

Title of Report:	Support for Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust and Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 September 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	P4 Sustainability & Managing our Natural and Built Environment
Outcome	Designated sites, landscapes, and biodiversity which are protected, enhanced, and managed sustainably. Increased citizens and visitors access to high-quality green spaces
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism & Recreation Coast & Countryside Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	March 2027

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£39,000 for CCGHT £30,000 for Binevenagh LPS
Included in Current Year Estimates	26/27 for CCGHT Not provision made for LPS
Capital/Revenue	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:
	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)			
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the recent activities undertaken by Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) of behalf of Council and seek approval for support of the ongoing work for the current financial year 2026/2027.

Approval is also sought for further financial support for the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS), hosted by CCGHT, for the current financial year 2026/2027.

2.0 Background

2.1 Council Support for CCGHT

Council has supported Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) since its inception, providing funding for agreed activities that contribute to the development and implementation of environmental and protected landscape management plans.

This work focuses on the three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty — Antrim Coast and Glens, Binevenagh, and the Causeway Coast — as well as the World Heritage Site. CCGHT also receives core funding from DAERA to support delivery of these objectives. The Trust's activities continue to complement Council's Coast and Countryside and wider Destination Management remit.

2.2 Previous Funding Arrangement

In September 2023, Council agreed to provide financial support of £35,000 per annum for a three-year period from 2023 to 2026, for services delivered through an agreed workplan. In February 2023, Council had previously agreed an annual uplift to reflect changes in inflation. Coast & Countryside has reviewed the agreed actions and confirmed that they have been completed, enabling all funding to be paid in full. These actions are listed in **Annex A**. With the three-year workplan now complete, Council is asked to consider how it may continue to support CCGHT in future.

3.0 Proposals for CCGHT

3.1 CCGHT is currently undergoing a period of transition due to staff changes, the final 18 months of the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Partnership Scheme and the delivery of new projects through alternative funding streams. CCGHT has developed a workplan for 2026 -2027 in consultation with Council officers. Offering a one-year agreement will see the work undertaken by CCGHT on behalf of Council continuing and will allow for the development of a longer-term work plan which meets the needs of Council and CCGHT.

3.2 It is proposed that Council provides funding of £39,000 for the 2026–2027 financial year to support the agreed actions detailed in **Annex B** allowing for the annual CPI increase. These actions reflect the ongoing work in protected landscape management and sustainability. The specific outputs in Annex B relate to:

- Developing sustainable and effective partnerships such as the World Heritage Site Steering Group and implementation of the World Heritage Site plan for Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast WHS.
- Delivering protected area management provision through action plans for Antrim Coast & Glens, Binevenagh and Causeway Coast AONBs.

- Ensuring best practice in sustainable development principles delivered through the AONB action plans and assessing the development potential of a Co. Antrim Geopark.
- Delivering opportunities to experience the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area's unique outdoor and heritage through public events.

The agreement will be subject to regular review and staged payments on satisfactory completion of actions. Additionally, the agreement would seek to have regular engagement with other funders, both existing and potential, for the benefit of all parties and the delivery on actions.

4.0 Background for Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme

- 4.1 The Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) commenced in 2020 having secured £3.4 million in support from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and partners for a five-year programme. The Partnership has progressed the delivery of projects across the themes Outdoor Recreation, Natural Heritage and Built Heritage and Conservation. The LPS has been hosted through CCGHT.
- 4.2 In October 2019 Council agreed to become a supporting partner of the LPS providing £273,560 of match funding over five years. Whilst Council's financial contribution is complete, Council staff continue to work with the LPS to ensure project completion.
- 4.3 The LPS has established a strong legacy, including a UK and Irish sourced tree nursery in partnership with HMP Magilligan, the Castlerock Trails and Tales project, community-led initiatives, publications and events based on the built, natural and cultural heritage of the Binevenagh. These achievements provide a foundation for the Council and Landscape Partnership Board's longer-term ambition to seek UNESCO Biosphere status for the Binevenagh area.

