

Sperrins Future Search	11th December 2018
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing Our Environments and Assets
Outcome	All environments in the area will benefit from pro-active decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure and Development Head of Tourism and Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	18/19 - £4,937 19/20 - £ 16,273

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the Sperrins Future Search process and seek approval for a contribution by Council for additional staffing requirements. The report is being reintroduced to Members following the recent workshop where Adrian McCreesh from Mid Ulster Council presented on the proposal.

Background

The Sperrin Mountains were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1968. They are the largest and least explored mountain range in Northern Ireland covering an area of 1181km² across four Council boundaries, which is broken down as follows:

- Derry City and Strabane District Council – 447km² (38%)
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council – 301km² (25%)
- Mid Ulster District Council – 256km² (22%)
- Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council – 117km² (15%)

A map showing the Council boundaries can be seen at **Annex A**.

Future Search Conference

The recent reform of local government provided an opportunity for the new councils to lead discussions with stakeholders with a view to realising the potential of the Sperrins whilst protecting and enhancing the natural heritage of the region. To this end 'The Sperrins Future Search' Conference was initiated by the four councils which brought together a group of key stakeholders to make an action plan for the future of the Sperrin AONB.

The conference took place over three days in September 2017 involving 60 participants from a wide range of stakeholder groups: community, land owners/farmers, government departments & statutory agencies, tourism, heritage & environment, outdoor recreation, business & industry, elected representatives and young people. The conference consisted of 5 sessions, Past, Present, Future, Common Ground and Action and the product was a number of 'common ground statements' and an action plan. Full details of the Future Search process and outcomes of the conference can be seen at **Annex B**.

Work to Date

Five thematic groups were created to develop and deliver the action plans and each of these groups are Council led.

1. Environment & Heritage - Mid Ulster District Council.
2. Infrastructure - Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.
3. Brand & Tourism - Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.
4. Community - Derry & Strabane District Council.
5. Management Structures - Mid Ulster District Council.

All groups have now met and agreed their short and long term action plans. One of the short term actions is to appoint a Project Co-ordinating Officer and 2.5 day administration support to oversee the project and carry out administration duties for the Thematic Working Groups and Management Board.

The estimated costs for the proposed posts in 2018/19 is £27,745.75 which is divided equally between the four Councils with each council contributing £6,937. Council has been advised that the required contribution for the remainder of 2018/19 (January to March) is £4,937. The estimated costs for 2019/20 are £65,089.50 with each council contributing £16,273. A full breakdown of costs can be found at **Annex C**.

Continued participation in the Future Search process provides an opportunity for Council to ensure that the south west of the Borough, and in particular the Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is represented in any discussions moving forward. Officers' time will be apportioned to the benefit and promotion of the Sperrin AONB that falls within the Borough.

It is anticipated that officer commitment will be attendance at meetings and input into consultations relevant to the thematic groups identified above.

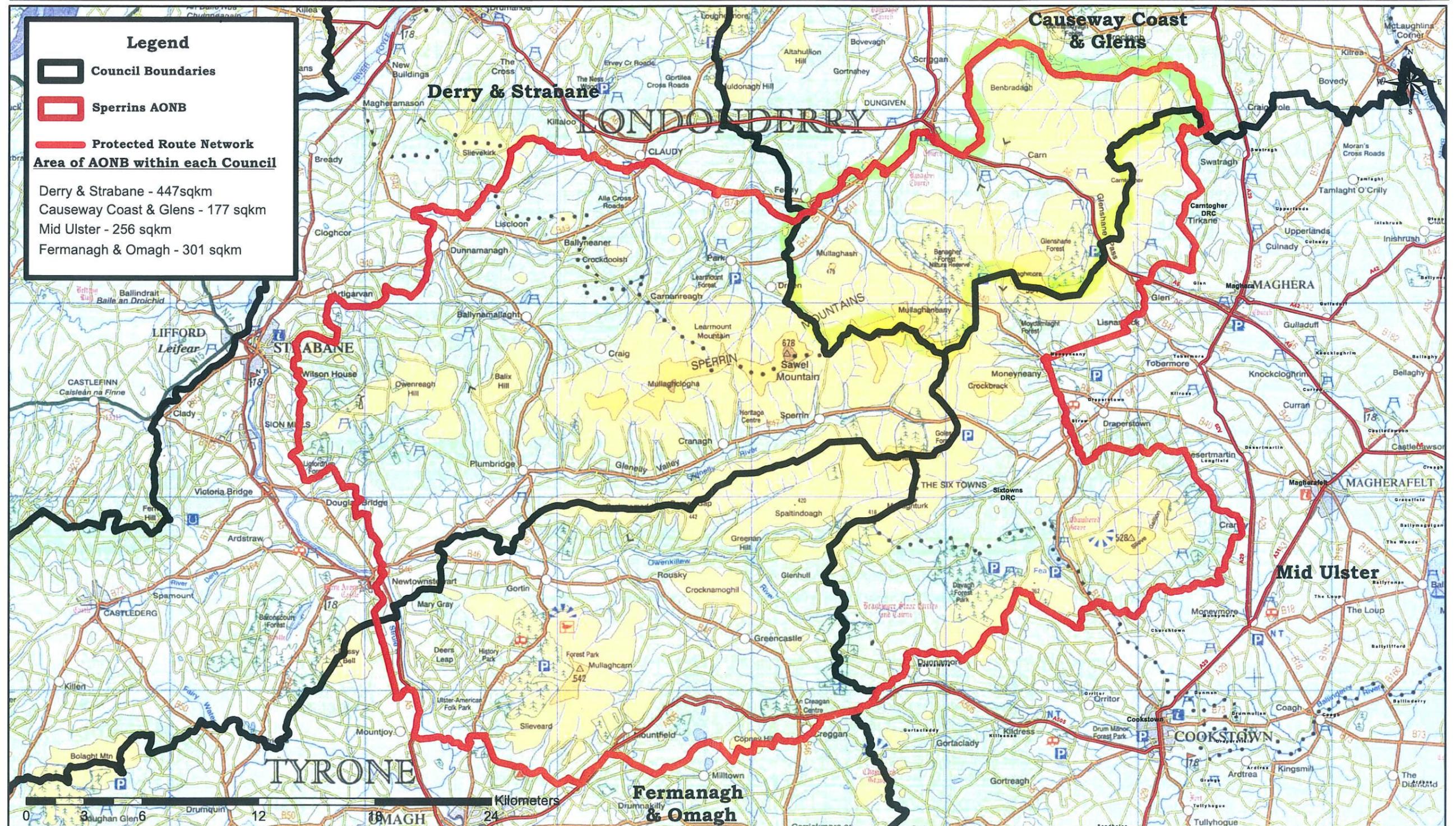
Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the following options for approval;

1. Making a contribution of £4,937 for the 18/19 period towards the proposed staffing of Future Search.
2. Making a contribution of £16,273 for the 19/20 period towards the proposed staffing of Future Search.

A review of the Future Search process and any further contributions will occur at the 31st March 2020.

Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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The Sperrins: Reaching New Heights, Realising Our Potential



Future Search Conference Report



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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The Sperrins Future Search conference brought together a group of key stakeholders to make an action plan for the future of the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) summed up in the words 'reaching new heights, realising our potential'.

The event was initiated by the four local councils responsible for the area and with a view to enabling participants to agree a common mission, to take responsibility for action and to develop commitment to implementation. It took place over three days and involved 60 participants drawn from a wide range of stakeholder groups: community, land owners/farmers, government departments

& statutory agencies, tourism, heritage & environment, outdoor recreation, business & industry, elected representatives and young people.

The conference embarked upon a collective journey that developed over five sessions labelled Past, Present, Future, Common Ground, and Action. Each involved gathering information, sharing understandings in small groups, reports to the whole, and large group dialogues. Each session built on the previous one and the product was a number of common ground statements' and an action plan.



Five Common Ground Statements

Example Actions

(Full action plans are in section 11)

1. Environment and Heritage:

The spirit, environment and heritage of the Sperrins is conserved, enhanced and responsibly managed so that those who live, work and visit can enjoy, celebrate and respect.

Review and feedback to Community Plan, Local Development Plan and other statutory plans.

Audit of existing Heritage and Environment resource.

Sperrins Day/Weekend: 'Spring in the Sperrins'. Annual event.

2. Infrastructure:

We provide safe and interesting networks for recreation that complement the environment. We are linked into the wider tourism offering in Ireland. We provide modern communications for the Sperrins.

Audit of infrastructure to establish baseline.

Define potential: greenways, routeways, access to transport.

Implement full marketing plan.

3. Brand and Tourism:

The Sperrins, spurs of rock, is a great natural, undiscovered and unspoilt destination that is recognised and cherished by others as it is by those who live and work here, and is steeped in history, rich in culture and with majestic views.

Definition: the area, essence, product.

Research: Essence of the Sperrins: - What is it? - Where is it? - What is the USP? - Why would people visit?

4. Community:

We are a community of people of varying needs and aspirations, fuelled by our passion to ensure a strong, vibrant, happy community with equal access to social, health, educational, cultural, economic and creative opportunities. We are the custodians who have lived loved and worked the land for generations, past, present and future. The beauty of the Sperrins is reflected in the beauty of its people.

Four councils community planning and community services teams to meet and coordinate.

Gather community development groups together to enable networking, to discuss the way forward and to further develop.

5. Management Structures:

We are creating a management structure fit for purpose with the necessary resources, authority and expertise, taking forward our shared vision for the Sperrins to enhance an area of beauty we can live and work in.

Examine models of best practice of delivery/ structural mechanisms based on what works elsewhere.

Examine models of best practice of delivery/ structural mechanisms based on what works elsewhere.

Key messages

Emerging from the three days of discussion that crafted these five Common Ground Statements and the associated Action Plans are a number of key messages that help inform what the next steps should be.

Definition: There is uncertainty as to what is meant by 'the Sperrins' in terms of geographical area and therefore the scope of the conference. The discussions that took place suggest that there is a probable consensus around treating the AONB as the core while embracing the critical relationships between communities in the AONB and neighbouring larger settlements.

Place: Participants feel a very strong sense of 'place', of being connected to where they live and extending to a great love of that place. Their sense of identity is not necessarily embodied in the Sperrins as a whole but rather in their particular part of it. At the same time there is pride and enthusiasm for the past, present and future of the Sperrins.

Strategy: Critical to achieving the aspirations of this conference is a strategic approach to the Sperrins. Past efforts at managing the AONB have been piecemeal and often short lived. This conference is an important first step in the right direction.

Structure: A successful strategic approach requires the right partnership for the Sperrins comprising the necessary authority, resources, legitimacy and expertise. There is agreement that this must be an inclusive structure specifically designed for the task and should learn from best practice and other governance models elsewhere.

Leadership: Initially the four councils are expected to provide the necessary commitment and leadership to achieve the aspirations of the conference. Leadership must come from all sectors, however, in a collective effort to work in a connected way towards common goals. This is especially true given the lack of political direction from Stormont – a major theme throughout the conference.

Participation: There is an expectation that the participants in the Future Search event will be involved in developments that flow from it and that there will also be wider stakeholder and community participation.

Joined up: The importance of links with Community Plans, Local Development Plans and the draft Programme for Government, as well as existing policies and programmes was emphasised.

Audit: Participants want a clear picture of existing physical infrastructure and resources, community infrastructure, programmes, policy and governance.

Research: Most of the working groups identified the need for research ahead of implementing actions.

Connection: Sperrin communities have much in common with each other and there is a desire to strengthen connections within the AONB. Connection and relationships within communities is also important.

Conflict: While the Future Search process is predicated on consensus building it also recognises the need to make space for those things that are 'not agreed'. Although participants did not record a list of 'not agrees' it is clear that conflict and division are live issues: mining, quarrying and wind turbines were all mentioned. The passion behind such issues was also evident outside the conference on the first day.

More than tourism: It is clear that while participants see tourism as a critical and under-developed part of the local economy with great potential, their perception of the Sperrins is a more holistic one encompassing a range of economic and social opportunities. There is a strong focus on what supports the health and wellbeing of the local population and the environment they inhabit.

Appetite for action: There is real enthusiasm from all participants, whether locally based or from external agencies, for following up on the conference and putting words into action.

Next steps

Suggested next steps are:

1. Each of the conference's five action planning groups (Environment & Heritage, Infrastructure, Brand & Tourism, Community and Management Structures) meets before the end of November 2017 to:

- a.** clarify the actions suggested in the action plan to ensure they are easily understood,
- b.** confirm what participants are ready and willing to do now within existing resources,
- c.** consider if any additional participants should be part of that action planning group.

