

Title of Report:	DAERA Rural Tourism Collaborative Experience Programme
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16th March 2021
For Decision or For Information	For Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Destination Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	25% match-funding: £10,416 – Marketing/Product Dev £6,250 - Product Development
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

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 detail an opportunity to avail of funding from a pilot programme, which aims to develop and promote visitor experiences within rural parts of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area, for the benefit of the visitor economy. £50,000 of funding is available through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Rural Tourism Collaborative Experiences Programme (at 75% funding).

2.0 Background

The Rural Tourism Collaborative Programme is a pilot programme delivered by DAERA aimed at boosting tourism in rural areas. This funding will enable local Councils to identify businesses and other potential partners to develop quality visitor experiences, based around a geographical area, theme, attraction or key market segment.

The tourism experiences should offer visitors an end-to-end holistic product that meets their needs, increases dwell time and thereby drives economic growth within rural areas.

3.0 Funding secured

Council Officers have secured maximum funding of £50,000 through the Rural Tourism Collaborative Experience Programme (75% funding). £25,000 has been allowed for the facilitation service to work with the local tourism sector in the Binevenagh and Glens areas of the Council. An additional £41,666 will allow for resourcing, product development and marketing activities. The total contribution from Council is therefore £16,666, which has been allocated from the Council's Destination Marketing and Product Development budget.

4.0 Project Brief

The project aims to bring rural businesses and other potential partners together to develop a number of NI Embrace a Giant Spirit brand aligned tourism experiences within the Binevenagh and Glens areas of the Council based on a 'Cultural and Heritage' theme. Participants will be encouraged to work together to identify the uniqueness of the area and package a range of authentic local products that can be promoted as a tourism experience.

The tourism experiences will focus on encouraging visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with local people, engaging the senses, and learning the history and stories of the places through different narratives such as storytelling, music, language, sport, craft and outdoor activities. The experiences may be in different locations, guided, self-guided or within a workshop. Local food, drink, and accommodation will be threaded through these new experiences to offer an end-to-end holistic product.

The resulting experiences should create a real 'sense of place' and appeal to the 'Culturally Curious' target market segment.

5.0 Project Outcomes/Benefits

This is a pilot programme, and after consultation with DAERA and Tourism NI, initially targets the Binevenagh and Glens areas. There are a number of businesses within these areas that currently offer a range of experiences. By connecting these businesses/ experiences together and with the addition of new collaborations and partnerships it is hoped that this programme will result in:

- Increased visitor spend.
- Increased visitor numbers.
- Increased dwell time and address seasonality.
- Increased employment opportunities.

- Marketing intelligence, research and support for the experience product target market to ensure that the new experience fits into the core existing markets and experience brand for Northern Ireland.
- Development of a measurable Action Plan that will deliver on a new experience.
- Brand development in line with Northern Ireland Embrace the Giant Spirit.
- Development of the experiences, including digital and media.
- Launch of new tourism experiences on both domestic and global platform.

Due for completion by 31 March 2022, this project invests in new and improved experiences and aligns to 'Northern Ireland – Embrace a Giant Spirit'. Development and promotion of this project will assist in spreading the benefits from a visitor economy and helping to create viability in our rural areas.