

Title of Report:	Taste Causeway request for Financial Contribution
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 September 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.
Outcome	Contributes to improving levels of business innovation. Contributes to increasing business startup and survival rates. Develop the visitor economy.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Head of Prosperity and Place

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£19,500 to £45,000 per annum
Included in Current Year Estimates	NO
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

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 the report is to facilitate further consideration of the request from Taste Causeway (presentation June L&D), who is seeking a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Council and a commitment to funding. Elected Members are asked to consider options on how Council can support the existence of Taste Causeway Community Interest Company (CIC) for the benefit of the wider tourism and hospitality sector, within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

1.0 Background

In June 2024 the Chair and a Board Member of Taste Causeway presented to the Leisure and Development Committee requesting Council support for the further development of Taste Causeway CIC.

The Taste Causeway board wish to secure financial stability to allow future operational delivery. The Board have currently committed to employing a member of staff to cover administration, member services and communications. This post is funded until the end of October 2024. Post October 2024, there is a short fall in revenue to pay for these core activities for Taste Causeway.

2.1 Who is Taste Causeway?

Taste Causeway is the brand name for the Causeway Coast and Glens Food and Tourism Collaborative Growth Network. The Taste Causeway Collaborative Growth Network brings together local companies working in the food and drink supply chain to position the sector as a driver of economic growth and job creation. Taste Causeway began in 2016 to support and showcase artisan food and drink producers. They have grown from an original membership of 14 to almost 80 members.

Taste Causeway is now a community interest company (CIC).

2.2 How can Taste Causeway assist in the delivery of our Destination Management plans?

In line with Council's Corporate vision, the Destination Management Team is responsible for the coordination and management of the marketing, trade support, visitor servicing and the development and delivery of a broad range of tourism projects that have a strong, positive and sustainable benefit for the local economy. Taste Causeway's operational activities therefore would be an addition to the work already being carried out by Council's Destination Management team and the Prosperity and Place service.

2.0 Funding Policy

The Grant Funding Policy adopted by Council in October 2015 and reviewed annually thereafter, outlines Council's agreed approach to grant funding in relation to resourcing external bodies that can assist in the delivery of its strategic objectives and priorities.

The policy only relates to funding that adheres to the following definition:

Grants - May be awarded through a variety of sources from within the Council. Eligibility for funding is enabled through the grant programmes with specified criteria. This allows Council to focus on supporting organisations to achieve their best and to meet clearly identified needs.

Donations - Contributions to general appeals, charities and other one-off requests should be directed to the Mayor's Fund. These will be awarded at the discretion of the Mayor guided by specific terms and conditions.

Contract for Services - Allocations made for the provision of services undertaken on behalf of Council will be made after appropriate procurement guidance has been adhered to.

Taste Causeway have requested that Council provide core funding. As there is no grant fund that would facilitate this request, to do so would be outside of the Grant Funding Policy and process.

Officers believe the only possible avenue for Council to support the request is through a Contract for Services, where specific activities and outputs would be delivered on behalf of Council. In a similar scenario, Council have entered into a Contract for Services with Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust who deliver an approved programme of activities/projects that are funded by Council.

Any activities must be in line with Council's corporate approach and complement a specific areas remit, for example Tourism and Recreation and/or Prosperity and Place. Procurement Policy and advice must be adhered to.

Council could consider the procurement of a programme of specific activities and outputs to be tendered for the award of a Contract for Services. However, before proceeding, Council needs to consider the impact of externally advertising for the delivery of activities and outputs currently delivered inhouse.

Possible options are outlined below and expanded on in **ANNEX A** and **ANNEX B**.

3.0 Taste Causeway's Request for Financial Support and SLA

At the June L&D committee presentation, Taste Causeway requested that Council consider supporting this initiative up until the end March 2025 and have requested the following:

From October 2024 – March 2025

- £12.5k - funding from Leisure and Development budget to cover core funding /match fund committed projects.
- £10k – ring fenced from Tourism Budget for Destination Marketing/ Tourism Trade Shows/Fam Trips specific to food and drink within wider destination marketing offer.
- Commitment to explore all funding opportunities with key stakeholders.
- Delivered through a Service level Agreement (SLA).

