

Title of Report:	Tourism and Recreation Destination Management – Update on activities
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Sub Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 October 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating Our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Promote our tourism offer locally and internationally Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing and Cohesive Community.
Outcome	Improved access to our natural environment. Development of visitor economy and health and wellbeing opportunities
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Destination Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	n/a

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	n/a
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
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/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 provide an overview of the Destination Management Team's activities, achievements, and strategic direction, highlighting their impact on the local economy, community, and the long-term development of the Causeway Coast and Glens as a premier tourism destination.

2.0 **Background**

The Destination Management Team within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council plays a strategic role in supporting the growth and sustainability of the local visitor economy. This report outlines the team's key activities across destination marketing, visitor servicing, trade engagement, and product development all of which directly support economic development, community wellbeing, and the long-term management of the Causeway Coast and Glens as a world-class tourism destination.

3.0 **Strategic Vision**

The Destination Management Team contributes to the Council's priorities by driving sustainable tourism development, enhancing the quality of life for local residents, supporting local business growth, and increasing global visibility for the Borough.

A new Destination Management Plan (2026–2036) is currently being developed and this will set the strategic direction for tourism over the next decade within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough. This plan will focus on sustainability, economic growth, and community benefits, while aligning with national tourism policy and strategic objectives.

4.0 **Key Areas of Activity**

• **Destination Marketing**

The Destination Management Team delivers four seasonal campaigns each year, targeting both domestic and international markets. These campaigns are often delivered in collaboration with national bodies, including Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland, and are featured in high-profile publications. See **Appendix 1** for

details of The Autumn Campaign. The team also attends trade and consumer shows in partnership with these organisations, promoting the Causeway Coast and Glens as a first-choice visitor destination.

High-quality digital content, including social media, videos, and itineraries, are produced to encourage longer stays and increase visitor spending. The team manages visitor guides, promotional materials, and branding, ensuring that marketing reflects the area's natural beauty, heritage, and culture.

Council-led and supported events, such as the Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival, Atlantic Sessions, Rathlin Sound Festival, and Lammas Fair, are actively promoted to boost visibility and generate economic impact.

The Tourism Team's marketing efforts have been recognised through both local and national awards, acknowledging excellence in digital content, campaign innovation, and visitor engagement. These accolades enhance credibility, support media coverage, and attract further investment opportunities.

- **Visitor Servicing**

The Destination Management Team operates seven Visitor Information Centres (VICs) along with a Local Information Office in Cushendall. Between April and August this year, these centres processed approximately 80,000 enquiries, a 35% increase compared to the same period last year. This strong growth reflects the area's increasing appeal and the rising number of visitors year-on-year.

The VICs play a vital role in supporting the visitor experience, offering booking services, ticket sales, and retail products from more than 100 local suppliers. They also actively promote local events and experiences, including the weekly "What's On" ezine, which consistently achieves a 34% open rate.

The high quality of service provided by the centres has been recognised by TripAdvisor, with awards for excellence in visitor servicing, a clear reflection of the positive experiences shared by visitors.

- **Trade Engagement**

The Destination Management Team actively supports local businesses through trade clinics, marketing partnerships, and professional training. Some industry events, including familiarisation trips and workshops, are organised in collaboration with Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, fostering connections between neighbouring businesses across the Causeway Coast and Glens region and helping them create and promote high-quality visitor experiences.

Over 40 businesses have benefited from the Council's Experience Development Programme, which provides opportunities to participate in events such as Meet the Buyer. Additionally, a trade e-zine is distributed fortnightly to more than 1,200 businesses, achieving an impressive 44.4% open rate, well above the industry average

Planned Activity (Next Few Months)

- CCR Familiarisation Trip for Tourism Ireland GB Office – showcasing new products within the Causeway Coast and Glens
- GO Succeed Programme – supporting new tourism businesses with skills and growth opportunities.
- Tourism Industry Day – bringing together stakeholders for networking, insights, and collaboration.

• **Product Development**

The Destination Management Team develops new visitor experiences across wellness, food and drink, and cultural tourism, ensuring alignment with national priorities and sustainable tourism trends. Capital projects currently supported by the team include:

- Shared Island Wild Atlantic Way / Causeway Coastal Route project
- Greenways and Connected Causeway initiatives
- PEACEPLUS initiatives

These projects enhance visitor offerings while supporting long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

5.0 Economic and Community Impact

Tourism is a major economic driver for the Causeway Coast and Glens.

