

Public Consultation Report

Analysis of responses to inform the development of the Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins

10 November 2022

Key findings

The responses received were largely in agreement with the development of a Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) for the Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins.

- 131 survey responses
- Comments shared via 3 x stakeholder engagement events, 4 x industry briefings and 4 x drop in consultation sessions and email correspondence

On review of the survey responses, key findings include:

Strategic direction	Action Planning	Strategic delivery
93% in favour of a VEDP	74% agree with actions around: Governance and management of implementation	76% agree Fermanagh and Omagh District Council should lead a Strategic Partnership and coordinate the delivery of the VEDP
85% agree with the Vision and Aims of the VEDP	82% agree with the actions around: Developing a clear and consistent message	
89% agree with the Regenerative Tourism focus within the VEDP	89% agree with the actions around: Enabling industry	
89% agree with the Experience Development focus within the VEDP	87% agree with the actions around: Enhancing the visitor experience	
	89% agree with the actions around: Enabling a sustainable future	
	88% agree with the actions around: Enabling insights and intelligence	

Introduction

draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins

The draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins has been jointly funded and developed by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Tourism NI and Waterways Ireland following engagement with representatives from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors.

The draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins is a 10-year roadmap for tourism across the 'Fermanagh Lakelands' and 'Omagh and the Sperrins' visitor propositions.

It recognises the tourism potential of the district and aims to improve the tourism and visitor experience to encourage people to stay for longer when they visit.

Sustainable and regenerative

A key focus of the draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins is to develop sustainable and regenerative tourism to benefit the local economy, communities and the environment.

The UN Environment Program and UN World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

Regenerative tourism goes further than this. Its aim is that visitors have a positive impact on their host destination, its communities and the environment; leaving it in a better condition than they found it.

Public consultation

Timeframe

Public consultation on the draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins opened on Friday 08 July 2022 for 12-weeks and closed at 4pm on Friday 30 September 2022.

Responses to the consultation were reviewed in October. This report will be considered by the Regeneration and Community Committee on Tuesday 8 November 2022.

Focus areas of consultation

The public consultation sought feedback from representatives from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors and all those with an interest on:

- The Vision and Aims of the VEDP
- Its regenerative tourism and experience development focus
- The Action Plan
- Establishment of a Strategic Partnership
- How tourism is managed, promoted and delivered
- The VEDP overall

Consultation activity

A range of consultation activity was undertaken during the 12-weeks including industry briefing events, stakeholder engagement events, information stands at Council venues and events, drop-in consultation sessions and an online survey, supported by press advertising, media relations, direct email communications and social media activity as appropriate.

Responses to the consultation were submitted via the online survey, in writing (email, hard copy survey or letter), and comments and feedback made to Council officers at various engagement events.

Communication	Detail
Advertising and media relations	Public notice in 4 x local newspapers w/c 11 July 2022 Press releases issued to media distribution list at various stages of the consultation
Stakeholder engagement events	3 x online events held on 5, 9 and 16 September Total attendance: 32
Industry briefings	3 x in person events held on 25 & 26 July and 23 September 1 x online event held on 28 July Total attendance: 45
Drop-in consultation sessions	1 x drop in Connect Centre, Omagh, 8 September 1 x drop in Strule Arts Centre, Omagh, 8 September 1 x drop in session County Buildings, Enniskillen, 14 September 1 x drop in session The Ardhowen, Enniskillen, 14 September Total attendance: 13
Email campaign	Information distributed to relevant FODC service areas for information and dissemination to relevant contact lists and networks as appropriate and to external stakeholders from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors
Online and social media	Information hosted on Council website and promoted via social media including: 1 x webpage for VEDP consultation 1 x online survey 1 x tile on Council homepage to promote Social media posts on Council Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram profiles 1 x online video on Youtube
Information stands	Information including VEDP, consultation questionnaires and survey response boxes at 13 Council venues across the district and Fermanagh County Show.
<p>Consultation responses Consultation responses were received via a number of formats before the closing date of 4pm, Friday 30 September 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 131 via survey responses - Email and written correspondence - 11 industry briefing and stakeholder engagement events – comments fed back as part of these sessions <p>*Please note, those who made comments at industry briefing and stakeholder events or provided email or written correspondence may have also submitted a formal response via the survey.</p> <p>Respondents per category The table below shows most survey responses were received from residents of the district. It is possible that those who responded as a 'resident of Fermanagh and Omagh' may also be involved in a business, community or voluntary group or a public body.</p>	

