



Title of Report:	Market Led Experience Development Programme
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 October 2021
For Decision or For Information	For Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity
Outcome	Working with partners to maximise business growth and prosperity Maximise investment funding opportunities from external sources.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Destination Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	n/a
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

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

1.0 The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on opportunities sought by the Tourism and Recreation Destination Management team, to develop, enhance and support the visitor economy. £293,000 has been secured from Tourism Northern Ireland's Market Led Product Development programme.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Market Led Product Development Programme is a programme outlined in Tourism Northern Ireland's Tourism Recovery Action Plan aimed at supporting those businesses that have been severely impacted by the pandemic. This programme will provide local Councils with funding towards programmes to enhance the NI experience within their regions in support of the Northern Ireland "Embrace a Giant Spirit" Campaign.

2.2 The tourism experiences should offer visitors an end-to-end holistic product that meets their needs, increases dwell time and thereby drives economic growth within the Destination.

3.0 Funding secured

3.1 Council Officers have secured maximum funding of £293,000 through the TNI Market Led Product Development Programme (100% funding).

4.0 Project Brief

4.1 The programme aims to:

- provide more reasons to travel to and within NI
- enhance and animate the visitor experience for NI and ROI visitors while here
- encourage more opportunities to spend

5.0 Project Outcomes/Benefits

5.1 Taking full advantage of this opportunity, Council Officers have put together a programme of new and enhanced events and experiences that will take place from October 2021 and March 2022. This schedule of activities will also provide a strong foundation and help to launch the Spring/Summer Season 2022. The programme is designed to provide additional reasons for those from within NI and ROI to travel to the Causeway Coast and Glens Destination during the months of October 2021 - March 2022. The expected outcomes will also deliver more opportunities to spend. All the events and experiences planned will include evening, midweek and weekend activities and will increase the accessibility and connectivity of experiences within the Causeway Coast and Glens through guided experiences, trails, and bookable events. In the short term it will deliver much needed activity as our tourism trade recover from the devastating effects of Covid-19, but also, longer-term, it raises the profile and the breadth of the offer from the Causeway Coast and Glens destination in terms of activities, creativity, opportunities to access the outdoors, the arts in many forms and local food and drink.

The programme submission and initiatives demonstrate a clear focus on building the strength of the NI experience brand, aligning with core segments, with the potential to maximise demand in future years. Using food and drink, arts and crafts, the outdoors, music, culture and heritage, it comprises unique, innovative, authentic, opportunities to engage with local people through high quality tourism experiences. By connecting these businesses/ experiences together and with the addition of new collaborations and partnerships it is hoped that this programme will result in:

- Increased visitor spend
- Increased visitor numbers
- Increased dwell time and address seasonality
- Increased employment opportunities

5.2 The specific proposals are as follows

Slow Food in the Causeway Coast and Glens October 2021 – March 2022

In 2019 Taste Causeway was runner-up in the all-Ireland Foodie Destination Awards and its reputation for quality, local food was further enhanced in 2020 when it received accreditation as a Slow Food destination. Council partnering with the Taste Causeway Food Collaborative will organise a series of events to promote Causeway Coast and Glens as a Slow Food Destination from dining in special places, a Slow food Festival featuring a Slow Food Market in collaboration with Lacada, Slow Food Menus in participating restaurants, a trial of a permanent Slow Food Trail, foraging and wild cooking experiences.

These events will help to connect and increase accessibility to the food and drink offerings available in N.I and connect the visitor to the Landscapes in which they are set. Consumer sentiment has shown post pandemic that food and wellness are key elements and where the food comes from is important to them, the slow food movement is a perfect vehicle to take the consumer on this journey.

Atlantic Sessions Inside Out 19 - 21 November 2021

Atlantic Sessions is an established event that has run in November since 2008 and has served to create a reason to visit Portrush and Portstewart out of season. Since its inception it has connected the visitor to the local NI music scene and in recent years has been recognised by Tourism Ireland as having significant potential to attract the Culturally Curious market segment in normal travel circumstances. In 2020 Atlantic Sessions took place virtually and the ambition is to re-establish it as a live event in 2021 to provide a much needed injection to the local hospitality industry. **At the September Leisure and Development meeting, three options were presented for Atlantic Sessions, with the preferred option being to avail of the funding from the Market Led Experience Development Programme and run two outdoor events at Flowerfield Arts Centre, Portstewart. The Tourism and Recreation team has pursued this option but unfortunately they are now unable to deliver due to being unable to secure an Entertainments Licence for the site. Officers have now no alternative and whilst they will explore other options to utilise the funding before the March deadline,**

Atlantic Sessions will now need to be delivered in a reduced format, therefore as outlined in Option 2 of the September Leisure and Development report – carry out a digital and social media campaign promoting Atlantic Sessions.

