



Title of Report:	Drumagully Trail – Downhill Forest
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
For discussion In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and enhancing our environment and assets Promote our tourist offer locally and internationally Prosperity, Health & Wellbeing & Cohesive Community
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Head of Service – Tourism & Recreation Coast & Countryside Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Circa £75,000 (grant aided at 100%)
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	Capital & Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	Staff representation on LPS Board and assistance with project delivery.

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES

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 present an update, for Members, on the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) and to seek Members' approval to further progress on the delivery of the Drumagully Trail at Downhill Forest North.

2.0 Background

The Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) started in September 2020 following a successful application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for support of £3.4 million. The Partnership has progressed the delivery of projects across the themes Outdoor Recreation, Natural Heritage and Built Heritage and Conservation.

Council agreed in October 2019 to become a supporting partner of the LPS providing £273,560 of match funding over five years.

One of the Outdoor Recreation projects, the Downhill Spatial Masterplan, was developed to consider the recreational use of Downhill Forest and the historic demesne. The Masterplan recommended, to improve the walking product and visitor experience, that Council considers entering into licence agreement for Downhill Forest North to develop, manage and maintain the existing Ulster Way/North Sperrins Way and create a new spur, in the form of Drumagully Trail.

At the January 2023 Leisure & Development Committee it was agreed Council negotiate the terms of the licence agreement with Forest Service for both Ballycarton and Downhill North proposed projects, which limit council's responsibilities and cost to operational area of interest/benefit. The licence agreement will restrict Council's liability to the maintenance, repair and insurances regarding recreational walking activities where the trails are located.

3.0 Proposals

The project works on the Drumagully Trail would see the enhancement of an existing looped walking trail through Downhill Forest North measuring approximately 1.4 kilometres. These works will enhance the visitor experience and minimise negative impact on the site. The route is shown on the trail map below.

The works will include the appropriate surface dressing of the route and associated trail furniture including footbridges, way markers and interpretation.

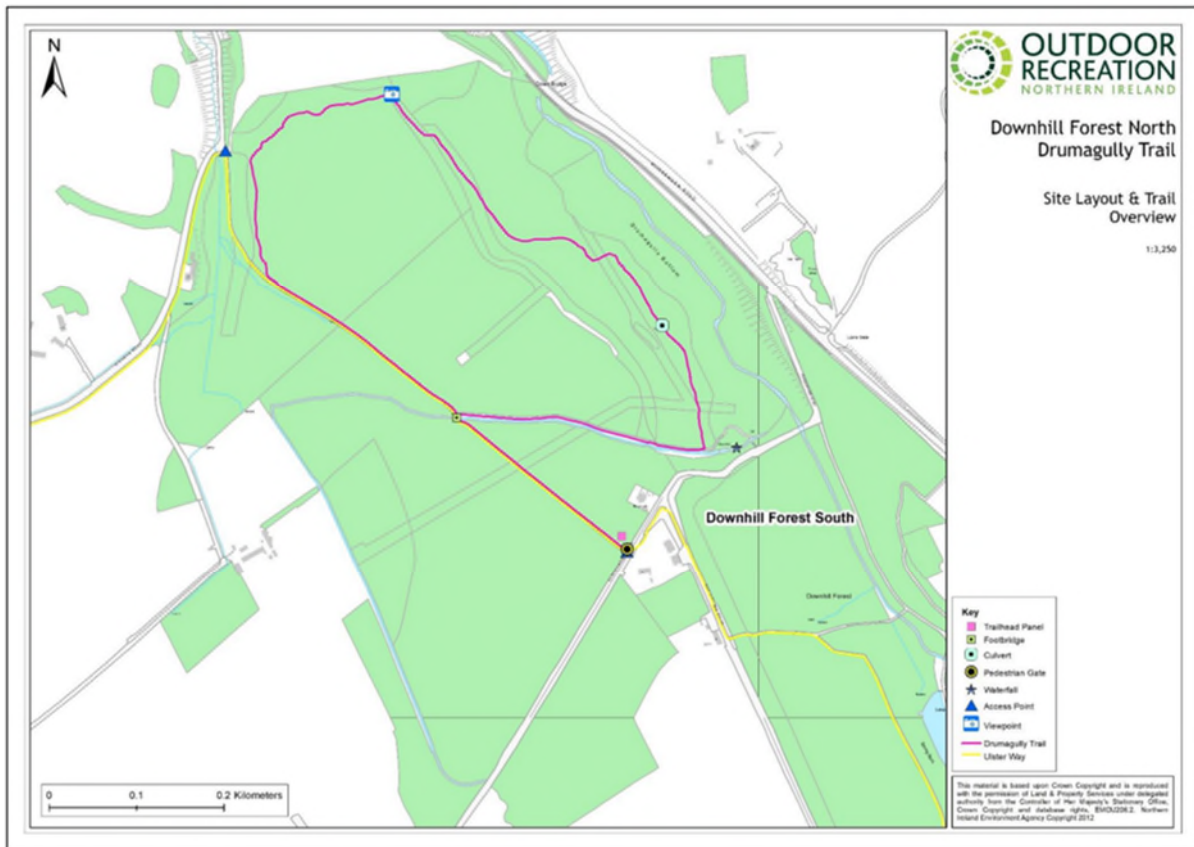
Council staff have now progressed discussions with Forest Service with respect to the necessary licence agreement for the trail development works. A draft agreement has been prepared and reviewed by Council staff and solicitor.

The cost of the trail development is estimated at £75,000 which will receive grant aid at 100%.

Council will have to build in an annual maintenance budget for this facility:

- Circa £2000 per annum, up to year 10.
- Circa £5000 per annum, beyond year 10.

The expected tenure for the licence agreement is 25 years.



4.0 Next Steps

Subject to Council approval, it is proposed to avail of the £75,000 grant aid at 100%, and complete on the upgrading works for the Drumagully Trail in conjunction with LPS. This site will be promoted in the future as an improved outdoor recreational opportunity for citizens of the Borough and visitors to the area.

5.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee recommends to Council to enter into a licence agreement with Forest Service for the development of the Drumagully Trail at Downhill Forest North. As part of this licence agreement, Council will assume maintenance and insurance liabilities for the walking trails under the 25 year tenure of the licence agreement. The project will be subject to the condition that the Binevenagh & Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) provide £75,000 Capital funding for the works required.