From April 2025 – March 2026

- £25k - funding from Leisure and Development budget to cover core funding /match fund external funding applications.
- £20k - ring fenced from Tourism Budget for Destination Marketing/ Tourism Trade Shows/Fam Trips specific to food and drink within wider destination marketing offer Destination Marketing/ Tourism Trade Shows/Fam Trips.
- Delivered through a formal Partnership Agreement involving all stakeholders.

Taste Causeway have also stated that they are in discussion with a number of bodies including, Tourism NI, Invest NI, DAERA and Enterprise Causeway to collectively look at the future of the network.

4.0 Alternative suggested approach and SLA (October 2024 - March 2025)

Officers have drafted an activity plan which would allow Taste Causeway to receive financial/ equivalent support from Council, subject to approval and meeting the identified outputs. **ANNEX A** details an option for consideration up until 31 March 2025. **ANNEX B** details an option for consideration from April 2025 up until 31 March 2026. Below provides a summary of possible activities:

- The delivery of one food and drink inspirational event within the Borough. This will be open to the wider tourism and hospitality sector and will showcase the activities of Taste Causeway and provide networking, developmental and learning opportunities for the wider sector.
- Taste Causeway partner the Tourism Destination Management Team on Day 2 of World Travel Market, in London. This is a major international trade event and provides an excellent promotional opportunity for Taste Causeway CIC.
- Taste Causeway to develop a programme of activities that can be promoted as part of the Destination team's 'always on' annual campaign (pilot February 2025).
- Taste Causeway to develop and animate a presence at the Council run Salmon and Whiskey Festival. (October 2025).
- Taste Causeway to run a programme of activities to support the food and drink sector within the Causeway Coast and Glens. This programme will include hosting 6 events throughout the year outlining best practice in areas such as development, retail, pricing, merchandising/packaging and supply chain. Each workshop will be in two parts, with part one outlining the above and providing examples of success stories and keynote speakers. Part two will be to allow for one-to-one mentoring which includes the opportunity for a follow up meeting at the next scheduled workshop.

The activity plans (**ANNEX A & B**) fits with Council's corporate approach and complements activities with the Leisure & Development remit. If ANNEX A is approved by Elected Members, most of the activities outlined in bullet points above could be achieved within the current financial year, with the exception of the Salmon and Whiskey proposal and the need to reduce the number of workshops from 6 to 4. This would represent an investment from Council of £15,000 within the current financial year and would require adjustment and a reduction in the planned service provision for the year ending March 2025 from both Tourism and Recreation and Prosperity and Place. If ANNEX B is approved, this would represent a financial investment by Council of £19,500 and would require to be added to the relevant budget areas as part of the preparation for next year's rate setting.

As outlined in section 4.0 of this report, for the period April 2025 – March 2026, Taste Causeway has requested a financial contribution from Council of £25,000 for core funding and £20,000 ringfenced from the Tourism budget for destination/tourism marketing, which represents a significant allocation of the expenditure for destination marketing, an activity currently delivered inhouse. Also, there is no mechanism within Council for core funding external bodies.

5.0 Proposals

Any agreement to fund Taste Causeway must adhere to Council's Procurement Policy. Consideration should be given to open procurement unless any agreed financial transaction can be awarded based on a Direct Award Contract for services that Taste Causeway is considered as best placed to deliver on.

The following options are presented to Elected Members for consideration:

5.1 Option 1

Provide Taste Causeway with financial support, as requested at the June Leisure and Development Committee Meeting:

- £22,500 up until 31 March 2025.
- £45,000 from April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Subject to adherence to Funding and Procurement Policy.

5.2 Option 2

Provide Taste Causeway with financial support as outlined in section 5.0 above and **ANNEX A**:

- £15,000 up until 31 March 2025.
- £19,500 from April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Subject to adherence to Funding and Procurement Policy.

5.3 Option 3

Do not provide Taste Causeway with financial support, as requested at the June Leisure and Development Committee Meeting.

6.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee considers the above options that include the request from Taste Causeway, at the June Leisure and Development Committee meeting, for financial support and the suggested alternative options as detailed in **ANNEX A** and **ANNEX B**.

Given that Taste Causeway are aiming to become financially self-sustaining, if either Option 1 or 2 are adopted by Council, then there should be no assumption that a Contract for Services will continue to be implemented after 31 March '26.

