



**Mid & East  
Antrim**  
Borough Council

April 12th, 2024

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

You are requested to attend a meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Environment and Economy Committee

to be held on **Monday, 15th April 2024 at 6:30 pm** in **Council Chamber, The Braid, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena.**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valerie Watts".

Valerie Watts  
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

# Agenda

## 1 NOTICE OF MEETING

## 2 APOLOGIES

## 3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

## 4 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION

### 4.1 Town Centre Vacancy and Dereliction – Way Forward - circulated (11.04.24)

📄 *Town Centre Vacancy & Dereliction.pdf*

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📄 *Appendix 1 - DfC Living High Streets Craft Kit Overview .pdf*

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### 4.2 Climate Change Sub-Committee Meeting Notes - 20 February 2024 - circulated

📄 *Climate Change Sub-Committee Action Notes - 20 02 2024.pdf*

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### 4.3 Glenarm Regeneration Sub-Committee Meeting Notes – 7 March 2024 - circulated

📄 *Glenarm Regeneration Sub-Committee Meeting Notes - 7 March 2024.pdf*

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### 4.4 Ballymena Business Improvement District Update - circulated

📄 *Ballymena Improvement District Update.pdf*

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### 4.5 Economic Development Activity Report - circulated

📄 *Economic Development Activity Report April 2024.pdf*

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### 4.6 MEANZ Business Project Update - circulated

📄 *MEANZ Business Project Update.pdf*

Page 96

### 4.7 Carrickfergus Business Awards – Lunch Invitation - circulated

📄 *Carrickfergus Business Awards - Lunch Invitation.pdf*

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### 4.8 Review of Science Summer School NI 2024 - circulated

#### 4.9 Carrickfergus “Around the Town” Music Festival - circulated

### 5 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

### 6 TABLED QUESTIONS

*Closed Committee - In accordance with Council policy, representatives of the Press will not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.*

### 7 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION – CLOSED COMMITTEE

#### 7.1 Town Centre Footfall - circulated

#### 7.2 St Patricks Barracks Quarterly Update - circulated

#### 7.3 Belfast Region City Deal Quarterly Update - circulated

#### 7.4 Larne Community Wealth Building Grant Request - circulated

#### 7.5 Electric Vehicle Charge Point Upgrade and Replacement - circulated

## **7.6 Business Case - MUGA Upgrade Programme - circulated**

📄 *Business Case - MUGA Upgrade Programme.pdf*

*Not included*

📄 *Appendix 1 - Business Case - MUGA Upgrade Programme.pdf*

*Not included*

📄 *Appendix 2 - MUGA Review.pdf*

*Not included*

## **7.7 Efficiencies with Waste - to follow**

## **8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED COMMITTEE**

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*Open Committee*

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<b>Council/Committee:</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Economy</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Town Centre Vacancy &amp; Dereliction – Way Forward</b>
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Open
<b>Author:</b>	John McVeigh, Interim Head of Finance & Capital
<b>Approver:</b>	Philip Thompson, Director of Operations

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update in relation to the re-opening of Dunluce Street and seek approval to prioritise Larne as a pilot to progress plans to tackle Town Centre Dereliction through engagement and partnership working with the Larne Business Forum.

## 2. Background

### A. Committee Approval To Develop A Dereliction Strategy For The Borough

- 2.1. At the March 2024 meeting of the Environment and Economy Committee, following the presentation of a Paper by the Interim Head of Finance and Capital on Town Centre Dereliction within the Borough, Elected Members gave approval to Officers to work with Elected Members and key stakeholders to develop a Dereliction Strategy for the Borough.

### B. New Developments

- 2.2. Since the March 2024 Committee Meeting, there have been a number of related developments which affect Town Centre's within the Borough. Those are as follows.
  - Dunluce Street within Larne continues to be closed, however, in recent weeks, progress has been made. The necessary improvement works required to address Council's Building Control regulations have now been identified, and the Council Facilities Team have priced up the work and approval has been given through internal spend control processes to appoint the contractor.
  - It is anticipated that the appointed Contractor will have completed the required works by the end of April 2024, with Dunluce Street being reopened by early May. Council officers are however keen to study the lessons which can be learned from this episode.

- Following the March 2024 Committee Meeting, there has been extensive general Media coverage, both in local and regional print media on the level of Borough Town Centre Dereliction reported in the previous Paper. In addition, Public Questions through the new Public Question portal now in use at Full Council have been raised around Council's plans to regenerate the Larne Town Centre area;
- There has been further specific Media coverage in the Larne Times in relation to the former Dunnes Building on the Main Street in Larne, which is currently in a state of Dereliction; and
- Correspondence has been received from Ratepayers which has highlighted the level of Dereliction, particularly in the Larne area.

### **C. Choosing a Location?**

- 2.3. Officers have given consideration towards an all-embracing Dereliction Regeneration approach within the Borough, or to concentrate on one location initially.
- 2.4. Given resource limitations, it was felt that prioritizing one location might be a more favourable approach. For example, Officers across a range of Council Departments – Economic Development, Capital & Regeneration, Planning, Building Control, Facilities – could come together and focus on a Borough Location in greatest need.
- 2.5. In addition, lessons could be learned in any pilot which could be shared more widely through the Borough as Officers and Members develop expertise in practical Regeneration issues.
- 2.6. Currently within the Borough, the Council Major Projects Team are progressing the Carrick Regeneration City Deal initiative. This is an important Town Centre project, which has the benefit of significant funding and external Design Consultant support. There has also been substantial progress made through the THI initiative which has been very successful in upgrading properties. Therefore, it was thought that an alternative location should be considered for any Dereliction pilot.
- 2.7. Ballymena Town Centre is also in need of a Regeneration intervention however it continues to be the more vibrant retail town centre within the Borough. Given the obvious problems around Dunluce Street, Point Street and Lower Cross Street and that the recent report which identified Larne with the highest level of dereliction then it would be recommended that as a pilot Council prioritises Larne Town Centre.



### **3. Key Issues for Consideration**

#### **A. Local Initiative Led By The Larne Business Forum**

- 3.1. Council is encouraged to note that local Business leaders in Larne have come together to lead on developing an intervention strategy for Larne Town Centre.
- 3.2. Led by the Larne Business Forum and supported by academic experts in design from local universities, an initiative has been launched to gather community feedback and attempt to produce a unified consensus on ideas to tackle the chronic dereliction in Larne Town Centre.
- 3.3. Council officers have been holding discussions with members of the Larne Business Forum, and have supplied some relevant background information – without being formally part of the intervention strategy group.
- 3.4. It would be advantages for Elected Members to approve that Council officers to take a more formal involvement which would include – providing expertise and support to the Forum, as well as helping to influence a consensus outcome which is beneficial for all Town Centre users.

#### **B. Using The DfC Living High Streets Craft Kit**

- 3.5. A new tool has been developed which may prove useful in any such engagement - the Department for Communities (DfC) Living High Street Craft Kit model.

#### **C. What Is The Living High Streets Craft Kit?**

- 3.6. For some time, DfC have been examining the problem of High Street Dereliction within NI.
- 3.7. DfC have set up a "Ministerial Advisory Group on the Built Environment" (MAG) which is a group of Design/Architectural specialists, who are providing expert Design technical advice to DfC and the Minister.
- 3.8. DfC MAG have previously worked with Council to produce a Regeneration Briefing review for Council in 2023, which concluded that *"...pedestrianisation is the only viable long-term solution for Dunluce Street due to its width and scale. However, the panel also recognises that businesses are fearful of the impact that it could have, and as such pedestrianisation is not currently supported. The panel feel DfI should be encouraged to take a more flexible approach to the design of the street even if full pedestrianisation is not possible in the short term, to allow new ideas*

*to be tested. To start with, it is suggested that a step back is taken, and a wider regeneration strategy is looked at as a first step."*

- 3.9. Since this review, DfC MAG have developed a Living High Street Toolkit, which is designed to elicit community-led feedback and ideas, shaped by technical Design expertise, which had regenerate dilapidation and dereliction in the typical Town Centre High Street.
- 3.10. The Craft Kit has been piloted in Downpatrick over the last 12 months, and the findings of the Pilot exercise were shared in a recent formal launch of the Craft Kit by DfC in the Crumlin Road Gaol.
- 3.11. In terms of what the Craft Kit does, it sets out twenty-one simple but challenging questions to guide conversations about shaping the future high street.
- 3.12. In short, the Craft Kit Model could be an ideal framework to develop a comprehensive, community-led, Council Regeneration Strategy for Larne Town Centre.
- 3.13. Council officers have been invited to receive training in the application of the Craft Kit, and that might enable a more informed ability to positively influence discussions with stakeholders in the Business Forum initiative.

#### **D. What Would Be Required?**

- 3.14. The Larne Business Forum have already secured the services of two academics who specialize in Urban Design and Planning, which would negate the need for Council to seek to procure any such resource.
- 3.15. Council officers, as stated earlier, would be able to supply relevant archive data and reports, which would undoubtedly prove helpful in group discussions.
- 3.16. DfC MAG have offered to provide training to two Council Officers on the use of the Living Town Centre Craft Kit, and should any additional resource be necessary, a report will be brought back to Members.

#### **E. What Would Be The Goals Of The Business Forum Initiative?**

- 3.17. Members should expect the following outcomes.
  - The group aims to build consensus between Business, Community, Young and Old, Elected Member representatives and Departmental Officers for the future Regeneration of Larne Town Centre; and



- To bring forward specific Plans to be put to the wider Community for the Regeneration of the Larne Town Centre, such that could be taken forward for funding consideration by external partners such as NI Executive departments or UK Government Agency programmes.

#### **4. General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1. Financial implications – Dereliction is leading to loss of rate income, loss of footfall in our Borough Town Centres, and also loss of Capital value for properties in our Borough Town Centres.
- 4.2. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan - Council is committed to the economic regeneration of the Towns and Villages in the Borough to include tackling dereliction. Continued commitment to the Town Centre and Investment Strategy is an essential element of delivering on that Strategy.

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1. If Elected Members agree, Council officers would formally participate in the new Town Centre Regeneration in partnership with the Larne Business Forum, and which is intended to bring forward ideas to tackle chronic dereliction in Larne Town Centre.

#### **6. Recommendation or Decision**

Elected Members are asked to –

- 6.1 note the update on the planned work to make safe the derelict building in Dunluce Street and the timescale for it to be reopened;
- 6.2 give approval for Larne Town Centre to be prioritised as a pilot to commence focused work in tackling dereliction with any lessons learned and experience gained to be taken forward and rolled out across the other main town centres; and
- 6.3 give approval for officers to positively engage with the Larne Business Forum to work in partnership with them to progress dereliction in Larne Town Centre.

