TOURISM WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Theme 1 - Causeway Coastal Route

The continuing development of the Causeway Coastal Route to create an international stand out product offer, working with adjoining authorities and agencies

Actions

- Signage - similar to the Wild Atlantic Way and brand the route
- Encourage tourist routes through the Borough rather than taking the direct route (linking off the Causeway Coastal Route)
- Advertise alternative routes through branded signage
- Change Tour Operator routes e.g. come back via the Causeway Route
- Work with Tour Operators to promote them to change the route - incorporate the whole coast
- Financial aid for small enterprises where people can stop at
- Longer opening hours - **the incentive to stay open (even if it's r**ate relief/grant)
- Mechanism to advertise the coastal route - not the sat nav route - signage is key
- Use specific events to promote e.g. the NW 200
- Signage e.g. coastal routes
- Need to link destination marketing e.g. signage, destination maps
- Need to develop a relationship with MEA not separate councils any more
- Change bus route - reverse it so stop at towns - start at The Causeway
- Farmers create car parks to get some money
- Villages along the route need to keep shops, cafes open later
- Cranny Falls
- Get Operators to do anti-clockwise route
- Information - more outlets
- 3 towns still disjointed
- Brand awareness for the industry tied into the Wild Atlantic Way
- **Familiarisation of what's already available**
- What is our market?
- USP!
- Better understanding of river/fishing/water sports
- Where everyone sits
- Consistent message and branding
- Specifically mapped to identify attractions/stops
- Customer journey
- Marketing at entrance points
- Customer touch points
- Development of Larne Port
- Slow road

Theme 2 - Culture and Heritage

Develop the Cultural and Heritage assets and potential of the region by extolling, promoting and protecting the quality and character of the landscape, the natural environment and heritage assets

Actions

- Advertise the US Rangers - WWII links
- Narrow Gauge Railway could link to Iron Ore history - **should be reinstated as it's** suitable for all ages and could be developed alongside greenways
- 3 US Presidents from MEA - potential to develop
- Kilwaughter Castle - impressive
- **St Patrick's Way** - promote development ➜ a pilgrimage
- The Ulster Way - the walking culture
- Link with local Historical Societies - historical links, genealogy
- Tour Guides - need to enhance information for local people
- 1859 revival
- Past and heritage and important
- Folklore means more - historical events
- Mythology
- Council to engage Tour Guides - paid - tendering exercise to identify them and use them to take tours. Tours would be free.
- The Vikings
- S**outerrain's**- visiting these
- **St Patrick's Way** - walking is now popular
- Genealogy
- Historical Societies need to link in together
- 1859 revival
- Engage with Historical Societies
- In-village story teller
- Council need to engage with Tour like people - tour force
- Viking Landings in Larne
- Opening up archaeological sites
- Walks
- Interpretation
- Using living heritage and drawing into the plan
- Competition!
- Employment and skill development
- Itinerary development
- Create trails
- Packages
- Designation heritage towns
- Christian heritage tours
- Welcoming towns/villages
- World Host status
- Hospitality training
- St Patrick
- Maritime heritage
- Built heritage
- Mapping of sites of interest

- Good website
- USPs
- Environmental awareness

Grow, stay and spend on existing events and festivals. Attract international events with growth potential.

Actions

- Specific event to celebrate anniversary of the US Rangers in June 2017
- Develop Partnerships between those running events and other local providers e.g. NI Open and Carrickfergus Castle
- Ballycarry - Andrew Jackson - Annual festivals - link to the 4th July
- Feis/traditional music festival - attracting more tourists to such an event
- Sporting facilities e.g. 100k run, sailing facilities
- Café Culture Night - local musicians visiting cafes etc. In Larne once a month - up to 400-500 each month attend
- Music and food
- Agri-food sector - promoting local produce and selling it
- Selling local goods
- Medieval banquets
- Signage from Larne for NW 200 route
- Carrickfergus - look to running and sports activities
- Café Culture nights in Larne - musicians etc. Young musicians and folk music
- Medieval banquets
- Markets - farmers markets - promote other areas like our local produce
- Farms
- International festivals
- Infrastructure
- Development of facilities to host events/festivals
- Ballee green field site
- Infrastructure
- NI Open - lack of accommodation (perception possibly)
- Mismatch between needs and demand
- Bigger, more internationally attractive
- Carrickfergus Castle to be developed as a venue
- Maximising existing venues
- Bidding for international events
- Niche
- Capitalising on events e.g. Giro
- Creating connects e.g. castle trail
- Need one or two international events and lots of community led ones