Survey responses

Answer choices	Responses	Number
A resident of Fermanagh and Omagh	59.54%	78
Visitor to Fermanagh and Omagh	6.11%	8
Representative of a public body or organisation	6.11%	8
Representative of a private body or business	22.90%	30
Representative of a community or voluntary group	4.65%	6
Other (please state)	0.76%	1
TOTAL		131

Analysis of consultation responses

The tables on the following pages provide an overview of the key points arising from consultation feedback. Specific feedback, requests or proposed actions or activity have also been collated and shared with the relevant Council service area or partner agency for their attention and consideration.

Please note, some points made may have been repeated under a range of consultation questions. In such instances the point has been included once, aligned to the relevant question.

Q.4 There was overwhelming support for a VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins

A number of comments in addition to this were received and can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q.4 Are you in favour of a VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins?	93%	7%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
The Plan should not be a collective one for the two propositions. They are at different levels of maturity and should have their own Plan, be developed and marketed separately	The comments reflect a variety of viewpoints. The VEDP relates to the Council's responsibilities in relation to the district as a whole, however, recognises that, within the district, there are 2 tourism propositions at different levels of maturity. The plan provides for a more coherent approach while providing scope for tailored activity relating to each individual proposition.	
The Plan should equally represent the two visitor propositions and link the two propositions together as one tourism destination;		
There should be a stronger focus on Fermanagh Lakelands / Enniskillen as the primary tourism product;		

<p>There should be a stronger focus on the Omagh and Sperrins area as the least developed proposition;</p> <p>There should be a stronger focus on Omagh as the major town of the district and history of peace building.</p>	
<p>Tourism related to heritage, sport, culture, music and shared history etc should feature more strongly within the Plan</p>	<p>The reference to ‘communities’ within the plan relates not only to communities of place but communities of interest which will include, e.g., sport, culture, music. The plan aims to build the involvement of local communities in delivering the ambition around visitor experience.</p>
<p>The Plan has been developed without involvement of key private stakeholders</p>	<p>Opportunities for engagement with all stakeholders have been provided in terms of initial engagement to inform the plan and subsequent consultation on the draft plan proposals. This included engagement with 50 businesses as part of the co-design approach between September and December 2021. During the consultation phase 3 x in person events were held on 25 & 26 July and 23 September 2022 and 1 x online event held on 28 July 2022. A number of discussions also took place with Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism (FLT) Officers.</p>
<p>The Plan should have been developed using PESTLE or SWOT analysis – not the VICE model</p>	<p>The internationally recognised VICE model recognises that tourism in a destination is the interaction between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors; • the Industry that serves them; • the Community that hosts them; and their collective impact on, and response to • the Environment where it all takes place. <p>Initial development work also included a SWOT which supported plan development.</p>
<p>Overall the Plan and Action Plan lack detail</p>	<p>This is a strategic long-term document which aims to set out a vision, overall direction and key actions. The new Strategic Partnership will further develop the Action Plan including a more detailed timeframe and a specific theme to develop data and intelligence, alongside identification of relevant performance measures.</p>
<p>FLT are already doing this work – there is no need for a Plan</p>	<p>This is a strategic partnership plan supporting the sustainable growth of tourism across the district as a whole and will bring together key partners across public, private and community sectors to work towards its delivery. This goes beyond the existing role of FLT.</p>