#### **7. Appendices / Links**

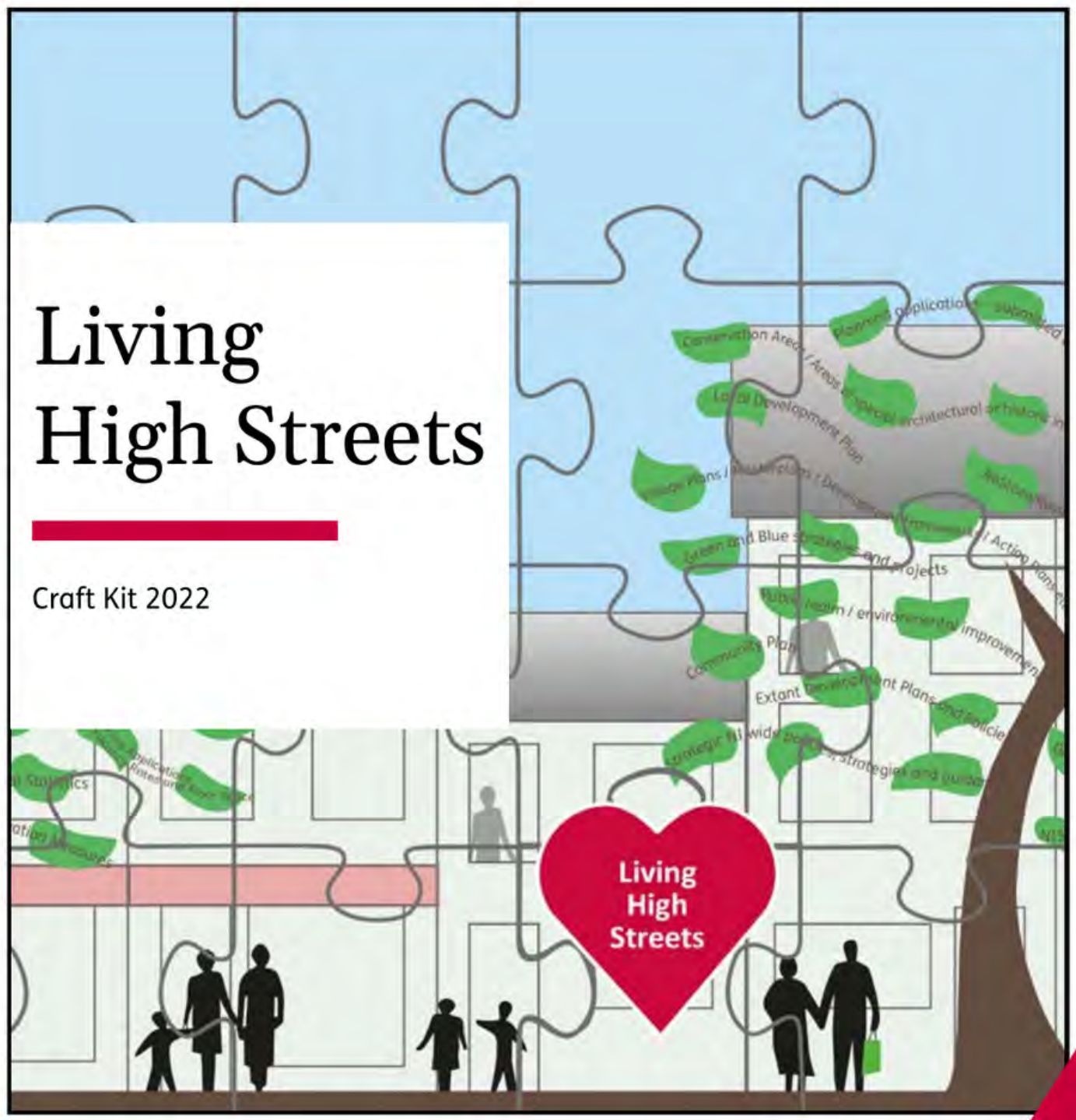
Appendix 1 - DfC Living High Streets Craft Kit Overview



MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP  
ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

# Living High Streets

Craft Kit 2022



# Minister's Foreword

I am committed to working together to put people at the centre of the Living High Street where better ways of living in places can be explored and discussed in a manner that respects everyone's aspirations.



The Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment has developed this Living High Streets Craft Kit as a resource to help communities develop a shared

understanding of their needs and assets.

This supports my Department's purpose of Supporting People, Building Communities and Shaping Places.'

In response to the challenges faced by traditional high streets, successful places must be underpinned by community wellbeing and supported by multiple layers of activities and resources. Successful places are always safe and accessible; they always encourage healthy active travel, adapt their buildings and spaces sustainably and protect their local natural environments. They are beautiful places that communities love and take care of.

Change starts when everyone comes together to begin doing things. Tactical or pop up approaches can make this immediate and experimental, providing people with opportunities to share experiences, try things out and work together on practical improvements.

This Craft Kit helps translate such ideas into practical actions.

It is a fresh approach to placemaking that supports and challenges communities to work together and ask important questions about all aspects of their places.

These community insights will be vital sources of ideas and visions, to be drawn on in creating the new policies and approaches that are required to address the challenges of crucial issues like climate change as we seek to put quality design at the heart of our placemaking. I hope that this important craft kit can be used as a valuable resource and its full potential realised.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Haughey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Minister for Communities**

# Prologue

The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland has a vital role in supporting the future success of our villages, towns and cities, with high streets central to that challenge.

While the definition and roles of 'high streets' have changed over the centuries, the idea that they are the heart of our places has endured. Reviving the spirit of our high streets can only come from communities reimagining sustainable ways of living together.

MAG has co-designed a fresh approach to placemaking in our Living High Streets. This is not a design guide or template to rejuvenate high streets. It is a fresh approach to placemaking that challenges communities to work together through a series of questions about all aspects of their place. The desired output from these conversations will be a co-designed Living High Streets Framework, underpinned by local knowledge, agreed priorities and means of delivery. The emerging Living High Streets will reflect the purpose and meaning each community envisions for themselves.

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# Living High Streets

## PART ONE - Approach to Living High Streets



# Approach to Living High Streets

Historically, high streets have been the most important public spaces in our urban settlements, developing around the defensive, legal, religious, trading and administrative roles that have naturally brought people together.

High streets became the nerve centre for places, supplying a rich mix of functions, facilities and services that supported their residential communities, wider rural districts and visitors. They were the 'seed of places', holding meaning for people by reflecting their unique identity, underlying landscape, roles and culture.

This portrayal reflects places and their high streets in their best light. However, places are inequitable for many people in a variety of ways, which has negative implications for everybody's prospects. Languishing places which are visibly down-at-heel discourage investment, new people and visitors. This in turn embeds unsustainable practices that are often hard to break.

These issues have been decades in the making and are most obvious in high streets and town centres. Significant factors in their decline have been an over focus on retail, loss of services and saturation of the public realm with cars and parking leaving many places looking like 'Anytown'. People increasingly look elsewhere

for their services, facilities and shopping, which includes online.

With these changes, places have gradually lost their meaning, causing the traditional and natural bonds between people and places to disintegrate. Re-establishing them as places of choice depends upon the successful re-tying of these bonds. That does not mean 'bouncing back to better times' but moving forward with an informed understanding of the people-place connection. The best location to start this change is in the centre; in the high streets themselves where communities have always come together to share their culture, build relationships and trade. This requires a whole place approach that involves everybody.

MAG have developed this fresh approach to Living High Streets with a Craft Kit to guide and support communities to share an understanding of their needs, make the most of existing assets and strip out the things that negatively affect them. Because places shape lives, the Craft Kit poses twenty-one simple but challenging

questions to guide conversations about shaping the future high street. The desired output from these conversations will be a co-designed Living High Street Framework that enables:

- Continued collective involvement
- Inclusive, cultural activities and events
- Movement, public realm and environmental initiatives
- Existing and new masterplans
- Development and restoration projects
- Incorporation of fresh ideas
- Ongoing stewardship

This approach recognises that places and people are ever-changing and will equip local communities with the ability to make this a sustainable and rewarding process. The Craft Kit is designed to be accessible, inclusive and adaptable to all places with the aspired outcome of supporting people throughout their lives. This will require communities to revisit the questions periodically, involve new people, review their Living High Streets Framework and refresh the management structures of their Local Action Group. There is also potential to grow the initiative into ‘big conversations’ about the wider town, city or rural district.

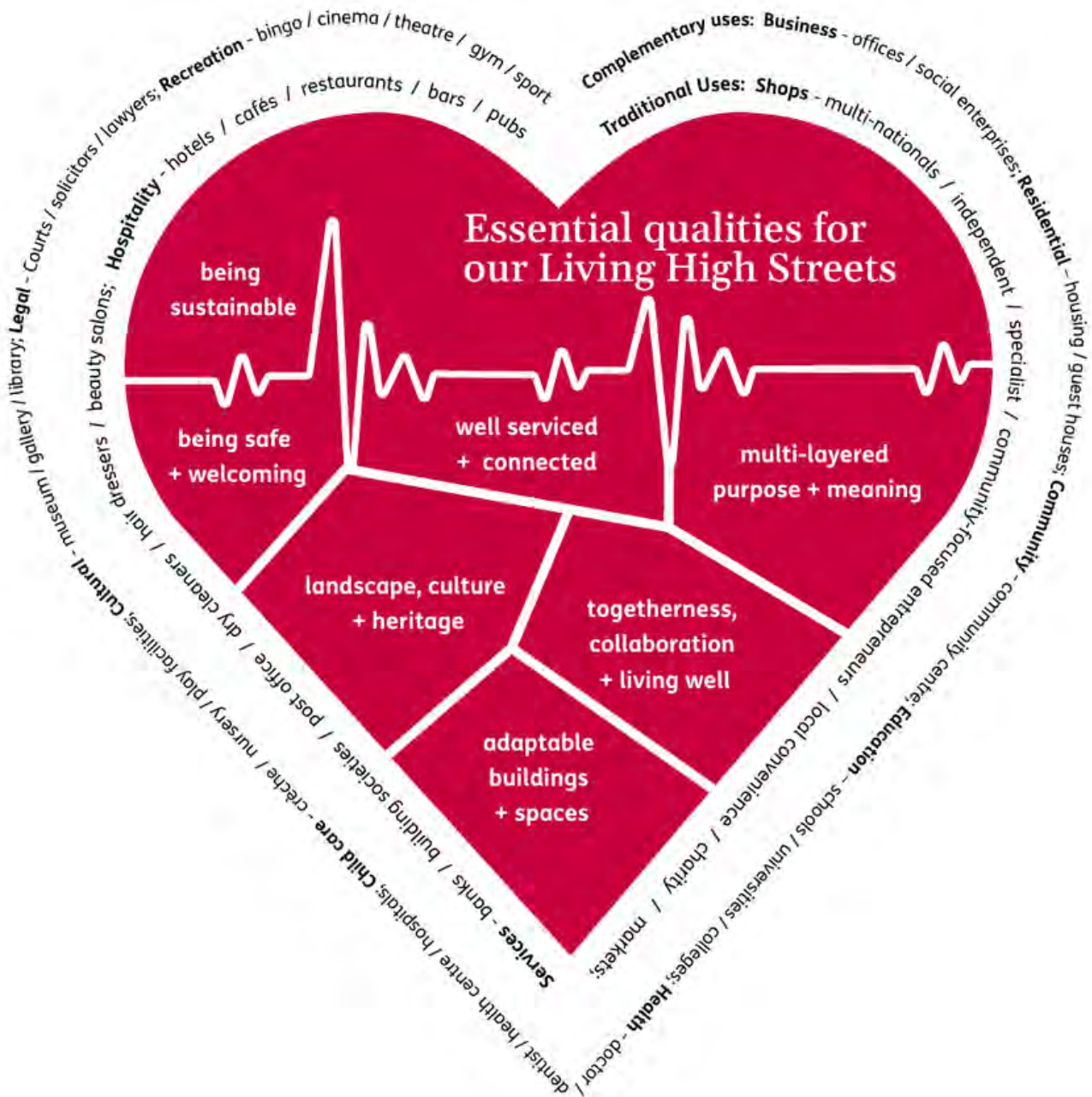


Photo Captions: 1. KidsSpace event engaging children and young people in Placemaking, St Anne’s Square, Belfast; 2. Live entertainment at the Harmony Hub, Ballymena; 3. Talkeoke engagement, Colin Urban Village; 4. Causeway Speciality Market, Coleraine; 5. Enjoying the Living High Street, Lisburn Square



# Essential Qualities of Living High Streets

Living High Streets will be resilient to the natural ups-and-downs of changing events, including economic downturns, pandemics and climate change.