Build the regions' image, identity and awareness in domestic, all-Ireland, UK and international markets for quality experiences, generating overnight visits throughout the year by common commitment to an agreed framework for marketing, promotion and selling of the region

Actions

- Communicate to visitors what is available at the destination, for example The **Gobbins need something for those who can'**t do the walk, traditional farm
- Need to make marketing friendly for elderly people - user friendly
- Mid and East Antrim website needs to be improved - difficult to navigate
- Money spent on ease of access - simple reference, click and an image
- Need to determine a brand - needs a tag line and an image
- Leaflets in shops and garages
- Tourist maps and leaflets along the coast - information on hand for people travelling along it
- The brand - MEA have to invest in this
- All communication needs to be user friendly
- Internet is essential
- Ease of access for communication
- Need a tag line for Coast and Glens
- Leaflets in shops and garages
- Map for MEA to show routes and destinations
- Competition among school kids to brand
- Spend money on the brand
- Safe place to come - market this as new
- Itineraries and packages
- Website
- Identify
- Signage gaps and resource them
- Creating connections
- Activities that can be pre-booked
- Package and cluster towns and villages
- Welcoming
- Environmental
- Joined up thinking
- Knowing your market
- Opportunities through Community Planning
- Regional tourism approach - confusing for international tourists when broken down to Council specifics
- USPs - The Gobbins, Carrickfergus Castle etc.

Theme 5 - Destination Development and Management

Organisation and management; communication and engagement of public and private sectors to generate commitment to the shared vision and way forward

Actions

- Identify key elements:
    - Website key tool to channel tourists to your key assets/products
    - Link up historical information with Ancestry.co.uk
    - Package our products better having identified strengths
    - Market through Game of Thrones
    - Guide to plan the trip for visitors across the Borough Council e.g. highlight what they do
    - Look at existing guides to see what they say about the area
    - Asian visitors
    - Twin towns - need to be developed
    - Boat trips from Carrickfergus to The Gobbins
- Funding
    - Advice on start-ups etc. for new projects/people who want to develop products
    - Impact of Brexit needs to be considered
    - Farm diversification required
- Managing the development of the brand - it has to be concise and accurate
- Website has to be developed and managed
- Website needs to also show interests, breakdown by age and groupings
- Nothing for the MEA area - all focussed on Belfast, Causeway Coast and Carrickfergus - need to remove the separate legacy council areas
- Has to be buy-in from providers, private and social sectors. Not all down to the Council
- People have to be trained and developed for the tourism sector i.e. what customers want, the social approach
- Welcome Host courses - not only for accommodation, tour operators
- Aim to be the Most Hospitable Area - an aspiration for MEA
- World Host Programme - selling the people and the area
- Training and education schemes
- Management - Council and NRC - work to provide tourism and hospitality courses
- Local environment and landscapes need to be taught to local children
- Now a safe environment to visit - peaceful - other countries are now becoming dangerous
- Micro businesses - training is a problem but can be marketed and capitalised upon i.e. advertised etc. Buy in.
- Linked to brand
- MEA website have details if possible by interest, by age group etc.
- Pamphlets and book on MEA
- Buy in from providers - **Council can't manage on their own**
- Become aware of what paying customers need and want
- Training - World Host Course
- **MEA "most hospitable area" possible outcome**
- NRC - run courses on hospitality and retail management
- Itineraries

- Genealogy
- Enabling scheme expanding to tourism sector
- Environmental management of natural resources, e.g. beaches
- Wild Atlantic Way marketing
- Slow road marketing
- Different levels of marketing - local, regional and international
- Ownership
- Innovative approach

1. Do you agree with the SWOT analysis? Have we missed anything?

- Yes, broadly agree with the SWOT but these should be underpinned by the softer elements i.e. **"people and place"**
- Strengths:
    - Glenoe - small area but many qualities
    - Carrickfergus should be part of the Coastal Route - **it shouldn't start at The Gobbins. The Castle is key.**
    - Antrim Hills Way (walking routes)
    - Ulster Way
    - Cycling Routes (Magheramorne)
    - Environment and surroundings - geology, caves, salt mines
    - People but need to connect
    - Sense of ownership
    - The Slow Road - MEA
    - Starting Points - Carrick Castle and The Gobbins
    - Fishing/outdoor pursuits
    - Heritage
    - Built and industry heritage
    - Identify areas of heritage tourism
    - Traditional music
    - Infrastructure - road links
    - Close proximity to Belfast
    - Making History Matter - report
- Weaknesses:
    - Agreement by the group
    - Family and group accommodation - lack of location/venue such as Centerparcs
    - Loss of middle age group/child group e.g. teenagers
    - Admission fees - need to get people to stay in area to ensure they spend.
    - Fragmented tourism offer - whole package for everyone.
    - Port of Larne - tourism info for North Down etc. but Airports etc. Not MEA - need stronger marketing
    - **People don't realise Ballymena is central. Need people staying in Ballymena** - central on the map, perfect place to base. Not enough accommodation in the area.
    - Unstable long term solution
    - Sunday closing/opening hours
    - Accommodation provision
    - Flags/territorial marking
    - Not enough graded accommodation
    - So much red tape
    - Spend by people in camper vans and yachts - area of spending we have no way of judging - but they do spend money in local shops and businesses.
    - No funding from banks
    - Following approved themes
    - Not an established brand
    - Close proximity to Belfast
    - Business travel
    - Access to land and walking routes - lack of right of ways