2. Each of the four councils will take the lead on a common ground statement and host the

meeting in their area of the Sperrins. The councils' Future Search Planning Group (Chief Executives or nominated Director) will meet collectively with the Management Structures group.

3. Reconvene the Future Search Conference (including new members of the action planning groups) early in the New Year to launch the conference report, report back on thematic group action plans and learn from best practice elsewhere.

Conference narrative

Introduction

1. Background

The Sperrin Mountains are in Counties Tyrone and Derry/Londonderry within an area bounded by the towns of Strabane, Dungiven, Maghera, Magherafelt, Cookstown and Omagh. The Sperrins are the largest and least explored mountain range in Northern Ireland.

Originally designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1968, the Sperrins encompasses a largely mountainous area of great geological complexity with an abundance of natural tourism resources, such as lakes, rivers, valleys and forests. It provides an attractive destination for a wide range of outdoor activities and the area is rich in historic and archaeological heritage and folklore.

The Sperrins AONB occupies a total area of 1181km² broken down across the four

respective Councils (the boundary of the Sperrins AONB is shown at Annex A):

- * Derry City & Strabane District Council – 447km² (38%)
- * Fermanagh & Omagh District Council – 301km² (25%)
- * Mid Ulster District Council – 256km² (22%)
- * Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council – 177km² (15%)

The recent reform of local government has presented an opportunity opportunity for the new councils to lead and co-ordinate discussions with the various stakeholders with a view to realising the potential of the Sperrins while protecting and enhancing the natural heritage of the region. To this end the four councils decided to organise a Future Search Conference of Sperrins stakeholders and this took place in Cookstown from 27-29 September 2017.

Future Search Principles

- "Whole System" in the room
- "Whole elephant" as context for local action
- Focus on future and common ground - not past problems and conflicts
- Self-management and responsibility for action

2. What is Future Search?

Future Search is a unique planning method used world-wide by hundreds of communities and organizations. The method enables large diverse groups to validate a common mission to take responsibility for action and to develop commitment to implementation.

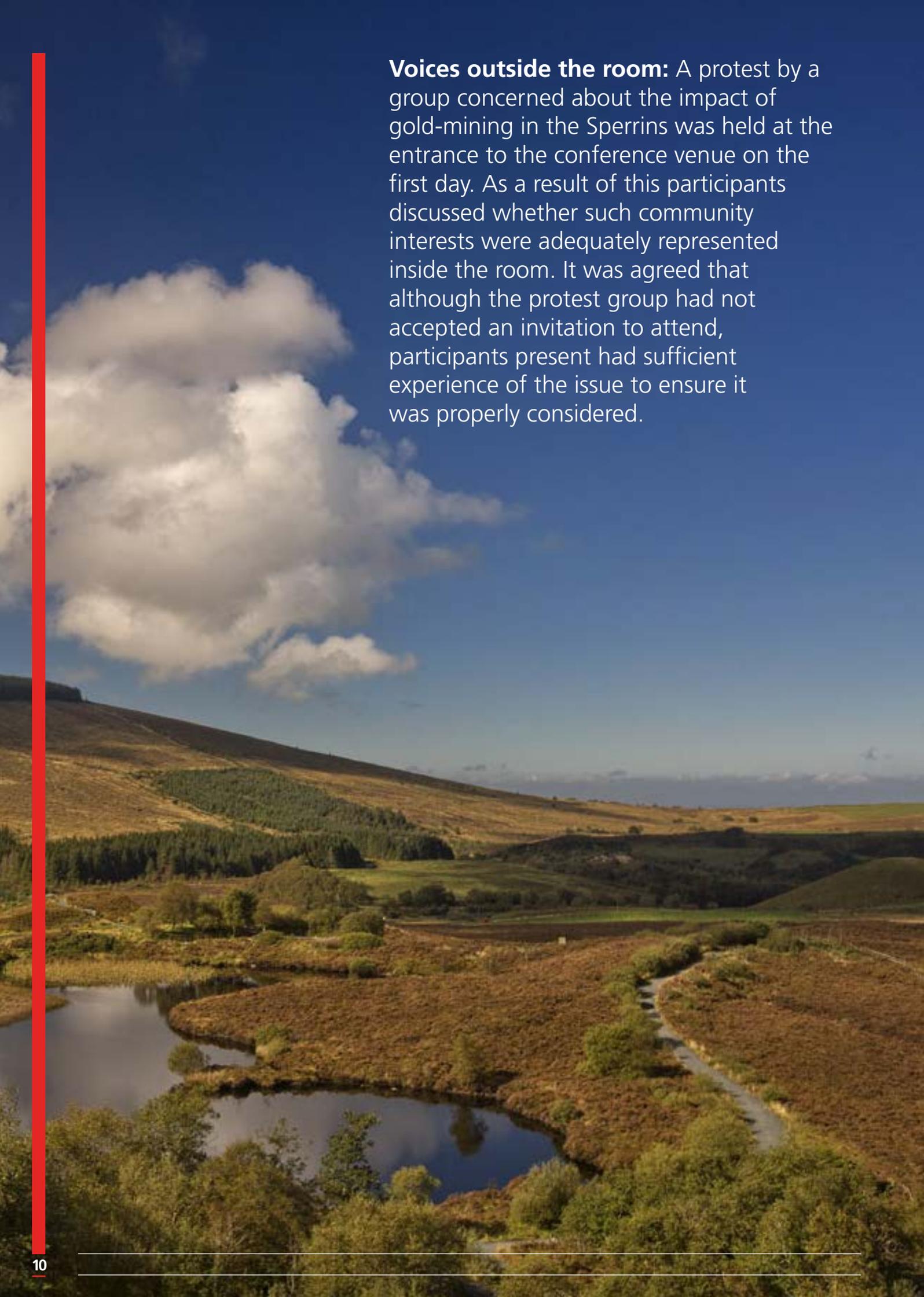
Typically Future Search involves 60 to 80 people meeting over three days and working in small groups as 'stakeholders' (shared perspectives), and in mixed groups that are a cross-section of the whole. Every person has a chance to speak and listen. This makes possible a shared picture based on the experience of all those present.

The meeting is also managed so that the entire group can be in dialogue when necessary. Future Search follows tested principles based on what it takes to enable people to act cooperatively without having to defend or sell their own agendas or give up cherished values.

The first principle involves 'getting the whole system in the room' - meaning people with authority, resources, expertise, information and need. The second involves putting the focal issue in global perspective, helping each person to see a bigger picture than usual. The third requires seeking common ground and desirable futures, while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items. The fourth asks people to manage their own small groups and take responsibility for acting on what they learn.⁽¹⁾

There are five sessions labelled Past, Present, Future, Common Ground, and Action. Each involves gathering information, sharing understandings in small groups, reports to the whole, and large group dialogues. Each session builds on the previous one and the product is an action plan and follow-up structure.

1: Weisbord and Janoff, *Future Search: Getting the Whole System in the Room* (Berrett, Koehler, 2010).



Voices outside the room: A protest by a group concerned about the impact of gold-mining in the Sperrins was held at the entrance to the conference venue on the first day. As a result of this participants discussed whether such community interests were adequately represented inside the room. It was agreed that although the protest group had not accepted an invitation to attend, participants present had sufficient experience of the issue to ensure it was properly considered.

Conference narrative

Introduction



3. Opening and introductions

The Sperrins Future Search Conference was opened by the Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council and Chair of Mid Ulster District Council who then handed over to the conference facilitators, Sandra Janoff and Aideen McGinley (see Annex B for biographies), who explained the process, principles and task ahead. They emphasised that this event is about all aspects of life in the Sperrins, that all voices will be heard and that the list of participants had been drawn up with this in mind. Participants in the event fell into nine stakeholder groups:

- Community
- Land Owners/Farmers
- Govt Departments & Statutory Agencies
- Tourism
- Heritage & Environment
- Outdoor Recreation
- Business & Industry
- Elected Representatives
- Young People

After participants had introduced themselves, the question 'Are we the right people to do this work?' was asked. It was noted that the Young People group had no members and it was explained that given the timing of the conference it had proved very difficult to secure participation from this group.⁽²⁾ A one-day conference focused on young people was suggested. It was noted that 'health and wellbeing' was not directly represented but a number of participants felt they were actively involved in that area. It was also noted that a substantial proportion of those present were people who live and work in the Sperrins.

Further explanation of the process included the task, agenda and conditions for success. The facilitators explained that although this is very much an action-orientated event, we need to exercise a little patience so that "Action is based on an informed understanding of the reality." To that end, the conference split into groups and spent a bit of time exploring 'what the Sperrins means to me'.

²: This was partially rectified by attendance later that day and the following day.

Focus on the past

4. *The story of who we are*

The first exercise of the conference aimed to enable participants to understand the Sperrins in the broadest possible context and so they were asked to think about the past from four perspectives.

- a. Personal: Key experiences that have shaped your life.
- b. World: Events that have shaped our global society.
- c. Northern Ireland: Milestones and events in Northern Ireland.
- d. The Sperrins: Critical events and milestones in the Sperrins' history.

Participants thought these things through as individuals and then transferred their thoughts to timeline charts on the walls of the conference room. There was a timeline for each of the four perspectives and it was divided into four timeframes: pre 1987, 1987-97, 1998-2007 and 2008-now.

After a time the walls were covered with a mass of personal and public events at which point the conference divided into seven mixed groups to use the data to establish a framework for discussion.

Personal: The first group was asked to use the 'personal' time line to 'tell a story of who we are in this room' and examine the implications of this story for the work of the conference. They described themselves as individuals from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, religion and place, a resourceful people with a strong sense of community and open to sharing with each other and with others. A sense of place and pride in the area and its artistic and cultural heritage is an important part of that identity.

The implications are wide ranging and sometimes conflicting. They include constraints on development; the lifecycle, scale and spirit of the area; and a strong sense of identity

alongside rivalry between councils. A champion is needed and something to hook visitors in.

World events: The second group was asked to use the 'world events' time line to tell a story about how our global society has changed in the past decades and the implications of this for the work of the conference. This started with the ice-age and its impact on the landscape and then moving swiftly forward to the industrial revolution, emigration, world wars, the Common Market, peace building, the financial and economic crashes, immigration, Brexit and the Trump effect with the latter events having an as yet unknown impact. Alongside these historical events was the rapid development of technology and the emergence of the digital era.

Northern Ireland: Two further groups were asked to use the Northern Ireland time line to tell a story about the changes in the past decades and the implications of this for the work of the conference. Both groups took the Flight of the Earls as their starting point moving on through the Plantation of Ulster, the partition of Ireland, the civil rights movement (in its global context), and the troubles. They highlighted the impact of the EU, mechanisation and intensification in farming and forestry and depopulation of the area. Since 1987 there has been the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement, devolution, the ability to legislate and the possibility of focusing on more 'normal' issues. There are now opportunities to think and act locally in a sustainable way that celebrates our environment. Investment is needed in tourism and in settlements and there is a need for stable government.

The Sperrins: Two groups were asked to use the Sperrins time line to tell a story of what has happened locally over the years and the implications of this for the work of the

conference. The time line began with the formation of the landscape we know today 600 million years ago, through evidence of early civilisation such as stone circles and the rich archaeological heritage of the area. This was followed by the emergence of agriculture, quarrying, small and medium industries, experience of flooding and erosion, the establishment of the AONB, the Folk Park and other links built with the USA, the start of tourism, depopulation, and the Rural College came and went. Conflict emerged between economic, social and environmental priorities e.g. gold mining, wind turbines and mineral abstraction. In the absence of a strategic approach to tourism or the AONB, development through community initiatives has had an important impact. All this implies the need for a more joined up and strategic approach.

All four time lines: The final group was asked to use all four time lines to tell a story of what has happened over the years and the implications of this for the work of the conference. This group painted a picture of rural diversity and of changing demographics. They detected that people want change based on new ideas, beliefs and structures. The digital community is stronger but connectivity is poor – both digitally and physically. There is great power to be found in community groups and in building community from the bottom up. We could start by connecting up all 55 development officers in the area. We should have confidence in what we have.

Plenary Discussion

We are not sure what exists in the Sperrins - what assets we actually have. We need to know more about what exists.

Is there a Sperrins identity? What are we selling to the outside world? There isn't much of a Sperrins identity. We are peripheral to different councils. Should we create an identity that doesn't exist? Should we follow the example of the Burren? What are we doing here today? Is it a tourism plan? Is it a community plan?

What is the common bond for the Sperrins? Where is the plan, where is the continuity? There is an elephant in the room somewhere.

