

Title of Report: Rural Tourism Project Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Culture Author: Tourism Manager / Rural Tourism Project Officer
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update members on the progress of a number of tourism projects being delivered by the Business and Culture directorate.

2 Background

- 2.1 The tourism development section of the Culture department are progressing a number of key strategic tourism projects in order to deliver upon the aims of the city and district's tourism strategy 'Tourism 2018 -2025: A New Level of Ambition.
- 2.2 The primary aims identified within the strategy are the creation within the council area of an additional 1,000 jobs supported by tourism and the doubling of visitor spend to £100m over the period of the strategy.
- 2.3 Members may recall previous reports on these projects for information and for decision. The purpose of this report item is to provide an update on activity.

The projects include:

- The Sperrin Future Search Initiative
- The International Appalachian Trail- Ulster Ireland
- Rural Tourism Development Initiatives

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 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. This conference brought together a group of the region's key stakeholders to agree an action plan for the future development of the Sperrins and in particular the Sperrin's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Approval by all the respective council partners to support the initiative financially (to be reviewed after year one) has now been granted, enabling the progression of a number of core activities.
- 3.2 Activities include the appointment of personnel to deliver the Sperrin Future Search Action Plan. Derry City & Strabane District Council will take the lead role in the recruitment process over the coming weeks. The launch of the Sperrin Future Search Action Plan has been confirmed for 2pm on 5th September at The Alley Arts & Conference Centre in Strabane. The appointment of the board which will not exceed twenty members will be made up of the chairs of each thematic group, two elected members from each Council, key stakeholders and council officers observing. Members will be aware of the parallel appointment process to this board to nominate members from this Council area.
- 3.3 To facilitate the continued growth of the **International Appalachian Trail** - Ulster Ireland, the organisation's working group has recently hosted a 5 day programme of learning involving the Ulster Ireland and North American chapters of the International Appalachian Trail (IAT), the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).
- 3.4 Activity included daily walk and talk networking events as well as an Outdoor Economy Forum event held in Strabane on the 6th June. Guest speakers at the Outdoor Economy forum event included a range of local and international experts in the fields of outdoor and adventure tourism.
- 3.5 The primary aim of the event was to build the capacity and knowledge of those driving the development of the IAT Ulster Ireland while building relationships with international leaders in trail development. The learning achieved will in particular enable the delivery of capital and marketing spend being undertaken on the Ulster Ireland section of the IAT through the NI Rural Development Programme's Co-Operation fund. Additionally it is hoped to engage further with the AMC and ATC during the 2019 Golden Bridges Conference in Boston with a view to tapping into AMC's and ATC's extensive walking memberships and networks.
- 3.6 As a legacy to the **Slow Adventure in Northern Territories** (SAINT) European funded project which completed in July 2018, officers have continued to support a cluster of providers to develop and market new rural tourism experiences.

3.7 Working in partnership with Tourism NI, a 5-week intense experience development and marketing programme was delivered to this cluster. To build on the success of this programme, Council have appointed Full Circle to deliver a one-year support programme which will provide continued support in developing new bookable experiences, identify routes to market and associated marketing opportunities.

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

4.1 All projects detailed above have been funded from previously member approved budgets therefore no additional financial ask is required.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members to note contents of the report.

Background Papers

None.