5.0 Proposals for LPS

- 5.1 NLHF approved a two-year extension and an additional £700,000 in June 2024 for the LPS following disruption from COVID-19 and subsequent inflationary pressures. The LPS continues to October 2027 and is expected to deliver more than £4 million of investment over its duration.
- 5.2 The final phase will focus on the following specific projects:
 - Farm resilience and woodland restoration work.
 - Improving public access and heritage interpretation at Downhill Forest.
 - Conservation and public access works at the WWII Trainer Dome in Limavady.
- 5.3 To facilitate the delivery of this final phase Council has been asked to consider providing additional £30,000 match funding to the LPS. The requested financial support would contribute to the staff and project costs of completing the scheme. Any further request for 2027/2028 would be subject to separate consideration by Council once developed.
- 5.4 Council is already invested in the Downhill Forest project having entered into a licence agreement with Forest Service for the development of recreational trails. Council staff have played a key role in the design of the heritage interpretation and development of the trail specification.
- 5.5 To date Council has not provided direct support for the WWII Trainer Dome project. By agreeing to provide additional match funding Council would facilitate the completion of a further two significant projects associated with the LPS. Without this contribution these projects are unlikely to be completed.

6.0 Options

6.1 Support for CCGHT

Option 1 – Council does not enter into a new agreement with Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust. Council would have to source alternative means to complete on these activities or agree to pause on the actions.

Option 2 – Council agrees to enter into a one-year agreement with Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust to deliver on the agreed actions within **Annex A** and develop a longer-term plan for delivery on actions relating to protected landscape management which will be subject to a staged approval and satisfactory delivery of the outputs detailed.

6.2 Support for Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme

Option 3 – Council does not agree to the request to provide £30,000 match funding for 2026/2027 for Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme. The completion of the identified LPS projects would not be possible.

Option 4 – Council agrees to the request to provide £30,000 match funding for 2026/2027 for Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme contributing to the completion of the project works at Downhill Forest and the WWII Trainer Dome in Limavady subject to staged approval.

7.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Leisure & Development Committee considers the options provided and makes a recommendation for the preferred option either Option 1 or Option 2 in relation to a one-year agreement with Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust to deliver on the agreed actions within **Annex B** and develop a longer-term plan for delivery on actions relating to protected landscape management which will be subject to a staged approval and satisfactory delivery of the outputs detailed.

It is recommended that Leisure & Development Committee considers the options provided and makes a recommendation for the preferred option, either Option 3 or Option 4, in relation to providing £30,000 match funding for 2026/2027 for Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme contributing to the completion of the project works at Downhill Forest and the WWII Trainer Dome in Limavady subject to staged approval.

ANNEX A - CCGHT Activities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area 2023 to 2026