We are here because the four councils sensed a need to react to concerns about what is going on in the Sperrins. This is the start of a conversation. We want to leave the Sperrins in good shape for the next generation. Part of the problem is that there has been no funding from government for the AONB because there is no management body. We need to harness the passion in this room and beyond – including the passion of the demonstrators here this morning.

Is the size part of the problem? Or is it an opportunity? We have a culture, landscape, and communities who have a strong identity but it is not necessarily a Sperrins identity. A good portion of the Sperrins was, and often is, known as Muintir Luinigh/Munterloney. The remoteness and quietness is special but we could share it with many others.

We agree that we have the right people in the room.



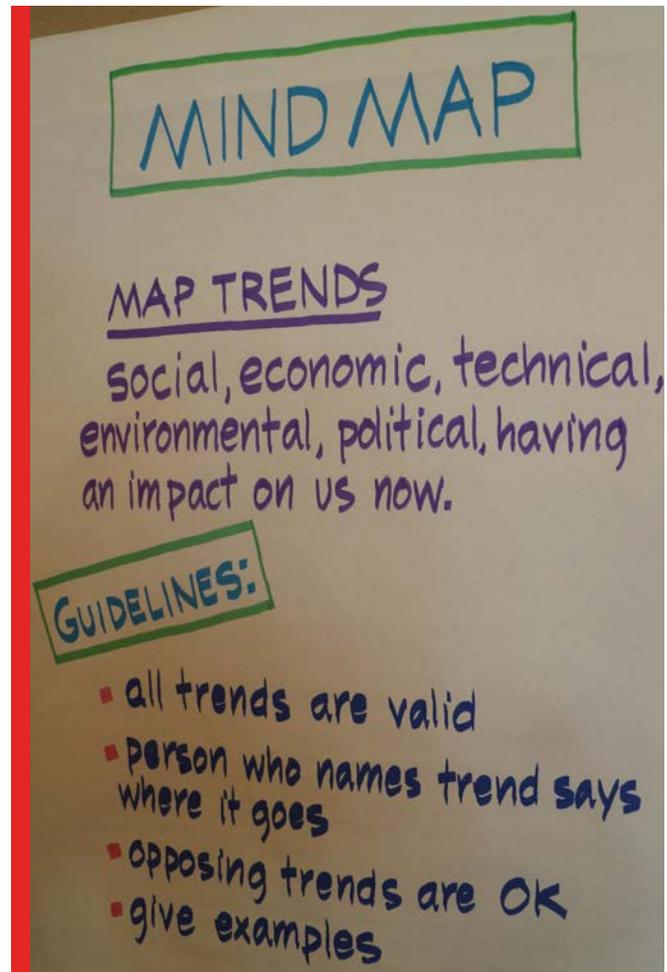
Focus on the present

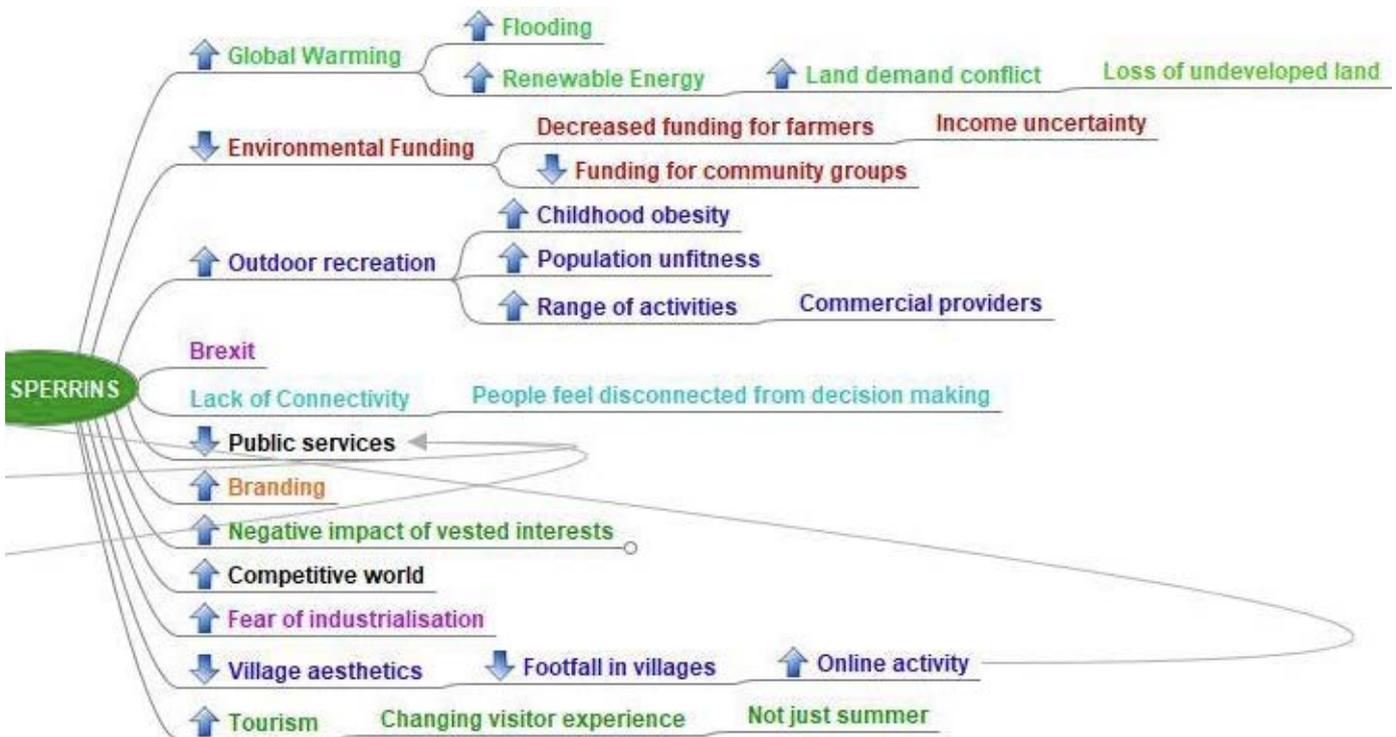
5. Trends affecting the Sperrins

The focus of the conference then shifted to the present day with an examination of the external trends affecting the Sperrins. The aim was to create a social, economic and technological context for dialogue that included everybody's perceptions of key trends.

A trend implies a direction of change: from more to less, less to more, greater to smaller, smaller to greater, and so on. The idea was to observe what is happening and defer judgment and analysis. This task was done as a single large group collectively creating a wall-sized mind map. A representation of the finished map is shown below.

Once the map was finished and after time to reflect, participants were each given a number of dots (different colours for each stakeholder group) and were asked to place the dots against the trends that they felt were the most important.





6. How trends affect what we do

The second day of the conference opened with reflection on the mind map created the previous afternoon. Participants used the distribution of coloured dots to identify clusters of top trends as follows:

- Infrastructure
- Tourism
- Environmental funding
- Global warming
- Awareness of mental health
- Lack of political direction
- Outdoor recreation
- Branding
- Community/Industrialisation

The conference then divided into its stakeholder groups. The purpose for the next stage was to find connections between key trends and learn what people are doing now and want to do in the future with respect to the Sperrins, bearing in mind that how trends are related leads to better decisions and solutions than dealing with each trend in isolation.

The task was to select three or four trends of greatest concern to the group, to draw a mind map to show how they are related, say what people (individually or as a group) are doing right now to anticipate or respond to these trends, and what new actions they want to take in the future.

Council officers: This group selected four trends: funding (down); lack of political direction (up); outdoor recreation and increased demand for access (up); demand for infrastructure (up).

The things being done right now include a more joined up approach through Community Planning and Local Development Strategies. Work on the ground includes a Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework, forest recreation



(councils and Forest Service working together, and angling (Loughs Agency and councils).

New actions for the future are an AONB Management and Action Plan; a new business leadership programme for the rural area; and increase local engagement and partnership working.

We have had experience of many disparate bodies operating over the years and we don't want more of the same. Our job is to maximise the product – commercial, public, private or community. We need to develop the recreational resource for both visitors and the local community.

We need to have an understanding of what the Sperrins are and then develop a strategic approach to the future of the Sperrins – that is what needs to come from this conference.

Elected representatives: Two key trends are the lack of political direction and lack of finance. Central government gives nothing to the west of the Bann. Another is depopulation: people make an area and we need more people living in the area which means allowing more building and better infrastructure.

A Sperrins brand is needed for tourism and outdoor recreation. Community Planning plays an important role and we need more greenways, festivals, and initiatives like the Appalachian Trail.



A strategic approach and management plan is critical with the four councils establishing joint authority - adopting a similar approach to cross-council working used by building control.

Government departments and agencies:

The trends selected were lack of political direction, demand for outdoor recreation and demand for infrastructure.

Members of this group observed that Government departments and agencies seldom meet in the way that this conference has enabled. They need to improve on this. There is immense pressure on budgets leading to staff losses requiring prioritisation of spending. If communities aren't promoted to departments, they are neglected.

The draft Programme for Government uses the Outcomes Based Accountability approach and asks the question 'who is better off as a result of what has been done'. This alongside Community Planning could be a positive development. The future must be based on a management and action plan for the AONB with increased local engagement and more partnership working.

Business & industry: The first trend identified by this group was the lack of political direction. Business and industry have been encouraged to ask MLAs to lobby on their behalf but this can't be effective in the absence of government at Stormont.

The demand for infrastructure includes roads, broadband, sewage, flood defences and energy. There is a supply of local materials so infrastructure bodies should buy local and help create jobs. Energy firms are providing security in the form of jobs and skills and this helps to keep people in the area.

Growth in tourism can be achieved by promoting the industrial heritage of the Sperrins and accommodation in B&Bs etc. needs to be developed. The final trend is all about people: there is emigration and therefore skills shortages. We need apprenticeships and there is uncertainty for migrant workers due to Brexit. The challenge now is to continue to manage current and future industrialisation.

Youth: A key trend is the lack of political direction leading to lack of continuity, things not being joined up and stalled decisions. This leads to poor infrastructure and failure to tackle mental health issues, for example. To capitalise on tourism as a trend we need to come together to invest for further development.

Current work includes Community Plans and the Year of Youth 2019. Activities have tended to be short term programmes with stop-start pattern. Lobbying is needed to secure long term development.

For the future we need long term commitment to a cohesive structure and resources for youth engagement and to create jobs for young people.

Outdoor recreation: This group selected the trends: infrastructure demand (up); tourism & outdoor recreation (up); political direction (down); and funding (down).

The AONB has no management plan, governance body or funding and this leads to a lack of protection from major infrastructure proposals. Visitors are important for the local economy and yet the Gortin Glen masterplan remains unimplemented and councils lack commitment. This means that in terms of what is happening right now, we are not fulfilling our responsibility for the AONB. In the future we must use our influence to protect and celebrate the Sperrins as an AONB.

Landowners: This group identified with many of the trends mentioned by the other groups. The lack of clarity regarding policies creating uncertainty is a major concern for this group. As landowners this is our business and our job is to protect the land but there is uncertainty about income as a result of this. We feel we are poor relations to the Mourne, the Antrim Plateau and Fermanagh Lakelands AONBs.

Global warming has a big impact - flooding has been devastating.

There are challenges for tourism regarding access to land/trespassing/liability and landowners are happy to engage with appropriate bodies. We need to engage with

all stakeholders to get the balance right and to help develop a product that will help Sperrins businesses. The health of families, livestock and land is so important to all who live in the Sperrins.

There is conflict over land use – energy, mining and mineral extraction and this needs to be dealt with by planners in a strategic manner.

Community: Coordinated tourism branding is needed and tourism and planning need to be linked and built on our heritage and history.

Large scale industrial development divides the community and it has a severe effect on the health and wellbeing of the Sperrins population e.g. concerns about the health impact of cyanide use in gold mining. Wind turbines don't exist in the Mourne AONB and therefore shouldn't be in the Sperrins either. At the same time services are diminishing through lack of funding and schools, essential to the community, are closing. The Sperrins include some of the worst wards in NI in terms of lack of services.

We need community involvement from the bottom up where there is a track record in addressing health and wellbeing. We also need council led initiatives and community capacity building.

Environment & heritage: The trends selected were political direction (down); global warming (up); funding (down); and outdoor recreation and tourism (up).

There is an overarching need for a strategic body (a Trust) and management plan. A new group needs to be set up to deal with flooding and renewable energy – controversial issues in the AONB. Community led initiatives are the driving force locally yet funding is falling. We need to join up, replicate, and secure council commitment.

