

Larne Town Centre Regeneration

Summary Masterplan Report

June 2010



A vision for Larne Town Centre

To be a vibrant and prosperous Town Centre through a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to redevelopment.

Larne Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan

The masterplan for the regeneration of Larne presents a unique opportunity for the town to shape its future. Through consultations and discussions, research, consideration, and thoughtful design, the masterplan has come into being. This document summarises the key issues that have shaped the Larne Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan.

Larne Town

Larne is located in a particularly strategic position along the Northern Irish coast with good sea, roads and rail connections and is known as the 'Gateway to the Glens and Coast'. Although the port has remained commercially buoyant there has been a spiralling decline in the town's appearance. The construction of the Harbour Highway in the 1970s effectively created a by-pass to the town causing a loss of much of the visitor market. Lack of inward investment, the declining appearance of the townscape and public realm and the availability of alternative higher quality shops in other neighbouring towns resulted in an increasing retail leakage out of the town. Today the signs of decline are evident throughout the town centre in the form of gap sites and empty shop units, creating a quite negative impression which can only be detrimental to the town's appearance.

The Masterplan process

Preparation of the masterplan was led by AECOM with a team of specialist consultants. Their work was co-ordinated by a Project Management Team from DSD, Larne BC, DRD Roads Service and DOE Planning Service. A Baseline report comprising economic analysis, transport assessment, stakeholder consultation and a Retail and Leisure Capacity study identified particular needs for the town. This led to the creation of a draft vision supported by regeneration aims for the town. A draft set of proposals to realise the aims was put out to public consultation in late 2009 and a final draft of the masterplan endorsed by Larne BC in February 2010. Publication of the final masterplan was completed in June 2010.

New Strategies for Larne's Future

It is clear that the vitality and prosperity of the town is largely dependent on people. The primary objective of the masterplan is therefore to draw people into the town centre. Currently, both the tourist market and the local market are not being captured. This objective therefore holds great potential, with the challenge being for Larne Town Centre to win these markets back. This requires a broad range of improvements to the identity of the town, the townscape, access into the town, the facilities and attractions in the town; the retail provision and to the overall design of the town.

The masterplan identifies strategic elements which will contribute to these town centre improvements including –

- Urban design to maximise future development opportunities
- Public realm and open space to benefit the commercial core
- Transportation changes to recapture lost markets
- Tourism and Leisure enhancements to retain those markets
- Retail developments to provide high quality shopping outlets
- Residential and business office development to promote vibrancy
- Sustainability to counter global climate changes

Action Plans and Key Locations

Over the next 15 years a number of improvements are proposed in the town centre and with the completion of each improvement the identity and character of the town will improve and in so doing will act as a catalyst for future improvements. Full details of these improvements are shown in the Action Plans on pages 4 - 9.

The role of the masterplan has been to identify the best opportunities for the town centre and to develop these as part of an overall phased strategy. The key town centre locations identified for a comprehensive programme of renovation and redevelopment are –

- The town core – Larne has a relatively intact traditional town core and this character must be preserved. Redevelopment within this area will target derelict and vacant sites and seek to repair and strengthen the original urban pattern.
- Waterfront and Riverdale - there is a greater opportunity for reinvention and these sites should be used to create a new and positive identity that also respects and complements the historic core.

Phasing

Phasing is an important part of the implementation strategy. Not everything can happen at once, which is why development is shown in incremental stages over time. There are three action plans, one for each five year phase. These are effectively a series of tables that summarise all the key projects that make up the different phases of the masterplan. They identify the type of project, the priority of the project, and where relevant, the potential cost range of the project and potential funding. These set out the separate proposals into a logical order that reflects what can be practically achievable within the early stages, also singling out those projects that will act as effective catalysts to further regeneration.

- Phase 1

These projects focus on securing early wins that will make visible improvements to the image of the town by redressing the more notable negative impacts.

- Phase 2

These projects focus on improving the infrastructure; designed to improve access and connections and in so doing open up new areas for redevelopment.

- Phase 3

This marks the culmination of all the phases by promoting the release of the key sites at Waterfront and Riverdale for redevelopment.