- o Seasonality
- o Lack of independent retailers
- o Visual environment
- Opportunities:
  - o Agreement
  - o Linkage between The Gobbins and Blackhead Lighthouse Path
  - o Glenarm as a marina destination
  - o Maritime sector
  - o Port of Larne - cruise ship potential
  - o Build on local VICs
  - o Welcome Host/hospitality training
  - o Private projects sitting ready
  - o Genealogy/family history
  - o UNESCO applications - linkage of site
  - o Traditional music
  - o Private projects need funding from the banks
  - o Family History market
- Threats
  - o Rates
  - o Commercial rents
  - o Use of the Euro
- Social Enterprises
  - o Little documentation
  - o 2012 figures now provided - questioned if more updated figures available
- Transport NI
  - o Key figures included
  - o Overarching theme to infrastructure - freight etc.
  - o Journey time improvement
  - o Website is key showing updated info including road works
- More workshop provision in the area - Kilroot Business Park etc. More info out there e.g. NI Business Info regarding sizes, units etc.
- Under picture to take into account - business and enterprise parks
- Size is important = to get the full picture for charges etc.
- Start-up stats
- Self-employment figures/statistics e.g. elderly people and self-employment.
- What do visitors want? Important to know this. 8 years ago money from bus tours but no longer getting this. People don't come in the same numbers. No help from the Council to sell stock.
- Carrick Castle - problems with opening hours - bus tours waiting to get in. Need to have people in period costume.
- Glenarm Festival - no money/cash available in Glenarm e.g. ATM, Bank for people visiting the Festival
- Galgorm Castle trying to attract international tourists - need a product to impress these visitors. Need to identify key products e.g. Carrick Castle. Scotland have embraced experiences e.g. on buses.
- OK having aspirations but need to be realistic.
- Need product that is right and ready
- **Can't keep everyone happy as a Council** - need to focus on key products.

- NI tourists do like historical assets - **don't need to build new attractions but need to** make Carrick Castle fantastic.
- Need a joined up approach between Council and Dept.
- Galgorm Resort - have made a fantastic product
- Need selection of interesting products.
- Council should help facilitate partnerships between tourism providers/accommodation etc. so everyone gets a return from it.
- Require high quality facilities e.g. toilets, signage and environment e.g. in France local Mayors are responsible.
- Where Council is responsible for facilities it should be done to a high standard.
- **Shouldn't raise expectat**ions - need high quality product.
- Be aware of creating bad experiences - as these spread quicker
- Problems with rubbish in towns and countryside - there should be higher fines.
- Agreement generally good.
- Gaps in the baseline:
  o Agri-food sector
  o Quality
  o Freshness
  o Need to find out what is currently there
- Trip Advisor promotion
- Spatial planning - awareness of live applications and approvals
- Rural proofing across the board
- Linkage to Central Government priorities
- Where do you define towns?

2.   Do you agree with the Themes? Have we missed anything?

Theme 1 - Causeway Coastal Route

- Reap benefits from this route
- New destination
- Need to push the route, not just the Causeway
- Need good branding and signage along the route
- **Market "incidentals" from the main Causeway Coasta**l Route
- Unique - **can't overdevelop it** - it has to be protected
- Galboly - deserted village but on private property. Can we work with the owner to develop this?
- Reverse the bus/car route e.g. start in the North
- Galboly (deserted village)
- 20 miles?
- Communication
- overview

Theme 2 - Culture and Heritage

- Need to build on our history and storied related to MEA and our towns
- What is the market for this e.g. retired?
- Church histories - Americans should be interested
- St Patrick
- US Rangers in Carrickfergus anniversary next June needs to be developed and sold as a product and continued to ensure legacy
- Maritime sector, especially Carrickfergus and Glenarm
- **St Patrick's Walk/Way e.g. like the Camino de Santiago**
- Slemish
- Need to promote Carrickfergus Castle - banquet nights an functions as potential events
- Carrickfergus Castle - medieval banquet nights
- Maritime
- **St Patrick's Way**
- Dunseverick Castle