According to NISRA data:

- The Borough hosted over **1.07 million trips** (23% of Northern Ireland's total)
- **3.24 million bed nights** (22% of the regional total)
- Generated **£210 million in visitor spend**
- Supported approximately **5,400 local jobs**

These figures exclude day visitors, meaning the total economic contribution is likely significantly higher. Council-led marketing, product development, and visitor engagement initiatives have further boosted bookings, spending, and business visibility. Local testimonials consistently highlight the tourism sector's positive impact on both rural and urban economies across the Borough.

6.0 Future Direction: Destination Management Strategy (2026-2036)

The Council has commissioned RUNDA Hospitality and Tourism Solutions to assist with new Destination Management Strategy, which will assist in sustaining and growing the area's visitor economy over the next decade. The plan will focus on sustainability, community benefit, and economic growth, providing a shared vision for stakeholders across the public sector, local businesses, and the community. It will establish clear actions, measurable outcomes, and strategic alignment with national

tourism policy to ensure the Causeway Coast and Glens remains a premier destination.

A programme of workshops is in place for the wider industry and local community, allowing stakeholders to contribute to the development of the Destination Management Plan (2026–2036) see **Appendix 2**.

Councillors are invited to participate in a dedicated hybrid workshop on Thursday 18th November from 5pm–7pm.

7.0 Conclusion

The Council's Tourism Team continues to deliver high impact, strategically aligned work that benefits the local economy, enhances the visitor experience, and promotes the Causeway Coast and Glens as a world-class tourism destination. Continued support from councillors and ongoing investment are essential to maintain momentum, ensure successful delivery of the ten-year Destination Management Plan, and unlock further opportunities for communities and the tourism industry.

8.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Sub-Committee notes the comments of this Report for information.

Appendix 1

Visit Causeway Coast and Glens Autumn Campaign 2025

The Visit Causeway Coast and Glens Autumn Campaign will run from **Monday 29th September to Sunday 16th November 2025**.

As part of this campaign, we are targeting key audiences in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland using Tourism Northern Ireland's audience segmentation. These audiences include families, mature couples, outdoor enthusiasts, lovers of local food and drink, those seeking authentic experiences, and visitors to iconic attractions.

The **Destination Marketing Team** has developed the campaign using compelling imagery and video to showcase the destination to these key audiences. Marketing activity includes social media advertising (Facebook and Instagram), Google Search and Display, ITVX pause screen advertising, and radio.

Traffic from the campaign is directed to a dedicated landing page <https://www.visitcausewaycoastandglens.com/autumn>. This page features an autumn blog highlighting the wide range of things to see and do across the borough, where to stay, places to eat and drink, outdoor experiences, and events. It also provides a platform for the tourism trade in Causeway Coast and Glens to showcase dedicated autumn offers free of charge, encouraging collaboration and joint promotion.

The primary objective of the campaign is to raise awareness of Causeway Coast and Glens as a premier destination for domestic and Republic of Ireland visitors. By highlighting unique experiences and accommodation, we aim to encourage trip planning, support visitor itineraries, and increase both footfall and spend within the borough.

Link to video <https://youtu.be/E4g17njMww>

Appendix 2

Destination Management Strategy – Consultation and Engagement Schedule.

Steering Group Meetings

Thursday 16 th October	2.30 – 4.00pm (VS)
Thursday 27 th November	2.30 – 4.00pm (VS)
Thursday 18 th December	2.30 – 4.00pm (VS)
Thursday 29 th January	2.30 – 4.00pm (VS)
Thursday 19 th February	2.30 – 4.00pm (VS)

Destination Management Strategy Officers Update (TIER 3)

Dates as above	4.00 – 5.00pm (VS)
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Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

Tuesday 11 th November	9.30am - 11.30am	Marine Hotel, Ballycastle
Tuesday 11 th November	2.00pm - 4.00pm	Lodge Hotel, Coleraine
Monday 1 st December	2.30pm – 4.30pm	Roe Park Hotel, Limavady

Council Staff

Monday 6th October

Destination Team	9.00am – 10.30am	Conference Rm 1
Coast and Countryside/ HALP's	10.45am – 11.45am	Conference Rm 1
Tourism Events	12noon – 1.00pm	Large Committee Room
HOS	2.00pm -3.30pm	Large Committee Room

Chief Executive & SMT

Monday 1 st December	10.30am – 12noon	Chief Executives Office
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Councillors

Tuesday 18 th November	5.00pm – 7.00pm	Council Chamber (hybrid)
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Community/ Business

Monday 1 st December	6.30pm– 8.30pm	Lodge Hotel, Coleraine
Monday 8 th December	12.00pm- 1.30pm	Virtual session

Stakeholder engagement

October/ November/December