The communities in these thriving places will come to know where the tipping-point lies and strive to remain on the right side of that by considering the social, economic and environmental aspects of their place. This is sustainability at its simplest.

Change is a natural process that can bring success or uncertainty. When it brings uncertainty, it threatens resources, making the future difficult to predict. In places where people feel resources are already diminished, individuals, businesses and authorities can tend towards caution and be resistant to change – they get stuck.

When developing this approach to Living High Streets, MAG asked contributors to share their feelings about their favourite high streets – what were their essential qualities? Feedback included childhood and holiday memories; hometowns where people chose to live; novels and films; and some, an imaginary mixture of all these experiences.

Think of your favourite high streets. Hold the feelings they evoke in your mind as you consider their essential qualities. You will discover successful places have a unique 'spirit of place' and are built on, and support:

- The local landscape, culture and heritage – the heart and soul of the place
- Togetherness, collaboration and living well - the fundamental human need to be together
- Being safe and welcoming - a public realm of streets and spaces, which are safe and well connected
- Multi-layered purpose and meaning

- Having adaptable buildings and spaces
- Being well serviced and connected – accessible services and facilities
- Being sustainable - social, environmental and economic

When we think about contemporary high streets, we do not have these essential qualities at the forefront of our minds. If the high street has what we want, we will visit, but otherwise we will not. This creates a narrow definition of high streets, which is often as simple as the shops either side of a road. However, they cannot survive when reduced to this level of simplicity. Successful high streets rely on a network of other streets and spaces for:

- Access and servicing
- Complementary traders, facilities and services
- People visiting, working and living there

Developing Living High Streets that better serves its community therefore requires us to look at it as a neighbourhood with soft edges, strong connections to other parts of the place and the ability to satisfy a range of community needs. Thinking about the high street as a neighbourhood brings these essential qualities of place to the fore. In smaller places, the simpler high streets may encompass the whole centre. In larger places the high street and their range of activities increases, often with more than one high street. Regardless of scale, the role of the high street with its complex mix of activities, must be equitably managed to be functional and attractive for everyone.

Additional guidance can be found in **Living Places: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland**. It aims to clearly show the key principles behind good place making. It looks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland.

### **Landscape, culture and heritage**

From fishing ports to market towns, the landscape has shaped places, their culture and heritage. Essential to a successful place is its character and culture which comes from its natural and built environment. These qualities give a place its personality and can relate to the design and layout of the streets and spaces, scale and continuity of built frontages, historic buildings and the landscape setting.

It is easy to overlook the importance of these elements in a rapidly changing world but increasing concerns with global environmental issues have made these changes local. Pollution and climate change cause the loss of trees, biodiversity and flooding - all negatively affect everyone's wellbeing. By conserving past culture and heritage through better considered actions, we will also be accumulating and creating positive culture and heritage assets for future generations.

### **Togetherness, collaboration and living well**

Traditionally, people lived their entire lives in and around high streets as a matter of choice. Evidence continues to show that people benefit from living close to essential amenities and services that only urban centres can offer, including the opportunity to meet easily and connect with others as neighbours. This is especially true for older and more vulnerable residents. We need to make town living a positive choice for people of all ages with wellbeing central to policy and plan making. Establishing a collaborative ethos across all communities in the high street will enable the establishment of a sustainable neighbourhood with the success of the high street at its heart. Such a shared mission will support togetherness and enable people to live well in all stages of their lives.

### **Being safe and welcoming**

Attracting people back into central areas to live requires the creation of safe environments that are accessible and inclusively designed. Walking, cycling and reliable public transport is good for the environment, health and community wellbeing. These will form the essential foundations for growing new urban communities, while at the same time attracting and supporting everyone else who visits the Living High Street. Champions and ambassadors can play an important part in making Living High Streets welcoming for visitors and locals alike.



Photo Captions: 1. Spring flowers, Comber Square; 2. Working creatively together at the Artisan Market, Downpatrick; 3. Historic street, Carlingford; 4. "Back-in-Bangor" shop-eat-enjoy week; 5. Opening celebrations, Colin Connect Transport Hub and Colin Town Square, Belfast; 6. Townhall Street, Enniskillen; 7. Promoting active travel, Larne Town Centre

### **Multi-layered purpose and meaning**

The Living High Street offers diverse things for residents, workers and visitors to do and experience, with seamless connections into surrounding streets. Meaning in places grows from positive experiences. These may include being able to set up and work in unique businesses; to buy produce or services exclusive to your town; to enjoy festivals, public art, sports and other civic activities. Together with the unique landscape, culture and heritage, these activities will support the sense of a well-functioning, well-resourced, accessible and inclusive place.

The 'town centres first' policy in the **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)** aims to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland through the promotion of established town centres as the right first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions including cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment and businesses.

### **Adaptable buildings and spaces**

A thriving Living High Street has good-quality, adaptable buildings and spaces that enable a range of different activities. The importance of quality of the built environment cannot be overstated, whether historical or contemporary; buildings or monuments; lanes, streets and spaces. By preserving their unique characteristics, a distinctiveness that people can relate to forms the spirit of places. Local sustainability issues also include the sustainable re-use of existing buildings instead of replacing them to reduce our carbon

footprint. Also, the re-purposing of existing buildings, other built elements and conservation of the historic elements keeps the form, shape and character of a place.

### **Well serviced and connected**

Living High Streets will be 'smart places', with efficient servicing that accommodates the changing functions of their buildings and spaces. That includes deliveries, refuse collection, home and office removals; street infrastructure for markets and events; public transport stops; secure cycle parking; and street furniture that aids walking. The underlying street scene should be simple and robustly constructed, not dominated by cars nor necessarily pedestrianised. The Living High Street should also be a digitally connected place.

### **Being sustainable - social, environmental and economic**

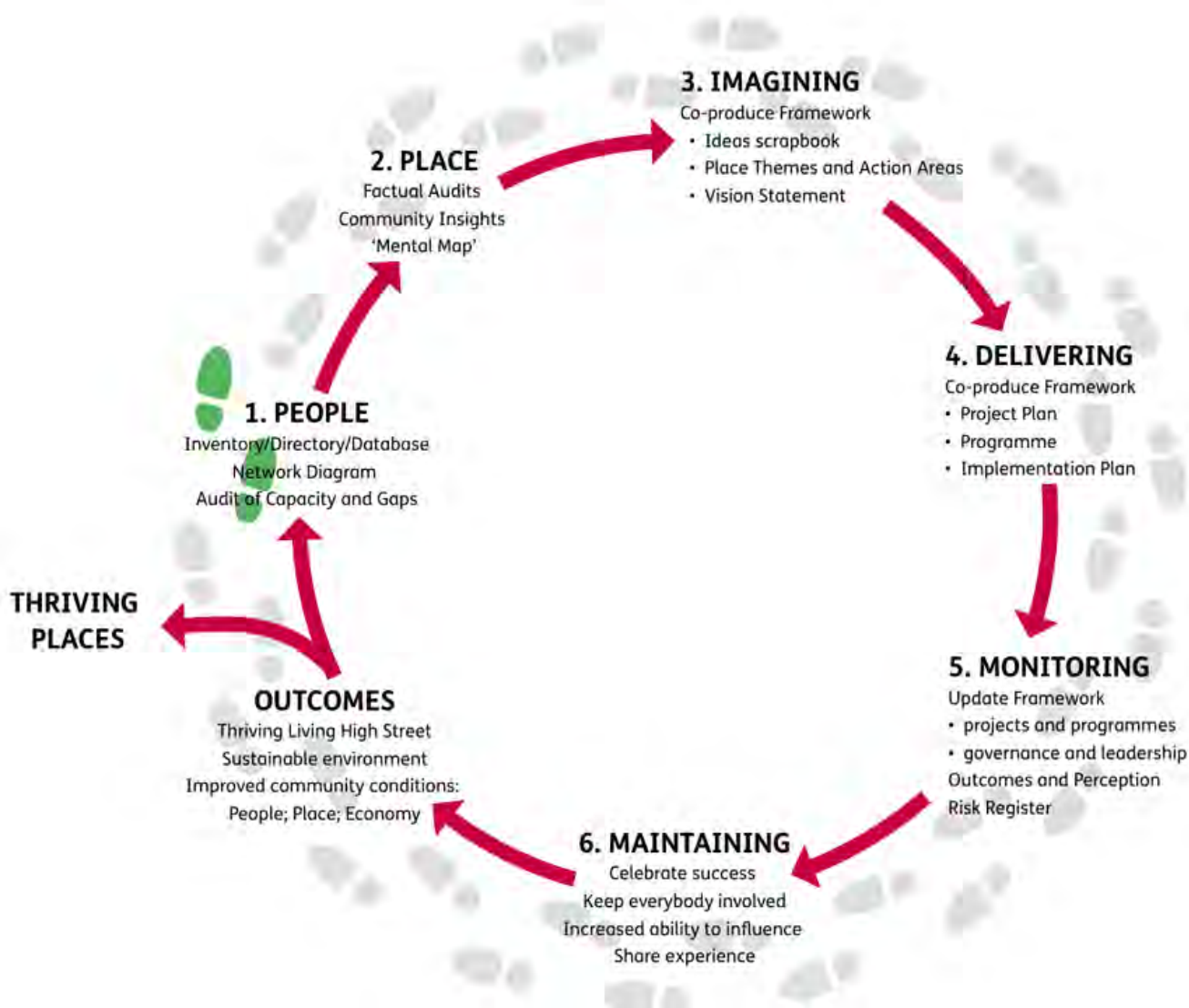
Thinking about sustainability can begin with consideration of the traditional pre-car street layout, the scale of spaces, the shape of the townscape and how it once worked as a network, when people were reliant on active travel and chose to live in town centres. There will be an unfolding story of how the place has grown and become successful, or how it has unravelled. To be sustainable, it is important to see and understand what is working, what adaptability can look like, what needs to be repaired and what must be rejected. The challenge of building Living High Streets will grow from this social, environmental and economic baseline.



Photo Captions: 1. Historic village centre, Richhill; 2. Cyclist on the Ormeau Road, Belfast

# Collaborative Placemaking Approach

Living High Streets serves everyone in the community and therefore everyone should have an opportunity to shape their place.



Living High Streets serves everyone in the community and therefore everyone should have an opportunity to shape their place. This includes public service providers; residents young and old; business owners; employees, schools and colleges; third sector organisations; landlords and investors; and visitors from near and far. Making this achievable requires shared purpose and leadership that works for each individual place. A range of people and organisations could lead and support the process, either as an existing or newly created 'Local Action Group' of doers.