Theme 3 - Events and Festivals

- Need to join up what we have with the event e.g. Carrickfergus Castle
- Infrastructure need to be there e.g. mobile phone signals
- NI Open - 9 years in existence only now recognised
- Need to build on events and not give up so quickly
- Carrickfergus Castle banquet nights
- Marathons and sporting festivals
- Disability sports/sailing
- Fairs e.g. Crosshill
- 10k race
- Sporting festival
- Teddy Bears Picnic
- Ballyclare May Fair
- Fairs

- International events?
- Infrastructure

Theme 4 - Destination Marketing

- New destination may attract new tourists
- Host town
- Americans see NI as a day trip rather than a long stay
- **"Novelty" b**ook/brochure about the secrets of the area
- Need to promote: why would you want to go anywhere else?
- Geo-tourism
- Slemish and St Patrick (like George and the Dragon in England)) - St Patrick is unique
- Genealogy - working with PRONI to develop this. Especially for American and Canadian visitors. Visiting graveyards. Sam Houston has NI Connections
- **Don't promote it at all**
- Sam Houston
- Book about their own villages
- Genealogy, family trees, PRONI
- Geo-tourism
- Activity tourism - water!
- Local connections
- Local ownership
- Walking
- Environment
- Maritime

Theme 5 - Destination Development and Management

- Engagement with cruise ships?
- Monitor Trip Adviser for comments e.g. re the Gobbins and do this right
- Maybe local training needed for tourism providers
- E.g. American Football Event in Dublin - very successful - something similar needed here
- Need to ask tourists what they want - has this been done?
- Need to get the message out
- Word of mouth and social media and website are important.
- Needs to be more acceptable accommodation e.g. disability friendly
- Genealogy - family history
- Larne/Carrickfergus as the end of the Causeway Coastal Route
- Boat trips around the coast - strong potential - even to see The Gobbins
- Geo-tourism - development of rocks/stones, natural geology and quarries etc.
- Boat trips up the coast
- Reverse bus route - start in Causeway but then travel back down the coast and stay in towns

- Yes, agree with the themes but believe that the Causeway Coastal Route should be the umbrella under which others sit. Also feel that Culture and Heritage should be adapted to Culture, Heritage and Environment
- General consensus
- Cultural change is needed e.g. enhanced promotion on self-employment
- Getting employment for the right area
- Increasing jobs both private and social - social enterprise/self-employment needs a separate priority
- Sustainable employment is important. Large employers can be brought in but **it's** actually keeping the jobs
- Irish Open - people go to Dublin - Americans go to Trophy Courses
- American**s don't have long holidays**
- Golf concentrate on UK based tourists
- Broadly happy with the themes - feel they are generic enough to include the MEA aspects that Group feel need to be included

3. Looking at the proposed themes, what specific actions must we take to deliver them?

Theme 1 - Causeway Coastal Route

- We need to BE the CCR
- We need to integrate
- We need to engage with neighbouring Councils
- There is an education process needed with regard to the CCR i.e. too many names still being used - Antrim Coast Road, North Coast, The Slow Road. These lead to confusion and dilution
- **This is the "hook" to get visitors here**
- We need to learn from best practice

Theme 2 - Culture and Heritage

- We need to strengthen our existing assets in terms of investment.
- We need to develop more products that are interactive i.e. trails etc.
- St Patrick should be developed much further
- We need to know our existing assets and products

Theme 3 - Events and Festivals

- We need to know what makes us unique and build on it
- We need to think bigger
- We need to recognise that growing events takes time and money
- We need to develop packages round events
- We need to look to outdoor events i.e. cycling, maritime etc.
- We sho**uld investigate "pop-up" events**

Theme 4 - Destination Marketing

- We have too many leaflets
- We should have one clear message
- **Tourists don't recognise Counc**il borders
- We need to know what our piece of the puzzle is
- Remove the MEA name as far as tourists are concerned
- Need a strong, clear on-line presence and printed material
- We need to look at the hooks that get visitors here
- We need to stop and stare at our offering with a critical eye
- Education needed in terms of CCR and Causeway Coast and Glens Council - confusing for industry and visitors
- We need to look at the bigger CCR picture i.e. Belfast - Derry
- **There needs to be clear guidelines in terms of social media, it's here and it's time** we harnessed its power

