

Rural Development Programme Co-operation Projects	12 September 2017
To: Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting & enhancing our environment and our assets.
Outcome	Generating economic and social returns without compromising the sustainability of our natural assets.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Rural Development Programme's Co-operation Projects that relate to the Council area, and to detail the proposed engagement with the Local Action Group (LAG) on the development and implementation of beneficial projects within the following themes:

- Coastal and Dune protection/management.
- International Appalachian Trail development.
- Lower Bann development of recreation opportunities.

Overview

The Local Action Group for the Causeway Coast and Glens Area have identified the potential from the above themed areas, and are looking for opportunities to develop these with other partners. The Council is ideally positioned to benefit from this programme and officers from the Tourism and Recreation Service have been working with the Rural Development Programme (RDP) team to identify and develop possible beneficial projects to deliver in our area.

A priority theme of these Co-operation Projects under the Programme is to enhance the tourism offering by encouraging increased expenditure and overnight stays in the Borough. Working with the LAG presents an opportunity to deliver on key objectives within the Council's Destination Management Plan and the pending Community Plan. Currently all costs associated with project preparation are being met by RDP funds and will continue, up to a maximum of £5,000 per project. (There is no financial implication for Council in project preparation).

The total cost that can be allocated to the three areas is £462,666. The Programme can provide 75% of each project's final costs with the remaining 25% of costs being contributed by Council. A percentage can be in kind (allocated to staff time) with the remainder, a cash contribution from Council.

1. Coastal and Dune Protection/Management.

Project Cost	£144,000
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Causeway Coast and Glens Borough has some of the most recognisable and loved coastline in the world. The Tourism and Recreation Service is tasked with the management and coordination of care for many coastal sites within our area.

Council's approach to beach management has evolved in recent years to reflect the change in how the coastline is used and the demands placed upon it for potential project locations. The Coast and Countryside Team will build on the beach management remit and factor for the following in the chosen locations.

- A year round approach to site management.
- Visitor safety.
- Recognition of the dynamic nature of our coast line.
- The need for education and environmental awareness raising Council's responsibility in the management of designated sites.

The most appropriate sites will be considered, project details identified and then prioritised for approval.

2. International Appalachian Trail Development

Project Cost	£142,666
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Under the RDP project known as the International Appalachian Trail Development, a study is currently being undertaken to identify a number of opportunities to improve the trail infrastructure and quality of the visitor experience through capital investment.

The International Appalachian Trail follows the route of the Ulster Way as it passes through the Borough, encompassing the following 3 waymarked ways: The North Sperrins Way, the Causeway Coast Way and the Moyle Way.

The main emphasis from a Council and trail management perspective is to enhance the existing visitor experience. This proposal will deliver:

1. A more marketable and attractive product.
2. Improved infrastructure and trail furniture.
3. Greater awareness of walking product throughout the Borough.
4. Increased opportunity to develop links to and from the trail to our settlements and trail hubs.
5. Increased opportunity for the promotion of physical and mental well-being.

Specific locations for intervention have yet to be confirmed.

3. Lower Bann Recreational River Study

Project Cost	£176,000
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This project arising out of a recent study (Lower Bann Recreation and Tourism Study), part funded by Causeway Coast & Glens Council, is looking at improving the river as a resource for local communities and visitors. The Council's Tourism & Recreation Service wish to work over a period of time to unlock the river corridor's potential for recreational pursuits and bring benefit to the visitor economy.

Possible projects could include supporting new enterprises that connect and promote historic, natural heritage, economic and leisure assets. Key to this is the development of what is known as a 'Blueway Concept' for the river, based on the 'Greenway' approach; this can be used to market and raise the profile of the river for activities on and off the water.

The Local Action Groups are also considering a Coastal Regeneration Programme and what is known as a 'Yellow Frames Project'. Information about these will be brought to the Committee in the near future.

Next Steps

Council officials will progress with the LAG a number of beneficial projects and make applications for funding. A future report will be brought to the Leisure & Development Committee outlining recommendations regarding the detail of potential projects and seeking approval to implement.