Traditional Music Trail in Ballycastle:

Traditional music is alive and well in Ballycastle but is relatively unknown if you are a visitor. There are a number of licensed premises in the town that regularly feature sessions with local musicians including the House of McDonnell, Taisies and O'Connors Bar & Restaurant but to date visitors are likely to stumble across these sessions rather than preplan their visits. We know from consumer research that access to live music and indigenous culture are motivators for visitors. The proposal is to bring together the traditional music offering within the town of Ballycastle and create a new bookable immersive music trail experience in the company of a guide, curated and managed by a third-party supplier/coordinator. There will also be the option to make it a multi-sensory experience by adding a bespoke food element to the trail by partnering with local restaurants and cafes, some of whom are Taste Causeway members. The traditional pubs will offer a unique insight into this aspect of our culture and the experience will link to the inspirers of the Embrace a Giant Spirit brand showing links to so many of the inspirers for the Embrace a Giant Spirit brand including big-hearted, legends and stories and original. The aims are to animate and enhance the evening economy within the town of Ballycastle throughout the year, showcasing local talent and culture, appealing to both the NI and ROI markets and longer term, the Culturally Curious segment in overseas markets. This is intended as a pilot programme, offering reasons to spend more time and more money in the town of Ballycastle, while fulfilling the visitors desire to connect with locals and engage in an immersive experience. We will launch in January with one event, repeat once in February and then once a week in March. Following a review, the intention to continue it as a regular, bookable experience after the programme ends in March.

Craft Trail Creative designers and makers trail of the Causeway Coast and Glens

The Causeway Coast and Glens is home to a wealth of artists the increase of creatives now resident within the borough is testimony to how our spectacular landscape, coastline and cultural heritage is inspirational to artists and makers. This wealth of creative talent offers a unique profile which benefits creative arts development, economic prosperity and tourism potential to the area. We know that visitors increasingly want unique experiences specific to the cultural identity of a place, with the opportunity to meet the maker, and indulge their own passions by learning a new skill. We see this event and experiences linking to the inspirers for the Embrace A Giant Spirit Brand and awaken the Giant Spirit in visitors by sparking creative and artistic responses, and encouraging them to add new skills. In February/March 2022, we are proposing a Meet the Makers Craft Fest where participating artists will work together to create a programme of events for the visitor to access open studios for workshops and tuition. The extended nature of the festival, spanning several weekends will provide opportunities for visitors to access the programme of events more than once. These activities may also be enhanced by partnering

with local suppliers to include a food element to be and accommodation providers to offer residential packages. The legacy of this festival will be the creation of a Meet the Maker Trail for visitors to plan self-guided experiences in the future.

The Great Outdoors of Causeway Coast and Glens showcase month: March 2022

In March 2022, Causeway Coast & Glens will host a festival of events to showcase outdoor activities on land and sea to encourage visitors to experience the area as never before. The adventure programme on offer will provide additional reasons to visit, enhance the visitor experiences and encourage increased visitor spend. Every weekend there will be a range of events and experiences to enjoy across the Borough. These collaborative experiences will be provided by a minimum of 20 providers in the area and will allow for visitors to choose a combination of activities with a range of accommodation options available. A key feature of the programme will be highlighting the accessibility of walking routes in the Causeway Coast and Glens for walkers of all abilities. New guided walks will be hosted by recognised walking guides, helping to disperse the visitors off the beaten tracks and create memorable experiences. Food will also be interwoven into these outdoor experiences through breakfasts, brunches, picnics on the move and camp cooking, as well as another iteration of the Dining in Unusual Places with Taste Causeway and Burrenmore Nest.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Great Outdoors Showcase will be used as a season launcher, highlighting the scale of opportunities in the destination to engage with the outdoors, at a number of different levels and abilities. This festival is designed to throw a spotlight on the extent of the outdoor offering across the destination and to identify, support and include new collaborative partnerships from not just outdoor activities, but also among food, accommodation, cultural and transport providers. These new collaborative experiences and events will be designed to offer compelling reasons for visitors to stay and enjoy what the Causeway Coast and Glens throughout the year and particularly out of season.

- 5.2 The programme is built around the findings of Tourism NI's research and insights, noting that the key motivators to visit Northern Ireland are escapism and getting away from it all with food and drink as key elements in the experience. The programme will be aligned to the segments identified and the visitors needs will be met through the connection with the great outdoors and natural environment, with the importance of good food and drink offerings throughout.

This programme has been carefully collated to deliver not just a recovery in the short term but to build a lasting legacy across the Destination and is a stepping stone for future growth from markets beyond Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The programme will also address key objectives of the Destination Management plan. Day trips will become overnights with the associated increase in spend by providing compelling reasons to the visitor to extend their stay and explore more of the region. The addition of new experiences and

events will encourage first time visitors to the area who are likely to become repeat visitors. The proposed programme of events will address the evening, weekend and midweek economy with many of the events, experiences taking place during this time.

- 5.3 Council Officers have secured maximum funding of £293,000 through the TNI Market Led Product Development Programme (100% funding). Details of estimated costs per activity

Project	Estimated costs
Slow Food in the Causeway Coast and Glens	£83,000.00
Atlantic Sessions – Inside Out	£73,000.00
Traditional Music Trail, Ballycastle	£25,000.00
Craft Trail Creative designers and makers trail of the Causeway Coast and Glens	£25,000.00
The Great Outdoors of Causeway Coast and Glens showcase	£87,000.00

- 5.4 Due for completion by 31 March 2022, this funding will support those businesses recover from the devastating impact of Covid.