



Title of Report:	Taste Causeway Future Support
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 February 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy
Outcome	Council contributes to an increasing tourism spend. Council contributes to improving levels of business innovation. Council contributes to increasing business start-up and survival rates.
Lead Officer	Interim Head of Prosperity & Place

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£20,000 per annum for max. 3 years
Included in Current Year Estimates	Included in 2022/23
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	32003
Staffing Costs	n/a

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 seek approval for future match funding to support a successful application to Phase III of Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme by TASTE Causeway Community Interest Company.

2.0 Background

Taste Causeway began in 2016 as a Council-led project, to support and showcase artisan food and drink producers. They have grown from an original membership of 14 to almost 100. Following on from successful Council and industry partnership, over the last 5 years, Taste Causeway has now become a community interest company (CIC).

The Taste Causeway priorities, as presented on 21st September 2021 to the Leisure and Development Committee, are summarised as follows:

- Economic Recovery of Local Food and Drink Sector.
- Development of Local Food and Drink Supply Chain.
- Support major "game changing projects".
- Further Development of Taste Causeway Digital/Social Media Platforms.
- Major Autumn/Winter Marketing Campaign.

These priorities align with Council's Economic Development Strategy to support the agri-food business sector.

Council has supported the Taste Causeway project at a cost of £25,000 per annum over the last three years, under the agri-food support initiative, alongside Invest NI support of £144,000 over the last three years up to January 2022.

Taste Causeway are requesting that Council continue with their valuable support and approve an annual financial contribution for the same 3 year period, by way of match funding to support the business case for Phase III of Invest NI's Collaborative Growth Programme (CGP) to the value of £20k per annum.

Previous Council contribution of £25k was used primarily for marketing the TC brand, including the following:

- Marketing to support *Taste the Island* campaign.
- Trade show attendance by producers.
- To match fund DAERA retail development programme and put branded units into 5 retail outlets and VICs. (£24K additional external fund levered to the programme through this matched fund).

The current request from Taste Causeway CIC for 2022/23 is for Council support of £20k to continue to market the Taste Causeway brand.

The priority areas of focus for Taste Causeway are: [extracted from their application to Phase III of Invest NI's Collaborative Growth Programme (CGP)]

1. **Further development of the local supply chain** to build on the foundations for growth and evidence/best practice from research.
2. **Further development of the Digital Platform tastecauseway.com** to exploit the opportunities around digital innovation, to drives sales and bookings and reach the identified target market.

3. **Training /Upskilling/ Business Support/ Accreditation/maximising trade/buyer opportunities to drive growth.** Building on collaborative working and alignment of skills and expertise within stakeholder group and realise the opportunities for artisan producers within Industry 4.0 to address scale-ability issue.
4. **Brand Development and Marketing** to build on the opportunities for growth as a result of trademarked brand with high level of awareness and growing reputation.
5. **Food Tourism.** This element of the supply chain has developed beyond any expectations in Phase 2 and is now a key aspect of the work plan, given the opportunities for diversification/business growth and accessing new target markets. Now an essential component of the visitor offer for the area.
6. **Structure, Governance and Finance.** Consolidating the advantages of a CIC structure to facilitate growth in membership and ensure that the network is adequately resourced and financially viable for the future.

3.0 Proposal

That council continue to support the local agri-food business sector, through promotion of the Taste Causeway brand. Taste Causeway CIC exclusively manage and protect the Taste Causeway brand and have made a bid to Invest NI for a further £169,850 for continued agri-food business development. As per letter from Taste Causeway Chairperson dated 31st January 2022 (**Annex A**).

An allocation of £20,000 has been included in the Prosperity & Place budget estimate for 2022/23 for Agri-food Support.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee recommends to Council, its future support to Taste Causeway CIC, in the amount of £20,000 per annum. This annual funding would be for the duration of Phase III, of Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme, up to a maximum of three years, pro rata. This financial support is conditional upon Taste Causeway being successful in their bid for Phase III funding, which is awaiting Invest NI's decision.



Richard Baker

Director of Prosperity and Place

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

31st January 2022

Dear Richard,

Re: Annual Financial Contribution to Taste Causeway

Taste Causeway CIC has been very grateful for the continued support of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, both through the annual financial contribution of £25k over the last three years and through the in-kind contributions as a result of Alchemy or Digital support or through tourism grants, notably the successful Slow Food Causeway programme which runs to end March 2022.

Never has there been more need for a business led network such as Taste Causeway. The last two years have showed us the strength of collaboration, as the businesses sought to share resources and knowledge to navigate the challenges of the Covid pandemic, relying heavily on our Facilitator to access financial support, loans and furlough and help us understand and implement the restrictions and legislation. Our network membership has now grown to over 100 businesses and stakeholders. Businesses pay a small membership fee to support branding, marketing and trade show activity.

As we move into 2022, we are optimistic and ambitious for the future of our food and drink sector here in the Causeway Coast and Glens. We are keen to embrace the opportunities to innovate, develop new products and grow, as well as capitalise on the opportunities which food tourism offers in this area.

We are currently building a business case to access further Invest NI Collaborative Growth support for continued facilitation for a 3 year period. We are requesting that Council continue with their valuable support and approve an annual financial contribution for the

ANNEX A

same 3 year period, by way of match funding to support this business case, to the value of £20k per annum.

We look forward to a continued positive working relationship with all the Council departments we currently work with and showcasing our food and drink sector through the Taste Causeway brand. Taste Causeway is recognised as a leading food and drink destination across Ireland, runner up in the Foodie Destination awards and the only region in Northern Ireland to gain the globally recognised Slow Food Accreditation. Despite the pandemic, we have seen a rise in new business and existing businesses continuing to expand, diversify and innovate. We had our best year to date, with 19 stars at Great Taste Awards and 5 Gold awards, 4 bronze awards at the Blas na hEireann Irish Food Awards. We are looking forward to breaking this record again this year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leona Kane', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leona Kane

Chair

Taste Causeway Collaborative Growth Network