities for Council branding exist at the event.

How will the success of the Marketing techniques used be evaluated?

Please attach a Full Marketing and PR Plan for the event.

***Failure to enclose a full Marketing/PR Plan for the event will
result in your application being rejected***

SECTION 5: FINANCE

Please note: the maximum amount you can apply for is £10,000 per event

Detail the progress to date in securing private sponsorship for the event.

CASH SECURED:

Company	Amount

IN-KIND SECURED:

Company	Amount	What expenditure elements in your budget does this offset?

NB: Enclose copies of letters confirming cash/in-kind funding secured as described above.

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP TO BE CONFIRMED:

Company	Type of sponsorship (e.g. cash or in-kind)	Amount	Date Confirmation Expected

Detail all public sector funding applied for.

Name of Body	Amount	Purpose of Funding	Contact Name & Number	Confirmed? (Yes/No)

In the absence of public funding would the event (as described within this application form) go ahead?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

EVENT COSTS

Category	Key costs included in category	Amount
Participant costs		
Production costs		
Insurance		
Marketing		
Venue costs		
Health & Safety		
Administration		
In-Kind Sponsorship		
Miscellaneous		
	TOTAL	£

EVENT INCOME

CATEGORY	DETAIL	AMOUNT
Entry fee/Income		
Private Sector Income <i>(Include only confirmed cash & in-kind)</i>		
Corporate Hospitality		
Merchandising		
Public Sector Funding <i>(Include unconfirmed public funding also)</i>		
Miscellaneous		
	TOTAL	£

Has any confirmed in-kind sponsorship also been included in the expenditure side of the budget?
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

Project/Event shortfall

TOTAL INCOME	
MINUS TOTAL EXPENDITURE	-
EQUALS SHORTFALL	=

How much is requested from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council?

£

I/we are prepared to furnish details of all cheques, cash and credit card records to the Council's internal audit for inspection during office hours
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

Please confirm that this is the only grant application made to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

Detail any other 'in-kind' support envisaged from Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.
(E.g. Technical support, advertising etc)

SECTION 6: ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EVENT

Estimate the **Total Number of Participants** expected at the event:

Breakdown of Expected Participants (Number or Percentage)

NI	
ROI	
GB	
Other*	

*Please detail

Estimate the **Total Number of Spectators** expected at the event:

Breakdown of Expected Spectators (Number or Percentage)

NI	
ROI	
GB	
Other*	

*Please detail

Participant Bed nights

Number of participants staying overnight in commercial accommodation
i.e. hotels, guesthouses, bed & breakfast

Number of night's participants staying for

Total Participant Bed nights

(No. of participants x No. of nights)

Spectator Bed nights

Number of spectators staying overnight in Commercial accommodation
(i.e. hotels, guesthouses, bed & breakfast)

Number of night's participants staying for

Total Spectator Bed nights

(No. of spectators x No. of nights)

Is participant/spectator accommodation subsidised by the organisers (or others)?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If so, who by?

Detail the event expenditure *within* Northern Ireland; include all event costs spent locally. Exclude expenditure leaving Northern Ireland (i.e. expenditure which goes to a UK or international based company).

COST	AMOUNT

SECTION 7: EVENT MANAGEMENT

Does your organisation have an applied policy on these aspects, where applicable?

Safeguarding Policy YES / NO
(Child Protection Policy and/or Vulnerable Adults Policy – dependent on audience profile)
(Delete as appropriate)

Health & Safety Policy YES / NO
(Delete as appropriate)

NB: If successful, a certified Risk Assessment must be submitted prior to any payment

Equal Opportunities Policy YES / NO
(Delete as appropriate)

Traffic Management Plan YES / NO
(Delete as appropriate)

COVID Focused Risk Assessment YES / NO

Valid Public Liability Insurance YES / NO

- Employers Liability Insurance
- Specific Event Insurance (to include cancellation cover)

(Delete as appropriate)

Detail any court judgements against you or your company/organisation.

Are you awaiting any criminal or civil proceedings against you or your company/organisation?

(Delete as appropriate)

YES / NO

If yes, please detail.

SECTION 8: DECLARATION

I/WE HEREBY SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION TO LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL, SEEKING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BETWEEN £1,000 TO £10,000.

I/WE WILL COMPLY WITH RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS AT THE TIME OF THE EVENT.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

I/WE CONFIRM THAT THIS APPLICATION GIVES A TRUE AND ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT/EVENT.

I/WE CONFIRM THAT WE HAVE NOT APPLIED FOR NOR RECEIVED FUNDING, DURING THIS FINANCIAL YEAR, FOR ANY ANOTHER EVENT, FROM LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL.

IF REQUESTED, I/WE WILL PROVIDE THE COUNCIL WITH ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED OR CLARIFICATION ON ANY MATTER.

I/WE ACCEPT THAT LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL DOES NOT BIND ITSELF TO AWARD ANY GRANT OR THE LEVEL OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTED FOR THE PROJECT/EVENT IN THE APPLICATION.

