

Title of Report:	Destination Marketing Recovery Plan
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16th June 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

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

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£57,285
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	12005
Staffing Costs	In-house staff

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to assign a percentage of the Destination Marketing budget (2020/21) to specifically address efforts for promoting our visitor economy coming out of the COVID 19 pandemic. It is proposed that Council will work on joint marketing initiatives with Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) and the trade, prioritising the domestic and ROI market as part of a special COVID-19 Recovery Plan for the Causeway Coast and Glens area.

2.0 Background

2.1 Value of Tourism

The most recent value of Tourism for the Causeway Coast and Glens area was estimated at £172m in 2018 and the sector employs just over 5,000 in the area accounting for 1 in 8 jobs.

2.2 Impact of Covid 19

Tourism and hospitality as a sector have been particularly impacted by COVID-19. In Northern Ireland, accommodation, food services, arts, entertainment and recreation are forecast to experience contractions in employment of 9.2% and 8.1% respectively. Locally, over 43% of businesses responding to a Tourism NI survey in April had reduced staff numbers, laying off 777 workers temporarily and 140 workers permanently. The seasonal nature of the NI tourism offer means that 70% of business is carried out between spring and summer and much of this has been lost, although the Economy Minister's announcement on the reopening of the accommodation sector by no later than 20 July has been welcomed.

3.0 Assistance to the Tourism and Hospitality sector

Council Officers have been working with TNI and the trade to assist in the recovery for the Tourism and Hospitality sector. A dedicated COVID-19 updates page was created giving information on travel advice, attraction closures and more for the Causeway Coast & Glens destination; listing local trade offering useful services to the community including food delivery services and supporting our creators by sharing opportunities to purchase the local crafts and gifts normally stocked in our Visitor Centres. The trade engagement team have been supporting the trade by telephone, email, ezines and social media to help them, in conjunction with the Prosperity & Place team, navigate the UK and local government support available during these most difficult and challenging times.

The attention is now on recovery and reopening and staff are currently surveying the industry to establish what way the Council can assist.

4.0 Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Plans

Tourism Northern Ireland has coordinated the establishment of a Tourism Task Force with associated recovery plans and Council's Chief Executive sits on the Steering Group. A representative from the Destination Marketing Team has been appointed to the local authority marketing working group. A comprehensive marketing plan, comprising of traditional forms of advertising and PR, along with social and digital activity has been developed by Tourism Northern Ireland in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Hotel Federation. Support and investment from Councils and Regional Tourism Partners has been requested.

The first wave of destination advertising and promotion will target the local and domestic markets, followed by the Republic of Ireland to generate business from summer and autumn through to spring 2021. Phase 1 of the campaign is scheduled to commence on 1 July for six weeks, followed by a second phase running until mid-October. The Causeway Coastal Route will be the lead destination for the campaign.

4.1 Target Markets

The campaign will be aimed at segments identified by Tourism Northern Ireland as key targets for the Causeway Coastal Route offer, and those with the desire to travel in the short-medium term, both in the domestic and Republic of Ireland markets.

5.0 Proposals

5.1 Partnership Approach

It is proposed that Council partner with Tourism Northern Ireland to maximise the impact of this campaign and generate leads and business for local businesses, firstly by deploying the tourism engagement team to enlist the participation of the tourism providers in the area and secondly, by increasing the importance / weighting of the Causeway Coast and Glens share of voice by investing funds from the destination marketing budget.

The aim will be to work with the creative agencies procured by Tourism Northern Ireland to deliver consistent, quality and integrated material to promote the Causeway Coast and Glens as part of the new Northern Ireland – Embrace a Giant Spirit brand.

The advantages to this approach is that the combined media buying power of the agencies and ability to use pre-created templates will deliver a cost-effective solution to Council. It also serves to strengthen Causeway Coast and Glens relationship with Tourism Northern Ireland and will be a recognition of its position as the foremost holiday destination in Northern Ireland.

5.2 Website Development

It is proposed that the Visit Causeway and Glens destination website be redeveloped to complement the campaign and assist the wider recovery. The site which was last updated in 2013 no longer delivers the expected user experience from tourism destination websites, nor does it allow the flexibility and functionality required for current marketing best practice. Longer term, a redevelopment will ensure that the website is commensurate with the profile of the destination, both in the domestic and international markets.

A ready-made solution for the website has been procured by Tourism Northern Ireland and is available on licence to Causeway Coast and Glens Council. It would be fully responsive across all digital devices and offer a replicate web design and functionality of the national tourism website while allowing for individual destination branding and control over content. The licensing agreement would include a complete support and training package negating the need for annual hosting and maintenance contracts with third parties and ad hoc upgrades and refinements at additional costs. It is both cost effective and expedient to pursue this option while also ensuring a consistent, quality platform that encompasses functions not previously available. The website would be available for 3 years with the option to renew for a further 2 years. To date Newry, Mourne & Down District Council and Visit Derry have agreed to be partners in the project with TNI.

6.0 Allocation of Costs from Current Destination Marketing Budget

Costs:

July - Sept 20	£25,000 Advertising
July - March 21	£18,600 Promotional activity (Media and Influencers)
July - Sept 20	£13,685 Website Build Cost

Total Costs **£57,285** (re-profiled in current year estimates)

7.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee approve expenditure of £57,258 reallocated from the 2020/21 Destination Marketing budget for a targeted marketing

campaign to assist the Tourism and Hospitality sector in recovery of lost business, income and employment.