Q5. There was very strong support for the Vision and Aims of the draft VEDP

A number of comments in addition to this were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q.5 Do you agree with the Vision and Aims of the draft VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins?	85%	15%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
<p>Vision Wording is slightly different within the plan – clarification required</p> <p>Global – too ambitious or wide</p> <p>Regenerative tourism is a new concept and niche – consider wording around ‘slow tourism’ instead</p> <p>The word ‘temporary’ should be removed from the Vision</p> <p>Should acknowledge economic benefit of tourism e.g. inclusive growth</p>	<p>85% of respondents agree with the Vision. Wording will be reviewed to ensure consistency in the Plan. A Vision statement should demonstrate ambition and, in this case, it recognises the opportunity for global recognition as a regenerative tourism destination. While regenerative tourism is relatively new, it is linked to the critical issues around the Climate Emergency and the need for change to address sustainability challenges and to ensure that tourism brings benefits to local communities and places.</p> <p>The word ‘temporary’ refers to the visitor’s experience of being a ‘temporary local’ reflecting the temporary nature of their visit. The reference to ‘inclusive growth’ is noted for consideration.</p>	
<p>Aims Too general, too many, lack ambition to work towards ‘global’ Vision</p> <p>The two propositions are at different levels of maturity and should not be referred to as a ‘Place’ within the Aims</p> <p>The Aims do not acknowledge the already good work taking place within the sector</p> <p>Lack of measurable outcomes and SMART objectives</p>	<p>85% of respondents agreed with the aims of the Plan. The Plan generally acknowledges that there has been good work contributing to the tourism success already achieved but recognises that there is room for improvement. The plan identifies how it will support the six community planning outcomes and a number of the population indicators identified for the district as a whole.</p> <p>At an Action Plan level, it is recognised that there is a need for further detailed consideration through a Strategic Partnership, involving a range of agencies and sectors, to fully scope the detail around the actions. The plan recognises the need for a specific theme to improve data, intelligence and related tourism performance measures to support informed decision making. This will be taken forward in partnership with all stakeholders so that actions will be measurable and there will be regular monitoring with performance reports provided.</p>	

Q6. There was very strong support for the regenerative tourism focus within the VEDP

A number of comments in addition to this were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q6. Do you agree with the regenerative tourism focus within the VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins?	89%	11%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
The development of the Greenways linking town centres with other key attractions should be considered a priority	The Strategic Partnership will further review actions to identify key priorities aligned to funding opportunities.	
Unrealistic to stand out globally as a regenerative destination given prohibitive financial costs to providers of adopting a sustainable or regenerative approach. Significant investment / funding required across the region / to businesses to enable this change	Moving towards a regenerative tourism approach applies to all stakeholders and is in line with the regional direction being developed by Tourism NI. The plan commits to working with industry to support and enable change.	
Greater emphasis needed on walking and cycling to support regenerative tourism. Needs appropriate infrastructure in place to support	This is noted and recognised within the Plan.	
The Plan should highlight the cleanliness of air, low pollution and light levels of the area	Noted. These points will be fully considered in the further scoping and development of actions.	
Regenerative tourism is not properly defined in this plan i.e., Pages 7 & 8 – and is being incorrectly used in the Plan at times. It is being confused with sustainability at times	The plan aligns to the Sustainable Development Goals and in these pages sets out the importance of sustainable approaches while going beyond that to a regenerative approach. The Plan sets out both approaches to aid understanding of each however definitions of sustainable and regenerative tourism will be added to the Plan.	
Balance will need to be found between sustainability and growth	The Plan will focus on growth through increasing length of visitor stay, extending the tourism season and encouraging visitor movement across the district.	
Lack of acknowledgement re current environmental issues impacting on sustainability e.g. water pollution, lack of infrastructure re waste from water vessels, invasive algae	In taking forward a regenerative approach, the Strategic Partnership will work with all relevant bodies to seek/lobby for improvements to infrastructure which enables tourism. There will be alignment with actions identified in a range of other plans, eg, the Council's Local Development Plan, the Biodiversity Strategy and the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy.	
Need for neighbouring councils to FODC to adopt this approach for success	The Council will work with a range of stakeholders including neighbouring Councils to support action delivery.	

A holistic approach is required – it is more than, for example, energy and carbon.	Noted. The approach is based around the VICE model with a need for all four to be taken forward collectively.
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Q7. There was very strong support for the experience development focus within the VEDP

