

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Terms of Reference for the Development of Outdoor Recreation Strategy</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	The Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	17 January 2023
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Decision

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities Protecting and enhancing our environment and assets
Outcome	Citizens have access to Council recreational facilities and protected natural environments, which help them to develop their physical, emotional and cognitive health.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	£20,000
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>NO – planned for 23/24</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	n/a

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	n/a	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	n/a	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	n/a	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of this report**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the development of a bespoke Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for future management and implementation, through the Council's Coast and Countryside team and other stakeholders.

## **2.0 Background**

Outdoor Recreation is one of four service areas delivered through the Coast & Countryside Team.

Defined as any recreational activity undertaken in a natural setting; it does not include pitch or facility based activity. The interest and participation in outdoor recreation has grown significantly in recent years with an emphasis on the physical and mental well-being benefits available through participation. Outdoor recreation is considered physical activity for life.

The Borough lends itself well to outdoor recreation with the high-quality landscape and seascape providing the venue for activities. The unique combination of land, water and air-based activities within the area has proved to be a visitor attraction providing opportunity to be outdoors throughout the year.

There has been a considerable amount of strategic work undertaken in the past ten years with respect to outdoor recreation. The opportunity now presents to develop a strategic approach which is tailored to the unique aspects of the Borough and responds to the public demand for the outdoors.

Outdoor recreation has several cross-cutting themes:

1. Community – beneficial to local population.
2. Health and lifestyle – benefit physical and mental well-being. Outdoor recreation is physical activity for life.
3. Economy – a growing sector in terms of commercial activity provision and/or equipment plus ancillary services, especially hospitality sector.
4. Environment – Our landscape and seascape are the playground.
5. Sustainability – Sustainability of activities and suitability at sites
6. Safety – The safety of the public in the outdoors is the highest priority. The increase in commercial provision and practitioners requires careful management.
7. Year-round provision – No longer a seasonal consideration.

## **3.0 Key Outputs of the Terms of Reference**

Key outputs of the Terms of Reference will include:

- Strategic direction for future development.
- Prioritisation of actions and timescales for delivery.
- Resources identified, including partnership arrangements (internal and external) and funding opportunities.
- Model for future delivery including governance and delivery/monitoring and evaluation.

## **4.0 Terms of Reference**

Terms of Reference is attached at **Annex A**.

## **5.0 Recommendation**

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to approve the procurement of suitably qualified individuals/companies to assist the Tourism and Recreation team to deliver on a strategic approach for Outdoor Recreation, as detailed in the attached Terms of Reference.

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## Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Strategy & Action Plan Terms of Reference

### Background:

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council wishes to commission the development of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy for the Borough. It is the Council's aspiration that while the Strategy will be 'owned' by the Council, it will also reflect the views and attract the commitment of all relevant stakeholders in Outdoor Recreation in the Borough.

Except for Belfast, the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough is the largest tourism destination in NI. In 2019, prior to Covid 19, Causeway Coast and Glens attracted over 1 million overnight visitors to the area, generating 3.5 million nights and a spend of £192 million for the economy.

There are many attractions in the Borough including a World Heritage site, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, beaches, dramatic coastlines, forests, spectacular upland landscapes, shopping towns, events, food and beverage offerings, world class golf courses and historic sites. Within these attractions are numerous natural outdoor assets that have helped the Borough grown in popularity as a region for both the local community and visitors to participate in a range of Outdoor Recreation activities. It is proposed that, for the purpose of this commission, Outdoor Recreation is defined as:

Physical recreation in an outdoor environment, most commonly in a natural setting and typically pursued for purposes of physical exercise, general wellbeing, spiritual renewal, and an opportunity to positively engage with nature.