Local community lead initiatives and local businesses like the jungle are the future of outdoor recreation and tourism and must be supported. Davagh Forest Trails are brilliant but need more investment.

There are real concerns about industrialisation – we need this but not on a large scale. We need to capitalise on what has already been carried out. More lobbying is needed and we should learn from best practices elsewhere – possibly the Belfast Hills and from Scotland.

Tourism: It takes all of us to deliver a tourism product. Although we have some good tourism products such as music, heritage and golf, we have no clear identity or brand for the Sperrins. This has been attempted in the past but hasn't been well done. On the funding trend, people need to take action and stop waiting for the politicians in Stormont or the councils.

The councils need to find a model of excellence for working together. They have often not worked well together in the past and that must not be repeated. The Sperrins Gateway Landscape Partnership has done good work.

Outdoor recreation is only part of the tourism product and we shouldn't be afraid to try something new.

Plenary discussion

This process is encouraging and elected representatives need to take responsibility and drive things forward. There is a commonality of issues and a strong will to work together with everyone pushing for a shared vision and a joint approach.

The AONB is what connects us but who will run with this? We should look at other AONB management bodies. This is an issue – how can it become an outcome?

There are common themes and issues emerging that should be tackled from the bottom up as part of the community. The common denominator is that no one organisation can provide the solution. The answer is a collective of bodies in this room and outside this room. Shared responsibility is needed.

Next year it will be 50 years since the Sperrins AONB was established but it has degraded over 50 years. We need to stop that now by ensuring everyone is involved.

Focus on the present

7. 'Prouds' and 'Sorries'

The purpose of this session was to enable participants to take responsibility for what they are doing and not doing. Working in stakeholder groups they brainstormed two lists based on the following questions:

- "What are you doing right now (individually or as a group) that you are proud of in your relationship to the Sperrins?"

- "What are you sorry about?"

The emphasis was on individuals/groups owning up to their own actions, not blaming or complaining about other people. Each group selected their three "top prouds" and three "top sorries." These are shown in the table on next page.



Plenary discussion

We need to focus on the kind of strategic management structure we want. Past structures haven't worked. The human connection is important – government is comprised of humans. The Belfast Hills Partnership is a model worth looking at. We should ensure it is a flexible structure that everyone is bought into. There will be different mechanisms to achieve different things. To secure funding we must have an agreed way forward and the Councils can also work together and share services.

“Prouds”	“Sorries”
Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of Broughderg Centre, archaeological tourism, landscape programme • NI’s first greenfield festival • Raising awareness of language and cultural history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal sacrifice • We didn’t get together sooner – missed opportunities • Didn’t prevent contentious industrialisation proposals getting this far
Landowners/Farmers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with the soul of the area, appreciating its beauty and life force and sharing this with others • Contribution to the land and livestock and connection to the wellbeing of the area and its animals • Taking time to get to know the Sperrins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sorry: I can only do my best to ‘protect’ what I perceive to be precious • I haven’t tried to understand people better – a closed mind • Haven’t taken time to know the Sperrins better
Tourism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the tourism product • Still here willing to talk after 25 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge of area • Working more coherently together • Not connecting with new audiences the way we would like to
Heritage & Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage • Community • To live here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We expected others to do more • Didn’t value the Sperrins more until now • We have not promoted the Sperrins enough
Elected representatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This conference • Proactive in highlighting rural issues • Heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignorance of Sperrins • Haven’t realised a management plan • Outdoor recreation opportunities unrealised
Industry and business	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great companies providing employment and supporting communities • Innovation in engineering • Promoting and supporting tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnect between extraction industry and community • Mismanagement of farming impacts on the environment • Lack of investment
Outdoor recreation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing passion for the Sperrins • Doraville objection • Gortin Forest Park management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haven’t been vocal enough • History Park in Gortin Glen closed • Don’t visit here often enough
Council officers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of new product • Developing best bespoke policy • Supporting community actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have not agreed ‘Vision’ • Local response to changing Sperrins/rural needs • Loyalty to invisible boundaries
Government departments and agencies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funding • Supporting infrastructure • Capacity to promote globally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucracy • We can’t provide long term commitments • We don’t come together

Focus on the future

8. Desired Future Scenarios

The purpose of the next stage of the conference was to imagine a future that participants believed in and that they were willing to work towards. Working in mixed groups, participants were asked to “Put yourself thirteen years into the future. Today is 29 September 2030. Your dreams are now a reality. The Sperrins is an extraordinary resource where stakeholders feel a sense of ownership and belonging. We are living its potential and sharing responsibility.”

They were asked to describe a scenario in concrete terms using the following as prompts:

- Describe the Sperrins.
- Structures, policies and programmes that keep the dream alive.
- How stakeholders work in partnership.
- How we communicate and sustain the vision.
- Accomplishments through the years.
- Think back to 2017. Note the main roadblock you had to remove to clear the way to where you are now.

Scenarios were to be:

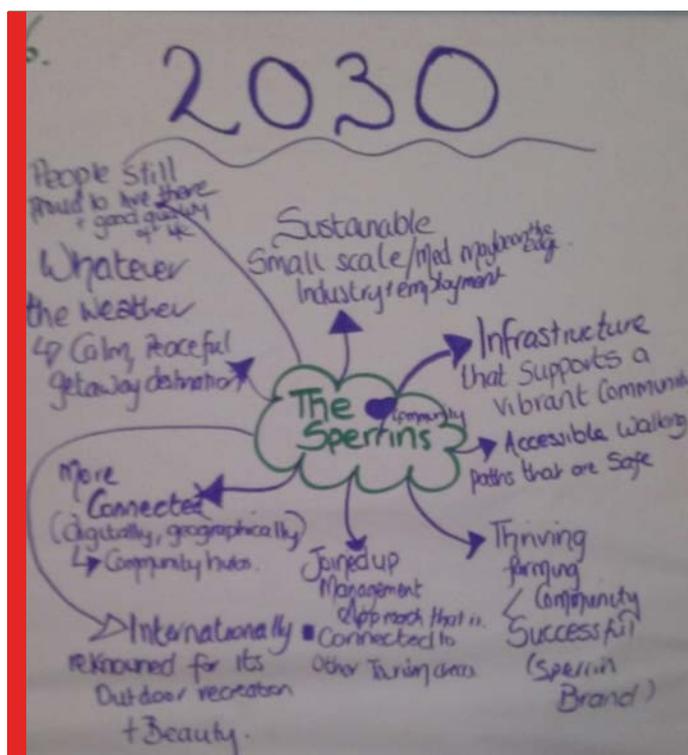
- Feasible – The technical know-how exists to implement it.
- Desirable – Society benefits from its implementation.
- Motivating – Participants are ready, willing and able to work to make it happen.

Group 1: Our vision is of an enhanced natural environment: waterfalls, heather, picnic tables, parking, cycle routes, better roads, camping, nightscape, dark sky structure, signage, shared community halls and even a mountainside rollercoaster.

There is a joint management plan with a committee structure that meets in the Sperrins comprising political representatives, councils, Tourism NI, heritage and landscape, funding bodies, community representatives and an AONB officer.

We have enhanced the natural heritage, improved health and wellbeing and there is civic ownership of the Sperrins and a heightened sense of pride from the people who live there. There are educational programmes, branding and promotional material, sustained communication, training, ambassadors and better protection and enforcement in the AONB. The Sperrins are promoted for all with fewer constraints.

The roadblocks we encountered were the lack of a joined up approach from government, land conflict and lack of funding.



Group 2: There is a wide range of accommodation and plenty to do in the Sperrins. The Jungle, the Ponderosa, the Shepherd's Rest, Davagh Forest, Gortin Glen, the Sperrins Fun Farm and the Appalachian Trail are just some of the many thriving attractions. There is cooperation with the Roe Valley and guiding in different languages is available. There is cross-selling, good signage, Irish language promotion, music festivals and

other cultural events. New products have been developed and we have won an international tourist destination award.

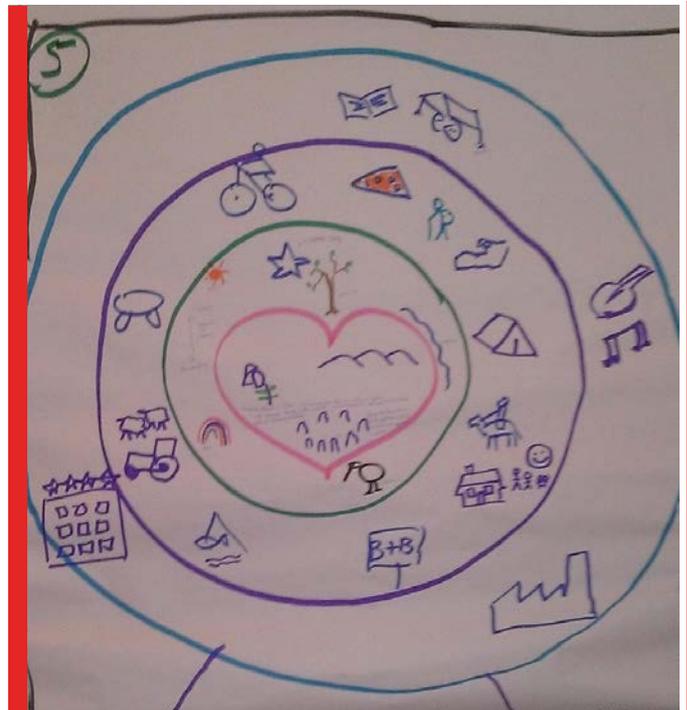
Visitors who come to the Sperrins experience a thriving community which includes new employment from innovative business and industry encouraged by Invest NI. We are scoring high on the happiness index. All this development has taken place under the auspices of the Sperrins Trust.

Group 3: Ours is a community living in harmony with itself and the environment, enriched with quality product, attracting visitors from near and far. We are a diverse community that is bright, vibrant and open: a changeable tapestry and an eclectic balance of archaeology, industry, jobs and environment. There is a Sperrins Management Trust with authority and resources to make things happen and a policy approach that recognises the primacy of environment and community. This is supported by regional and local policies such as enhanced community plans and local economic plans. Infrastructure is enhanced, local services are secure and connectivity is improved.

We work in partnership through getting the right mix of people at the table, sharing responsibility and working towards shared outcomes.

The Trust stays close to the community through engagement and a formal communication strategy. Our work is underpinned by creativity and innovation. It promotes success but doesn't run away from failure.

Our accomplishments include: a rising population with more pupils in primary schools so schools remain open; an AONV – Area of Outstanding Natural Vitality; civic pride and civic leadership; a sustainable economic area; an area recognised for its distinctiveness.



Group 4: We have a strong sense of identity: an understanding of what we are and what we have to offer. This is a great place to live and work sustainably. It is a vibrant, thriving, clean and green place. We have attracted new visitors through a joined up approach to tourism, new products such as food and recreational infrastructure. Our people are happier and healthier and the population has increased.

There is an AONB management structure (perhaps something like the Lough Neagh partnership) and plan, properly financed and resourced and including different sectors. It reports back to the public every year. Development programmes encourage diversification to activities that are unique to the area as a 'hook' for visitors, e.g. archaeology and Irish language. An inspiring brand has been developed with online resources and effective marketing. We have a strong political voice and representation through effective communication and lobbying. There is regular engagement and consultation with wider stakeholders. Every citizen is an ambassador.

Our accomplishments include effective partnership working to reverse the population decline, infrastructure developments, a new brand developed, visitor numbers up, international recognition and new jobs created. The roadblocks we cleared along the way were

siloes working which we replaced with 'one vision' by overcoming administrative boundaries. We enlisted the powers and recognition of central government, which brought finance and political voice.

Group 5: We live in an intact functioning ecosystem with the wild places of the Sperrins at its heart. It is a valued and protected resource. The AONB has reached its potential containing happy communities pursuing a huge range of activities such as an artisan food sector, cycle routes, walking routes, archaeology, farming, tourist accommodation, music, technology and both primary and secondary education. All this has provided new employment and opportunities. We have a well-developed tourism product with a clear identity that is recognised internationally. An enabling structure has been established. It includes multiple stakeholders and is a blend of government and community.

Our accomplishments have been to find a balance between 21st century living and the environment of the AONB; a balanced and growing economy; high value food products; and a £30 million investment in a national museum.

Along the way we faced the challenge of ensuring that development was compassionate to the environment and recognised residents' attachment to their local area. We had to develop a willingness to compromise and we overcame poor communications finding ways to engage positively with farmers, for example. Infrastructure development was a challenge that we met through proper planning processes.