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q7. Do you agree with the experience development focus within the VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins?	89%	11%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Signposting e.g. brown signs, and up to date, well maintained and streamlined signage required	Noted. Actions in the plan relate to wayfinding and interpretation across the district	
Activity provision / infrastructure required for experience development and benefit to surrounding area	Noted. The Plan identifies a number of investment projects and the actions refer to a long term investment strategy for the area alongside a blueways, greenways, navigational infrastructure and bridleways development plan amongst others	
Lack of ambition and does not set the district apart from anywhere else – focus should be on developing a unique world class attraction or developing new indoor tourism attractions for poor weather conditions	The focus is the uniqueness of our natural and cultural heritage and actions to enhance and preserve this. Investment is proposed in relation to enhancement of existing attractions such as the Ulster American Folk Park, Marble Arch Caves, the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and the Fermanagh Lakeland Forum alongside investment in new active travel infrastructure, eg, greenways.	
Unclear on how we nurture and build these experiences; or how the area can be developed to attract tourism while maintaining its natural beauty	Experience development will be considered by the Strategic Partnership when taking forward the Action Plan. The focus of regenerative tourism is to ensure that we go beyond sustainability and doing no harm, to leaving a place better than it was before. It is imperative that the unique selling point of our district, its natural heritage and beauty, is not diminished by tourism activity as this will damage the tourism potential of the area and the environment which our local communities enjoy. We must learn from the success of other areas and build on our own successes to make the plan a reality.	
Agri-food tourism – introduce permaculture (or organic) and reduce reliance on monoculture to support sustainability. Opportunity to	Agri-food tourism, with a focus on sustainable agriculture, is recognised as an opportunity within the Plan to develop visitor experiences. A specific action relates to a network of food ambassadors.	

extend offer to agri-tourismo i.e. accommodation, entertainment offer	
Unclear on what 'Fuzzy Boundaries' means	'Fuzzy boundaries' recognises that visitors do not see the boundaries which we often work within, eg, Local Government districts or organisational boundaries and is a recognition of the need to work seamlessly across such boundaries.
Need to add an experience of 'Natural Landscape' to capture the natural heritage of the area and connection to the outdoors	The natural heritage of the district underpins the Vision and direction of the plan including all of the experiences identified.
Higher priority needs to be given to 'Hidden Gems / Unexplored Corners' experiences across the district	This is recognised through the hub and spoke approach but will be further developed through the Strategic Partnership and delivery of the actions, including consideration of how to manage visitor capacity at locations.
Responsible tourism – a need to encourage positive visitor behaviour e.g. respecting the outdoors, leave no trace	Noted.

Q8. There was strong support for the actions around: Governance and management of implementation

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q8. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Governance and management of implementation?	74%	26%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Bureaucratic and will not contribute to an improved visitor experience	The actions set out within the VEDP will require a partnership approach. They are not within the responsibility of any single organisation and therefore will require a new partnership arrangement to ensure that actions are taken forward collectively in a coherent manner.	
Lack of information on how the Plan will be funded	The actions will be delivered over a 10 year period and will be funded through a range of approaches including partner contributions and applications to other funders. Consideration of this will be a key requirement of the Strategic Partnership.	
Industry needs to be kept informed on proposed / forthcoming strategic developments / capital programmes	Industry has been recognised as a key stakeholder in the plan with a specific theme in the Action Plan focused on 'Enabling Industry'.	
Collaboration between public and private sector and neighbouring Councils will be key to successful implementation	Noted.	
Need to have an intermediary body between Council and industry for industry engagement - FLT role	FODC will be considering options for governance and delivery beyond the establishment of a strategic partnership.	

important in successful delivery of Plan and destination marketing. Potential to build upon and extend remit of FLT. An organisation similar to FLT should be established for the Omagh and Sperrins	
The Plan should be overseen by an independent entity	The Strategic Partnership will comprise a range of stakeholders who will work together to deliver this ambitious plan using industry best practice and learnings from other destinations.
Need for delivery of Tourism within Council organisation to be streamlined	FODC will be considering options for governance and delivery beyond the establishment of a strategic partnership.
Council should provide long term Vision – private sector can deliver SMART short term actions	The VEDP takes a short, medium and long term strategic approach and recognises the need for industry engagement to support private sector investment.
A range of partners should form the Strategic Partnership from the public, private and community sectors to ensure inclusivity with roles and responsibilities clearly defined	Noted. This will be considered further in the development/establishment of the Strategic Partnership.
Lack of detail on how the Strategic Partnership will operate	Further to agreement of the strategic direction set out in the VEDP, consideration will be given to the options for the establishment of a strategic partnership.

