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**CONSULTATION ON MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 2030 - DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY.**

I refer to you letter of 12 March 2020 and Dr Bloomer's letter of 16 July 2020.

The Department for Communities' comments on the consultation on the Draft Plan Strategy for the Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030 are set out below.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

**Anthony Carleton
Director of Local Government and Housing Regulation Division**

MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2030: DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY.

1. **Comments have been submitted from Engaged Communities Group of DfC, as follows:**

Active Communities

Sports Branch and Sport NI

The Department welcomes the Mid Ulster District Council commitment regarding the importance of sport and physical recreation and the acknowledgement the role that sport can play in the local communities.

The Department, Sport NI (SNI), DAERA and Council have worked collaboratively together to develop sporting opportunities in the MUDC area under the Sports Matters Strategy and as part of the Your School Your Club Policy. We look forward to this work continuing in the future.

SNI recognises the rural idiom of Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) area and notes that this is reflected throughout the draft Local Development Plan (LDP). SNI welcomes the inclusion of sports criteria in the definition of Dispersed Rural Communities and the acknowledgement that sport plays a critical social and economic role in those areas. Over the last three years SNI has worked collaboratively with DAERA on the development and enhancement of sports facilities in rural communities; it is hoped that this collaborative approach will continue in the future.

SNI welcomes the commitments given by MUDC in paragraph regarding the importance of sport and physical recreation. This approach is consistent with Sport Matters (2009-2019) and Our Great Outdoors (2014).

SNI welcomes the commitment (para 11.5) to community use of school sports facilities; this is consistent with the Your School, Your Club policy framework.

SNI acknowledges the rural aspect of MUDC area and the need articulated in para 11.27 for collaborative and agreed (where possible) approaches to access and sports facility development with local landowners (especially the farming community), in the development of increased, enhanced and sustainable access to sport in the natural environment and rural locations.

SNI welcomes the acknowledgement throughout the draft LDP to the findings of previous community consultations, not least and including the Community Plan, that highlight the importance of an integrated approach to community sports facility development – this includes access to public transports and inclusive/shared/equitable access to and use of sports facilities.

SNI welcomes the general presumption against the loss of open space in para 11.15 and would encourage the Council to apply this presumption rigorously with stated caveats

SNI welcomes policy OS2 as it meets the Water Framework Directive standards. SNI would encourage the council to include a statement about developing and maintaining public access to these river corridor buffer zones for angling, engagement with nature and facilitating community connectivity using green space.

SNI welcomes the specific mention of watersports development in paras 11.33 and 11.34. SNI has worked closely with the National Governing Bodies for Watersports and also led a pan European project for Watersports development (Watersports Enhanced Together). This project developed a toolkit for Watersports development (PDF copy attached); SNI would recommend that MUDC may find it useful to refer to this within the plan as it outlines good practice in development; further information is available through SNI Mid Ulster Community Planning lead representative.

SNI welcomes Policy SCA1 – welcome and notes in para 18.3 that ancillary open development relating to appropriate recreation / open space uses, such as pathways, walkways and picnic areas, in order that our community can enjoy the amenity of our mountains and lough-shores is allowed. However, to add strength to this it is suggested that an assumption supporting developments for the provision of

basic infrastructure to provide responsible and sustainable access to and enjoyment of the SCA suggest that an assumption is made at the outset to allow for the provision of basic infrastructure to provide responsible and sustainable access to and enjoyment of the SCA (in like manner to fishing)

Para 18.32 refers to AONB management guides however, SNI would note that there are no management plans for the Sperrin AONB. Currently the Sperrin AONB is the only AONB in the UK that has no management plan and management body. While it is recognised that some work is ongoing through Future Search to develop this, SNI would recommend that the need for such a body and management plan are articulated in the development plan.



Get Wet Toolkit.pdf

Culture Division

Libraries and Museums

Libraries NI do not have any significant comments to make. The development plan is the spatial strategy for the area and none of it affects Libraries NI directly nor are there any issues on which Libraries NI would appropriately have a view.

Libraries NI, however, makes the following observations;

1. The close alignment with and reference throughout to the Community Plan, is an area where Libraries are currently engaged with the Council and are a recognised community partner.
2. The hierarchy of settlements
 - Cookstown, Dungannon, Magherafelt - Libraries has 45/ 50 hour libraries
 - Maghera and Coalisland – Libraries NI has 35/38 hour libraries
 - More than 20 villages - 2 of which have libraries – Draperstown and Fivemiletown

Languages

Council is reminded of the key role of culture, including language, in building a shared community and as a driver to promote tourism and economic regeneration.

All public authorities have obligations on both Irish and Ulster-Scots arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Further advice on the Irish language can be provided by Foras na Gaeilge, the statutory agency with a duty to advise public authorities; and in respect of the Ulster-Scots Language, Culture and Heritage, from the Ulster-Scots Agency.

In terms of Culture, Council is also reminded of the need to be aware of those from the Deaf community who may require the use of an Interpreter when accessing council services.

Ministerial Advisory Group – Architecture and the Built Environment

MAG have advised that they will engage directly with the Council.

2. Comments have been submitted from Work & Health Policy Group of DfC, as follows:

Within the Draft Plan Strategy, Mid Ulster Council has the objective of 'creating jobs and promoting prosperity'. It also states that 'through the support of this Plan Mid Ulster will have a sustainable economy with varied and plentiful employment opportunities'.

There are very clear links and synergies between this objective and the draft Programme for Government Delivery Plan (17, 32, 33) for addressing economic inactivity, the employment rate by deprivation quintile, and underemployment. The Draft Plan Strategy focuses on the creation of new jobs and reducing unemployment, however. Mid Ulster has the second highest employment rate of the Council areas and rates of unemployment across Northern Ireland are below those of the UK average (3.8% NI, 4.0% UK). Conversely economic inactivity remains high at 26.8%. Mid Ulster has the third lowest rate of the Council areas (22%), however, this is still above the UK average (20.9%). Therefore, in order to ensure that there is sufficient supply for the 8,500 new jobs to be created, it will be necessary to take a proactive approach to employability and skills development.

A key theme in the draft Programme for Government Delivery Plan is 'Local Works!'. This theme recognises that local government has an important and direct role in "turning the curve" in relation to indicators 17, 32, and 33. The Department for Communities, through Work & Inclusion Group and colleagues across the Department, is already working with Mid Ulster, the Department for Economy and Invest NI to identify areas in which we could collaborate in a better way to improve impact. We are also represented on the Mid Ulster Skills Forum and look forward to continued closer working with Council to support integrated policy responses to the supply and demand issues around good jobs, health and work, employability and skills.