I/WE AGREE THAT THE LETTER OF OFFER ISSUED BY THE COUNCIL IS THE BASIS OF ANY AWARD AND NOT THE AMOUNT REQUESTED IN THE APPLICATION.

I/WE WILL ADHERE TO THE PROVISIONS OF ALL CURRENT FAIR EMPLOYMENT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DISABLED PERSONS LEGISLATION IN FORCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND OBSERVE THE SPIRIT OF THAT LEGISLATION.

I/WE CERTIFY, TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEVE THAT THE PARTICULARS GIVEN ON THIS FORM ARE CORRECT AND COMPLETE.

I/WE ACCEPT THAT IF THE EVENT IS CANCELLED, FOR ANY REASON, NO GRANT WILL BE PAID TO THE APPLICANT AND ANY GRANT ALREADY PAID IN RELATION TO THE EVENT, WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE RETURNED TO LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL.

Signed:

Print Name:

Position Held:

Date:

FALSE STATEMENTS CAN RESULT IN PROSECUTION

All applicants for assistance should note that, when a proposal is being considered and assessed, there can be no commitment by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to provide financial support until the Letter of Offer has been issued, received, accepted and any prior conditions met.

The information provided on this form may be available to other departments/agencies for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime.

Return the completed application form on or before Friday 13th December to:

**Margaret McAvoy
Tourism Development Officer
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Civic Headquarters
Lagan Valley Island
Lisburn
BT27 4RL
Margaret.McAvoy@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk**

INCOMPLETE FORMS WILL BE REJECTED

<u>GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION 2016/679</u>

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council collects the data on this form for the purposes of considering financial assistance to organisations (pre and post event). This data is not used for any other purpose or is not disclosed to any other organisation.

<u>FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY</u>

Date Received:

.....

<p style="text-align: center;">TOURISM MAJOR GRANTS PROCESS £1,000 - £10,000</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Application Form completed and returned to Tourism by the closing date ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Tourism Development Officer assesses against the existing scoring matrix The event may be awarded a % of their request amount if any ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Calculations verified with Tourism Development Manager ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary sheet completed and taken to Committee for noting ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Then a letter of offer is issued along with SAG form (to all events) ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Letter of offer is returned along with completed SAG and invoice for 50% of the amount awarded ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SAG form to be forwarded to Health and Safety Department (with a copy kept in the file with grant application) and they will then decide if a meeting is necessary with event organisers ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Post event evaluation to be sent out and returned to Tourism Development with an invoice for the remaining 50% ↓</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">When post event evaluation and any others items are deemed satisfactory the 2nd 50% will be paid out</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PROCESS COMPLETED</p>

<p>Scoring Matrix for Events funding From £1,000 - £10,000</p>
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Name of Applicant/Organisation/Club:

Title of Event:

Date(s) of Event:

Location of Event:

Does the event meet all the following criteria:

Criteria	Scoring Matrix	Score Obtained
A/ Attraction of out-of-state visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.	Pass/Fail	
B/ Attraction of domestic visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.	Pass/Fail	
C/ Generation of at least 50 'bed-nights' in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.	Pass/Fail	
D/ Attract at least 1,250 visitors and participants to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.	Pass/Fail	
E/ Generation of positive publicity for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area strengthening the areas credibility as a tourist and visitor destination.	Pass/Fail	
F/ Attraction of positive media coverage outside the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.	Pass/Fail	
G/ Requires Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council assistance to ensure the overall success of the event.	Pass/Fail	
H/ Have not received funding during this financial year for another event from LCCC	Pass/Fail	
I/Where the main purpose of an event is to raise money for a charity and/or charities, financial assistance will not normally be provided by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.	Pass/Fail	

Criteria	Scoring Matrix	Score Obtained
Does the event take place in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area?	Pass / Fail	
Is Gap Funding Required	Pass/Fail	
How many years' experience do the event organisers have in the management of events?	Year 1 = 1 2 years = 2 3-5 years = 3 6-9 years = 4 10 years+ = 5	
How many years has the event been running?	Year 1 = 5 2 years = 4 3-5 years = 3 6-9 years = 2 10 years+ = 1	
Amount of sponsorship confirmed for the event from 3rd parties?	0-500 = 5 501-1000 = 4 1001-2500 = 3 2501-5000 = 2 5000+ = 1	

How many out-of-state spectators and participants will the event bring to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area?	001-500 = 1 501-750 = 2 751-1000 = 3 1001-1250 = 4 1251+ = 5	
How many domestic spectators and participants will the event bring to the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area?	001-750 = 1 751-1250 = 2 1251-1750 = 3 1751-2250 = 4 2251+ = 5	
How many bed-nights will the event generate in the area?	50-75 = 1 76-150 = 2 151-200 = 3 201-250 = 4 251+ = 5	
How will the event generate positive publicity for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area, strengthening it as a tourist and visitor destination?	NI = 1 Ireland = 2 UK = 3 Europe = 4 Worldwide = 5	
How will the event generate positive media coverage for the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area?	NI = 1 Ireland = 2 UK = 3 Europe = 4 Worldwide = 5	
Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection Policy and/or Vulnerable Adults Policy – depending on audience profile)	Yes / No	