Theme 5 - Destination Development and Management

- We need a fresh start and a new mind-set
- Improvements to public transport should be looked at
- Improve signage
- **We don't make it easy for tour**ists in terms of getting around
- We need to engage tourism operators
- In relation to trade fairs/meet the buyer events we should have tourism providers attending
- Reps from industry, statutory bodies and local authority should meet with consideration given to the needs of the private sector in terms of timings of meetings etc.
- There should be industry workshops twice a year
- Front line staff should attend **as they are "at the coal face"**
- It can**'t b**e just another talking shop
- Need to learn from experts and best practice
- **Consider a "necklace of villages" them**e to get visitors moving around
- We need to make decisions based on evidence

4.   The Pyramid of Results - is this the correct approach?

TIER1

- Range of views - some felt it was very restrictive and that MEA has more to offer i.e. shopping
- **Very strong disagreement with the concentration on Galgorm i.e. it's a private business, it's restricted in terms of capacity and not everyone can afford to vis**it, with others feeling that it contributes to the tourism offering and should be in the top tier

TIER 2

- Broad agreement with this tier

TIER 3

- Broad agreement with this tier

- The Gobbins - Limited accessibility - good concept but the longevity is the problem
- The key destination too to use a stock local produce - the bottom tier
- Admission fees - **you need to get the lift from other financial revenue i.e. "the hook"**
- **Agree "the hook" has to be in place** - The Gobbins and GOT - USPs
- Galgorm is a brand - operated by a private company - **can't promote these venues by** the Council, but agreed that local businesses get a spin off from Galgorm Manor
- Agree with approach but question what is at the top level
- The Gobbins is in quite an isolated location but if completed it will be a big attraction **(need for further development at the site for those who can't actually do the walk)**
- Game of Thrones - series coming to an end soon
- Spa?
- Are the right things at the right level?
- Tiered approach is correct but bottom needs work - right time
- ? inclusion of Galgorm as a private sector business/booked out
- Missing from bottom tier - SSI, ANOB, Natural Heritage, Activity Tourism
- In effect there are 2 tiers
- Why promote only Galgorm?
- Specialist Interest Groups - few into the clusters
- Ownership of 16 activities
- Relationship building

5. How can we work together to deliver this approach?

- We need to identify key players
- Get together as a whole twice a year
- Sub-groups - feeding into a larger body
- Include people on the ground
- Needs to be SMART
- Recognition to be given in that NI is behind and it will take time to generate results
- **Need to consider emerging themes i.e. we need to "future proof" as much as possible**
- The internet and ICT
- Tourist Information
- Accessibility - not just about the Internet
- Buy in from large companies i.e. The Henderson Group doing pamphlet and info point
- Partnership working - different sectors work at different speeds and capacities
- Council have to take a key lead in taking forward facilities e.g. Carrickfergus Castle
- Henderson have a Trust Fund so they have a Community/Social background
- Translink/public transport advertising e.g. on the sides of buses, train stations etc.
- Partnerships similar to that used for the NI Open
- Involvement of key players
- Decision makers need to be at the table
- Key players need to sign up to key outcomes
- Engage with Tour Operators
- Partnership working
- Connections - Castles etc.
- Collaboration/ Working Groups
- Identifying the right people
- Resources
- Best use of existing channels - Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland
- Tap into local knowledge
- Strong levels of community ownership in MEA - capitalise on this
- Best Practice/Sharing Information
- KPI outcomes

6. How can we measure success?

- Increase visitor spend and length of stay
- Set targets and achieve them
- Increase access to visitor attractions
- We need to be adaptable
- Increase dwell time in Borough
- More emphasis in gathering the stats to support investment
- No of new products developed
- **Look at who's coming back and why**
- Uniformity of stats is important
- Visitor spend rather than numbers - **the product is not here "build it and they will come"**
- Visitor numbers are also a reflection i.e. numbers going to The Gobbins
- Footfall figures re: spend
- Increase in inward investment/jobs in tourism
- Customer surveys
- Spend of visitors
- No of visitors
- Visitor surveys
- Visitor satisfaction
- Extra employment in MEA - created/sustained - in MEA tourism sector
- More regeneration/decrease in dereliction
- Happy Borough! Resident satisfaction
- What do visitors spend their money on?
- Tourism NI figures
- Return on Investment
- Statutory bodies
- Visitor figures for attractions
- Qualitative methods
- Sustainable and ethical development
- Sites require planning input
- VIC figures
- Local area plans