Q9. There was very strong support for the actions around: Developing a clear and consistent message

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q9. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Developing a clear and consistent message?	82%	18%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Wording is slightly different within the Plan re one district and two destinations and one destination and two propositions – clarification required	Noted. One district and destination with two propositions.	
Some of these actions are already being delivered by other organisations e.g. FLT, Tourism NI	The Plan looks at delivery into the future and will support a coherent, joined up approach with a range of other agencies and bodies.	
The two propositions should not be marketed as one destination and should be marketed separately aligned to their unique selling points,	There are a range of viewpoints reflected in the consultation feedback. The VEDP reflects the Council's role in terms of the district and establishes a regenerative tourism approach for the district as a whole. It recognises that there are two	

<p>an overarching brand could be confusing;</p> <p>Opportunities exist to cross-promote and for each brand to fall under one overarching brand to reflect shared experiences within 'fuzzy boundaries';</p> <p>More marketing should be undertaken in relation to Fermanagh Lakelands, conversely;</p> <p>Marketing for Omagh and Sperrins lacking compared to Fermanagh Lakelands and should be increased</p>	<p>distinct propositions within the one district and will aim to build coherence and opportunities to cross-sell and promote as well as take advantage of economies of scale in delivery. There are opportunities across both propositions for improved visitor experience and opportunities to work cohesively should be encouraged.</p>
<p>More marketing of 'hidden gems' required</p>	<p>The Action Plan includes a specific theme relating to Developing a Clear and Consistent Message which includes development of marketing plans. The plan also aims to ensure that communities across the district will benefit from tourism while also ensuring that this is not to the detriment of protected or sensitive landscapes/areas.</p>
<p>Marketing needs to be inclusive and reflect the full offer of the destination and propositions</p>	<p>The Action Plan includes the development of annual and 3 year integrated marketing plans and development/promotion of 48/72 hour propositions.</p>
<p>Pg 40 reference to literature currently adopting 'EaGS' branding – this is as directed from Tourism NI</p>	<p>Noted and there will continue to be alignment with the regional brand through TNI.</p>
<p>Pg 13 Clarity may be required around promotion of the Sperrins within the FODC boundary</p>	<p>FODC will work in partnership with neighbouring Councils in the Sperrins area to jointly market and promote as appropriate with each Council taking a lead within its own geographical area.</p>
<p>Pg 40 Explore Omagh and the Sperrins logo should be listed here</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Pg 46 Clarification required re 'limited or no online marketing'</p>	<p>This refers to having consistent online marketing across a range of websites and a coherent online profile. This will be clarified within the Plan.</p>
<p>Lack of a sense of welcome or place on arrival into both propositions</p>	<p>The Action Plan includes reference to wayfinding and interpretation across the district and this can be considered as part of that work.</p>
<p>Branding and marketing should be resourceful and ensure a consistent message in the promotion of sustainable and regenerative tourism, products and experiences</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Need to work with TNI and TI to help identify and refine key target NI and RoI and market segments and international markets respectively and target marketing efforts</p>	<p>It is anticipated that both TNI and TI will be involved in the work of the Strategic Partnership.</p>
<p>Pg 35 Remove reference to Visit Britain</p>	<p>The website includes marketing on NI and presents an opportunity to showcase the district which does not currently feature.</p>

**Q10. There was very strong support for the actions around:
Enabling industry**

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q10. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Enabling industry?	89%	11%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Training required in cultural awareness, creating a feel at home experience and awareness of what is in local area – should be viewed on island of Ireland basis	The Action Plan includes an action around a training needs and implementation plan. This comment can be considered in taking forward that action.	
Consideration may need to be given to attracting talent into the area	Noted and will be considered in taking forward actions under the Enabling Industry theme.	
Opportunity to work with South West College on training and development activity	Noted. The Strategic Partnership will build on the existing strong working relationships with SWC including through the Labour Market Partnership.	

**Q11. There was very strong support for the actions around:
Enhancing the visitor experience**

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q11. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Enhancing the visitor experience?	87%	13%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Tourism offer needs to be widened cognisant of needs of minority groups based on for example, religion or minority interests such as pet owners	The VEDP, through ongoing research, will support industry to understand market trends and identified needs and to respond to these.	
Need to explore and expand on visitor opportunities for local people	The VEDP recognises the importance of the 'staycation' and the opportunities to promote local experiences to local people. Investment in facilities and attractions will benefit local people as well as visitors to the area.	
Lack of provision of motorhome facilities in towns and at jetties needs to be addressed	Waterways Ireland is progressing a study in relation to opportunities for motorhomes, glamping and EV Infrastructure. Opportunities identified will be assessed through the Strategic Partnership, including identification of opportunities to work on a cross-agency approach and with the private sector.	

