



Title of Report:	Cushendall Development Group Cottage Wood Trail
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 April 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaging Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism & Recreation

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	2027

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

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 the report is to seek approval from Members for the request received from Cushendall Development Group to use Cottage Wood for a Heritage Art Trail.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Cushendall Development Group is currently in discussion with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is in the early stages of developing a small initial heritage project. The project aims to celebrate local history and enhance visitor and community engagement, and includes a proposal to develop a Cottage Wood Trail, subject to Council permission.
- 2.2 Cottage Wood is a Council-owned site located on the northwest side of Cushendall, adjacent to High Street. The site extends to approximately 10 acres and comprises predominantly broadleaved woodland.
- 2.3 The woodland features a network of winding paths that provide access to scenic viewpoints and designated picnic areas, making it a valued recreational and amenity space for the local community and visitors.
- 2.4 Cottage Wood supports a diverse range of native and non-native trees, shrubs, and plant species. This varied habitat sustains a wide range of wildlife, including numerous species of wild birds. The woodland is also notable for its population of red squirrels, which are regularly observed throughout the site.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Cottage Wood Heritage Art Trail & Village Self-Guided Walking Tour

This project proposes the development of two complementary heritage initiatives designed to celebrate local history, folklore, and community identity while enhancing family engagement and cultural tourism.

- Village Self-Guided Walking Tour

A mapped heritage trail highlighting key historical locations within the village.

- Cottage Wood Heritage Art Trail

The Cottage Wood Heritage Art Trail will enhance the existing woodland walkway into an immersive outdoor storytelling experience. The trail will be child-oriented, with local children involved in researching heritage themes and contributing to the interpretation of the artworks.

Together, these initiatives will create accessible, engaging, and sustainable ways for residents and visitors to explore local heritage.

3.2 Key Features:

- Wooden Sculptures:

Curated sculptures created from tree stumps or fallen timber within the wood, reflecting local folklore and heritage themes, including:

Swan – Children of Lir

Horse – Tír na nÓg

Fairy – Tiveragh fairy legends

Squirrel – Theme to be confirmed

Harp – Feis na nGleann

- QR Code Interpretation:

Each sculpture will feature a QR code linking to stories, child-friendly explanations, and additional heritage information.

- Trail Map & Children's Passport

A map board at the trail entrance and a trail passport available from the CDG office and Tourist Office to encourage family participation.

- Future Feature – Story Chair

A carved wooden chair representing themes such as music, local sport and a connection with the sea, designed for storytelling and community use (phase two).

- Village Self-Guided Walking Tour

The Village Self-Guided Walking Tour will provide a structured yet flexible way to explore the village's heritage.

3.3 Additional proposals:

- Central Village Map

A large orientation map, potentially located beside the Curfew Tower, highlighting 10–15 points of historical interest.

- On-Site Interpretation

Smaller information boards and QR signage at each stop, offering written research, stories, and possible re-enactments of key historical moments.

- Digital & Printed Access:

The trail will be accessible online, with printed maps available from the local Tourist Office.

3.4 Key Outcomes & Benefits

- Promotes child-led learning and community participation.
- Preserves and shares local folklore and history.
- Enhances family-friendly cultural tourism.
- Uses sustainable materials and low-impact design.
- Strengthens local identity and pride.

3.5 Summary

The Cottage Wood Heritage Art Trail and Village Self-Guided Walking Tour together form a cohesive heritage experience that blends art, education, storytelling, and tourism. By engaging the local community and visitors using natural materials, and integrating digital interpretation, the project ensures local heritage is celebrated in a meaningful, accessible, and lasting way. If approved, Council's Tourism and Recreation team will facilitate this programme (subject to funding).

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee recommends the approval of the Cushendall Development Group's request to allow the use of Cottage Wood for a Heritage Art Trail.