Health & Safety Policy	Yes / No	
Equal Opportunities Policy	Yes / No	
Traffic Management Plan	Yes / No	
Valid Public Liability Insurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers Liability Insurance • Specific Event Insurance (to include cancellation cover) 	Yes / No	
Has the declaration been signed	Yes / No	
TOTAL SCORE OBTAINED		
PERCENTAGE REACHED		

Score obtained is divided by 40 and multiplied by 100 to reach percentage of requested funding amount.

Event Objectives (Please List)

Actual Outputs at Event Completion

Evaluation Methodology (please include back up information to justify/
contextualise evaluation findings) eg survey, questionnaire

Please compare actual outputs against agreed anticipated target outputs, providing detailed comment on each. In particular please state clear reasons for over/under achievement against the agreed targets. You may wish to provide support information (evidence eg action plans, progress reports, survey data, correspondence, business plans) to explain or back up each stated output.

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Please give details of the number of people attending the event and where they came from:

	PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	SPECTATOR NUMBERS
NORTHERN IRELAND		
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND		
ELSEWHERE (DETAIL)		
TOTAL		

Please estimate total number of bed nights generated because of the event:
(People staying overnight _____ x Nights _____) = _____ .

--

[illegible]

TOTAL INCOME:£

Vouching

Please ensure that all receipts are provide to cover the value of your grant minus any technical support (and where necessary that timesheets are completed and forwarded with this evaluation for Vouching).

Grant awarded £_____ (minus technical support)

Description of product	Amount	Receipt Attached (✓)	Evidence of 3 quotes if over £1500
Total	£		

Conclusions

Recommendations

Declaration

I confirm that the information in this evaluation is correct.

Signed

Position:

Date:

Organisation:

TOURISM MAJOR GRANTS REVIEW 2024/2025														
Event Name	Event Organiser/Promoter	Date	Venue	Brief description of event	Grant Awarded	Visitor Target	Visitors Achieved	Participant Target	Participants achieved	Expected Bed Nights	Actual Bed Nights	Impact of event on sample of local businesses.	Reason for event being unsuccessful or withdrawn	Evaluation Summary
					7,550.00	2140	1800	185	99	500	336	10 accommodation providers contacted: 1 was fully booked as all judges/staff stayed with them. 6 had bookings as a result of the event.	N/A	Numbers not as expected due to not being able to bring plants into NI (incl. with blooms), mostly from ROI. Had anticipated that this could be overcome with pre-planning but did not happen. Over 150 international participants-spectators most of whom had not been to NI before. Whilst numbers were not as high as expected, the profile of the event raised the awareness and experience of Daffodil growers from all over the world including New Zealand, North America, Holland and Germany.
					3,750.00	400	655	1,000	1,065	60	100	10 accommodation providers contacted: 3 were fully booked, 5 had some business from the show .	N/A	Excellent event that over achieved on visitors and participants. Inclusive event inviting children with special needs to come along. Large number of ROI participants/spectators.
					8,500.00	1400	1500	2700	2800	100	350	9 accommodation providers contacted: 9 had bookings as a result.	N/A	Highly attended show which is a qualifier for Crufts Dog Show. Show over achieved this year due to new category introduced. Large numbers from UK, almost 3k participants/spectators.
					7,000.00	10,000	9457	700	757	998	1,000	17 accommodation providers contacted post race: 5 were full due to the races, 3 had some bookings, 5 had bookings but not sure if any guests were at the races. 9 restaurants contacted: 8 said they were very busy over the race weekend.	N/A	This event heralds the start of the National Hunt Season. Attendance grew by 12% on last years figures. Extensive coverage on media including broadcasting on ITV. Haslem hotel provided a glass of bubbles and transport to the venue for those staying resulting in a busy weekend for them.

TOURISM MAJOR GRANTS SYNOPSIS 2025/2026														
Event Name	Event Organiser/Promoter	Date	Venue	Brief description of event	Recommended Grant Amount	Visitor Target	Visitors Achieved	Participant Target	Participants achieved	Expected Bed Nights	Actual Bed Nights	Impact of event on sample of local businesses.	Reason for event being unsuccessful or withdrawn	Evaluation Summary
					6,000.00	1200		250		Participant (780-975) Spectator (300-600)		To date: Haslem Hotel fully booked for this event, and rooms booked at Premier Inn Hotel		
					4,500.00	3000		1400		60				
					3,500.00	450		1,000		120				
					7,200.00	1400/1500		2800		450				
					5,750.00	1250		1250		160				
					6,500.00	10,000		700		1450				