

Title of Report: Sperrins Future Search Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Culture Author: Rural Tourism Officer
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update the council on the Sperrin Future Search process and recommend appointing two elected members to sit on the Sperrin Future Search Board.

2 Background

- 2.1 At the Business & Culture Committee of 14th March 2017 members approved a proposal to support the delivery of a Future Search conference for the Sperrins in partnership with Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.
- 2.2 This conference entitled 'The Sperrins – Reaching New Heights, Realising Our Potential' was held in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown on 27th – 29th September 2017.
- 2.3 The event brought together a group of the region's key stakeholders including community representatives, land owners/farmers, government departments and statutory agencies with an interest in tourism, heritage & environment, outdoor recreation, business & industry together with elected representatives and young people. The purpose was to draft and agree an action plan for the future development of the Sperrins and in particular the Sperrin's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 2.4 A collective journey was undertaken over the three days and developed over five sessions labelled Past, Present, Future, Common Ground, and Action. Each involved gathering information, sharing understandings in small groups, reports to the wider group, and large group dialogues. Each session built on the previous one and the product was a number of 'common ground statements' and an action plan.
- 2.5 The conference however marked only the start of a conversation. It was agreed to build on the enthusiasm that was so evident at the conference and reconvene the 5 thematic stakeholder groups which emerged from the conference to:

- Confirm that the draft action plans for each thematic area accurately reflected the discussions held at the conference
- Clarify the actions suggested in the action plan to ensure they are stated in a way that can be easily understood
- Prioritise actions
- Confirm what attendees are ready and willing to do to help deliver the actions
- Consider if any additional participants should be part of that thematic group

Each council was delegated co-ordinate the thematic group meeting as outlined below:

Thematic Group	Lead Council
Environment & Heritage	Mid Ulster
Infrastructure	Fermanagh & Omagh
Brand & Tourism	Causeway Coast & Glens
Community	Derry & Strabane
Management Structures	Mid Ulster

2.6 A number of thematic meetings have been hosted in in the interim, as well as a one day follow up Future Search event which was held at the Mellon Country Inn on 11th January 2018. The result of this activity is that the five thematic working groups have now agreed their short term and long term action plans.

2.7 Most recent activity relating to Future Search has involved:

- The production and print of the Sperrins Future Search Action Plan
- Approval by the respective council partners to support the initiative financially and appoint personnel to deliver.
- Agreement to proceed to the official launch of the Sperrins Future Search Action Plan. Consideration is being given towards a June launch of the document with Derry City and Strabane District Council being identified as the host council for the event.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The relevant councils met on Monday 11th February 2018 to discuss next steps for the future search project now that funding had been secured. It was agreed to convene a meeting with the management structures team to establish the board and its role which is not to exceed 20 members to consist of the following:
- Chairman representing each Thematic Group – 4 in total
 - 2 Council Members from each Council – 8 in total
 - Key Stakeholders
 - Council Officers observers only role
- 3.2 It was advised that the structure establishes a Statutory Partnership sub-group, this group would meet on a quarterly basis and feed into the board. This group would include organisations such as the Loughs Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Forest Service, Tourism NI, Department for Communities etc.
- 3.3 The Council will seek two nominations from elected members to sit on the Sperrin Future Search board at the AGM in May 2019. It should be noted that this will replace the Tyrone Sperrins Destination Management Group to which members have previously been nominated.
- 3.4 It is expected that a launch event will take place with this Council area as the host in June of this year.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

- 4.1 Council has agreed to support the Sperrins Future Search Initiative up to £22,000 per annum subject to equitable contributions by partner councils. This is to cover the appointment of a project Co-Ordinator and associated administrative support. These costs can be covered from existing member approved Tourism Budgets.
- 4.2 The recruitment process will take place shortly via a trawl from participating councils.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and to approve that council nominate two elected members to represent council area on the Sperrins Future Search Board.