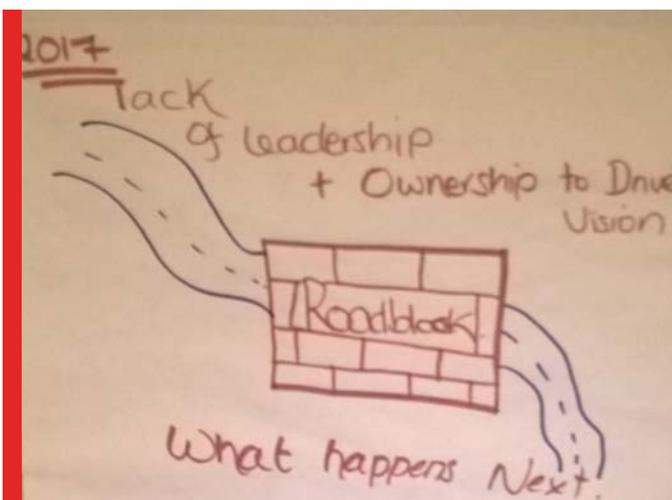
Group 6: The people of the Sperrins are proud to live here and have a good quality of life. Whatever the weather, this is a calm and peaceful getaway destination that is internationally renowned for its outdoor recreation and beauty and there is a joined up management approach that is connected to other tourism areas. We are more connected digitally and geographically through community hubs. There is sustainable, small scale industry and employment; infrastructure that supports a vibrant community; accessible walking paths that are safe; and we have a thriving farming community with a successful Sperrins brand.

There is an appropriately funded, resourced and structured management plan/Trust; integrated local and NI-wide strategies; a land use policy strategy (leading to overriding protection where needed); leadership and champions; joined up approach for all stakeholders; a Sperrins youth forum; an agri-food forum; communities supported with resources and finance to achieve healthy lives with wellbeing to the fore; and local business supports. This forum has been revisited to assess its effectiveness.

Partnership is achieved through the Sperrins Management Trust, which includes the community, landowners/farmers, heritage and environment, tourism, youth, elected representatives, industry and business, government departments/agencies, outdoor recreation and council officers.

The vision is communicated and sustained through the central hub created by the Sperrins Trust which has accountability for actions achieved and is built on openness and transparency, strong leadership, respect and mutual understanding, and inclusiveness. The Trust will capture all the great bottom up initiatives and has the right power to make the right changes.

We have accomplished an agreed vision, implemented by the Trust we have established, which is operational and effective. All this was done in the face of a lack of leadership and ownership to drive the vision in 2017.



Focus on the future

9. *Discovering Common Ground*

The next task for the conference was to establish those principles and key features desired by everyone present on which to build the future for the Sperrins. Three groups (randomly formed) prepared a list of common ground elements that reflected what they believed everyone present wanted. The list could include values, norms, structures, programmes and procedures. The groups organised and talked through the common ground, hearing and accepting differences as they arose. Where there was no consensus, it was open to the groups to have a list of 'not agrees'. The three groups then came together and organised the common ground elements under eight themes which were then consolidated into the following five clusters:

- i.** Integrity of the natural environment; Restoration of environment and built heritage; Protection & preservation where appropriate; Biosphere balance (landscape and people); Recognition.
- ii.** Infrastructure; Green access; Biosphere balance.
- iii.** Brand; Biosphere balance; Marketing brand identity; Tourism; Recognition; Communication.
- iv.** Vibrant communities; Recognition; Communication; Inclusion – everyone; Vibrant, happy, healthy, wealthy people and communities; Supporting vibrant sustainable communities (education, health, services etc);

Biosphere balance; Hope for future and current generations security (peace of mind, financial etc).

- v.** Management Structures; Partnerships; Leadership and management that is fully resourced; Common direction and shared vision; Communication; Strategy plan; Innovation; Inclusion; Equality; Responsibility; Accountability; Biosphere balance.

Arriving at a consensus on these points involved a discussion of what was meant by 'biosphere'. It emerged that those who had included the word perceived it as a holistic principle that recognised the interdependence of everything in the Sperrins (people, plants, animals, landscape, water etc) in a self-regulating system. This principle was challenged as being incompatible with human development and leading to a mindset that had led to the depopulation of the Sperrins through regulation that restricted home building and other development. This view held that without people, the Sperrins were an irrelevance.

The group agreed that there was an inherent tension between 'the person as number one' and 'person as part of the whole' but accepted that both are true and the challenge is to manage the tension. To reflect this the term 'biosphere' was amended to read 'biosphere balance'.



Focus on the future

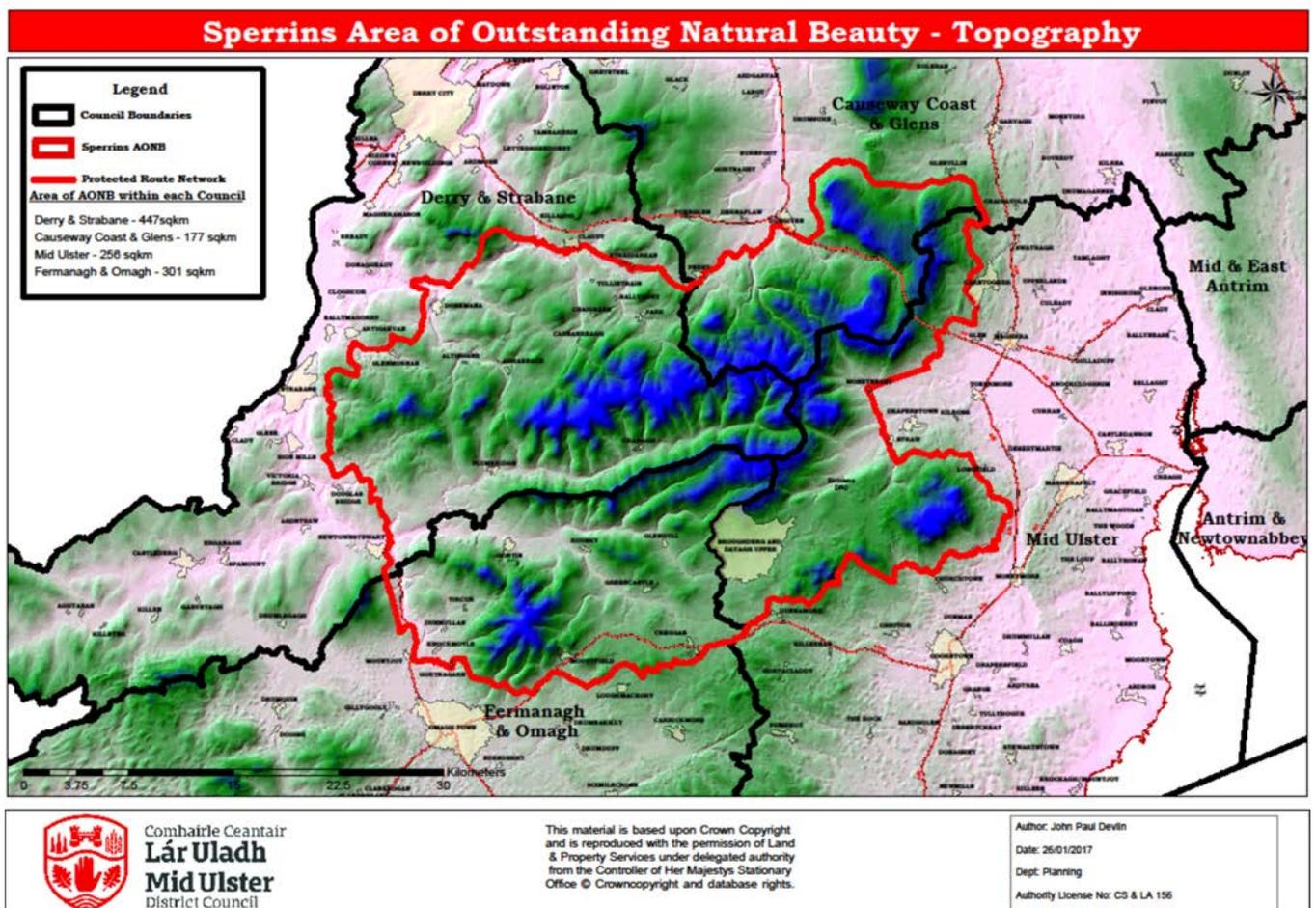
10. Creating Common Ground Statements

On Day 3 the conference reconvened and five self-selecting groups (one for each common ground theme) were tasked with writing a few sentences describing the group's common ground vision. The statement was to be something every person present would agree with and that would be understood by stakeholders who were not present.

The plenary discussion that followed the crafting of the statements focused on what geographical area is included in the term 'The Sperrins'. Definitions varied from the AONB to the much larger area covered by the Sperrins tourism initiative which extended from the border with Donegal in the west to the shores of Lough Neagh in the east. A consensus

emerged that the conference was essentially concerned with the AONB but in the context of the critical relationships between communities within the AONB and the larger settlements beyond. The Sperrins form a hinterland for towns such as Cookstown, Omagh and Dungiven while those towns form a 'reverse hinterland' for the smaller settlements within the AONB. Consideration of the Sperrins should therefore not be overly determined by a line on the map.

While everyone supported the statements, there was plea for recognition of just how difficult life can be for some communities in the face of unwanted development. "My life has been hell", said one participant.



The following five Common Ground Statements were agreed.

Five Common Ground Statements

1. Environment and Heritage:

The spirit, environment and heritage of the Sperrins is conserved, enhanced and responsibly managed so that those who live, work and visit can enjoy, celebrate and respect.

2. Infrastructure:

We provide safe and interesting networks for recreation that complement the environment. We are linked into the wider tourism offering in Ireland. We provide modern communications for the Sperrins.

3. Brand and Tourism:

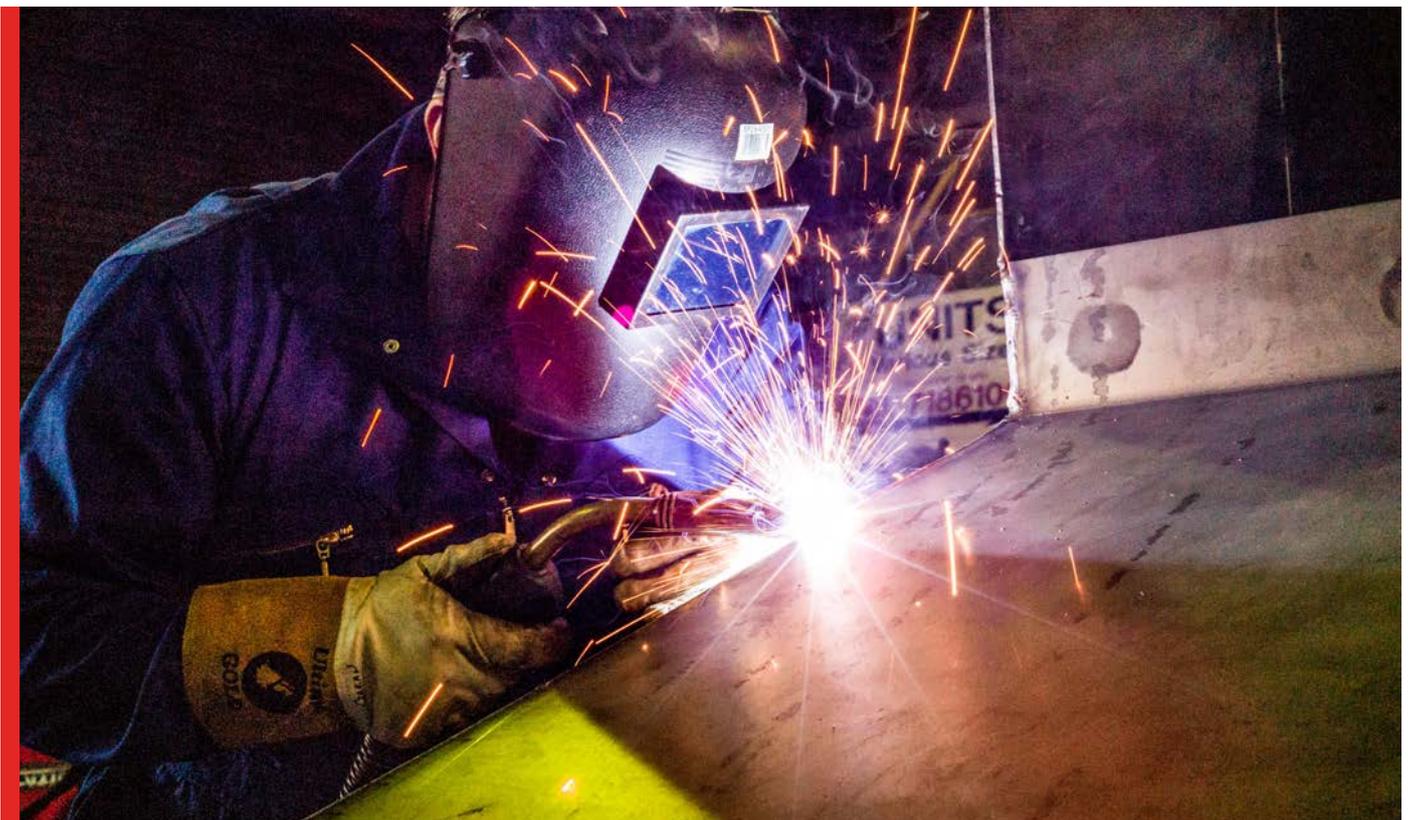
The Sperrins, spurs of rock, is a great natural, undiscovered and unspoilt destination that is recognised and cherished by others as it is by those who live and work here, and is steeped in history, rich in culture and with majestic views.