The activities that can be encompassed by the term Outdoor Recreation vary depending on the physical assets of the environment. The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough benefits from a unique combination of natural assets for Outdoor Recreation on land, on the water and in the air. As a result of these natural assets the Outdoor Recreation activities available in the area include inter alia:

- Water sports: Surfing (various), Kite Surfing, Sailing, Kayaking / Canoeing, recreational rowing, Stand-Up Paddle Board, Coasteering, Sailing and Open Water / Wild Swimming.
- Cycling: Mountain, Road and Gravel.
- Walking Based activities: Lowland and upland walking including Causeway Coast Way, North Sperrins Way, Moyle Way and Ulster Way/International Appalachian Trail
- Climbing related activities: Traditional and sport rock climbing, abseiling and scrambling.
- Fishing: Game, Course and Sea.
- Air: Hang gliding, Parapenting and Parascending.

While the above activities have become very popular in the Borough, this has mainly been uncoordinated and unmanaged rather than resulting from any strategy or plan.

The Council believes that there are many potential benefits to the further development of Outdoor Recreation in the Borough:

- A growth in visitor numbers, overnight stays and the tourism economy
- The economic development of rural communities

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- Health and wellbeing benefits for local communities from participation in physical activity in a natural environment
- Less weather dependant than other types of tourism
- Not limited to the traditional tourist season and so can extend the length of the season and level off the peaks and troughs in tourist related economic activity
- Equipment retail, hire and repair business opportunities
- Instructional, teaching and guiding business opportunities
- The physical and mental wellbeing of participants
- Planning and promoting the sustainable use of the natural environment for recreation

This view is largely reflected in the Tourism NI 'Unlocking the Outdoors Framework' which sets out eleven recommendations for 'Embracing A Giant Spirit: Outdoors '. In addition to these benefits, the Council is very aware of the need to protect the sensitive habitats, attractive landscapes and historic assets of the Borough and to ensure that the use of the outdoor environment for recreation and tourism is done in a sustainable and responsible way.

The Council believes that the development and implementation of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy has the potential to realise many potential benefits for the Borough while at the same time ensuring that the natural and historic environments are protected for the benefit of and enjoyment by future generations. Outdoor recreation can bring significant benefits to the local economy and to the protection and enhancement of our most special natural and built assets through education and engagement. Further, it provides low-cost opportunities for local people to participate in stronger communities and experience the physical and mental well-being benefits of physical activity in an outdoor environment. The Council proposes that Outdoor Recreation can provide an opportunity for green growth.

As a result, the Council expects the Outdoor Recreation Strategy to consider the opportunities and actions required to ensure a sustainable future of Outdoor Recreation in the Borough from three different perspectives.

### **A Framework for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation in Causeway Coast and Glens:**

- Environmental:
  - Protecting and enhancing our natural and built heritage, sensitive habitats and unique landscapes
  - Contribution to the Climate Action agenda and carbon reduction
- Social:
  - Stronger and more inter-connected communities
  - A community that is better connected with and enjoys participating in its local outdoor environment
  - Healthier people who enjoy participation in physical activities in their local outdoor environments
- Economic:
  - Outdoor Recreation is increasingly a reason for others to visit, stay and leave a positive economic footprint in the Borough
  - Local people enjoy rewarding careers (rather than jobs) in economic activities linked to Outdoor Recreation in the Borough

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### Causeway Coast and Glens Current Position for Outdoor Recreation:

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has a Coast and Countryside Team that sit within the Tourism Department of the Council. This Team has already done some preliminary work on mapping the current Outdoor Recreation:

- Positives
- Negatives; and
- Opportunities for development

This work is summarised below:

Positives	Negatives	Opportunities
Surf	Inconsistent conditions	Lessons and equipment hire
Variety of walking/cycling routes and environments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cliff</li> <li>- Beach</li> <li>- Forest</li> <li>- Valley</li> <li>- Upland</li> </ul>	Rights of way/access issues Causeway \Coast Way: could be more off road  Poorly connected by public transport	New access / outdoor recreation legislation.  Greenway and Blueway development  Improved and bike friendly public transport
Private sector Outdoor Recreation businesses	No/limited quality control  Unregulated providers using Council owned access points and promoted by Council Tourist Information Centres	A policy decision by Council on suitable accreditation in return for access to Council estate and/or Council promotion of business.  Investment in workforce training and accreditation.
Cold water swimming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mental health</li> <li>- All ages and abilities</li> <li>- High growth area</li> </ul>	Limited swim zones in Council harbours  Challenging “Atlantic” conditions  Powered v unpowered recreation	Basic swimmers’ infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safe swim zones</li> <li>- Reinstate swimmer’s rafts diving boards etc</li> <li>- Shelters</li> </ul>
Mt and gravel biking in local forests	Limited tracks and associated infrastructure.  FSNI relationships and policies	Low-cost pump tracks in local communities and open spaces close to communities.  Growth area – opportunities for the Glens – away from other outdoor hubs on N Coast
Ocean-based recreation:	Exposed to weather and rough conditions	Better use of R Bann: access points