Lacks focus on visitors from the older generation	The plan identifies a number of customer segments including 'natural quality seekers', 'short break enthusiasts' and 'comfort seekers' which all target the older person demographic. It is recognised that this demographic in particular offers opportunities to extend the tourism season. There will be a continued assessment of market needs to identify opportunities.
Need to ensure provision and promotion of up-to-date high quality information pre, during and post visit and joined up services for making high quality memorable experiences	Noted. There is a focus within the plan on 'Developing a Clear and Consistent Message' with specific actions around marketing, promotion and development of material bank of photos, videos, presentations, elevator pitches and stories.
More consideration on capacity management and greater emphasis needed on preserving and enhancing the environment	The VEDP sets out a regenerative tourism approach and will work in conjunction with a range of other plans such as the Council's Local Development Plan, the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy to preserve and enhance the environment alongside Waterways Ireland's Climate Action Plan. Capacity management will be a key consideration in taking forward the actions.
Action 4.11 should apply to Greenways as well as Blueways	Further reference to Greenways will be included in this action
Review needed of management of jetties and access to moorings and consideration given to inexperienced water-users and safety implications	Waterways Ireland's position on this is that our Inspectorate of Navigation, through its Lough Erne Warden, manages boating activity on the Erne System, directly engaging with boaters to provide advice and support. Where required, it enforces the Lough Erne Bye-laws, for example in terms of Public Mooring time limits. Waterways Ireland also collaborates closely with representative bodies of both the hire and private boat sectors, including the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) and the Irish Boat Rental Association (IBRA).
Need to focus on drawing visitor to Dublin and Belfast to the area by promoting it as a base for exploring surrounding counties and attractions	In taking forward the VEDP, the Strategic Partnership will work to better promote the area and build relationships with TNI and TI in terms of marketing opportunities
Over reliance on community capability to deliver international tourism experience; conversely positive comments in relation to inclusion of role of Community Development	The VEDP aims to ensure that communities benefit from the tourism sector. The Plan includes an action to invest in community capability development.
Need to enhance what is already available e.g outdoor spaces and local heritage with activity and refreshment provision where appropriate, signage, improved	Noted. The VEDP recognises that local heritage is key to the success of the area and sets out a number of investment proposals and opportunities.

access to sites in cooperation with landowners	
Help needed to enhance experiences delivered through interactive and immersive technologies	A specific action is included in relation to AR/VR trails and opportunities presented by innovative technology.

Q12. There was very strong support for the actions around: Enabling a sustainable future

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q12. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Enabling a sustainable future?	89%	11%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Need to maintain what we have i.e. environment, heritage, enhance it and support businesses	The VEDP incorporates themes focused on 'enabling a sustainable future' and 'enabling industry'. A core principle is to promote a shared stewardship of the environment.	
Recognition of costs / challenges to adopting a 'sustainable' and 'net zero' approach required. Support and funding needs to be available	National and regional policy direction is focused on achieving 'net zero' and this will be a challenge which affects all sectors. The VEDP commits to working with industry through a training needs and implementation plan and training aligned to net zero targets. Funding opportunities will be explored through the Strategic Partnership.	
Development of attractions and experiences should be underpinned by a net zero approach – will this apply to all sectors?		
Development of cycling infrastructure to create vehicle free areas missing	The Plan refers to the development of Greenways to provide walking/cycling infrastructure. Opportunities for active travel infrastructure in key towns and villages will also be considered through place shaping plans.	
Sustainability actions must be authentic, qualified and sustainable	A specific theme on 'Enabling a Sustainable Future' is included in the VEDP. All actions will be led and monitored by the Strategic Partnership which will include representation from environmental bodies and there will be regular monitoring and reporting of progress.	