4. Community:

We are a community of people of varying needs and aspirations, fuelled by our passion to ensure a strong, vibrant, happy community with equal access to social, health, educational, cultural, economic and creative opportunities. We are the custodians who have lived loved and worked the land for generations, past, present and future. The beauty of the Sperrins is reflected in the beauty of its people.

5. Management Structures:

We are creating a management structure fit for purpose with the necessary resources, authority and expertise, taking forward our shared vision for the Sperrins to enhance an area of beauty we can live and work in.



Focus on the past

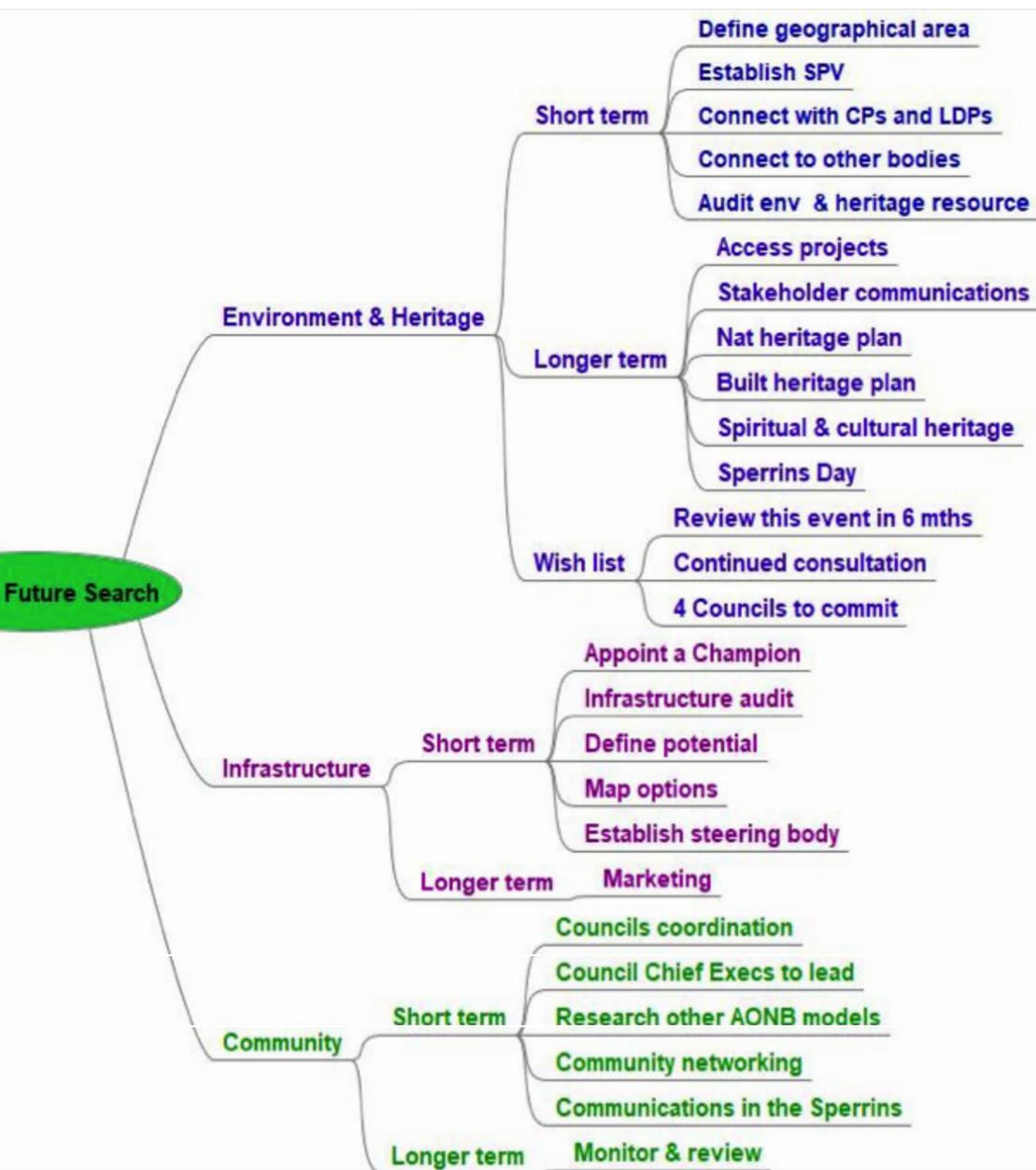
11. Action Planning

The final task for the conference was to decide on action steps, steps that participants were ready, willing and able to take that will work towards the common ground agenda. Each group set out a number of short term and longer term actions including, where possible,

how success will be measured, what help is needed, timeframes and people responsible.

These are summarised in the Mind Map below and are set out in more detail as Five Action Plans.





Focus on the future



Environment and Heritage Action Plan

1. Environment and Heritage: The spirit, environment and heritage of the Sperrins is conserved, enhanced and responsibly managed so that those who live, work and visit can enjoy, celebrate and respect.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
1.Short Term				
Effective information sharing, consultation and communication between F.S. working groups to deliver a co-ordinated and consistent approach to activity planning and delivery and to maximise use of resources. (E&H working group to ensure it helps inform strategic planning and activity). A co-ordinated/overarching website focussing on all aspects of life in the Sperrins.				
<p>1.1 Do we have the right people: Review current composition of E&H working group to address gaps in expertise and knowledge.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Secure Central Government resources for the Sperrins as per other AONBs.</p> <p>1.1.2 Secure Historic Environment Division HED (Department for Communities DFC) & Northern Ireland Environment Agency NIEA, (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs DAERA) involvement as a Sperrins Champion (NIEA /HED attendance at E&H Working Group meetings and roles and responsibilities defined)</p> <p>1.1.3 Ensure participation of any missing key stakeholders and decision makers.</p> <p>1.1.4 Ensure participation of Youth/Young Sector</p>		12 months	New Trust
<p>1.2. Audit of formally designated Built Heritage and Natural Environment resources to include SPA's, GAA clubs, the Grand Loyal Orders and community groups etc.</p> <p>Also outdoor recreation sites from ORNI work on development of Sperrins Outdoor Recreation Action Plan</p>	<p>1.2.1 All existing data collated. Data to include our industrial heritage and continued success at an international level within key sectors e.g. engineering.</p> <p>1.2.2 Tourism NI , Outdoor Recreation NI joined with Council databases</p> <p>1.2.3 Data accessible to public</p>	<p>Audit also being suggested by T&B Working Group (Co-ordinated approach required between E&H Thematic Group and T&B Thematic Group when producing respective audits)</p> <p>Four Councils Environmental and Planning services</p> <p>Four council's Local Development Plan teams</p> <p>Sport NI - Outdoor Recreation sites</p> <p>HED - DFC</p> <p>NIEA Officers (DAERA)</p>	12 months	<p>FODC to facilitate (using existing electronic framework).</p> <p>T&B Thematic group responsible for the communication of data.</p>
<p>1.3 Cultural heritage captured and made accessible</p>	<p>1.3.1 Online platform for capturing and promoting intangible cultural and spiritual heritage in place.</p> <p>1.3.2 Select a suitable intangible cultural heritage good practice and definition model.</p>	<p>Other models including UNESCO; PRONI; National Museums of Ireland; Scope for study, events etc. to be funded or promoted under European Year of Cultural Heritage.</p>	12 months	New Trust Community Working Group

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
1.4 Co-ordinated promotion of Sperrins events and activities all year round	1.4.1 Calendar of events published for the entire area	T&B Thematic Group	Ongoing	MUDC to facilitate preparation of Calendar.
	1.4.2 September designated and promoted as "Sperrins Month" by all.	Four Councils, Tourism bodies, event organisers, Sporting Clubs etc.	6 months	Four Councils
	1.4.3 Delivery of a large scale "Sperrins " 2019 event- Small scale community events are a failsafe for lack of innovation	Special consideration needed for activity events taking place in the natural environment – www.outdooreventplanning.com (useful tool currently used by Mourne & Ring of Gullion)		Community groups
	1.4.4 Delivery of a heritage gala day inclusive of the local population			Event Organisers
1.5 Develop common approach to planning policy for Sperrins across four Council areas. Legal standing position of AONB to be reviewed and communicated.	1.5.1 Four Local Development Plan (LDP) Policies synchronised for Sperrins.	Four LDP Teams	2 years	Four Councils - facilitated by LDP Teams Co-ordination Group
	1.5.2 Consideration of a buffer zone for AONB with regard to planning strategy.	National Outdoor Recreation Forum		
	1.5.3 Oversight role re AONB policy including environmental protection and enforcement	Recreation planning refer to Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Action Plan - www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Our-Great-Outdoors.pdf		
1.6 Contribute to creation of the Sperrins Trust and Sperrins Management Plan ensuring the Trust belongs to all stakeholders	1.6.1 Management Structure Group development of Trust proposal.	NIEA provision of details of Management structures in other AONBs	12 months	Four Councils to facilitate setting up of Trust owned by all stakeholders
	1.6.2 Approval by four councils.	Signposting by E&H Thematic Group to other models - for Management Group to consider	Ongoing	
	1.6.3 Heritage and Environment representatives involved in new Trust structure	Irish Uplands Forum - Upland Community Study published 2016 www.irishuplandsforum.org		
1.7 Review and feedback to Community Plan, Local Development Plan and other statutory plans	1.7.1 Contributions made	Four Councils	2 years	All stakeholders
	1.7.2 Plans reflect issues relevant to Sperrins	All Stakeholders		
1.8 New Sperrins Trust co-ordinates with other similar bodies for mutual benefit.	1.8.1 Collaboration for Policy influence	Other AONB Bodies and similar bodies	Ongoing	New Trust
	1.8.2 Learning from other bodies	Regional Government		
	1.8.3 Sperrins specific issues discussed and decisions reached.	Four Councils		

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
1.9.1 Explore the possibility of having greenways and improve access routes	Greenways explored and available where applicable	Local Hillwalking Groups	2 years	Infrastructure Thematic Group
1.9.2 Access routes	Access routes	Sperrins Gateway Landscape Partnership Pilot Mountain Access project		Hillwalking Groups
2. Longer term				
2.1 A vibrant and inviting environment created for all to enjoy	2.1.1 Resources available		3-5 years	E&H Thematic Group lead Infrastructure
	2.1.2 Number of visitors and users			
	2.1.3 Health and wellbeing			
2.2 Effective communication strategy established between key/all stakeholders including tourists and visitors	2.2.1 More harmony	Four councils	2+ years	New Trust
	2.2.2 Better working relationships	Regional Government Stakeholders		
	2.2.3 Increasing interest			
2.3 Positives are celebrated	2.3.1 News articles	Four councils	1-2 years	New Trust
	2.3.2 No of positive events	Stakeholders		
2.4 Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Plan	2.4.1 Protection Policy created	Four Council Bio diversity Officers NIEA officers	3-5 years	New Trust
2.5 Built and Industrial Heritage Plan To include our industrial heritage and continued success at an international level within key sectors	2.5.1 Protection Policy created	Four Councils HED officers Council Heritage Officer Local farmers Industry – Construction, Engineering	3-5 years	New Trust
2.6 Environmental Management Plan	2.6.1 Protection Policy created	Four Councils NIEA Officers	3 – 5 years	New Trust

Wish list: we want

- Review of this event in six months' time and regularly after that including the four councils led by Mid Ulster so we can see what has come out of this, what has happened, what is the action plan, who is responsible for what, how we can help make sure that this happens.
- Continued consultation on when and how a working group is formed and who it represents.
- We will update the organisations and groups that we represent on what has happened at this event and on progress going forward.
- Councils and others visit and connect with the area.
- What is the agreement/commitment from councils on driving this forward?