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- Kayak - Paddle board - Swim - Sailing		More access to harbours for sheltered water
Fair Head as a rock-climbing destination	Too hard for intro/intermediary climbers	Climbing wall
River-based recreation	Underdeveloped	Better use of river network including Bann, Bush and Roe.

The Council believes that the emerging strategy should build on this initial work by the Coast & Countryside Team but at the same time secure the views, opinions and buy in of important stakeholders.

As part of identifying the need for an Outdoor Recreation Strategy the Council has reconvened a its Outdoor Recreation Forum/Partnership. This body aims to provide an outdoor recreation stakeholder reference group who will initially help guide the development of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan. This group has representation from the following:

- CC&G Elected Members
- Government Departments: eg DfC, DAERE, DAERA Marine Division
- Arm's length bodies: eg Sport NI, Rivers Agency, Forest Service, Tourism NI, NI Environment Agency, Waterways Ireland, NI Water
- NGOs: Woodland Trust, National Trust, Causeway Heritage Trust, Ulster University
- Relevant governing bodies of sport and community organisations e.g. Royal Yachting Association, Irish Surfing Association, Mountaineering Association, Ramblers Association, Cycling Ireland, Canoe Association for NI
- Private sector representation
- Ulster Farmers Union
- Community representation

The CC&G Outdoor Recreation Partnership is already established and has agreed these terms of reference. It is envisaged that the Council will continue to convene this group during the implementation of the emerging Strategy and Action Plan. During this time membership will remain fluid to reflect the main interested parties related to the Strategy and the associated Action Plan

The final strategy should include:

**Strategic Context:** To set the Strategy & Action Plan in the strategic context of NI and other regions in terms of its strategic fit with the policies and strategies of the NIE and the Council but also the way in which Outdoor Recreation has been used as a tool for social, economic and wellbeing development in other jurisdictions. This section should be cognisant of the Tourism NI, Unlock the Great Outdoors Framework and the emerging Action Plan.

**Stock Take:** A robust audit of the current position for Outdoor Recreation in the Borough and an assessment of need for future intervention to include:

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- GIS mapping
- SWOT analysis
- Gap analysis of provision of facilities infrastructure and services

**Mission:** a high level, motivational but realistic statement of what we value

**Vision:** The picture of what the successful implementation of an Outdoor Recreation Strategy will look like in the Causeway Coast and Glens: what we want to become.

**Aims:** The broad category of financial and non-financial issues to be addressed by the Strategy. For example, the Strategy and Action Plan could cover issues such as:

- Access to open spaces for recreation
- Access to information on venues, routes, destinations and safety
- Physical infrastructure
- Human and organisational infrastructure
- Ongoing management and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure
- Skills and employability
- Service development
- Destination development
- Environmental sustainability and enhancement
- Climate impact
- Local community development opportunities
- Events
- Branding and marketing
- Partnerships, synergies with and differentiation from other regions
- Related strategic and policy approaches with partners or government
- Funding opportunities

**Objectives:** Time-bound specific end results which are to be accomplished via the Strategy including the areas of:

- Environmental
- Social
- Economic

**Action plan:** Short, medium and long-term, costed SMART prioritised actions that need to be completed and by whom to achieve the Objectives

**Monetary and non-monetary benefits of implementation:** Using established economic methodologies to predict the range of benefits for the Borough if the Strategy and Action Plan were implemented.

The above must be developed in consultation with key stakeholders as well as creating the opportunity for non-affiliated commentary from individuals within the local community through an open call to 'Have your say on the future of Outdoor Recreation in Causeway Coast and Glens'.