Q13. There was very strong support for the actions around: Enabling insights and intelligence

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q13. Do you agree with the actions within the action plan around the key area of: Enabling insights and intelligence?	88%	12%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Difficult to understand – bureaucratic		

Need to understand our target markets, visitor needs, motivation for travel and sentiment on marketing messaging	The Plan recognises that there is a lack of available performance information relating to tourism both regionally and locally. There is a need for a partnership approach to address this key challenge so that performance can be appropriately measured and monitored into the future.
Establishing a baseline with ongoing input, collaboration and information sharing with industry key to success	
Important for the VEDP to be monitored with updates provided to stakeholders	
Some information already available e.g. STR hotel information	
Must be time sensitive	

Q14. There was strong support for Fermanagh and Omagh District Council leading a Strategic Partnership

A number of additional comments were received. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	Agree	Disagree
Q14. Do you agree that Fermanagh and Omagh District Council should lead the Strategic Partnership and coordinate the delivery of the VEDP?	76%	24%
Overview of comments	Response to comments	
Council may not have skills or capacity to implement the Plan, conversely; Acknowledged that Council has successfully developed tourism within area and should take lead on managing the actions rather than a Strategic Partnership	The majority of respondents agree that the Council should lead a strategic partnership and recognise that such a partnership will require the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from across the district and wider region working towards delivery of the Vision and Aims set out in the VEDP. An initial task for the Partnership will be to undertake detailed scoping and development of the Action Plan and to identify funding opportunities.	
FLT, Lough Erne Landscape Partnership, Tourism NI or Waterways Ireland should lead the Strategic Partnership		
Single point of contact for all partners to work together to grow tourism in the area in area would be useful		
Accountability and VICE model must be at heart of decision making		
Stakeholder involvement from a range of sectors important to promote engagement and ownership important		
The two propositions should each have a 'tourism alliance' to oversee planning and delivery of the VEDP with local businesses involved in decision making		

Q15. This was not an Agree / Disagree question.

A number of comments were received in relation to question 15. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	
Q15. Have you any other thoughts on how tourism is managed, promoted and delivered within Fermanagh and Omagh at present, or in the future? If you have any best practice examples of tourism delivery in other parts of the world, please do let us know.	
Overview of comments	Response to comments
Marketing priorities can change quickly dependent on external factors. There is a need to be flexible and have the ability to respond and adapt quickly to changing market conditions	The comments received are noted and will be shared with key partners and with the Strategic Partnership to inform ongoing development of the Action Plan and delivery.
Ability of FLT to raise revenue from membership to invest in marketing is useful	
More events and greater lead in time to event planning required to promote events effectively	
Further marketing via bloggers	
Tourism development and marketing needs to be inclusive	
Some very good work undertaken by Council and staff in relation to tourism however some confusion or lack of cohesion with tourism falling within a number of Directorates	
Need to involve more sectors in tourism e.g. education, forestry, history societies and culture groups, arts & increase visibility to visitors e.g. Irish language, townlands, heritage	
Transportation between attractions and sites important; consideration needed in relation to infrastructural support required	
Focus on marketing via Tourism Ireland – more effective	
People are key – a really good, well trained enthusiastic guide can make a really memorable experience	
Best practice models captured in supplementary notes	

Q16. This was not an Agree / Disagree question.

A number of comments were received in relation to question 16. These can be broadly summarised as follows:

Consultation question	
Q16. Have you any other comments on the draft VEDP? This can include your opinion on tourism in Fermanagh and Omagh, other ways to develop and promote it or any other comments you would like the team to consider	
Overview of comments	Response to comments
The Sperrins and Gortin Glen Forest Park need to be further developed and promoted as a tourist destination	Captured in the VEDP in terms of the Omagh and the Sperrins proposition
Information on proposed development works by Waterways Ireland to the Erne System to be included within the Plan	Noted
Clarification required on inclusion of Nordic market segment	This is an aspiring market which will be receptive to a regenerative tourism destination
Need for VEDP to be aligned to Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland strategies and intelligence	Agreed
Environmental concerns e.g. extractive industries, water pollution, unsympathetic development and impact on local areas, communities and tourism	In taking forward a regenerative approach, the Strategic Partnership will work with all relevant bodies to seek/lobby for improvements to infrastructure which enables tourism. There will be alignment with actions identified in a range of other plans, eg, the Council's Local Development Plan, the Biodiversity Strategy and the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy.
The VEDP should include Screen Tourism and the creative industries	This can be considered in further development of the Action Plan.
The VEDP should include a cross-border strategy and opportunities via funding programmes such as PEACE and Shared Island	The Strategic Partnership will work to identify funding opportunities. The Plan also recognises the importance of working across boundaries.
There is a need to address the resultant implications of EU Exit such as travel across the island and regulatory services	The Action Plan refers to an action which seeks to promote access on an all-island basis.
Need to achieve quick wins at low cost – this is overlooked in the VEDP	The Plan identifies a number of short-, medium- and long-term actions.
Reference to some infrastructure projects e.g. Enniskillen Sligo Greenway, Ulster Canal, Enniskillen Bypass within Plan insufficient	The VEDP identifies a short, medium and long term approach which will incorporate a wide range of specific projects over the plan's lifespan. Further consideration will be given to opportunities to highlight additional project opportunities.
The VEDP does not cover all of the Fermanagh area – reference to Erne	The VEDP looks at the district as a whole and identifies existing tourism assets but recognises