Infrastructure Action Plan

2. Infrastructure: We provide safe and interesting networks for recreation that complement the environment. We are linked into the wider tourism offering in Ireland. We provide modern communications for the Sperrins.

Preamble: We expect councils to continue to provide the best services and linkages. We want to provide the linkages between ourselves within the Sperrins.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
2.1 Appoint a Champion	Identified Champion			
2.2 Audit of infrastructure to establish baseline	Baseline established	Landowners Communities Councils Translink Other transport providers Dept for Infrastructure Tourism Industry Local business Funding bodies Telecoms providers	1 year	Champion Steering Group Stakeholders
2.3 Define potential: greenways, routeways, access to transport	Agreed priorities and programmes			
2.4 Appraisal to establish realistic options				
2.6 Appalachian Trail as first hit				
2.6 Establish steering body	Steering body in place			
Longer term				
2.7 Marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use/Visitors • Increased expenditure • Regeneration/sustainability • 100% communications • Recognise infrastructure on Google Maps with local tourism businesses • Develop offer in hubs – each unique 	Trails in place with facilities Marketed Visitor numbers Bedspace/pitches Business starts and numbers Profile of visitors' expenditure	As above but more needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals: surveyors, architects accountants etc • Service providers: cafes, hotels, pubs, campsites, guides, maintainers, constructors, builders • More people providing work for our children's future 	Progressive increase in income over next 13 years to 2030	



Brand and Tourism Action Plan

3.Brand and Tourism: The Sperrins, spurs of rock, is a great natural, undiscovered and unspoilt destination that is recognised and cherished by others as it is by those who live and work here, and is steeped in history, rich in culture and with majestic views.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
3.1 Identify where major resources are coming from and how they will be utilised to design, develop and implement the strategies/ action plans developed	Strategic plan / structure required AONB Management Plan as part of wider strategic plan and to gain more recognition/ funding for protection Management body in place Sperrins officer(s)/ guardian(s) appointed and given resources Funding sources identified & applied for	Management Group Tourism NI NIEA Environment & heritage Thematic Group	Urgent - 3-6 months	Management Group Tourism NI NIEA 4 Councils
3.2 Definition: "The Sperrins" area	Agreement reached – The AONB and neighbouring settlements (gateway towns) to be included	/	/	Tourism and Branding Group
3.3 Short term initiatives: - GIS Map of Sperrins Area and current "products"	Map developed	4 Councils – Excel sheet of current products within defined area to be sent to George Bradshaw with Postcodes Co-ordinated approach with other thematic groups eg. environment and heritage to produce one map with the various layers included	End of February	FODC GIS team Staff from 4 Councils
3.4 Definition: the essence and the product: • What is it? • Where is it? • What is the USP? Why would people visit? Current perceptions of the Sperrins?	Audit of what constitutes the Sperrins is required	Wider Stakeholders Collaborate with other Thematic groups for an Audit	3 months	4 Councils Future Search Stakeholders Tourism NI
3.5 Short term initiatives: - Local fam trips	Take staff from VIC's and people on F.S. groups out on tour of Sperrins – let them see what there is to offer Then in the longer term move to a wider audience for FAM trips – media, tour operators, industry professionals	Local stakeholders	6 months	4 Councils
3.6 Short term initiatives: - Event celebrating 50 years of the AONB	Develop a combined 50year celebration of original AONB declaration for September across the Sperrins region that showcases the natural richness and promotes the area, tying in with established/ ongoing community & council events and to encourage more positive action within the AONB than the previous 50years	Tourism NI All Four councils- come together for events NIEA	6 months 2018 -Ongoing organisation, date for event – September 2018	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI Wider Stakeholders

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
3.7 Short term initiatives: - What's on guide / Events Calendar	incorporate current events across all four councils and local community groups etc into a what's on guide/ Events calendar specific to the Sperrins Area, and for the 50th anniversary celebration of the AONB (month of September) produce a special guide incorporating these events	4 Councils VIC and Tourism Staff Tourism NI	Ongoing - 2018	4 Councils Tourism NI
3.8 Research: internal and external – looking at the perceptions of people in relations to the Sperrins, both local and wider audience	Report delivered – Research/ Stats required for informing policy/plans	Tourism NI	12 months and ongoing	Tourism NI Management Structure
3.9 Development of visitor experience plan – Consider development of a wider strategic plan for the Sperrins Area which incorporates V.E. Plan	Output and outcome measures – Strategic Plan developed	4 councils	18 months and ongoing	Sperrins Management Body primarily Future Search Stakeholders / Brand & Tourism group
3.10 Creation of unified Branding/ Logo/ Straplines etc	Identifiable brand that pulls together the identity of the Sperrins and its products/communities	Management Group 4 Councils Tourism NI Other Stakeholders and FS Thematic Groups	1 – 2 years	Tourism & Branding Group
Longer term				
3.11 Brand development: use visitor experience plan to develop current products; expand to new product offerings	Further development of area and additional literature and offerings	Councils Tourism NI Tourism Ireland	2+ years	Sperrins management structure Councils etc
3.12 Trial new initiatives/pilots	KPIs: 2020 – own stand at Holidays world with Sperrins branding and literature, website and social media up and running	4 Councils Tourism NI	2+ years	4 Councils Tourism NI
3.13 Consultation/engagement process	Tactical forward thinking	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI	2+ years	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI
3.14 Brand awareness: marketing/ communications campaigns; tactical plans, use of branding on own social media pages and website development	Building relationships Trade buy-in developed	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI	2+ years	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI
3.15 Flagship events: "Undiscovered" international event	Visitor numbers	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI	2020	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI
3.16 Schools and Youth outreach programme	Pride, more awareness through upcoming generations and across NI	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI EA	2019/20	4 Councils NIEA Tourism NI

Community Action Plan

4. Community: We are a community of people of varying needs and aspirations, fuelled by our passion to ensure a strong, vibrant, healthy, happy community with equal access to social, health, educational, cultural, economic and creative benefits and opportunities. We are the custodians who have lived, loved and worked the land for generations, past, present and future. The beauty of the Sperrins is reflected in the beauty of its people.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
4.1 Four councils' community planning and community services teams to meet to facilitate and coordinate	A completed scoping study in consultation with stakeholders of emerging cooperative opportunities to include e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Plans • Rural Development Programme • Peace IV • HLF • Local Development Plans • Tourism initiatives E.G. International Appalachian Trail etc. • Co-operative initiatives • Existing community plan partnership structures • Contentious live issues • No. of potential cooperation projects identified 	Council Officers	3- 6 months (The Community Working Group recommends quarterly progress reviews)	The Management Working Group will determine the structures required to facilitate, monitor and measure the future delivery of actions identified by the working groups.

Additional Information / Member Feedback

- Subject to approval, Community Planning and Community Services/Support teams from councils to meet. Review the partnership structures of each Community Plan.
- The different Council Community Plans may be at varying stages of development (DCSDC /FODC have completed theirs) and the level of focus may differ also between councils (DCSDC has launched its overarching strategic community plan for the district but is also currently developing additional DEA focussed local plans – one of these local plans covers the part of the Sperrins in the DCSDC area). Planners from all four councils are already meeting in relation to the alignment of the Local Development Plans in regard to the Sperrins.
- The scoping study should give a clear picture of existing physical infrastructure and resources, community infrastructure, programmes, policy and governance as well as links with CP, LDP, PfG and other relevant policies and governance related issues including new deprivation indices.

4.2 This conference to be on the agenda of the next meeting of the four Council Chief Executives in order to move things forward (and subsequent meetings where key decisions are required in moving forward key actions)	Item on Chief Executive Officer (CEO) meeting agenda	Council Officers	3- 6 months	CEOs
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Additional Information / Member Feedback

- Chief Executive/ Director approval (from each council) to be sought for the allocation of adequate staff, administrative support and finances from council Community Support resources for the delivery of agreed Future Search initiatives.
- Identification of additional sources of funding and support to facilitate successful delivery
- Consideration should be given to equality of funding/resource opportunity funding between rural and urban areas

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
<p>4.3 Research: We want a fresh approach based on our needs, but we also need to know about existing models for other AONBs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collating best practice research on AONB and other equivalent landscape partnership type models on a range of relevant issues. Link with Landscapes for Life (the national association for AONBs) • Sharing of information /resources /services on current research • Undertake research on models of evaluating the programme • Service provision audit of the Sperrins to facilitate the development of a service provision plan 	<p>Other AONBs - Landscapes for Life</p> <p>Other partnership models</p>	0-9 months	Council Directors and associated staff teams

Additional Information / Member Feedback

- Build upon research already undertaken- including European sources. Link with Landscapes for Life (the national association for AONBs) and explore how other AONBs work, taking account of the unique population and community base in each one
- Cross reference against other AONB models , equivalent landscape partnership type models and LEADER project models outside of NI, and extract best practice from each in relation to design; delivery; pitfalls; structure; funding; community engagement; environmental impacts; environmental management versus environmental protection concepts; the issues associated with National Park designation; landscape heritage management; new ways of doing things etc. Look at other models like the Belfast Hills Working Partnership or the Connswater Community Greenway as an example of community engagement driven partnership. The importance of local communities leading actions was strongly emphasised.
- Policy research on all relevant policies affecting the Sperrins including liaising with DAERA (LEADER), DfC, HLF among others
- The group agreed that it would be important to look at and map the baseline of service provision e.g. banks, schools etc... in the Sperrin's. This audit should include the identification of existing essential services and gaps in provision of these essential services; It should also review the "status" of services so as to identify – for example- any which are at risk /under threat of closure; and look at changes in the local and wider environment which are likely to impact on service provision. Such an audit would help identify priority actions and allow forward planning in relation to essential service and wider service provision.



What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
<p>4.4 Gather community development groups together to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and plan the way forward • Facilitate networking and capacity building and to share learning • Develop sustainable community organisations and build in succession planning. • Facilitate community engagement with others e.g. business and industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to create a database of groups for the Sperrins (taking account of data protection) 	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action	0-9 Months	Community Services Teams
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull together community stakeholders to seek their views on the concept of “a stronger together approach” and how communities are best engaged moving forward and how they can be investment ready in regard to emerging opportunities 	Rural Community Network	0-9 Months	Communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine other ways of gathering information from communities- Walk and Talk events; mini Sperrins Future Search with a community focussed theme; Gather on the Go events 	Local networks like Fermanagh Rural Community Network, Omagh Forum for Rural Assocs, Omagh Focus, Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network, Dennett Interchange, Rural Area Partnership in Derry, Glenelly Dev Trust, Rural North West, Villages Together		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of information /resources /services e.g. develop an engagement plan for a range of different groups across the area including young people and other Section 75 (Of The NI Act 1998) groups 	Community Services - Village Plans	0-9 Months	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a “Sperrins Community Summit ” as part of the wider delivery of the Sperrins’ September Month 	Council Equality Officer and Youth Officers where available	0-9 Months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a bespoke session with young people in order to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ascertain if and how they represent their voices in any structure moving forward – - get the next generation engaged; to enable succession planning; and build a bank of new emerging leaders 	Derry City & Strabane District Council youth officer agreed to assist – ask EA youth officer to also assist	0-6 Months		

Additional Information / Member Feedback

- The sharing of information /resources /services e.g. to transcend council boundaries (e.g. recycling facilities). Examine new ways of engaging with communities – walk and talk events, mini FS events for communities
- Need to create a new database of all interested groups across a range of genres and interests and ensure S75 coverage. Data protection issues need to be considered when developing a database of groups for the project moving forward
- Needs to include young people / nine key groups listed under S75. Need to think about timings for the engagement of different groups
- Ensure geographical representation and balance across all sectors within the structure of working groups/structures. Need to look at who is missing from the working group /any future delivery structure– Rural Community Network , local groups from Derry and Strabane and Mid Ulster Councils , youth groups , people with a disability and older people are potentially missing. Community Services and Good Relations officers could also assist with this.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
4.6 Strategy development with strong community input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design, co-delivery and co-production should all be a core part of the strategy development and delivery process. Conference to take forward • Strategy implementation • Success is proof-e.g. Community buy in; builds real communities; reduces polarisation; reduces conflict; integrates communities; community input/views are listened to and valued. • Puts people first – community at the heart and ensure youth are engaged 	Council Community Planning teams Planners	6-15 months +	Directors External Support

Additional Information / Member Feedback

- Needs to put people first
- Needs to aim to deliver the right services – services which will develop /produce vibrant communities
- Needs to deliver on local issues
- Co design element required - e.g. Education Authority input
- Needs to include young people / nine key groups listed under Section 75
- Need to take account of objections and issues that people do not currently agree on
- Need to ensure a monitoring and evaluation and outcomes based approach is also included

4.7 Review/monitor what has been achieved/delivered and that we are still loyal to our vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake research on models of evaluating the programme • Dedicated officer support • Develop an OBA approach for the plan. Agree outcomes, results and indicators 	Community planner University support	6-15 months + in line with strategy	Community planners External support
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Additional Information / Member Feedback

- Need to ensure a link with community planning outcomes and Programme for Government emerging outcomes



Management Action Plans

5. Management Structures: We are creating a management structure fit for purpose with the necessary resources, authority and expertise and taking forward our shared vision for the Sperrins to enhance an area of beauty we can live and work in.

