

# THE SPERRIN SCULPTURE TRAIL

REFLECTIONS OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE





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TRAIL**

The Sperrins Sculpture Trail is a joint tourism initiative being developed by **Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)**, **Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (FODC)** and **Mid Ulster Council (MUC)**. Interim support for the sculpture trail has also recently been obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) which has granted approval for the project to be considered for technical assistance funding.

The Sperrin Sculpture Trail project will embed an iconic public artwork installation within the heart of the Sperrins; one that reflects the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region and opens up, for further exploration, this area of outstanding natural beauty.

The proposed Sperrin Sculpture Trail project will be developed under the Rural Tourism Scheme as part of the

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (NIRDP).

The aim of the programme's Rural Tourism Scheme is to support investment in natural and built heritage projects that have the potential to encourage rural tourism, particularly that derived from out of state visitors, whilst preserving the natural assets of the rural community.

When the call for expressions of interest was issued, the Department gave a clear indication of its priorities, namely:

- > Develop an iconic and unique offering for visitors
- > Increase tourism from out of state visitors
- > Create capital infrastructure
- > Create jobs

The Sperrin Sculpture Trail project represents a means to drive the development of our natural and cultural assets within the region and to make them accessible to visitors. It is envisaged that the artwork installation will be iconic in nature and produced by an artist of international renown. Visitors will use stunning walking trails and dramatic driving routes to move between the artwork sites in a way that enables them to immerse themselves in the cultural heritage of the Sperrins.

## Strategic Context

The Sperrin Sculpture Trail project has been identified as a key flagship project and economic driver to deliver upon the strategic aims articulated by each of the three partner councils.

Within the DCSDC Strategic Growth Plan tourism has been identified as a key economic driver with the stated outcome that “we live in the cultural destination of choice offering world class visitor experiences”.

Whilst the district’s recently launched tourism strategy flagged the economic importance of tourism, it also highlighted the contrasting baseline

between the City’s tourism product and the rural hinterland, which is much less developed. Rural tourism receives approximately one tenth of the total visitor spend. That said, the strategy recognises that the rural hinterland has many ingredients to facilitate longer term opportunities relating to tourism: a beautiful natural offering including the Sperrins, rivers and the loughs, historic villages and heritage, however accessibility is a challenge.

The development of activity, adventure, heritage focussed visitor experiences is considered to have the greatest potential of addressing the underperformance of tourism in rural areas and providing the platform to attract a new profile of visitors in the medium to longer term.





Within Mid Ulster there is a recognition, that in tourism terms, it is a developing destination which in recent years has not reached its full economic growth potential. The central issue and greatest barrier to success for the area, as highlighted in its tourism strategy **'Our plan to develop tourism in Mid Ulster to 2021'**, is its comparative lack of visibility in the tourism marketplace. This is evidenced by limited levels of visitation (214,000) and spend (£27m) equivalent to 4.6% of NI overnight trips and 3.6% of NI spend in 2014; and its dependence on day trips and visiting friends and relatives.

Visibility in the marketplace is also a barrier to success for Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. The Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. Tourism Development Strategy 2016-2019 states ***"We've highlighted that Omagh and the Sperrins' regional identity is not well enough known, again especially for out-of-state and overseas markets. This results in the question of how to raise visibility and visitation and how long it might take."***

## Scope of Works

The Sperrin Sculpture Trail project will have 2 phases. Phase 1 is concerned with the technical study and project competition. Phase 2 relates to the capital element of the project.

### Phase 1 – Technical Study

DCSDC will appoint a competent service provider to complete the technical study for this project identifying sites for the public artwork installation, secure all relevant permissions and compile a fully comprehensive artist's brief to enable project to proceed to competition. The three partner councils will establish a Project Reference Group. The successful bidder will liaise closely with this Project Reference Group in the delivery of Phase 1.

The service provider will be required to deliver the following project Phase 1 elements:

- a** To liaise with the participating councils in the identification of 9 opportunity sites across the Sperrins' AONB area and wider Sperrins' region (3 per council area).
- b** To undertake an options appraisal of these 9 sites identifying 1 preferred site within each council area based upon the potential for successful delivery and capacity to fulfil the project concept.
- c** Provide an outline of the potential walking and driving routes linking the preferred sites and taking best advantage of the natural landscape, rights of way, permitted access, local settlements and cultural heritage.





- d** To negotiate and secure the appropriate permissions/contracts from the relevant landowners regarding the installation and ongoing upkeep of the proposed public artwork installations.
- e** To secure outline planning permission for public artwork installations on the three priority sites in partnership with each of the participating councils.
- f** To compile a report on each of the three sites to include an analysis of and recommendations concerning:
  - Provision of services.
  - Access and egress (including provision for the pan disability community).
  - Environmental impact assessment.
  - Cultural context (including an overview of local heritage, community and landscape character).
- g** To engage with local communities, ascertaining the aspirations to be reflected within an iconic public artwork installation.
- h** To define a proposed budget to deliver the overall project including artwork installation and complementary access & trail route collateral.





- i** To compile the final artist's brief incorporating all of the elements detailed above in advance of a competition to tender.
- j** Compilation of a funding application to DAERA for capital element including artwork installation and complementary access & trail route collateral.
- k** Coordination of an open tendering competition for public artwork installation.

### Phase 2 - Full Capital Project

Upon completion of phase 1 the project will move to deliver phase 2 of the project, the delivery of the full capital project and launch of the Sperrin Sculpture Trail.

#### Project Financing

The estimated budget for Phase 1 is **£67,000**.

The estimated budget for Phase 2 is **£1,933,000**.

It is envisaged that Phase 1 will be financed by DAERA and the 3 partner councils.

For the delivery of Phase 2 the partners will seek £1,433,000 from DAERA, £300k from Department for Infrastructure (Percent for Art Scheme) with the remaining £200,000 met by the 3 partner councils.





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