Feedback, Sustainable Jobs - 28 September 2016

Is the SWOT Accurate - any changes/additions	Do you agree with the suggested outcomes/vision for the Mid and East Antrim area?	Are the New actions appropriate - any gaps	Who is the best placed to lead/deliver	Can we consider prioritisation of actions
STRENGTHS Big employers not a strength (JTI/Gallaher, Michelin, Caterpillar), although could be an opportunity for the future. Accessibility and location Retail could also be a weakness - although it is strong in Ballymena, it is weak in Larne and Carrickfergus Range of employment opportunities - youth unemployment seen as a weakness Employees travel widely (from outside the borough) to work in the borough, which could be seen as a weakness	Reality versus ambition Competing with Belfast How are these to be measured? (Proud, vibrant and ambitious place) Grow Pharmaceuticals sector proactively Outcomes generally supported round the table	FDI is key - Who is chasing FDI in area and **who's focusing on it. Not** listed as action Action 4 Rapid redundancy Response Group What will they actually do? Setting it up versus actually doing something Action 7 Alive after 5 important priority Action 5 **Don't forget about social** enterprises	Integrated strategy led by Council Collaboration/collective responsibility utilising resources of partners as appropriate (ie Invest NI for FDI)	LAUNCH STRATEGY Communications programme rather than **'Launch event'** Ongoing communications annually (accountable to stakeholders against KPIs (milestones) Reporting Led by innovative, creative, engaging dynamic individual No 1 priority is job creation Priority Actions 6 - 11 are concrete actions on the ground Single stage actions - quick wins More tangible

Higher than average economic activity - is this the case currently?
 	
  NOTE - The stats given are probably out of date now
 	
WEAKNESSES
 	
  • Post-incubation SMEs, there is a lack of business space/opportunities/potential
 	
OPPORTUNITIES
 	
Brexit? - Potential to be explored
 	
Now have available skilled workforce
 	
Proactively push area for film location (Game of Thrones and Dracula)
 	
High speed rail network
 	
Are Council in a position to react to opportunities? - integrated approach
 	
THREATS
			Investment stays within borough
			
			Others
			
			While beneficial, multiple stages e.g. 40 people through Leaders Programme, then what??
			
			Investment may not be realised in borough

Are Council in a position to react to threats? - integrated approach				
Table discussed SWOT under each category Strengths Recent survey out previous day - MEA happiest place Revise/Remove the name JTI, Michelin, etc. as no longer a strength Include education sector providers Weaknesses Emphasise 16.5% of total working age have no qualifications (this has remained the same for the past 10-15years) NI wide focus on graduates or those who are high attainers and not those with lower/no qualifications Struggling retail sector Productivity/Leadership capabilities Opportunities Rebalancing the economies	Table discussed that MEA were the highest level (87%) in NI (average 85%)of Start-ups/External Sales/Sustainability - figures provided by A Donnelly Discussion as to whether 95% was realistic. Some felt it was good to aspire to this Tailor to meet skill gaps (Level3-Level5 being the biggest gap) Mindful of those with low/no qualifications - enhance training skills Add welcoming to the vision	Table felt overall more clarification and detail required on the scope of the 11 Actions (apart from launch event which should not have been included in the first place) Query as to whether these new actions replace or complement existing actions Action 2 should include management as well as leadership Schools should be included Action 2	Table discussed each Action General consensus is if it is MEA led plan - MEA should set up, resource and structure to enable it Action 1 - agreed all strategy partners Action 2 -- MEABC to lead and then assisted by other agencies Action 3 - MEABC to lead with assistance from other agencies Action 4 - again MEABC with assistance from other agencies -Catalyst INC should be included Action 5 - again MEABC with assistance from	After discussion the table agreed Action 1 was a given Actions 3,4,5,9 & 10 were priority (short term) next 12 months Actions 2,6,7,8 & 11 followed (medium term) 1-3 years

Diversification - needs Catalyst Inc mentioned/refer to Science Park Build a community all-inclusive of all cultures/backgrounds Commuter links should be included (handy to big cities) Agri foods/manufacturing ok - but examine new sectors in Ballymena eg Biosciences A2,A8,A26 should all be noted Educational partnership is a critical factor for MEA given statistics, better educated and qualified works-force as a foundation stone Threats Commuter area for Belfast should be a positive as well Public transport limited (physical isolation of rural areas of MEA on North/South axis) Demographics - MEA lowest population growth rate		Action 3 - Local sills forum required for Borough Translink should be included as partner for Actions 6 & 7 No need for staffing resources presented in listing as yet - gives wrong impression - ok to include these with detailed action plan	other agencies -Catalyst INC should be included Action 6 - remains Invest NI Level - Translink should be added. MEABC to lead at sub region with wider links to NI and neighbouring council areas Action 7 - MEABC to lead - Translink again needs to be included Action 8 - MEABC to lead - LEAs and Invest need to be added Action 9 - MEABC to lead and again with assistance from other agencies Action 10 - MEABC to lead. Include biosciences, add DfE/CAFRE Action 11 - MEABC to lead with assistance from other agencies. Add Catalyst Inc and DfE	