What	Measure	Help from	Due Date	Responsible
Short Term				
5.1 Planning group from Councils to get together, digest the outputs from this conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite feedback from conference • Present draft report at a reconvened conference in January 	Review meeting organised for Jan 2018	4 Councils Thematic Groups	11 Jan 2018	Council Officers
5.2 Directory of current activity in the Sperrins and support systems. 5.3 Collate information on current activity in the Sperrins from public and private sources	Directory of current activity and calendar of coordinated events	Council Community Plans Tourism Initiatives Sperrins Landscape Partnership Outdoor Recreation Forum Ancient Heart of Ulster LP	Ongoing	5 Thematic Groups Councils
5.4 Build datasets to support future planning May need reworded and discussion on 11/01/2018	All existing data collated	5 Thematic Groups Sporting organisations Community Groups Stakeholders		2 Levels – Local Government and Central Government
5.5 Look at models of best practice and suggest some delivery/structural mechanisms	Implement a best practice model	Councils	Mar 18	Management Thematic Group
5.6 Ask everyone to cross-sell based on new relationships 5.7 Promote cross boundary working	Establish Sperrins brand, develop a communications strategy	Councils Statutory Thematic groups Stakeholders	Ongoing	Tourism & Branding
5.8 Review and feed into Community Planning process, Local Development Plans and align with draft Programme for Government	Contributions made Plans reflect issues relevant to Sperrins	4 Councils Statutory Partners	2 years	4 Councils Statutory Partners
Medium term				
5.9 Establish Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) and partnership comprising community, council and statutory representative. Structure to follow strategy				

Annex A: Facilitators' Biographies



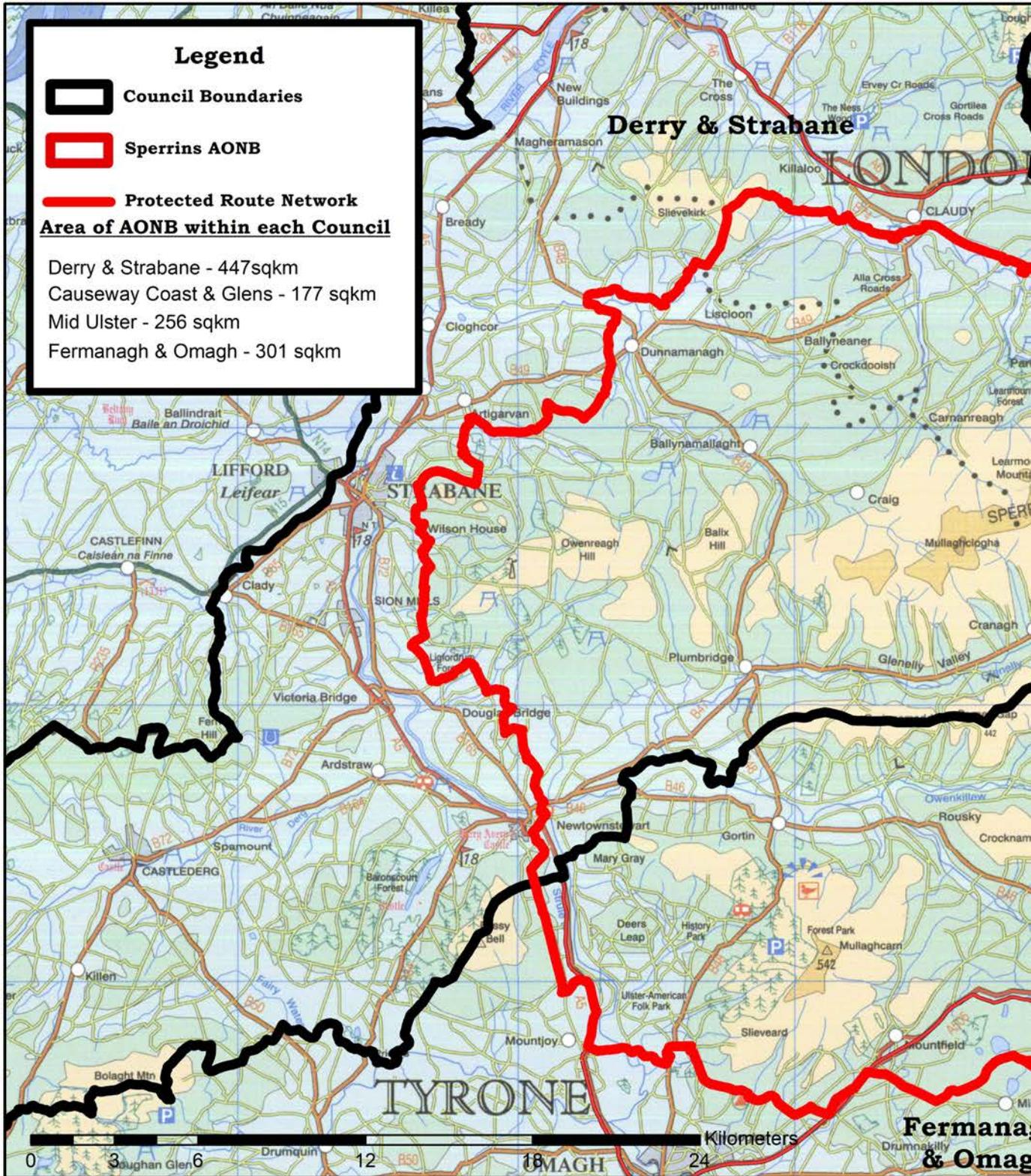
Aideen McGinley is Chair of Galway 2020 European City of Culture and a Trustee of the Carnegie UK Trust. She was National Trustee for Northern Ireland on the BBC Trust from 2012-2017. She has 37 years local and central government experience in Northern Ireland being the first woman CEO in local government and subsequently the first woman Permanent Secretary in central government when she took up post, on devolution, to create the first Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and then moved to the Department of Employment and Learning where she was responsible for further and higher education, employment and skills. Reflecting her interest in regeneration she too took up a secondment in 2009 as CEO of ILEX, the Urban Regeneration Company for Derry-Londonderry, where she was instrumental in developing the £400m 10-year regeneration plan, building the symbolic Peace Bridge and successfully securing the inaugural UK City of Culture 2013 title for the city. Aideen has a particular interest in, and experience of, whole systems thinking and effective stakeholder engagement and successfully embedding the outcomes in policy and practice across a range of issues and sectors. These include Culture and Creativity, Urban and Rural Regeneration, Social Entrepreneurship, Women and Leadership Development. She has been involved in a variety of roles both professional and voluntary in the non-profit sector which, coupled with her private and extensive public sector experience and her ability to create integrated policy and delivery on the ground, has been recognised in her award of an OBE in the Queens millennium honours list and a honorary degree from the University of Ulster. Aideen is an associate of Future Search Associates, Co-Chair of the Carnegie UK Trust initiative on the measurement of wellbeing in Northern Ireland and a jury member for the selection of the UK City of Culture 2017.



Sandra Janoff, PhD co-developed the principle-based methodology called Future Search, a process used world-wide to get the "whole system" focusing on the future and creating values-based action strategies. She is an international consultant and works with global corporations and communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, India, North & South America, Australia and New Zealand. Sandra's humanitarian work includes: UNICEF-sponsored initiatives such as: Finding a Future for the Children of South Sudan during the North/South Sudanese civil war. This resulted in a second Future Search in South Sudan to demobilize child soldiers. Over 13,000 children were released and sent back to their homes. A Future Search in South Sudan in 2013 created solutions for abandoned children in Juba. In a UNICEF initiative, Preventing Violence Against Children in Schools in Uganda, she worked with stakeholders on all levels, from ministerial to district schools, to address the issues of corporal punishment and other violent acts against children and to implement a nation-owned mandate for zero tolerance Sandra's work with integrated economic development in NI includes Future Searches in County Fermanagh, Derry-Londonderry, Strabane, Coleraine and Lough Neagh, along with those above named by Aideen. Sandra is Principal of Future Search Associates and Director of Future Search Network (FSN) which won the Global Work Award and the Sharing the Wealth Award. She is co-author of Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground (Berrett-Koehler, 3rd ed, 2010), Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings that Matter (Berrett-Koehler, 2007) and Lead More, Control Less: 8 Advanced Leadership Skills that Overturn Convention (Berrett-Koehler, 2015). Sandra was just honoured with the Organizational Development Network's 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Annex B:

Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
 District Council

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Annex C:

The Sperrins 2030

Landowners; Farmers; Tourism; Heritage and Environment; Government Departments; Council Reps; Business; Industry; Youth and Community.

Have all worked tirelessly over the last thirteen years to establish Unity.

The Sperrins has a strong place in our hearts;
Its natural beauty, birds, bees and fauna
A rural land, full of heritage and history;
Why we are so passionate about it, is no longer a mystery!

Sandra and Aideen's Future Search Event in 2017 has given us the tools and encouraged us to work together to build a future for our youth;
A shared desire that brought us here today is definitive proof.

From darkness and confusion;
We have risen to a place of sustainable conclusion.
A Joint vision, blood, sweat and tears;
Has helped us to preserve the Sperrins for many many years.

Susan Doherty © 2017

Annex D:

Glossary of Abbreviations

AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONV – Area of Outstanding Natural Vitality

CCG - Causeway Coast & Glens

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

CP - Community Planning

COM - Community Thematic Group

DfC - Department for Community

DAERA - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

DCSDC - Derry City & Strabane District Council

DEA - District Electoral Area

E&H - Environment & Heritage Thematic Group

EU – European Union

FODC - Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

FS - Future Search

GIS– Geographic Information System

HLF - Heritage Lottery Fund

HED - Historic Environment Division

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

LEADER - Liaison Entre Actions Development de l’Economie Rurale

LDP - Local Development Planning

MLA – Members of the Legislative Assembly

MUDC - Mid Ulster District Council

NI - Northern Ireland

NIEA - Northern Ireland Environment Agency

OBA - Outcome Based Accountability

ORNI - Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland

PfG – Programme for Government

PRONI - Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

S75 - Section 75

SPA - Special Protection Area

SPV – Special Purpose Vehicle

T&B - Tourism & Branding Thematic Group – T&B

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USP – Unique Selling Point

VEP – Visitor Experience Plan

VIC – Visitor Information Centre



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27th October 2017



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSraha B ain
Derry Clit e & Str abane
District Council



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hOma 



Comhairle Ceantair
L ar Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Future Search Sperrins YR 18/19

Nov to March 18/19

Detail Code	Description	Annual Budget	
1005	Salaries	21,043.75	PO1 pt 33 £16,065, Scale 4 pt 18 £4978.75
2210	Electricity	209	
3040	Mileage Allowance	1,042.00	
4005	Equipment (Non Cap.)	3,000.00	office equipment
4060	Hire Charges	1666	room hire, office hire, photocopier and printer
4105	Hospitality	335.00	refreshments for meetings
4145	Stationery Supplies	200.00	
4505	Postage	100	
4710	Subsistence	50	
4515	Telephone	100	
		27,745.75	

Cost per council £6937**Future Search Sperrins YR 19/20**

Detail Code	Description	Annual Budget	
1005	Salaries	53,239.50	PO1 pt 34 £40,812, Scale 4 pt 19 £12427.50
2210	Electricity	500	
3040	Mileage Allowance	2,500.00	
4005	Equipment (Non Cap.)	3,000.00	office equipment
4060	Hire Charges	4000	room hire, office hire, photocopier and printer
4105	Hospitality	800.00	refreshments for meetings
4145	Stationery Supplies	500.00	
4505	Postage	200	
4710	Subsistence	150	
4515	Telephone	200	
		65,089.50	

Cost per council £16273