Implementation of the Masterplan

A Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership comprising elected representatives, Council officers and representatives from the public and private sector is to be established. This partnership is to be supported by specific and time-bound project teams with the sole remit of delivering against actions within the plan; each team would have a designated leader who would report progress to the Partnership. The servicing and co-ordination of the partnership is to be undertaken by Council officers. An Advisory Panel will be established following public advert and will include public sector departments, agencies, organisations, forums and individuals who have an interest in the masterplan, as well as representatives from the private sector, to offer their advice, support, skills and influence.

To keep the masterplan alive and relevant, it will need to change over time. The partnership should regularly monitor and review the actions and their impact. Significant changes may be required; these should be made available for public consultation at the end of each five year phase so that the masterplan is an active working document on which to report progress and provide up-dated information. The masterplan has been designed to be adaptable in this way.

Funding

Funding is essential for anything to happen and opportunities for attracting funding need to be explored. The most significant source of funding for urban renewal in cities, towns and villages in Northern Ireland is private funding. Of course such private funding must be able to make a return in the market place and the recent economic conditions have been acutely felt in the slump in the property market. However, over a 15 year period private investor confidence is likely to return and development projects need to be ready when the next available funding opportunity arises.

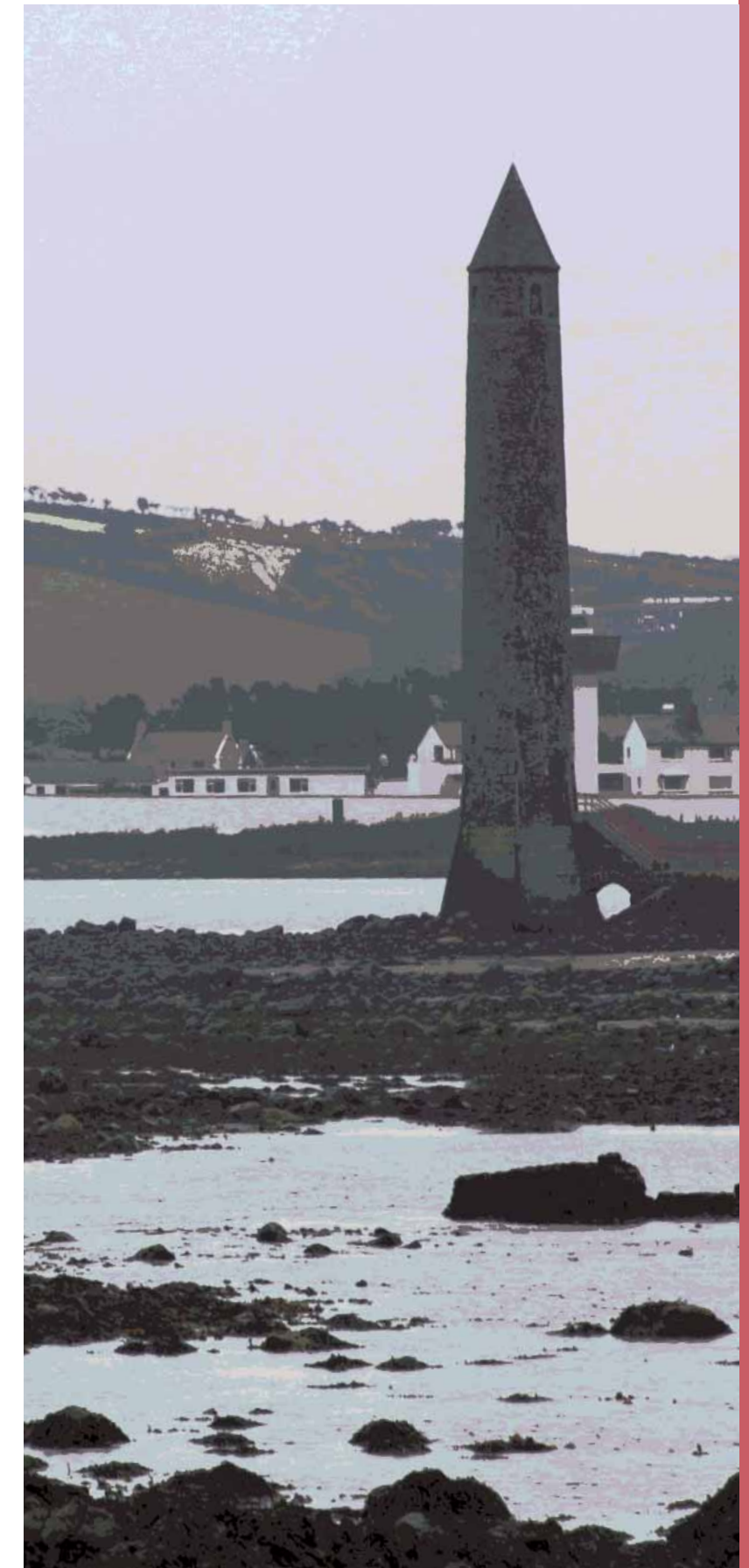
Public funding will come from governmental organisations, which at the local level is currently Larne Borough Council and the NI Executive at the regional level. Other funding sources may become available through the European Union, the Lottery Funding and other Community funding bodies. Partnerships are to be encouraged between public, private and community bodies as a means of increasing the scope for potential funding.