Completed activities for Council

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
Using existing research on Community Tourism to draft a TOR on how community engagement will be carried out, to include objectives, methodology and timeframe. Work to be carried out in consultation with the Destination Team.	Production of a TOR to assist Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 'give communities a voice' to express their views on the impact of tourism and the value of tourism, to their community. This TOR will help inform the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the Borough 2025 - 2035	2023-2024	3-4	TOR will inform the Destination Management Plan ToR TOR on consultation & engagement plan (questionnaire & online sessions) agreed with CCGBC & TNI reps. 41 groups contacted and feedback collated.	Local Economy Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
Subject to Council approval of the TOR on Community Engagement, CCGHT to roll out the consultation programme.	The overarching purpose of the following work plan is to engage with communities within Causeway Coast and Glens to set the scene in terms of the value of tourism to the economy and to 'give them a voice' to express their views on the impact of tourism on their communities. The outcomes of this	2024-2025	1-4	Community Engagement programme completed and rolled out by CCGHT. Community Engagement Report completed 2024	Local Economy Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
	report will inform the community aspect of the DMP 2025-2035				
Develop a report on the findings of the engagement programme and present to Council. Deliver several roadshows throughout the Borough to present the findings.	Current research directly relevant to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough which can inform workstreams and the DMP.	2025/2026	1-4	Findings of the research presented to the communities within Causeway Coast and Glens via several roadshows. Report presented to Council that will inform workstreams and the DMP.	Local Economy Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
Implementation of the World Heritage Site plan	Maintain UNESCO World Heritage Site status at a key landscape feature and visitor attraction. Contributes to Causeway Coast Way, Ulster Way and International Appalachian Trail experience.	Annual		Implementation of targets from WHS plan 3x WHS Meetings per year Periodic Reporting UNESCO NI awareness event in Stormont on 23rd June 2026	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
				From Legend to Legacy taking place September 2026 Ballymoney Museum. Celebrating 40 years of WHS status at Giant's Causeway.	
Administration of AONB Management Plans for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB, Binevenagh AONB and Causeway Coast AONB	With partners, implement actions from reviewed AONB Management Plans	2023 - 2026	1-4	2x AONB meetings per year per AONB Combined AONB meeting with training element for all Complete monitoring and communication tasks for each AONB Review of membership and focus of the 3 AONBs Causeway Coast & Glens AONB new management and action plan launched 05/06/2026 New draft action plan in preparation for Antrim Coast & Glens AONB Fixed Point Photography project ongoing across 3 X AONBs	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
Continue with the development of the potential Co. Antrim Geopark.	Present findings of assessment to inform key partners of potential benefits of geopark status and resource implications required to deliver this. This report will include both positive and potentially negative impacts that might arise from the implementation of this status. Seminars and information sources will be required to share with key stakeholders regarding the geopark agenda.	2023-2024	1-4	Overall Activity Plan/Road map developed including proposals for governance. Raising awareness via WG and CCGHT media Participation in UK and ROI Geopark meetings to gain experience/best practice Development of proposed Geopark maps and catalogues. Development of Geopark blueprint UNESCO awareness event in Stormont 23rd June 2026 - MLA's and Councils invited	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Driving the Visitor Economy
Preservation works at The Dark Hedges	Assessment of site and conservation work where appropriate	2023	Q1 & 2	Clarification of condition of site and expected lifespan of trees	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
				Tree planting in April 2025 with Dark Hedges saplings grown Post storm damage works undertaken.	
Support renewal of Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Improved biodiversity in the CCGBC area	2023 – 2026		Participation in biodiversity projects in the CCGBC area that contribute towards the intended outcomes of an emerging LBAP Supporting CCGBC Coast and Countryside team with volunteer invasive species removal and habitat management activities. This has included: -Himalayan Balsam removal -Ragwort Pull -Rhodedondron removal in Castlerock -Sea buckthorn removal in Castlerock - Supporting Native Trees -Native seed collection at Stendhal - Tree planting in Portush with.	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
				Coastal clean-ups WHS coastal cleanups Beach litter pick in Ballycastle Training and educational events -FIT count training with Buglife and Bushmills Community Garden 12/08/25 -Beach Schools NI event at Cushendall for Heart of the Glens Festival 07/08/25 -RSPB and CCGHT Winter Food event with Causeway Coast AONB farmers 24/09/25 -Raptor Awareness Training with NI Raptor Study Group, RSPB and British Trust for Ornithology 28/03/26	
Delivering opportunities to experience the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area's unique outdoor and heritage through public events.	Series of outdoor and heritage events developed, promoted and delivered. Partners' events are promoted. New or enhanced opportunities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area to access	Annual		At least 10 events organised across AC&G, Binevenagh and Causeway Coast AONBs. At least 300 participants. Events to be published and promoted digitally.	Health and Wellbeing/people Prosperity

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
				32 events held in CCGBC in 25/26. Total participant numbers = 574. Included archaeological talks, environmental volunteering, foraging walks, networking events for farmers, training for community groups and individuals. Also includes engagement outside of AONB such as facilitation support for Mountsandel Schools' programme. Events also supported CCGBC Blue Flag beach award, specifically: Corporate volunteer day with BT at Portballintrae undertaking himalayan balsam removal, beach litter pick and microplastic sieving. Volunteer Litter pick at Ballycastle beach Beach Schools "Explore our Shore" at Cushendall Beach Wild Food foraging walk at	

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes
				Portballintrae/Runkerry Beach	
Review of Rathlin Trails	Assessment of exiting trail provision on Rathlin Island	2023-2024		Identify necessary trail improvement works and any potential new trails. Landowner engagement	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Driving the Visitor Economy

ANNEX B CCGHT Activities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area 2026-27