East including for example Ulster Canal, Sliabh Beagh, Spring Grove, Carnmore, Cooneen/Coonian, Jenkin not included. This area of the country requires attention and investment.	that there is a need to ensure that communities across the district benefit and that we broaden the visitor experience. There is a commitment to working inclusively across communities to develop assets.
Lack of mention on the potential of St Angelo to tourism and air tourism (experiences by air)	Opportunities arising from the St Angelo airport can be further explored through the 'Enabling Industry' and 'Enhancing the Visitor Experience' themes within the Action Plan.
A Heritage Strategy should be developed alongside the VEDP	This is currently being taken forward by FODC.
Pg 21. Gortin Glen Forest Park should not be described as a smaller, complementary experience given its visitor numbers on a par or exceeding those of other visitor attractions in the district	Will review language within the Plan.
Private landownership around the lakes and Sperrins cited as a threat to the VEDP. This is not the way to approach collaboration	The use of a SWOT, ie, strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats is a recognised tool in developing strategic plans
Page 13 re Fermanagh Lakelands – reference to Belleek, Garrison and Ederney – however towns of Irvinestown and Lisnaskea not mentioned	This will be updated in the Plan.
Potential of quirky, unusual accommodation	Noted
Free access to outdoor spaces important	Noted.
Investment needed in developing attractions, infrastructure and events; staff training to ensure familiarisation with the area and how to 'sell' it	Noted.
One tourism body required – to bring all areas together to avoid duplication, improve communication, collaboration and inclusivity	Noted.
Pg 19 Hubs should be named by area, not attraction	Noted.
Reduce or remove 'nuisance' activities such as jet-skis, water skiing, speedboats from Lough Erne	There will be a focus on regenerative tourism and on actions towards achievement of 'net zero' targets.
Pg 24 The map does not accurately reflect volume of accommodation provision within the area	The map reflects certified accommodation providers across the district.
More consideration to be given to access for people with a disability and adequate car parking spaces	Noted. Data indicates that adequate car parking is provided in the main towns and villages.
Lack of coach parking	Additional coach parking spaces have been provided in Enniskillen and there is ongoing consideration to provision in Omagh.

Need to make Fermanagh and Omagh an all year visitor destination	Included within the VEDP
Inconsistency in number of B&B operators in the district on pages 25 & 27 – needs clarified	Noted. 75 B&B operators.

Summary

Overall, support for the VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins, and its various elements, is strong.

Comments received as part of the public consultation have been reviewed and considered under broad themes as outlined in the analysis of consultation responses on pages 5 to 20.

On review of comments received, the following key updates will be made to finalise the plan:

- Updating the VEDP Vision to reference '**businesses** and '**growth**'. The new Vision now reads as "Fermanagh and Omagh will be globally recognised as an exemplar regenerative tourism destination; a place where visitors become temporary locals, immersed in our rich natural and cultural heritage, and where local people, communities and **businesses** are supported through inclusive **growth** and collaboration.'
- Including definitions on 'Sustainable' and 'Regenerative' tourism
- Adding further information on refining and taking forward the action plan
- Adding an action within 'Enabling industry' on attracting employment talent to the area
- Adding an action within 'Enhance the Visitor Experience' on maximising visitor experience opportunities through delivery of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Events and Festivals Strategy
- Include information on planned or proposed capital investment by Waterways Ireland
- Aligning our priority international markets with Tourism Ireland, as the agency responsible for marketing the island of Ireland and its destinations to out of state markets
- Clarifying some of the figures quoted and presentation of some pieces of information.

Next steps

This report will be shared with all those consultees who expressed an interest in being kept informed on the progress of the VEDP.

The VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins will be finalised and officially launched early 2023. The final Plan will be made available on the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council website and shared with all those with an interest in the VEDP for Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and the Sperrins.