### A Place Change Model

MAG have developed a Place Change Model to help communities clarify their aims, build evaluation methods and set up a sustainable cycle of placemaking and stewardship. It provides an opportunity for everybody to be involved in the co-design of their places through six sequential themes that will increase knowledge and skills, build confidence, sense of ownership and most importantly, optimism. The thematic stages are:

- Theme 1 People:** growing your skills and resources
- Theme 2 Place:** knowing your high street
- Theme 3 Imagining:** what your high street could become
- Theme 4 Delivering:** how to focus and prioritise
- Theme 5 Monitoring:** confirming progress
- Theme 6 Maintaining:** loving your place

The purpose of each theme is explained in the Craftbook along with a series of simple but challenging questions and potential prompts for facilitators to use. It also includes ideas and techniques that allow people to share ideas and thoughts confidentially and without pressure. Thematising and presenting all these collective thoughts builds insights into the deeper community narrative that people are thinking about, rather than the often-narrower story from the strongest voices. The Craftbook also sets out outputs that build sequentially to create the Living High Streets Framework.

Participating in this process has its own value for individual and community wellbeing by promoting optimism. People will gain these benefits at a natural pace and this process cannot be rushed. The idea is for change to spiral upwards, with feedback and evaluation keeping it on track, and continually introducing new people, knowledge and ideas.



## An Inclusive Process

This process is designed to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to meaningfully contribute. The tools in the Craftbook are intended to be used in workshops, both virtual and face to face. The number of workshops will depend on the scale of the place and commitment of the community and there will be activity between thematic workshops. However, only proper resourcing from the outset will deliver the desired long-term sustainable outcomes in every place.

**Councils**  
**Residents**  
**Statutory bodies**  
**Older generations**  
**Councillors and MLAs**  
**Children and young people**  
**Town centre / BID managers**  
**3rd sector voluntary groups**  
**Businesses and services**  
 - owners, operators and investors  
**Local Chamber of Commerce and Industry**  
**Service providers - housing, health, education etc.**  
**Social enterprises and circular economies**  
**Community representatives**  
**Department for Communities**  
**Heritage - Council Heritage Officer,**  
 Historic Environment Division,  
 Historic Buildings  
 Council, Ulster Architectural Heritage, Local Groups  
**Northern Ireland Housing Executive**  
**Department for Infrastructure**

For many people, this will be the first time that they have been involved in placemaking discussions. For many professionals, it will also be the first time that they have worked outside of their areas of expertise in open discussions like this. It will be challenging for everybody, which is why expert placemaking facilitators will guide the conversations. The themes and questions in the Place Change Model will supply a structure to these discussions to:

- Create productive conversations that people want to take part in
- Consider the high street from multiple viewpoints
- Think beyond immediate problems to achieve sustainable outcomes; and,
- Move from different views and opinions to consensus

To deliver thriving Living High Streets, communities need to develop an optimistic understanding of what is possible, the means to make it happen and to be involved in its delivery. The purpose of this approach is to highlight the nuance and complexity needed for successful placemaking. It will stop strong voices derailing the process or stifling discussions (e.g., 'I can't see that working / being affordable'). It will prevent single-issue solutions (e.g., more parking; pedestrianisation; night-time economy). It will allow the whole community an opportunity to consider all relevant issues. Embedding 'designerly thinking' in communities in this way enables democratic participation in the future sustainability of their place.

### Building Social Capital

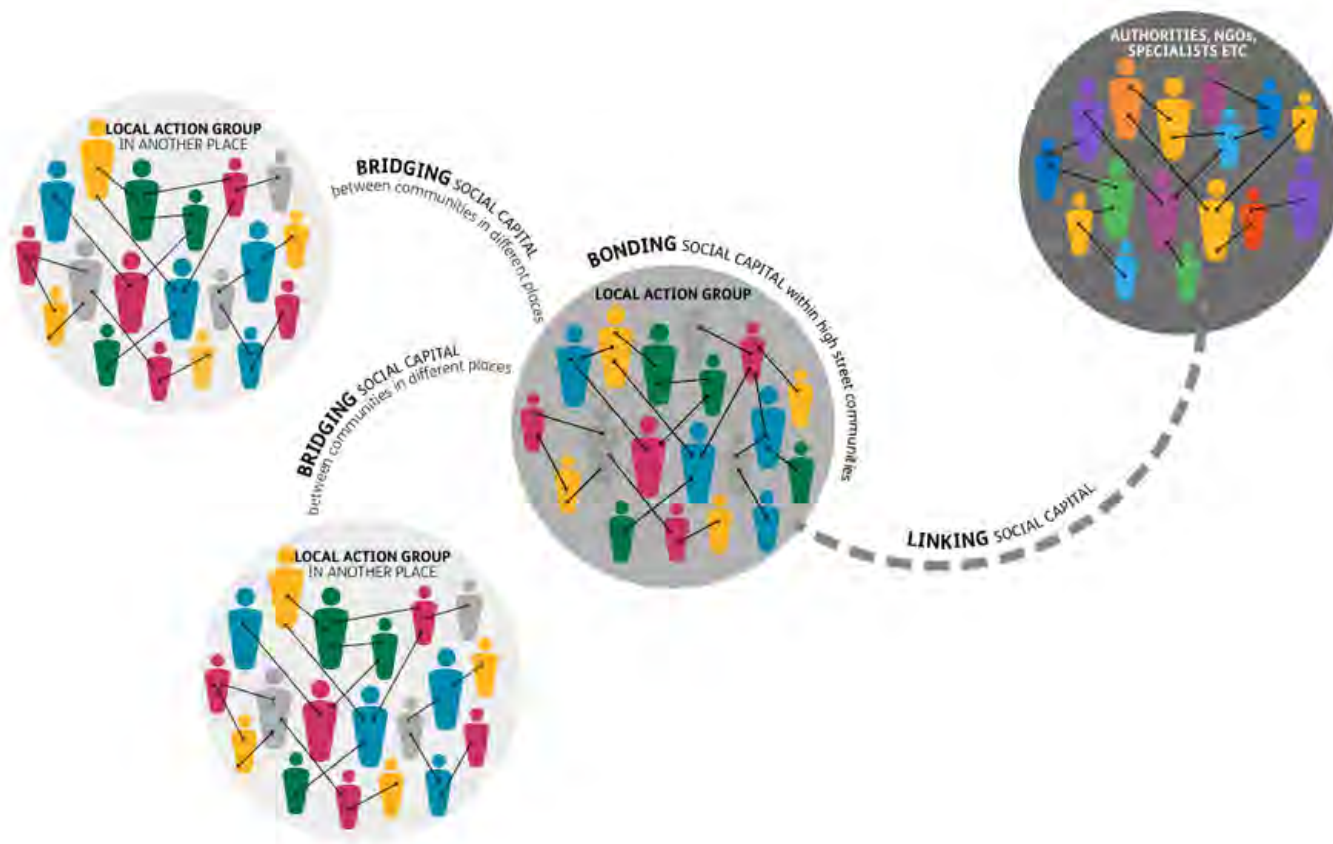
Social capital relates to the network of trusting relationships among people in a place, along with the public realm, buildings and their uses that support those connections. These relationships increase the sharing of experiences, skills and knowledges. The first theme in the Place Change Model is about people, their connections and the nature of their relationships:

**Bonding** – are there any social groups that share a sense of identity, values, trust, cooperation etc?

**Bridging** – do any of these groups connect, cooperate and share their social capital with other groups in different places?

**Linking** – are any of these groups connected to professional organisations, local or national government?

The desired outcome from the Place Change Model is to enable, develop and strengthen these relationships, and to build people’s bond with and to their high street by sharing skills, experience and knowledge.



### Developing Leadership - Organisational structures

It is critical that Local Action Groups have a clear sense of ownership and control over the co-production process. MAG has designed this approach to build skills and confidence in communities to enable this. Local Action Groups will be different in each place to reflect their context. A RACI matrix may help each community create the right organisational structure for their Local Action Group:

**Responsible:** individual or organisation leading the co-production process.

**Accountable:** individual or organisation accountable for delivering the process. They give permission for it to start or approve the results, delivery and evaluation.

**Contributor:** individual or organisation taking part in the process. They may be a stakeholder or specialist that supports the process with experience and knowledge.

**Informed:** individuals and organisations who need to be made aware of the process and when an activity has important consequences for any of the people involved.

	RESPONSIBLE	ACCOUNTABLE	CONTRIBUTOR	INFORMED
Community representatives	?		X	
Councillors and MLAs		?		
Residents - children and young people to older generations			X	X
Local Chamber of Commerce and Industry	?		X	
Businesses and services – owners, operators, investors			X	X
Social enterprises and circular economies			X	X
3rd sector voluntary groups			X	X
Town centre / BID managers			X	
Service providers (housing, health, education etc.)			X	X
Council (planning, community, heritage etc.)	?	?	X	
Department for Communities – Regeneration and Housing Directorate	?	?	X	
DAERA - Rural Development Programme Management Branch	?	?	X	
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	?	?	X	X
Department for Infrastructure			X	
High Street Task Force (TEO)	?	?	X	



## Initiating Engagement

The Local Action Group will identify existing networks of people and groups, where and when they meet and how they communicate with each other. Local and national government offices, business associations and third sector organisations have lists of relevant groups and their contact information. Local and social media can be used to get things started and involve the wider community.

Consider and ask how these different audiences would prefer to be engaged, and how much time and resource they can put to this. This is particularly important for children, teenagers, older and disabled people who can often be excluded from these initiatives. The wellbeing of

Northern Ireland's children and young people is a key aim of this process and it is important that they are fully involved and their voices heard. Their involvement also presents an educational opportunity. There are several overarching standards for engaging children and young people in the **Placemaking engaging children and young people**. Consider how to overcome any barriers such as language, literacy and neurodiversity. The Local Action Group need to ensure equal opportunity for the nine equality categories in **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**. A range of approaches need to be taken to ensure that no groups are excluded including thoughtful consideration of workshop and meeting venues.

Photo Captions: Urban Villages: 1. School engagement, south Belfast; 2. Expecting something engagement, East Belfast; 3. Talkeoke engagement, Colin; 4. Engagement event, Derry~Londonderry; 5. Stakeholder engagement, Derry~Londonderry



# Call to Action

Reviving our places can only come from communities being at the heart of reimagining sustainable Living High Streets. The time is right to take a fresh approach to our high streets and move forward with an informed understanding of the people-place connections. While there are common issues across our villages, towns and city centres, each must reflect its own distinct context in terms of people and place.

The Living High Streets Craft Kit will guide and support communities in developing a shared understanding of their needs, making the most of their existing assets and stripping out the things that negatively affect them. The aim is to enable all places to be thriving and socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. To use it effectively, broad participation will be needed, along with leadership and facilitation by people who understand the placemaking approach.

The Craft Kit emphasises the importance of constant evaluation of the Living High Streets Framework, revisiting and refining it so that the village, town or city centre grows sustainably in the short, medium and long-term. The process will also provide future continuity with a growing sense of local ownership and pride in place.

It is important to acknowledge that the outcomes from the engagement process are valuable for building social capital, where people come together to tackle common concerns. The emerging Living High Streets will reflect the purpose and meaning each community brings to life.

It is acknowledged that this process will require resources, but this may be using existing resources differently and seeking new resources to fill any gaps in skills, knowledge and experience. It is critical that the process is embraced at a regional level across Northern Ireland, and each stage properly supported with local community participation.

Opportunities will emerge through the process to implement 'tactical' or 'pop-up' approaches which are designed to introduce change through an experimental, flexible and inclusive method. These approaches can form part of the Living High Streets process, providing people with opportunities to share their own experiences of their places and to engage them in practical improvements.