The partnership will continue to monitor, review and progress the masterplan taking account of the general economic conditions and public expenditure plans so as to maximise the potential regeneration opportunities that exist and source all available funds on a timely basis. Changes will include any future plans to transfer urban regeneration functions and funding from the NI Executive to local Government under the Review of Public Administration.

Further Information

A full copy of the Larne Town Centre masterplan report is available to download from the websites of the Department for Social Development at www.dsdni.gov.uk and Larne Borough Council at www.larne.gov.uk.

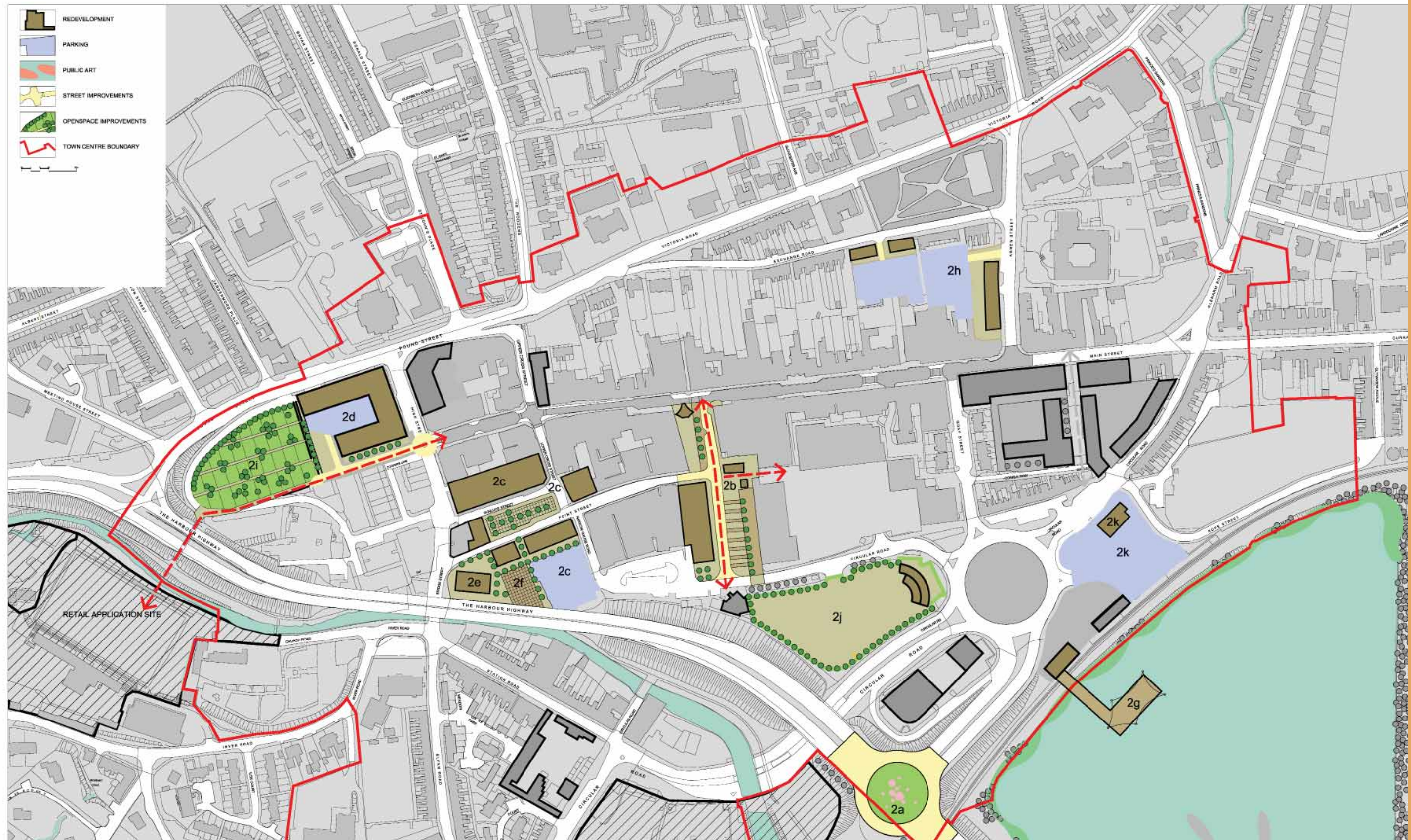
A communication strategy will be put in place by the Town Centre Masterplan Strategic Partnership in due course to advise progress on implementation of the Masterplan.



