

Title of Report:	East Lighthouse Rathlin Island
Committee Report Submitted To:	Council
Date of Meeting:	7th July 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Contribute to Prosperity
Outcome	Improvement of Visitor Experience. Driving the economy.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Capital Funding from Central Government.
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present to Members a proposal to work in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA), in the investigation and advancement of a potential tourism attraction on Rathlin Island. Approval will be sought to proceed to Stage 1 of the Capital Infrastructure Projects Scheme and allow DfI to develop the feasibility and business case prior to further advancement of the project.

2.0 Background

The Rathlin Island Action Plan 2016 – 2020 identified as a policy priority the need to develop and promote 'Rathlin tourism and environmental products'.

As the lead body for the implementation of the plan, Officials from DfI are investigating the feasibility of developing the East Lighthouse on the Island as a visitor attraction. They have been in negotiations with DAERA, and in order to benefit from the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme Tourism Scheme, they require Council's involvement as a joint partner.

To date, discussions between Council Officials and DfI have been based around the pre-condition that the development of such a project would be cost neutral to Council. Based on this prerequisite, the Department of Infrastructure has proposed that they act as the lead applicant for funding with Council being a co-applicant, supporting the project with a staff contribution.

An Expression of Interest application has been made to DAERA without any requirement for commitment to the project from Council.

3.0 Outline Project Description

DfI Officials have developed a proposal that they believe supports the Council's Economic and Tourism strategies, Tourism Northern Ireland's development priorities and the area's local plan. In addition to providing a place of interest for residents of the Borough, it is envisaged that this project will attract out of state visitors and increase dwell time in our area.

The project will be centred on the unique and compelling nature of the East Lighthouse site, and linkage of the three lighthouses on Rathlin, with the aim to increase dwell time and visitor spend on the Island helping to contribute to a more sustainable economy. It will be in keeping with Tourism NI's research on the potential of the Island to provide a place where the visitor can 'escape to the life of an islander'.

4.0 Project Proposals

It is proposed to:

- Renovate the Lighthouse Keepers cottage to provide a space where, for example, the story of the three lighthouses, Robert the Bruce, and the past innovation (Marconi) can be told, as well as potential future innovation and display / sale / production of island crafts. The renovation will include a space for refreshments which will allow the Lighthouse Tower and the wider site to be opened up to visitors.
- Restore the two semi-detached Lighthouse Keepers houses so that visitors can experience life as a Lighthouse keeper on Rathlin including the potential to occupy the buildings for a short time and live as a lighthouse keepers family. The buildings will also provide an opportunity to link the operation of the three lighthouses together.
- Build a walkway around the seaward facing exterior wall of the site, which will provide a unique experience of viewing the stunning clifftop scenery, the coast of Scotland and the sea channel as a lighthouse keeper would experience it, without necessarily having to climb the Tower (particularly important for those with limited mobility). This walkway

would provide a means of displaying the living history of the three lighthouses and the relationship between the islanders and the lighthouses.

- Improve the road access to the site for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians; and
- Improve signage on the Island to better direct the flow of visitors around the three lighthouse experience.

5.0 Indicative Costs

The total estimate cost of the project is £670,000, and based on successful application the Rural Development contribution could be up to £500,000. DfI and other departments would be required to make a contribution of approximately £125,000. Whilst Council would make no financial commitment to the capital build, as co-applicant it is requested that a contribution is made through the allocation of staff time.

6.0 Next Steps

If Council wishes to work with Department for Infrastructure on the development and implementation of this project then we would advance this to Stage 1 of the Capital Works process and prior to completion of Stage 1, develop a memorandum of understanding outlining roles and responsibilities and how a contribution in kind from Council would be delivered. A pre-requisite to this would be that no financial contribution would be available from Council at any stage of the construction or post-construction. Officers from the Tourism and Recreation team would assist in project management. This project is not on the Council's Capital Works schedule as pre-Stage 1.

7.0 Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Council approves:

- The development of a Memorandum of Understanding to advance the East Rathlin Lighthouse Tourism Project.
- Council Officials working with the Department for Infrastructure to complete on Stage 1 of the Capital Works process.