Proposed service activities for Council

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Implementation of the World Heritage Site (WHS) management plan	Maintain UNESCO WHS status at a key landscape feature and visitor attraction. Contributes to Causeway Coast Way, Ulster Way and International Appalachian Trail experience.	2026/27	• Implement targets from WHS plan • Facilitate 3 WHS SG and 3 Research group meetings • Periodic Reporting • Consult & develop new WHS management plan • Engage with UNESCO IUCN UK state party & others • Support WHUK conf Portrush (5 & 6 Oct 2026) • 40th anniversary of WH in CCGBC exhibition & events (Ballymoney) • Fixed Point Photography (quarterly)	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	£5,000	

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Administration of AONB Management Plans for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB, Binevenagh AONB and Causeway Coast AONB	With partners, implement actions from AONB Management Plans	2026/27	• 2 x AONB meetings per AONB • Complete monitoring and communication tasks for each AONB • Review membership & focus of AONBs • Ensure delivery of AONB management and action plans • Ensure Binevenagh AONB activities are delivered by Binevenagh LPS for duration. • Re-establish Binevenagh AONB Management Forum and develop new mgt plan by Jan 2028. • Deliver revised Antrim Coast and Glens AONB action plan. • Signage: survey legacy signage, recommend action. • Fixed Point Photography quarterly across AONBs.	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	£6,000	

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Support conservation of designated sites in the CCGBC area; especially of natural beauty or amenities and wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena throughout.	Conservation of designated sites Biodiversity Enhancement Reducing invasive species	2026/27	- Activities delivered to contribute to Local Biodiversity Action Plan - Support for CCGBC Coast and Countryside team with volunteer invasive species removal and habitat management - Deliver Hedgerow Highways Programme.	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	£10,000	- Wildflower planting at Portrush 08/04/2026 - Magilligan Strand litter pick 20/05/2026 - Himalayan Balsam removal at Portballintrae 04/06/2026 & 06/06/2026

CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens BC area	Year	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Continue to explore development of the potential Co Antrim Geopark	Present findings of assessment to inform key partners of potential benefits of geopark status and resource implications required to deliver this. This report will include both positive and potentially negative impacts that might arise from the implementation of this status. Seminars and information sources will be required to share with key stakeholders regarding the geopark agenda.	2026/27	- Engagement with CCGBC staff and coordination of joint meetings with MEABC to gain both councils approval & resources to develop full UNESCO application. - Development of detailed proposals to include boundary, resourcing and management structures and communications plan - Raising awareness of Geoparks through community events and engagement. - Engagement with UK and ROI Geopark bodies to build knowledge, networks and best practice	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Driving the Visitor Economy	£6,000	2 x Geopark Meetings to be held. Catalogue of assets (historic monuments, archaeological sites, geological sites, cultural heritage) produced.

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CCGHT Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Year	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Delivery of Rathlin Island Marine and Environmental Plan		2026/27	Delivery of Rathlin Ten Priority Actions Plan Delivery of secretariat services, including workshops and events which support CCGBC LBAP and Climate Strategy.	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	Funded through DAERA	Rathlin Island Marine and Environmental Plan now developed and currently delivering its 10 Priority Actions Plan. Rathlin Greylag Goose survey completed and final report shared with RSPB. Rathlin Geodiversity guide publication completed.
Reduce Marine & Terrestrial Litter	Reduced litter and improved understanding of impacts of litter	2026/27	3 x litter picks 1 x beach clean 6 x marine litter events	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	£3,000	
Delivering opportunities to experience the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area's unique outdoor and heritage through public events.	Series of outdoor and heritage events developed, promoted and delivered. Partners' events are promoted. New or enhanced opportunities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area to access and learn about the countryside.	2026/27	At least 10 events organised across AC&G and Causeway Coast AONBs. At least 300 participants. New partners approached and supported. Events to be published and promoted digitally	Health and Wellbeing / people prosperity	£7,000	All events promoted digitally.

Support for activities at the Dark Hedges		2026/27	• Deliver options appraisal for most effective management structure. • Develop masterplan for the site including proposals for funding. • Deliver annual tree inspections and remedial works carried out as soon as reasonably expected, once informed. • Develop plan for sale of Dark Hedges timber.	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets	£ 2,000	• Tree Survey delivered by ARBOR CONSULTING in June 2026 (£1,800). • CEO meetings (3) with wood manufacturers.
					Total: £39, 000	