no.	project	project description	potential cost	potential funding	priority / times-scale	associated projects
1a	Larne Lagoon – Lagoon planting / Signage	Planting of trees, reeds and aquatic plants around edge of Larne Lagoon. Planting of trees along Harbour Highway and installation of signage.	£100,000 - £300,000	Larne Borough Council NIEA Natural Heritage Grant Programme	High 1-2 years	2a Harbour Highway Roundabout 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
	Larne Lagoon – Public Art	Public art installation in Larne Lagoon and tree and reed planting around edge. Public art on Circular Road Roundabout.	£100,000 - £500,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Department of Culture Arts Leisure / Arts Council	Medium 2-4 years	2a Harbour Highway Roundabout 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
1b	Shop front / Gap site improvements	Shop front improvements to key Main Street buildings and installation of creative hoarding to gap sites.	£150,000	ReStore DSD funding Shop owner contributions	High 1-2 years	1g Main Street improvements
1c	Events Space	Improve landscape edge and remove internal barriers to create functional open space.	£30,000 - £40,000	Mid and East Antrim Council European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007 - 2013	Medium 2-4 years	1d Transport Hub 1e Tourist information Centre
1d	Local Transport Hub	Relocation of bus station and ticketing facilities adjacent to Larne Railway Station. Relocation of bus stations.	£750,000 £22,500	TRANSLINK Private developer	Medium 2-4 years	2k Cycle Hire centre 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
1e	Tourist Information Centre	Development of new TIC in more prominent location associated with events space. Marketing of old TIC for leisure use such as restaurant / bar.	£600,000 - £700,000	Mid and East Antrim Council European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for NI 2007 - 2013	Medium 2-4 years	1c Events Space
1f	Community Gardens	Establishment of community gardens in open disused land.	£20,000 - £40,000	Housing Executive Ulster Garden Villages Big Lottery Fund - Spaces and Places	Medium 2-4 years	2d Riverdale / High Street
1g	Main Street Improvements	Road improvements to rationalise parking provision and pedestrian priority on Main Street.	£250,000 - £350,000	DRD DSD Mid and East Antrim Council	Medium 2-4 years	2b Broadway extension / redevelopment
1h	Fire Station Relocation	Relocation of fire station to lorry park at Waterfront with improved access onto A2 and A8 link road.	£4,000,000 - £5,000,000	NIFRS	High 1-2 years	1c Events Space
1i	High Street / Pound Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of prominent corner site for ground floor retail and upper floors residential. Parking accommodated to rear.	£4,000,000	Private developer funding	Medium 2-4 years	2d Riverdale / High Street
1j	Town Hall Refurbishment	Renovation and refurbishment of existing Town Hall to accommodate community and social functions.	£3,000,000	Larne Borough Council Possible grant aid: NIEA – Historic Building Grant	High 1-2 years	1l Market Yard refurbishment
1k	East Main Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of block between Main Street and Cockle Row to accommodate medium scale retail on Main Street ground floor and office / residential above. Residential development on Circular Road.	£16,800,000	Private developer funding	High 4-5 years	1g Main Street improvements
1l	Market Yard Refurbishment	Renovation and refurbishment of existing Market Yard to accommodate community and business functions.	£1,500,000	Larne Borough Council Possible grant aid: DETI / NIEA / IFI	High 1-2 years	1j Town Hall refurbishment