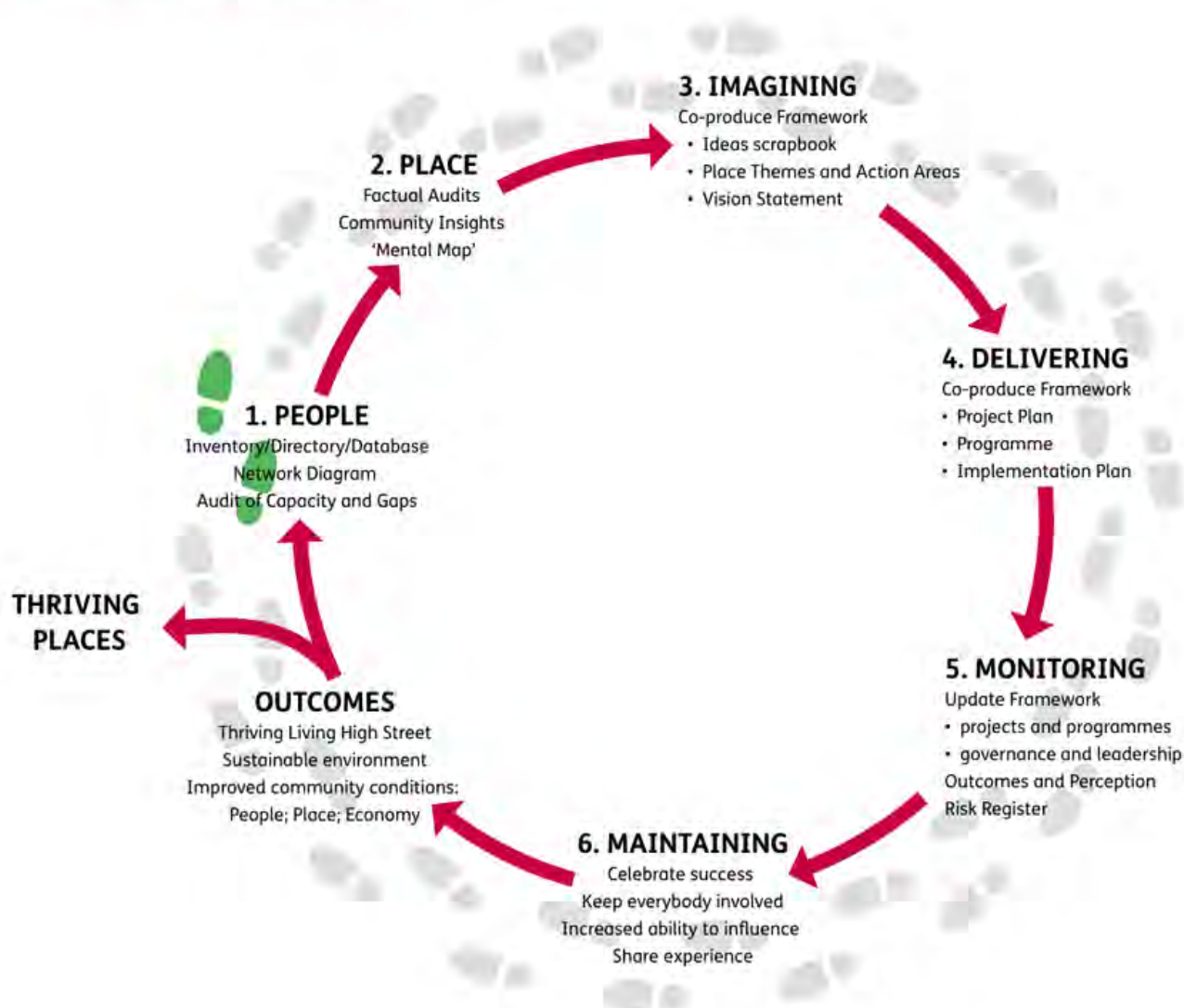
# Living High Streets

## PART TWO - Questions and Considerations



# Co-Producing Your Living High Streets

This Craftbook sets out the placemaking process in detail to guide Local Action Groups and expert facilitators in the co-production of a Living High Streets Framework. The process includes the six themes from the Place Change Model and twenty-one simple but challenging questions for communities with prompts to guide conversations about their future high streets.





The complexity of placemaking will be challenging for everybody, which is why we have devised a method to manage conversations so that everyone has an opportunity to meaningfully contribute. It is based on de Bono's 'Thinking Hats' method which represents different ways of looking at places and can be used to keep conversations alive and stop strong voices derailing the process or stifling wider discussions. We ask Local Action Groups and expert facilitators to keep discussions focussed as follows:

**The White Hat** is concerned with 'collecting facts' which is a neutral beginning to the process which everyone will find easy to contribute to.

**The Red Hat** is concerned with 'feelings' about places, activities or ideas which will be more challenging.

**The Yellow Hat** is concerned with being positive, looking for benefits and imagining what the high street 'could become'?

**The Green Hat** is concerned with creative thinking, asking 'what can we do here' and 'what will our place be like?'

**The Blue Hat** is concerned with planning and shaping ideas, asking 'where and how would we make changes?'

**The Black Hat** is concerned with evaluation, resolution, decision making and delivery.

**The Brown Hat** - is concerned with stewardship, valuing, supporting and keeping the living high street relevant.

In practice, if participants are discussing a question focussed on what they know about their place, it would be disruptive to go off on a tangent about design ideas. Similarly, when discussing design ideas, tangents about 'practicability' would also be unhelpful. There will be opportunities to discuss everything in the process which the facilitators should outline at each workshop. It is not intended to use the 'hats' literally but the facilitators should think about which 'hats' fit each question and how the discussion should be focussed. It might be helpful to colour match workshop materials like Post-it notes to the 'hats'.



There are several approaches the Local Action Group can take to pose and work through the questions, which will vary depending on the context, need and resources of each place and stage of the process.

The Local Action Group should start by:

- Information gathering and tasking people to collate existing data.
- Considering questionnaires to collect information and ideas.
- Inviting individuals and groups to walk around their places to undertake original surveys.
- Considering the best way to engage with communities:
  - Interviews can be conducted and include audio and video recording.
  - Web searches can be made to collate ideas.
  - People meet and participate in workshops.

The workshops are where the conversations will primarily take place, and all the information and ideas gathered through the other approaches should always be available to them. An essential part of the process is the accumulation of knowledge and the sharing of points of view.

It is a snapshot in time and the issues raised will be central to everyone's lives. As the process unfolds, people should feel:

- Greater responsibility for their place.
- Increasing confidence and control.
- Growing optimism.

Running workshops is a key part of the process. However, placemaking discussions are novel for most people and not everyone will want to attend meetings straight away.

It is therefore important to tailor the approach to match diverse communities. It might be right for special interest groups, schools, older people etc to run independent workshops, so long as everything comes together in a single conversation as part of that theme.

The following is a guiding structure for the workshops, setting out advice and key requirements:

- Display all background information in the room.
- Introduce the overall process and purpose of each workshop to the whole gathering.
- Work in groups of six (8 maximum) with one facilitator per two groups.
- While discussing the questions, ask participants to record every idea separately on Post-it notes in a few words - it could be useful to match their colour to the Thinking Hats.
- Keep reminding people to record their thoughts continuously in the session, being mindful that some may need help. This can be written, drawn or spoken.

- Do not be afraid of silences – it is an opportunity to ask people to write their thoughts down and think about what others have said.
- If the conversation stalls, use the suggested prompts – but keep the facilitation light-touch and try not to lead. Participants need to grow as a group and not look to the facilitator for ‘permission’.
- At the end of an exercise and session, ask groups to share their thoughts with the room. During this conversation, again ask participants to continue noting their thoughts down.
- After the session, facilitators should thematise all the captured thought and assemble them on a display.
- The next session should be at least a week later to allow people to digest what they have learned from each other.
- At the next session, display the thematised work on a ‘canvas’ and ask people to spend time looking at it. Open with a discussion on what they feel about it and would want to add – remember which hat it relates to and add to that theme.
- Conversations will move off subject from time to time, especially looking back on earlier sessions. Record those thoughts and add to right subject before getting back on track. This is when the ‘hats’ become useful.
- People may have sent photos with comments via social media invitations, taken them on walking workshops or brought back to sessions after thinking about what they did at an earlier one. Thematise these too and add them to the Post-it displays.

Additional guidance can be found in **‘Healthy Places, Healthy Children’** to guide work with young people. It is a useful set of tools built around Key Stage 2 produced by Belfast Healthy Cities in collaboration with the Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Education Authority.

Some ideas will bring challenges that are common to many high streets. Opportunities may come from cultural and habitual changes that the Local Action Group can encourage locally. Others may require policy, funding or legislative changes, or other external intervention. It is likely that ‘linking social capital’ by reaching out to the NI High Street Task Force, local or central government, Non -Government Organisations (NGOs) or specialists could help. There may also be some opportunities for ‘bridging social capital’ by asking for advice from other Local Action Groups in different places.

# Theme One

## People: growing your skills and resources



Photo Captions: Urban Villages: 1. Talkeoke engagement, Colin; 2. Engagement, East Belfast; 3. Talkeoke engagement, Colin; 4. Talkeoke engagement, Colin; 5. Stakeholder engagement

## Purpose: Building social capital around Living High Streets

The aim is to involve as many people as possible, including residents, businesses, service providers, stakeholders and the authorities responsible for the administration of places. This is the first step to building social capital, with opportunities for different communities of interest to connect, see the high street through each other's eyes, get an idea of how it affects their lives and what it means to them. It is important that no group or individual dominates the conversations.

### Outcomes and Outputs

This stage should build relationships and trust.

Anticipated results will include:

- **Insights** into what the high street means to different people.
- **Inventory** of individuals and groups interested in, connected to and using the high street regularly.
- **Network diagram** of formal and informal connections between various parts of the community.
- **Audit of capacity** – skills, knowledge, experience and availability.
- **Highlighting gaps** where capacity building will be needed.

Formally record all this information and keep it updated throughout the process.

### Ways of working together

Meeting with groups and individuals to discuss the questions gives an opportunity to introduce the Living High Street process and begin connecting people together around a joint initiative. Working through this theme will help people understand the skills and capacity they may not recognise they have. It will show them how and where they can make positive contributions to the process.

The Local Action Group may wish to develop their own questionnaires. Social media is an effective way of connecting, linking and gathering information through questionnaires. It is also useful to go to where people are doing other things:

- Libraries; local history groups; mothers and babies; environmental groups; schools etc.
- Holding pop-up events in the high street and public spaces.
- Exhibiting information in shop windows and public buildings.
- Potentially using vacant shops as temporary project centres.

Different people are likely to want to take part in diverse ways subject to their preferences. Some may just want to be informed and others may choose to volunteer for specific tasks that they have a talent for. At this stage we are simply looking to understand people's differences and to share them across the community. This is about building trust. In the Place Theme, we will look at how to build consensus.



Photo Captions: 1. Local services and facilities, Ballyhackamore, Belfast; 2. Family friendly streets, Carlingford; 3. Celebrating differences, Entries public art, Belfast; 4. Shop local, Ballyhackamore, Belfast; 5. Accessibility for all - Belfast Healthy Cities walk assessment of Belfast City Centre with RNIB

## Question 1: Who is your high street for?

A successful Living High Street should serve everybody's needs. Thinking about the wider community, build a picture of who uses the high street and who it could serve.