Strengths	Yes agree with strategic outcomes with two changes:	All agreed new Actions were appropriate with the following additions	Action 1	Prioritise Actions 5 and 6
Key strategic employment sites to include availability of workspace; Build on Sporting Achievements and Hosting Potential; Proximity to Belfast and Greater Belfast Region.	1. Change Nationally to Internationally 2. Confirm what the UK average is.	Action 3 Business/Trade directory for the Borough - link skills barometer to the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer. Enterprise & Innovation need two separate programmes	Council lead in partnership with Economic partners	
Weaknesses Underdeveloped East/ West transport connections; Skills levels overall add in high % with no qualifications; Social Economy sector relatively underdeveloped; Lack of learning opportunities to facilitate internationalisation.		Action 5 Focus on women and under-represented Action 7 Change Town Centre Regeneration to Urban & Rural Regeneration (focus on Village Development and Farm Diversification)	Action 2 Research current leadership programmes. Action 3 Council lead in partnership with Economic partners. Action 4 Council and Enterprise Agencies. Action 5 As listed + the Princes Trust. Action 6 Add Educational Establishments, Champions.	
Opportunities Strong strategic link to Belfast with recent road improvements; Technology starts through Ecos to be expanded throughout the Borough; Availability of opportunity sites for economic development throughout			Action 7 Council, Town Centre Bodies, Planners, Investors and Developers. Action 8 Council, Planners and Enterprise Agencies. Action 9 DFE, DAERA, Council and DFI. Action 10 Invest NI through PFG.	

the Borough. Threats Skills Mismatch - gap in skills availability to meet business needs			Action 11 Council and Business Champions.	
STRENGTHS Historical position could appear as a weakness Manufacturing - over-reliance of this area as a strength Raising the bar to match wages offered through JTI/Michelin - flat-lining of wages will be the result Knock on effect on the supply chain Definite sectoral strength - centre of excellence agri-sector/manufacturing Over-performance of some employers. Are we assuming this? Are there **gaps? We don't have the** evidence base to prove this - this needs bottomed out	POINT 1 Considered very ambitious! Set the bar high but it needs to be realistic - consider house prices etc Realistic target needs to be suggested, but based on evidence POINT 2 Are we restricting ourselves to these markets only? Evidence base required as to what industries are keen to grow here Clarify that advance manufacturing includes engineering Project Kelvin/Trans-Atlantic Cable - **let's build upon this** - digital infrastructure: regional/national **Let's use out USP's** POINT 3 Happy with points made	Strategy launch LEADERS PROGRAMME It needs to be clear who will be involved - considered vital Consideration of removing this entirely There is value of being on the same page and having connectivity with business sector SKILLS BAROMETER Beneficial: Council officers carry out/resource implications and requirements Business health checks When we have this info, what do we do with it? Move with shifting priorities *Lead: MEABC*	*Lead: uncertain*	Strategy launch is a given TOP 5 No 4 Client Manager/Escalator No 6 Place Promotion and No 7 Town Centre Regeneration (broadly combined) No 9 Broadband No 10 Sector Strategies No 11 Opportunity Factory CONSENSUS If we get the top 5 right, the other elements will follow through in due course

Available business space - infrastructure good - transport links MEA area - the happiest place to live Perception that Ballymena is <u>the</u> retail centre - regionally accepted - not necessarily local perspective **Questioning 'the work ethic'** - **there is a 'can do'** thinking but this needs mentored and supported A8 commuting - infrastructure - energy sources <u>WEAKNESSES</u> Limited representation needs expanded to pharmaceuticals - we are not actively coaxing these companies EU funded jobs No university in MEA is <u>not</u> perceived as a weakness - they are still local to us	<u>POINT 4</u> Environmental quality needs to be reflected We need to know our USP in MEA **'happiest place to live'**	<u>CLIENT MANAGER ESCALATOR</u> Are we duplicating the work of Invest NI/Enterprise Agencies? Perceived nervousness of Invest NI Linkages between skills barometer and business escalator Use of NI Connections/MEA Alumni <u>Lead</u>*: MEABC* <u>ENTERPRISE/INNOVATION PROMOTION</u> Prevent duplication - harness what is **happening? i.e. Prince's** Trust, Young Enterprise <u>Lead</u>*: NRC, Enterprise Agencies, Universities* <u>PLACE PROMOTION</u> Should be after strategy launch How can we sell this **place if we don't know** what we are selling?		

