

Title of Report:	153rd Open Championship
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 April 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Promote our tourist offer locally and internationally
Outcome	Improve prosperity
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	September 2025

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes	Date: 04 April 2025
	EQIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes	Date: 04 April 2025
	RNA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes	Date: 04 April 2025
	DPIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on Council's role in the continuing planning in advance of the 153rd Open Championship in Portrush in July 2025.

2.0 Background

2.1 At its meeting in November 2024, Council's Leisure and Development Committee recommended a report which outlined Council's involvement in the planning and delivery of the 153rd Open Championship. Council agreed a budget of £365,000 to enable this.

2.2 The 153rd Open Championship at Portrush is expected to deliver:

- The largest sporting event ever in Northern Ireland.
- Over 250,000 visitors to the Causeway Coast and Glens area.
- An annual economic benefit of over £150m to the host region.
- Over 600 Journalists from all over the world covering the event.
- A television audience of over 80 million including visuals of Portrush which will be broadcast in over 150 countries.

2.3 The 153rd Open Championship is the flagship event in Northern Ireland's key Golf Tourism market:

- In 2024 the value of golf tourism in Northern Ireland was estimated at over £70m, the highest year on record!
- We welcomed 29,000 out-of-state visitors.
- 53% of golf visitors stay between 1 and 2 weeks.
- £85m per annum is the economic impact target for golf tourism by the end of 2030.
- 59% of visiting golfers in 2023 were return visitors. Key golf markets are North America, Great Britain, Republic of Ireland, Europe, Nordics and Germany.

3.0 Headline Updates on Council Led Activity

3.1 Business and Community Engagement

- Business and Community Engagement Day held in February in Portrush Town Hall welcomed 243 attendees, including 75 representatives from 66 different businesses. There were also 8 Elected Members in attendance, who received a briefing from the R&As Director of Public Affairs. This Open Engagement Day will be repeated on 28th May as well as a rolling program of drop-in sessions in Portrush Town Hall.
- Council's Elected Members are due to receive a briefing from the R&A's Executive Director Championships and the Director, Public Affairs on Tuesday 6th May 2025.
- Council continues to promote widely amongst local businesses and community organisations including the benefits of the 2025 TNI Business Toolkit.
- Advanced Notice community signage has been agreed and erected across multiple sites in Portrush to notify businesses and the local community of Car Park closures.

- Council will take a lead role in the promotion and activation of the Open Legacy Fund.
- Recent recruitment event held in March in Portrush Town Hall. Over 300 people attended across the three days. Overall, of the 1,200 roles available, 85% have been recruited for locally. Following the success of the recruitment drive, recruitment for these 1,200 roles has since closed.
- The recent TNI led webinar – Council’s Golf Project Manager presented and took questions. There were 166 businesses registered and 70 attending live.
- Council continues to work with partners on the delivery of skilling up ‘Get Open Ready’ courses that are being delivered to Businesses, with sessions in Belfast, Londonderry and Coleraine.

3.2 Tourism and Promotion

- Site visits and local engagement visits have taken place to explore potential options for Animation and Events.
- Branding and Animation Plans are well advanced in terms of development, procurement and planning.
- Event Programme for the Championship week has been proposed to the Tourism & Promotion Group. Some final budgetary considerations are being considered. The Programme will be smaller and more targeted than in 2019. The main program will run from Wednesday, culminating on the Friday night showcase event.
- Council officers continue to work closely with key partners in terms of the plans for dressing roads, roundabouts, main travel routes towards Portrush. These options have been presented to R&A and TNI for their consideration. Plans are well developed.
- Council officers continue to explore options at the Portrush Harbour site and have been working with local businesses and the Harbour Master.
- Council continues to explore further activities in other towns, such as promoting “Live at The Open” music and entertainment events.

3.3 Service Continuity and Town Presentation

Plans for Town presentation and service continuity during the Championship are also well developed especially in terms of:

- Floral Displays and Grass Cutting.
- Enhanced Bin Collections, street sweeping, litter pickling & Special Waste Collections.
- Focus on presentation of Civic Amenity sites and Public Toilets.
- Environmental Health and Enforcement Issues including Street Trading and inspections of catering provisions.
- Entertainment Licenses/ Liqueur Licensing / Child Certification.

3.4 Traffic and Transport

- Traffic & Transport Communications sub-group has been established and has developed all Comms related plans for the Traffic and Transport arrangements for the Open Championship.

- Enhanced public transport (bus and rail services timetabling) across Portrush, the CC&G area and beyond have been finalised and are ready for publication.
- Translink to hold an Open Championship Travel Launch day on 10th April at Royal Portrush.
- New arrangements in place for the main Park and Ride facilities depot of buses. This has been moved to the carpark at Railway Road in Coleraine.
- Overall Park and Ride - (provision approx. 12,000 spaces) over 5 sites.

All plans are also well developed in relation to:

- Local area road network including taxi provision and business/resident parking.
- Reserved parking for cars and buses.
- Digital App being developed by R&A for transport to and from the Open Championship.

4.0 Temporary Transfer of Council Owned Lands to R&A

- 4.1 As part of the event delivery, the R&A has made application to Council for the temporary transfer of lands to facilitate the event. The requirement include land for TV compound, public Park and Ride facilities, coach parking and the provision of a public transport hub.

Officers from the Tourism and Recreation team, in conjunction with Land and Property are currently processing this application through the Land and Property Sub Committee and Corporate Policy and Resources.

5.0 Other Key Areas of Work

- 5.1 Council also continues to play a key role in the following Open Championship planning groups:
- Safety and Security.
 - Marketing and Communications.
 - Technical and Regulatory.
 - Recruitment, Skills and Volunteering.
 - Sustainability and Legacy.

6.0 Recommendation

Elected Members are asked to note the content of this update report.