### Additional Prompts

- What do they do there – work, shop, play, meet, eat, learn, live, relax etc.
- When do they use it?
- Are there certain times of the day or week that more people use it?
- Does it serve all their needs?
- Where do they live and how do they get there?
- How well do they mix and fit in together?
- Who is not involved now – do they not feel they belong, is transport an issue or is there nothing for them?

Keep in mind the vulnerable and those with protected characteristics, children and young people, residents, workers, business owners, service providers, visitors and even people passing through.



## Question 2: How do we involve people?

The process will encourage natural expansion of community networks as word spreads, connections are made, and the number and diversity of participants increases. Consider how this process can be improved and reach people that are often overlooked.

### Additional Prompts

- What groups and networks already exist?
- How and where do people come together?
- Who is not involved now?
- Are there local social media or digital platforms already set up?
- What events and activities are planned that could provide a link to communities?
- What are the potential barriers to diverse groups?
- Do we need to offer incentives – food, speakers, funding for social media etc?

Start developing an inventory and network diagram of connections with the participants and publicise it as it grows.





### Question 3:

## How do we better connect people to their high streets?

Successful Living High Streets provide communities with what they need to thrive which makes being able to connect to it an important consideration. However, connecting to the high street can mean different things to different people. It can range from the nostalgic to physical, social, economic and increasingly digital. Consider how different connections can be set up and improved.

### Additional Prompts

- Do people have historic connections to the place?
- Do people have a say in their place, and can they contribute if they choose to?
- Where do people meet and are they attractive and safe places?
- Are businesses connected to the community?
- Are businesses connected to each other?
- Is there a digital directory, local website, Facebook page to connect to community groups, services, activities and businesses?
- Is it easy to get to your high street?
- Is lack of good transport or its cost a barrier?
- Is the public realm walkable and accessible?
- Are there cycling facilities and secure parking?



## Question 4: What skills and experience do we have?

Every community will have a huge amount of skill, knowledge and experience, although people may not appreciate their value or how they can be shared in the development their Living High Streets. The Local Action Group may wish to use tools like Capacity Check or develop their own questionnaires to address this question.

### Additional Prompts

- What skills do you have that are relevant to your high street?
- Can you draw; photograph; make things; record; film etc?
- Can you inspire others to take part?
- Skills include Leadership; Organisation; Design; Creativity; Placemaking; Environmental; Business; Volunteering; Local and historic knowledge; Digital etc.
- Do you know anyone with relevant skills and experience that could be involved?
- What time can you commit to - this will change and may be seasonal; relate to school times; little and often; weekends; potential secondment etc.



## Question 5:

### Where do we find the skills and talents we are missing?

The audit coming out of the last question will have begun highlighting the resources that are missing or need strengthening. Build this list of gaps in the audit and think about how to deal with them.

#### Additional Prompts

- What is missing?
- What needs strengthening?
- Do we have skills and ability to set up a training programme?
- Do we have mentors in the community?
- Can schools and colleges help?
- Who can help (bridging and linking capital)?
- Can we share resources with other places?
- Can we learn from other communities?
- Do we need short term expertise - should we employ someone?
- How do we build succession into the process?

To continuously strengthen capacity, it will be important to return to this question regularly and update the responses.



# Theme Two

## Place: knowing your high street



Photo Captions: 1. Belfast Healthy Cities photovoice wall; 2. Belfast Healthy Cities walk assessment of Belfast City Centre with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB); 3. Better Bedford Street engagement in pop up space, Belfast; 4. Community engagement event, North Belfast Urban Village; 5. Better Bedford Street walkabout, Belfast

## Purpose: Building a shared understanding of your high street through local knowledge, perceptions and audits of existing assets and activities

Everyone has a different view of their place, and it is important to explore these openly to ensure everyone is talking about the same place when they say 'the High Street'. The aim is to share information, knowledge and feelings to understand what the high street means to different people and to build a picture of the essential qualities of each place. There are many good practice approaches to collating this material. However, it is important to cherish the individuality and uniqueness of places so that we develop 'right practice' for each Living High Street.

Living High Streets are diverse and serve a range of community needs. They are more than a row of shops, and the Local Action Group needs to treat them as neighbourhoods with soft edges.

### Outcomes and Outputs

This theme focusses on sharing knowledge and judgements to build a consensus on the high street **today**. It is important that this picture is mapped out to ensure that everyone has the same place in mind. Anticipated results will include:

- A range of **Factual Audits** on the physical place, its history, activities, connectivity, health and economy.
- A **Community Insights** report on how the high street supports people and is perceived by them.

- A **Mental Map** of the high street, illustrating its edges, adjoining neighbourhoods and connections to the wider place.

### Ways of working together

This theme is about sharing, considering and discussing people's different knowledge, values and feeling about their high street. It is also about agreeing a set of high-level shared goals that address community needs. The Local Action Group can post the questions on social media, canvas ideas in the street, public buildings and at events, as well as working with different ingroups such as schools, clubs, older person communities etc. However, it is the intention that these questions will be presented at facilitated workshops with participants walking the streets recording their observations and thoughts before discussing them together in groups. All observations and thoughts from other sources should be available and included in the community discussion.

The questions fall into two parts which requires a minimum of two public workshops. The first eases people into the process with a neutral sharing of information about the high street and thoughts about its sustainability – questions 6-8. This work will be thematised and presented to the next workshop. The second can be more challenging and asks people to share their feelings about their place, think about shared goals and draw up a map defining the Living High Street neighbourhood – questions 9-11. There should be a minimum of a week between these two workshops to allow people to consider what they have learned from each other.

## Question 6:

### What do you know about your high street?

This question is primarily about factual things. Walk around the high street making individual notes on Post-its or recording sound bites about the things you see and think are important to bring back to a group discussion. Take photographs too and caption them. In workshop groups, sketch out a map that illustrates where these things are.

#### Additional Prompts

- What do you think are the essential qualities here?
- What make this place distinctive?
- Buildings – quality type, size, style and condition.
- Buildings uses – are upper floors different?
- What kind of shops and service - are there other types of businesses?
- Are there any health services, dentists, opticians etc?
- Recreation and leisure including community activities and clubs.
- Living on the high street – houses, apartments and living over the shop.
- Public spaces – quality, type, size, facilities and uses.
- Is there an outdoor market – how does it work?
- Heritage – what has changed?
- Streets – pedestrianised, one-way, busy/quiet, width, parking etc.
- Pavements – quality, accessible, width, cluttered, well lit, trees etc.
- Facilities - cycle lanes/parking, bus stops, benches, public toilets etc.
- Are there barriers to movement – busy roads, pedestrian guard rails, pavement parking etc?
- Maintenance – litter, bins, graffiti, building condition etc.
- Opening hours of businesses and public buildings.
- Do you think that this is an inclusive place – think about gender, disability, younger and older people?

## Question 7: How and why do people use your high street?

This question is about habits and opinions. While many responses will be neutral and factual (I work here), this is the place to share opinions too (I like that shop).

### Additional Prompts

- Why do you go to town, how often and what do you do when you are here?
- What do you like about your high street?
- Where is your favourite place to go and why?
- How do you get to the high street – walk, cycle, bus, car, train, taxi?
- Do you have a preferred route - would you use the same route after dark?
- Is there a good pedestrian network?
- Are there leisure facilities – cinemas, swimming pools, tennis courts etc?
- What do you think is missing – think beyond retail?
- Why do you think people are not visiting or using the high street – who are they?
- What are locals and visitors looking for?
- Are there festivals and other events celebrated here?
- Are there free things to take part in?
- What impact do visitors and tourists have?



## Question 8:

### To what extent is your high street socially, environmentally and economically 'sustainable'?

This open question is intended to raise awareness and initiate discussion on forms of sustainability relevant to the high street. This discussion could form the basis of a community sustainability plan.

#### Additional Prompts

- Environment – what do we know about our landscape; biodiversity; water and air quality etc?
- Social – what do we know about connections and relationships; equity; diversity; liveability; quality of life; wellbeing; health etc?
- Economy – what do we know about the diversity of uses and opportunities; availability and quality of commercial space; business success; employment etc?
- What data do we have?
- Are there any policies for our place?
- Is public transport and active travel well supported?
- Are we promoting green energy use and reducing our carbon footprint?
- Are we making the most of embodied energy – supporting, restoring and repurposing existing buildings and structures?
- Are we reducing waste and recycling effectively?
- Do we have experts among us – professionals; bird watchers etc; community groups; heritage groups; up-cyclers; and schools and youth groups etc.?
- Are we developing a circular economy?
- Do you have community food growing or orchards?



## Question 9:

### What do you 'feel' about your high street?

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a feeling and an opinion. Believing that the high street needs more shops (an opinion) is different from feeling the emptiness of a high street (a feeling). This question is about emotional responses. How people 'feel' affects behaviours, choices and wellbeing, which in turns affects the whole community.

Carry this exercise out in the streets. Do not 'think' too hard but walk around noting your immediate responses to what you see and experience.

#### Additional Prompts

- Do you feel welcome?
- Do you feel like you belong here?
- What do you feel about the people here?
- Do the seasons change your feelings about the place?
- How did you feel about this place in the past?
- Memories - what was the best time you spent here?
- Reminiscence - what was it like before, how has it changed and where do you think it is going?
- Do you feel safe here?
- Do you feel safe here at night?
- Do you feel your children or parents would be safe here?
- Does this place feel successful?

It might be important to collect visitor perceptions which can be done through a simple questionnaire.



## Question 10: How do we agree shared goals?

Living High Streets bring everybody together to meet many of their various needs, day and night, across the year. With such a complex role, they can easily become congested places which need good management to ensure they stay functional and attractive for everyone.

This question is about agreeing a set of high-level shared goals that address community needs. These goals will inform the necessary indicators which will need to be revisited, monitored and developed throughout the process.

### Additional Prompts

- What are your goals for the Living High Street as a shopkeeper, café owner, children and young people, older generation, visitors, office workers, residents, hairdresser etc?
- What are the 'essential qualities' of our Place?
- Landscape, culture and heritage - the 'seed' and 'soul' of the place.
- Togetherness, collaboration and living well - the fundamental human needs to be together.
- Being safe and welcoming – an accessible public realm.
- Multi-layered sense of purpose and meaning.
- Adaptable buildings and spaces.
- Well serviced and connected.
- Being sustainable - social, environmental and economic.
- How do we protect the essential qualities here?



## Question 11: Where and what is your high street?

Create a **Mental Map** of your high street neighbourhood. Start with people drawing and sharing the map in their mind to understanding different views. Go outside as a group and walk around to consider the different things that should go into the map. It is important that this map should be a freehand diagram rather than an exact plan. This is because this will show how people perceive their place and relationships between things in their high street. This exercise will illustrate what is important to people and their perception of distance between places.

Think of the high street as a neighbourhood and consider all the things that add up to why you visit or live around the high street. Also think about how it might change shape at night, through the seasons or during festivals – these are the reason the edges need to be soft.

### Additional Prompts

- Where is the core of your high street and the neighbourhood that supports it?
- Where are the edges of the areas that are different from it – it's ok for there to be an uncertain 'gap' between them!
- What are the main routes through and the connections out?
- Building edges (active or blank) and landmarks (may be in the distance)
- Street and pedestrian network, meeting points and spaces
- Cycling routes and facilities.
- Market and festival spaces
- Public transport – where are the routes, stations or stops
- Landscape features like gardens, parks, rivers and important views.
- Main uses and attractions in the buildings and spaces.
- Empty sites and derelict buildings.
- Any negatives like smell, noise, danger, ugliness, boring, barriers etc

While the map should be simple, it must illustrate all the important parts and meaningful aspects of the neighbourhood.