ANNEX A Taste Causeway Activities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area October 2024 – March 2025

Proposed service activities for Council

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter			Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Delivery of a food and drink showcase and networking event February 2025	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for all tourism hospitality business to attend the food and drink showcase and networking event. Opportunity for local food and drink producers and experience providers to exhibit at the event. Student chefs involved in food demonstrations. Expert speakers and facilitators delivering workshops as part of the event. 	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	Match funding of 50% up to a maximum of £7,000.00	

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter			Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
					<p>Media writers from ROI and GB attending the showcase and Fam Trips and subsequent media articles on the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.</p> <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership</p>			
Attend World Travel Market	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.		●		<p>Opportunity to meet with 40k industry professionals from over 184 countries, to promote the food and drink offering in Causeway Coast and Glens.</p> <p>Foster relationships with key stakeholders, such as Tourism NI and</p>	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	£1000.00	

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter				Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
						Tourism Ireland UK and Global offices. Increase in Taste Causeway membership.			
Develop a programme of food and drink activities as part of Council's commitment to the promotion of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (February 2025)	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of the food and drink offering within the CCAG area to key segments within NI and ROI markets. Opportunity for non Taste Causeway members to come together, network, collaborate and innovate with Taste Causeway members as part of the campaign. Increase in Taste Causeway membership. 	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	£3,000.00	
Taste Causeway to develop a programme of	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host 4 workshops addressing the needs of the food 	Accelerating our economy and	£4000.00	

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter			Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
support for the food and drink businesses within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.	and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.				<p>and drink sector within the CCAG area.</p> <p>Opportunity for one to one mentoring local experts</p> <p>Workshops will provide opportunity for non Taste Causeway members to come together, network, collaborate and innovate with Taste Causeway members.</p> <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership.</p>	contributing to prosperity.		

ANNEX A Taste Causeway Activities in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area April 2025 – March 2026

Proposed service activities for Council

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter	Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
<p>Delivery of a food and drink showcase and networking event February 2026</p>	<p>Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for all tourism hospitality business to attend the food and drink showcase and networking event. Opportunity for local food and drink producers and experience providers to exhibit at the event. Student chefs involved in food demonstrations. Expert speakers and facilitators delivering workshops as part of the event. 	<p>Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.</p>	<p>Match funding of 50% up to a maximum of £7,000.00</p>	

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter			Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
					<p>Media writers from ROI and GB attending the showcase and Fam Trips and subsequent media articles on the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.</p> <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership</p>			
Attend World Travel Market	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.		●		<p>Opportunity to meet with 40k industry professionals from over 184 countries, to promote the food and drink offering in Causeway Coast and Glens.</p> <p>Foster relationships with key stakeholders, such as Tourism NI and</p>	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	£1,000.00	

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter				Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
					<p>Tourism Ireland UK and Global offices.</p> <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership.</p>				
<p>Develop a programme of food and drink activities as part of Council's commitment to the promotion of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (February 2026)</p>	<p>Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.</p>				<p>Promotion of the food and drink offering within the CCAG area to key segments within NI and ROI markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for non Taste Causeway members to come together, network, collaborate and innovate with Taste Causeway members as part of the campaign. <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership.</p>	<p>Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.</p>	<p>£3,000.00</p>		

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter				Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Taste Causeway to develop a programme of support for the food and drink businesses within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.	Contributes to the overall promotion and celebration of the food and drink offering within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.				<p>Host 6 workshops addressing the needs of the food and drink sector within the CCAG area.</p> <p>Opportunity for one to one mentoring local experts</p> <p>Workshops will provide opportunity for non Taste Causeway members to come together, network, collaborate and innovate with Taste Causeway members.</p> <p>Increase in Taste Causeway membership.</p>	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	£6000.00		

Taste Causeway Activity	Expected outcomes to benefit Causeway Coast and Glens DC area	Quarter			Outputs	Contribution to strategic themes	Financial Implications	Activity completed to date
Taste Causeway to develop and animate a presence at the Salmon and Whiskey Festival . October 2025.	Promote and celebrate the food offering and its development within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough area.		●		<p>Promote the Causeway Coast and Glens food experience to the community and visitors to the area.</p> <p>Enhance through quality animation the Salmon and Whiskey event</p>	Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity.	£2,500	