The appointed supplier will be required to be mindful that the Strategy is being commissioned and owned by the Council (as the accountable body) and many of the recommendations will have implications for the Council. While the Council will expect the appointed supplier to create a Stakeholder Reference Group, the Council will also require workshops and progress presentations to the Council, Committees and Elected Members as the contract progresses.

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The Draft document should be provided to the Council's officers for review and commentary in advance of the Final Draft being presented to the Elected Members for comment prior to the document being finally accepted by the Council.



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### Invitation to tender:

The Council wishes to receive proposals for the development of a Causeway Coast and Glens Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan, from suitable qualified and experienced contractors under the following headings:

#### 1. Team Experience

(max score available 30, minimum quality threshold 15)

In no more than 3 A4 pages at font type size 10, respondents should set out the experience of the proposed team that should include as a minimum:

#### Team Lead

The team leader must have led at least three similar strategy development processes in the last five years. Each example must be in a relevant discipline such as:

- Outdoor Recreation
- Sport & Leisure; or
- Tourism

Each example must be of at least a similar scale of geographic area i.e. at least the size of one council area in Northern Ireland.

#### Team Members

The team must consist of at least one each of the following:

##### - **A qualified economist with experience as follows:**

A team member with responsibility for using established economic methodologies to forecast the potential monetary and non-monetary benefits of at least three similar strategy development processes in the last five years. Each example must be in a relevant discipline such as:

- Outdoor Recreation
- Sport & Leisure; or
- Tourism

Each example must be of at least a similar scale of geographic area i.e. at least the size of one council area in Northern Ireland.

##### - **An Outdoor Recreation specialist with experience as follows:**

A team member with responsibility for the specialist Outdoor Recreation input to at least three Outdoor Recreation Strategy development processes in the last five years.

Each example must be of at least a similar scale of geographic area i.e. at least the size of one council area in Northern Ireland.

#### 2. Methodology

(max score available 30, minimum quality threshold 15)

In no more than 5 A4 pages at font type size 10, respondents should set out their proposed methodology for the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

As part of this commission, the Council requires the appointed contractor develop and implement a project methodology, based on the application of their own knowledge and experience as well as based on consultation with all the relevant stakeholders to Outdoor Recreation in the Borough. The

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Council understands that, while the views of all relevant stakeholders are important, some will have a higher degree of direct interest/relevance than others. As such, in the interests of practicalities and efficiency the methodologies proposed by prospective contractors should consider a different level/methodology of engagement with different Tiers of stakeholders. Respondents should set out their proposed methodology for Strategy & Action Plan development in consultation with stakeholders at three Tiers of relevance and indicate which organisations or individuals they believe would fall into each Tier.

**Tier 1:** Organisations and individuals central to the development and delivery of the CC&G Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan. This will be the CC&G Outdoor Recreation Partnership as convened by the Council

**Tier 2:** Organisations and individuals with some meaningful link to the development and delivery of the CC&G Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan

**Tier 3:** Organisations and individuals with peripheral links to the development and delivery of the CC&G Outdoor Recreation Strategy and Action Plan

Consideration should be given within proposed methodologies for an 'open call' for information, views, recommendations or evidence from other interested organisations or individuals.

### 3. Cost

(max score available 30, scores awarded on the basis of a % of the lowest cost submission which will attract a score of 30)

In no more than 1 A4 page at font type size 10, respondents should set out their proposed costs for the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

The costs proposed should include:

- The time and resources required from all staff input
- The costs of all and any third-party experts, office staff, office costs, communications and photocopying
- All costs associated with travel and subsistence
- The number of physical or online consultations they intend to deliver and how.
- At least three physical workshops with elected Members and a presentation to a Committee or Council
- The production of a final draft which will be subject to review and recommendations by:
  - o Officers and Elected Members of the Council
  - o CC&G Outdoor Recreation Partnership

The cost proposals should exclude:

- the costs for venue hire and refreshments for public consultations and meetings. The Council will, by prior agreement, cover all reasonable costs for this purpose. The preferred option will always be to use Council facilities where these are appropriate and available
- The costs of design, type setting and printing the final document