# Theme Three

## Imagining: what your high street could become

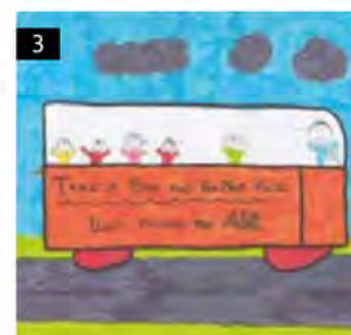


Photo Captions: 1. Community engagement event, North Belfast Urban Village; 2. Capturing discussions in Wordclouds; 3. Belfast Healthy Cities Take A Bus drawing, Extract from A Plan Fit for Children: 2017; 4. Children's event at Artisan Market in the courtyard of Down Museum, Downpatrick; 5. Engagement event, South Belfast Urban Village

## Purpose: Creatively producing ideas of what your high street could become, what it will look like and how it might evolve

The main objective is to produce and test ideas to deliver a 'Living High Street', giving an opportunity for everyone to share their aspirations and discuss their needs.

The Local Action Group should expect and tolerate natural contradictions and differing interest throughout this process because Living High Streets serve many functions. This process allows the net to be cast wide for ideas and thinking, followed by reasoned conversations to arrive at a consensus on what needs and can be done. The process encourages 'designerly' thinking, recognising that this collaborative process is not time barred. The aim of these questions is to get people to think differently and constructively about the future of their high street.

### Outcomes and Outputs

This theme focusses on sharing ideas and developing a consensus on key themes and action areas to be taken forward into a Vision for the Living High Street. Anticipated results will include:

- An **Ideas Scrapbook** assembled out of the first thoughts and conversations on what makes a good place.
- Agreed key **Place Themes** with a statement for each one and identified **Action Areas** marked on the high street map.
- A **Vision Statement** supported by broad long-term 'Goals' and more focussed 'Objectives' based on conversations of what the high street could become.

### Ways of working together

This theme is about being creative with ideas. Following the format in the People Theme, the Local action Group can post the questions on social media, canvas ideas in the street, public buildings and at events, as well as working with separate groups. However, again, it is the intention that these questions be presented at facilitated community workshops and incorporating ideas from other groups. These questions fall into two parts which requires a minimum of two public workshops.

The first workshop is designed to get participants thinking positively about their place - questions 12-13. While it can seem useful to show good examples of other places, it is likely to be better for group members to bring their own ideas and build their own interest and expertise of places. Having internet access in workshops will enable people to look for examples of the things they are interested in and be able to discuss them at once with others. This work will be thematised into an **Ideas Scrapbook** and presented to the next workshop.

The second workshop will focus on questions 14-15 to identify key **Place Themes** with a statement for each one, identify **Action Areas**. This workshop will also co-produce a Vision and develop the broad Goals from question 10 along with Objectives. A break of at least a week is recommended between workshops to allow for reflection. This is a further opportunity to see the high street through other people's eyes to get an idea of what they need from it and how it can be developed to meet those needs.

## Question 12: What makes a good high street?

This open question is an invitation to imagine what a good high street would be like and discuss what that means to you. Inspiration could come from places visited, seen on film or imagined. Try to hold the feelings they evoke at the forefront of your mind as you work through all the questions in this theme. Importantly, share and pool these memories with others to generate a collective and unique **spirit of place**.

### Additional Prompts

- What are your favourite high streets and why?
- Try to think about these things more in terms of **needs** before **wants**.
- Think about the needs of different people as well as your own journey through life.
- What makes you feel connected to places?
- What makes one place different to another?
- What do **Living High Streets** mean to you?
- What would make a good place to grow up in and to age well in?
- What about the quality of buildings and streets; spaces and environments; facilities and services; movement and accessibility.

Internet access could be useful to collect images, discussing why they are important and relevant to this place.



## **Question 13:**

### **What do you like about your high street?**

The key thing is to get a shared awareness of the positive qualities for your place. Again, get out into the streets to remind yourself of what is there and share these thoughts with others.

Discuss and thematise all the ideas from both Question 12 and 13. This is a time to get creative by sketching plans, creating collages, making models and producing a film or audio story.

#### **Additional Prompts**

- What makes you proud?
- What do you enjoy?
- What things hold meaning for you?
- Do you have a sense of belonging?
- Think about the little things that trigger memories: shopfronts, smell of baking bread, the friendly chemist, historic faded signs, tree stumps etc.
- Buildings – the architecture or just a door, window or ornament etc.
- Public spaces – seats, trees, ornament etc.
- Views – near and far.
- People – family, friends or wider community.
- Feeling welcome and safe.

## Question 14: What could we do here?

This question is an opportunity to assess ideas and thoughts on what you think should be kept, changed or added to the high street area. When reviewing these ideas together, divide them into what you think are **needs** and **wants**. The outcomes might be surprising – for example:

- Different shop opening times might be perceived as more of a need than a want.
- Being able to park in a particular place might be more of a convenient want than a need.

Questioning the ideas in this way can help break from convention, offering a more inclusive ways of thinking about change. Challenging and addressing the **wants** that are compromising the **needs** can create a more successful place:

- Increasing hospitality and night-time economy can affect and compromise the development of town centre living.
- Creating pedestrianisation and one-way traffic management schemes can negatively affect accessibility and place character.

Agree key **Themes** with a statement for each one and mark 'Action Areas' on the high street map.

### Additional Prompts

- How do we support people throughout their lives?
- What would make this an attractive place to live?
- How do we increase active movement?
- How do we improve the visitor offer?
- How do we increase activity for trade, work and volunteering?
- How do we increase the sense of safety and welcome?



## Question 15: What could your high street look and feel like?

This follow-on question is about the quality of place you would like to see created. Think of it as preparing a brief for future designers.

Include thoughts on architecture and landscape design, along with public art, activities and events. Think about the details, textures and colours you like in your place and others you have seen. Consider both traditional and contemporary design examples. Bring images from home, make collages from magazines and access the web to create an ideas scrapbook based on these questions.

The conclusion of this theme should be the production of a collective **Vision Statement** with objectives and goals. This is a vision of what the place could become, based on the needs of this and future generations. The facilitation team can help to interpret and illustrate these ideas.

# Theme Four

## Delivering: how to focus & prioritise



Photo Captions: 1. Street art to create a new sense of place in town centres designed by Daisy Chain Inc, Ballymoney; 2. Multi-layered community events and activities space, CS Lewis Square, Belfast; 3. Active travel on the Belfast Cycle Network, Grosvenor Road, Belfast; 4. Street front parkour engagement event for children and young people, Belfast; 5. Street art to create a new sense of place in town centres designed by Daisy Chain Inc, Limavady

## Purpose: Developing a shared understanding of how the change process works to support a focussed programme of projects and activities

The main objective is to develop a **Living High Streets Framework** out of the Vision which will co-ordinate a potentially wide range of actions, activities and unplanned challenges over time. The Framework should include consideration of existing plans and developments, ongoing stewardship activities, alongside the new ideas generated. It may also include consideration of delivery partnerships, budgets, funding sources, business plans etc.

This theme is about filtering ideas by seeing how they could best address the Vision Statement, goals and objectives. Importantly, start with the outputs from the Imagining Theme and develop them into a Project Plan. The resources to deliver it must be looked for based on the agreed Project Plan, not the other way around. This theme differs from the others. The whole community will be involved in shaping the Framework. However, the Local Action Group will be responsible for detailed and ongoing development of the Framework. More skills and resources can be sought for this detailed work from the NI High Street Task Force, local or

central government, NGOs or specialists as well as seeking advice from other Local Action Groups.

It is critical that the Local Action Group keeps everyone informed and involved with key decisions throughout this process.

## Outcomes and Outputs

The desired results from this part of the process is a **Living High Streets Framework** of action areas and supporting themes that loosely organise the ideas into a sequence of actions, interventions and activities. Outputs include:

- **Project Plan** – includes the place themes, action areas, physical projects and/or programmes and activities that address the goals and objectives in the Vision Statement using the Ideas Scrapbook.
- **Programme** - a series of Now, Sooner & Later actions.
- **Implementation Plan** - responsibilities, resources needed (skills and funding) and methods.

These should complete the Living High Streets Framework alongside the Vision Statement and Ideas Scrapbook.

## Ways of working together

These **Framework** shaping discussions could be facilitated in a single workshop to draw together the action areas, physical projects and activities that together will create a sustainable implementation plan. A break of at least a week is recommended from Theme three to allow for reflection.

Grouping ideas for projects, activities and programmes can be challenging but will help focus the opportunities that would make a difference. One way is to use Post-it or spider diagrams and plans to map out ideas, photographing each version before moving ideas around. It is unlikely that everything in the Ideas Scrapbook will reach the Project Plan but do not discount good ideas as they may be useful in the future. The Project Plan will benefit from more creative design work but try to stay strategic and not get into the details of specific actions.

The Local Action Group will develop and grow the **Framework** over time to include:

- Strategies – to address area wide changes (movement, public realm, lighting etc.)
- Planning and Development Briefs – to stimulate interest in sites / buildings
- Competitions – to generate and promote ideas (physical, activities, engagement)
- Scheme designs – when ideas and funding are certain
- Funding Applications and Business Plans – to seek and justify resources needed
- Activity programmes – to co-ordinate activities and events
- Volunteering programmes – to extend resources
- Tactical and pop-up opportunities
- Monitoring – measure change, review and refresh

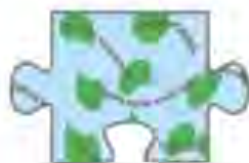
## Question 16: Where could we make changes?

This question is about turning the Vision, Goals and Objectives into a practical Project Plan. While this is a filtering exercise, it is important not to dismiss practical ideas – they may be the only choice down the line. Reviewing the ideas within the Place Themes and Action Areas, draw a simple plan or diagram for change. Look at the ideas in the key themes and think about how they would work together:

- What needs to come first to enable other projects – the catalysts, enablers and activities that prove needs.
- Can be tactical, pop-up, pilot projects and meanwhile uses for buildings and spaces.
- What are the back-up ideas that replace those that do not work?
- Illustrate how connecting themes like movement could pull everything together.

### Additional Prompts

- What kind of changes – landscape, buildings, spaces, landscapes, movement; stewardship?
- What are the hard and soft sites - what is non- negotiable?
- What new spaces are needed and could be created?
- Where could people live – above the shop; new houses; apartments etc.
- Where would new buildings or facilities go?
- How will people move about?
- Consider public arts, events and festivals.



## Question 17:

### How do we prioritise actions?

This question is about expanding the Project Plan by creating a Programme of prioritised actions to prove the practicality of the Framework, build confidence and develop trust. The earlier question started the process on what comes first and what comes later. However, places are complex, and things do not always align as we need them to. A programme will provide a management tool that can deal with these difficulties and help keep everything on the agenda:

- What existing initiatives are already committed - how can we complement and enhance them?
- Name actions as projects (e.g., buildings), strategies (e.g., movement) and activities (e.g., markets) etc.
- Think about the changes in terms of challenges, stakeholders, outputs and outcomes etc.
- Accept that funding and capacity will mean that ideas may not all be deliverable at the same time, but do not dismiss ideas because of this.
- Develop the programme as a series of Now, Sooner and Later actions.

