The purpose of the programme is the provision of the research, management and facilitation of a bespoke programme that will engage and develop sustained linkages through shared heritage between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council and groups within these areas.

The shared heritage will focus on The O’Neill and clans of Ancient Ulster with significance for Mid Ulster and Donegal. The programme presents an opportunity for joint working between both Councils and local interest groups. The programme is not only focused on bringing people together from across the border but also people from different community and religious backgrounds; with the aim of seeking to make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society and developing sustainable cross border contacts.

This project is supported by the European Union’s PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). The timeline for the delivery of the Programme is to commence June 2018 and complete May 2020.

Activities
1. Research into heritage of the O’Neill and clans
2. Development of a booklet and interactive app
3. Facilitation/connection of local interest groups in Mid Ulster & Donegal
4. Heritage Weekends: 2 in Mid Ulster 2 in Donegal
5. Study Visits and workshops: 3 Mid Ulster Visits 3 Donegal Visits
Mid-Ulster Visit 13th & 14th September 2018

Tullyhogue Fort
Tullyhogue Fort, also spelt Tullaghoge or Tullahoge, is a large mound on the outskirts of Tullyhogue village near Cookstown, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. It has a depressed centre and is surrounded by trees. It is an ancient ceremonial site where chieftains of the O’Neill dynasty of Tyrone were inaugurated.

Hill of the O’Neill
From the thirteenth century until modern times, this highland rampart above the town of Dungannon has been one of the most strategically important sites in the history of Ireland. Stronghold of the famous O’Neill dynasty its view of all nine counties of Ulster enabled its occupants to command the surrounding area.
Workshops will be held at each visit, activities will include planning future study visits, shared heritage and history, connecting with other groups, sustaining linkages between groups & engagement, resources and research that already exists.

The first of the workshop took place on the second day of the Mid-Ulster visit. This included a talk from expert Dr Mary Katharine Simms who is a Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College Dublin, where she was a Senior Lecturer in Medieval History to 2010. She is author of From Kings to Warlords: the Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages, and Medieval Gaelic Sources together with numerous articles on the kings, clerics and learned classes in Gaelic Ireland from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries.

Facilitator: Dr Colm Donnelly
Dr Donnelly is an historical archaeologist who specialises in Medieval and 17th-century buildings. As an experienced field archaeologist, he has directed excavations at a range of sites including the O’Neill tower house and Sir Arthur Chichester’s fort on Castle Hill, Dungannon, County Tyrone (2007).
Programme Launch and Medieval Banquet

A medieval banquet was held to celebrate the Launch of the Cross Border Shared Heritage Programme between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council and groups within these areas. The shared heritage will focus on The O’Neill and clans of Ancient Ulster with significance for Mid Ulster and Donegal. The banquet featured period food, weapons display, Gallowglasses and sword fighting!
Donegal Visit 19th & 20th October 2018

The Donegal visit started with site visits to Doe Castle, Doon Rock and Kilmacrennall Friary. The second day consisted of workshops which involved the planning of the next trips and a lecture from Dr. Colm Donnelly on the archaeology of ancient Ireland.

Doe Castle
Doe Castle, or Caisleán na dTuath, near Creeslough, County Donegal, was the historical stronghold of Clan tSuibhne (Clan MacSweeney), with architectural parallels to the Scottish tower house. Built in the early 15th century, it is one of the better fortalices in the north-west of Ireland. The castle sits on a small peninsula, surrounded on three sides by water, with a moat cut into the rock of the landward side. The structure consists mainly of high outer walls around an interior bawn with a four-storey tower-house/keep.

Doon Rock
This rocky outcrop was chosen by the O’Donnell clan to inaugurate their chieftains, a ceremony that was earlier taken at the abbey in Kilmacrennan. From 1200 to 1603, from Eigneachan to Niall Carbh, 25 chieftains were inaugurated at this place.
Kilmacrennan Friary

The friary was built in 1537 by the clan leader Manus O'Donnell for the Franciscan friars on the site of a previous monastery of the 6th century. It is said that at this early monastery Colmcille was educated by his foster father Cruithneachain O'Ceallachain, a priest who gave him the religious education, in 528. This monastery survived until 1129.

For over 400 years the O'Donnell Chieftains were inaugurated at this place, even before the building of the friary. The ceremony for their inauguration was divided into two parts, the religious rite at this site, the civil rite at Doon Rock. The friary was dissolved in 1610. West of the ruins are the remains of a Church of Ireland church which was inaugurated in 1822 and was abandoned in 1845.

Dr Colm Donnelly delivering a lecture on archeology in ancient Ireland.

Some planning for the next study visits was done on the second day of the Donegal Visit.
Donegal and Mid-Ulster History Forum Members

The programme is open to all groups that have an interest in participating throughout the duration of the Peace IV Cross Border Heritage Programme between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council. The aim of engaging groups of interest in both areas is to identify O’Neill and Ancient Clans heritage linkages, gather local information and knowledge and develop sustained community linkages between Donegal and Mid Ulster.

Forum Members to date
Donegal History Forum Members
Ardara GAP Heritage + History Group
Ballybofey and Stranorlar historical society
The Colgan Heritage Group
Cineal Eoghain Inishowen
Cooley Cross Heritage Group
Craobhghin an Tearmann (Termon)
Culdaff and Cloncha Heritage Group
Donegal GAP Heritage and History Group
Donegal Heritage
Fahan Heritage Group
Lands of Eogain Group
Leitir Corn Mill, Kilcar
McGinley Clan of Donegal
Newtowncunningham & District Historical Society
Oireas
Rathmullan Historical Society
Raymochy Historical Society
Sliabh Sneacht Centre
Ulster Local History Trust (UHT) Donegal Historical Society
West Inishowen Historical Society

Forum Members to date
Mid Ulster History Forum Members
Aughnaclay and Truagh
Ancient Clan O’Neill
Broughderg Groups/ cookstown
Cinéal Eoghan
Caledon Regeneration Project
Clans of Ulster
Clougher Historical Society
Donaghmore History Group
Desertcreate Church of Ireland
Eglish Historical Society
Killeshian and Clonanesse
O’Neil Country Historical Society
Stewartstown and District Local History Society