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2a	Harbour Highway Roundabout	Construction of new roundabout at main junction between Harbour Highway and town.	£600,000 - £800,000	DRD Private developer	High 6-7 years	3a Circular Road reconfiguration
2b	Broadway Extension / Redevelopment	Relocation of existing Murrayfield Shopping Centre and associated public realm and redevelopment. Construction of new road link between Main Street and Narrow Gauge Road and local transport interchange.	£6,000,000 £180,000 - £200,000	Private developer funding DRD	High 6-7 years	1c Events Space 1g Main Street improvements
2c	Dunluce Street / Point Street Redevelopment	Removal of central buildings and installation of public plaza. Redevelopment of surrounding buildings and provision of multi-storey car park.	£14,000,000	Private developer funding DSD	High 6-7 years	3d Laharna Retail Park
2d	Riverdale / High Street Redevelopment	Redevelopment of north east quarter of site for office / residential mix and installation of associated public realm.	£15,420,000	Private developer funding	Medium 7-9 years	3d Laharna Retail Park
2e	Youth Centre	Conversion of Old Presbyterian Church from Carpet Warehouse / Snooker Hall to Youth Centre and installation of associated public realm.	£100,000 - £300,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Youth Service	Low 9-10 years	2f Urban Sports Park
2f	Urban Sports Park	Construction of skate park under Harbour Highway and adjacent to Youth Centre.	£100,000 - £200,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Youth Service Big lottery space and place	Low 9-10 years	2e Youth Centre
2g	Larne Lagoon Centre	Construction of Larne Lagoon building to be used as visitor centre or alternatively some leisure use.	£2,900,000	Private developer funding Public / grant funding	Low 9-10 years	3a Circular Road reconfiguration 3c Circular Road redevelopment
2h	Agnew Street / Exchange Road Redevelopment	Redevelopment of old fire station site for residential to enclose street and rationalisation of parking to rear. Redevelopment of Exchange Road frontage.	£2,400,000	Private developer funding	Low 9-10 years	1h Fire Station relocation
2i	Community Garden	Extension of community garden with establishment of productive gardens.	£3,500	Housing Executive Ulster Garden Villages	Low 9-10 years	3b Riverdale redevelopment
2j	Events Space	Resurfacing of car park, further tree planting and development of public realm around TIC.	£250,000 - £350,000	Mid and East Antrim Council Big lottery space and place	Low 9-10 years	1c Events Space
2k	Local Transport Hub	Rationalisation of parking layout. Development of cycle shop / hire.	£400,000 - £500,000	Translink Private sector	Medium 7-9 years	1d Transport Hub



no.	project	project description	potential cost	potential funding	priority / timescale	associated projects
3a	Circular Road reconfiguration	Replacement of existing road structure to remove heavily engineered system including roundabout and rationalisation of road layout.	£2,000,000	DRD Private developer	High 11-12 years	3c Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road
3b	Riverdale Redevelopment	Redevelopment of site including removal of existing buildings and replacement with landmark hotel, mixed use retail / leisure / residential and associated public realm.	To be confirmed	Private / Public Partnership	High 11-12 years	1i High Street / Pound Street 2d Riverdale / High Street
3c	Waterfront Redevelopment – Circular Road	Redevelopment of land reclaimed from Circular Road reconfiguration for leisure development (Gateway Centre).	To be confirmed	Private / Public partnership	Medium 12-14 years	1h Fire Station relocation 3a Circular Road reconfiguration
3d	Laharna Retail Park Redevelopment	Replacement of existing retail park with attractive and well designed street frontage overlooking events space, containing retail on ground floor with residential above and capacity for medium sized stores.	To be confirmed	Private developer funding	Low 14-15 years	1c Events Space
3e	Events Park	Development of Events Space into more permanent Events Park.	£300,000 - £400,000	Mid and East Antrim Council	Low 14-15 years	1c Events Space 1e Tourist Information Centre