Exodus of graduates overseas because of limited job opportunities in MEA/NI No ready-made package in place to attract FDI Vocational training should be recognised **Don't know our USP** OPPORTUNITIES Port of Larne - development/attracting cruise ships - opportunities for job creation - commercial opportunities for railways Business creativity THREATS Can Brexit be an opportunity? Cheaper exports? Lack of SF Broadband - need digital infrastructure development		Include Tourism NI as partner - inextricable links Purpose of town twinning *Lead*: MEABC TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION & INTEGRATED PROPERTY PROGRAMME Expectations from Public Realm schemes Encourage businesses to open later - shutters up Nobody living in town centres - access accommodation - bring people back, bring life back Infrastructure - service industries, parks open Rates? Rates relief for developing premises upstairs - deal with vacancy issues Consider high end properties - strike balance with country living BROADBAND BENEFITS		

		Develop Project Kelvin Global links *Lead: Invest NI, Department of Infrastructure, Providers - Industry Experts* <u>PRIORITY SECTOR STRATEGIES</u> Advance manufacturing - does this include engineering? Requirement for sectoral expertise to attract any FDI Is this definitive list? - need to monitor/be flexible *Lead: External support* <u>THE OPPORTUNITY FACTORY</u>		
Strengths: High success rate of new starts (survival rates) Regional variation within MEA not identified, ie not everywhere in MEA has strong SME supply chain. Kilroot enterprise park needs to be highlighted.	Yes - general agreement with the four statements. Suggested including innovation within the last statement.	Group agreed that the five strategic priorities identified adequately covered the way forward. Very aspirational. Need to know budget, funding, timescales, etc. Action 2 not seen as priority - not clear who	Need to work more **closely with what's** already out there. Use existing agencies / sources rather than recruiting new. Need enterprise centres as stakeholders. **Need INI 'sector specialists' within**	Actions 5, 8 & 4 - priority (for INI) move on start-up industries - escalator programme vital. (*activities listed for Action 4 were questioned. It was felt* ***they didn't relate to*** *the action - economic*

Good place to live and spend wage - not just about attracting jobs. Larne/Carrickfergus jobs not necessarily well paid. Good Education. Weaknesses: No large employers in Carrickfergus - few within MEA now. Low retail profile in Larne/Carrick. Limited business space outside Ballymena - no 1000 - 5000sqft for **growing 'move**-on **businesses'.** People are risk adverse. Opportunities: Grow financial services/IT sectors etc as well. NI should be enterprise zone Nurturing self-employment Council powers in relation to incentives and rates. Threats: Lose skills from MEA due to manufacturing closures - need to retain these. Rates pose a big threat. Loss of young people to GB etc - brain drain. (due		involved - for elected members? Also good to have if everything else sorted. A lot of the early actions see as internal Council priorities. Needs to be clarified who is taking the lead (prevent duplication) (Strategic Alliance role highlighted by Fiona). Felt need to recruit new staff not necessary - info and expertise is already out there - just needs to be collated - use resources there rather than reinvent the wheel. **'Enterprise Centre'** should be included n 7 - Town Centre Regeneration, 8 - Integrated Property Programme. Action 3 - **"database"** should be responsibility of Council and ongoing updated. Issues with data protection from sources. More detail needed on Barometer survey - longer term needed.	regional areas - bring to the table. Has to be a collaboration rather than Council - who is out there to help in each area. What is currently working well in other places and use as a template. Initiatives. Not enough details as yet - still broad. Teams are out there to use.	*development forum needed - inter agency.*) Action 6 - important Action 7 - important but include enterprise centres - could be brought in under 5 Action 9 - broadband very important across the borough - especially for IT and rural enterprises. Also **'mobile coverage'.** ** Action 4 could be split into 2 actions. Action 10 no more strategies needed. INI have overarching strategy that they can bring to the table. Need more practicality - courses / skills / workshops *need action plans* Action 8 data already exists - need to pull together. Action 11 - right idea but needs more detail. Action 2 - leaders programme should be put on the long finger Action 3 - skills barometer - info there

to lack of opportunities/jobs/uni/ lifestyle) Uncertainty of what ahead, esp following Brexit		Action 5 - slightly vague. More information needed, ie school involvement, business involvement. Priorities of INI would be accommodation. Council needs to look at resources out there with sources before employing new officers. Prioritise actions to short, medium, long-term to get up and going.		- needs pulled together.