### Additional Prompts

- What is the decision-making strategy?
- Where do we put our focus - key themes?
- What is the logical order of things?
- What barriers and risks exist?
- How much resource is there within organisations, partners and collaborators?
- How can we do existing things differently to improve outcomes and confidence?
- What tactical, pop-up or pilot projects could be trialled to evaluate the viability of initiatives, gain traction and support?

## Question 18: How do we deliver action?

The Project Plan and Programme set out **what and when**. This question is about creating an Implementation Plan and asks **who** will be responsible for making a project happen and **how** they will achieve it. Consider the following for all the projects, activities and programmes in the Project Plan:

- Who needs to be involved – do they have the experience, skills and capacity to deliver the tasks?
- The RACI matrix may help find a lead that is responsible, a partnership or a charter that everyone signs up to.
- Where do we find people to fill the gaps?
- Whether we need to commission professional help?
- Empowering alternative groups to deliver sustainable civic leadership and stewardship.
- Would design competitions usefully bring skills to the table?
- How do we form and structure delivery groups or organisations - legal issues, charities, partnership etc.
- What approaches are already working well?
- Value the good things and work on them – celebrate success.
- Are there any good case studies or examples from which we can learn?
- How do we make land / sites / buildings available for change – ownerships, leases, covenants, rights of way etc?
- How do we get best value from existing resources, attract new investment and bid for funding?
- Small ideas can generate their own momentum.

Along with the Project Plan and Programme, the Implementation Plan is the working part of the Living High Streets Framework. All three should be in a continuous state of update, revision and development.

# Theme Five

## Monitoring: confirming progress



Photo Captions: 1, 2, 3 and 5 Stakeholder engagement, Urban Villages  
4. Academy of Urbanism, Derry~Londonderry



## Purpose: Evaluating outcomes, perceptions, and refreshing outcomes and goals

The main objective in this theme is evaluating progress and resolving issues. While these are primarily questions for the Local Action Group to address, the wider community will be naturally feeding information into the evaluation process and should be receiving regular updates on progress. Although this is a reality check on progress, it should remain a positive process that looks at successes as well as challenges.

### Outcomes and Outputs

The main outcomes will be updates to the Project Plan, Programme and Implementation Plan. Added outputs might include:

- **Framework Update** – naming and communicating key achievements, milestones and level of engagement.
- **Outcomes and Perceptions** – community insights.
- **Risk Register** - showing low, medium and high risks, proposed mitigation, and any implications (governance and leadership, finance, resource, legal etc.)

### Ways of working together

The Local Action Group need to keep the wider community informed on progress.

The Framework will also have indicators, developed from the agreed goals, which relate to community perceptions – safety, ease of movement, quality of the environment, business success etc. This data can be collected by surveys, a constant social media presence and from special interest sub-groups working to the Action Group. It would also be useful to hold community meeting periodically to discuss question 19 and other questions that need refreshing in conversation.

An underestimated part of delivering change is governance and managing capacity, along with available resources. It is important to be realistic about what can be achieved, so do not be afraid to adjust projects, activities and programmes if it will improve outcomes. The Local Action Group should review and rotate their membership and governance to ensure the structure and capacity continues to be appropriate and sustainable. Consider the RACI matrix as part of the review at a Framework level as well as at project and programme level. Take care to balance paid and voluntary inputs to ensure responsibility and recognition are addressed.

## Question 19:

### How do we know when we have Living High Streets?

This question is about measuring success which will mean different things in separate places. Key to the process will be sharing what worked and what did not work to improve the Framework. Select achievable indicators to match the vision, goals and objectives, remembering to always underpin them with sustainability outcomes. Consider factors like:

- More and different people coming to your Living High Street – do they stay for longer and do more things?
- Increasing sense of safety and belonging along with being inclusive and welcoming.
- More people choosing to live in and around the high street.
- Businesses thriving, diversifying and employing more people.
- Increasing quality of the environment.
- Increasing accessibility and active travel.
- Increasing levels of community wellbeing.
- Additional Prompts
- Is there more happening in your Living High Street now?
- Are you proud of your Living High Street?
- Have you achieved the agreed goals in the Vision?
- Which outcomes are you excelling in?
- Which indicators are you finding more challenging to meet?
- Are there specific barriers to achieving desired outcomes?
- Are there areas in your Living High Street that work well and are there areas that do not work so well?



## Question 20: How could the Local Action Group improve the Living High Streets approach?

It is important to monitor the implementation of the Craft Kit and whether it is making the difference it aimed to achieve. Through its use, the Local Action Groups may find gaps or better ways to engage people in discussing their place and planning for the future.

### Consider:

- Its ease of use with all members of the community – was any group excluded?
- Were the community able to develop an effective Framework?
- Was it easy to achieve shared goals and maintain consensus?
- Has it been sustainable and is the community continuing to reflect on the questions?
- What would you do differently or add to the process?



# Theme Six

## Maintaining: loving your place



Photo Captions: 1. Opening celebrations, Colin Connect Transport Hub and Colin Town Square, Belfast; 2. Pop up interventions, Ormeau Road, Belfast; 3. Enjoying the Living High Street, Lisburn Square; 4. Celebrating shop-eat-enjoy week "Back-in-Bangor"; 5. Maintaining colourful places on Dublin Road, Omagh

## **Purpose: Staying focused, maintaining ambition, keeping everybody involved and celebrating success**

The main objective of this theme is to keep the co-producing process alive and well. Maintaining momentum has its own challenges including capacity, time, skills, energy and funding. Confidence is expected to increase through the process, and it is important to reflect on people's increased ability to influence at various levels.

Communication will continue to be critical using traditional and digital formats along with local ambassadors who can be powerful advocates and promoters for your Living High Street. These may be self-selected volunteers or those employed to represent the place.

Competitions are an effective way to engage with everyone. These could range from photography to flower and produce shows, community festivals and local events or urban orienteering activities like URBINGO. These

competitions could link with nearby towns, villages or communities. It is important to celebrate successes throughout the place change process which can be marked in many ways.

Awards can be set up to recognise and celebrate inspirational champions of local life and their communities. Categories should reflect the place and their community and might include tidy town, best dressed street or shopfront, high street hero, place leader, children and young people achievements etc. They do not necessarily need to have financial rewards. Sharing experiences has benefits at both a local and regional scale. It strengthens community capacity by sharing skills, learning and up-skilling the whole community. 'Bonding social capital' will benefit individuals and the local community. Sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience should be encouraged between different Local Action Groups. Some skills transfer training could evolve into social enterprises.

## Question 21: How do we ensure our Living High Streets lasts?

This question is about staying focused and relevant. Like any plan, it is important to guard against mission drift or allow stronger voices to dominate the process. Maintaining your Living High Streets will need continual nurturing and refreshing. Consider how to keep the community:

- Engaged in the process – recognise that the community will change over time.
- Inspired to take part in delivering projects, stewardship and activities.
- Planning for future projects and programmes.

It will be important to reflect on what has worked and what you would like to see in the future. Everyone should have a stake in their Living High Streets, and it is important to continue reflecting on shared interests. This will keep them relevant and in people's minds. New people may bring fresh ideas or have diverse needs. For example, the community may develop an older or younger demographic, have more people choosing urban living or a visitor economy may grow.

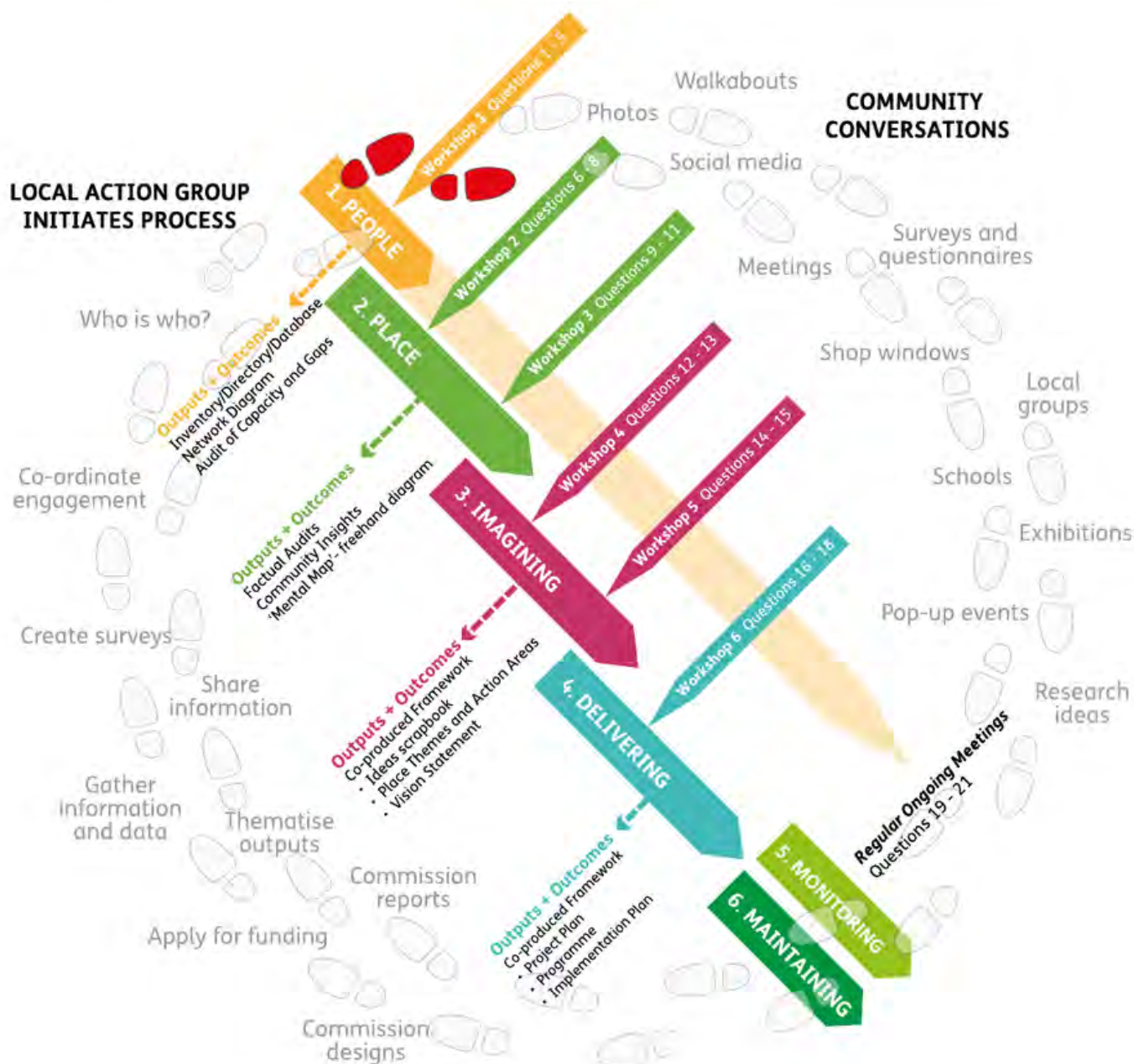
### Consider:

- How the Framework will be updated?
- How can we generate revenue funding?
- What we can share with other Local Action Groups and what can we learn from them?



# The Craft Kit in Action

While the themes work in sequence, there will also be natural overlaps and necessary feedback. The workshops, outputs and outcomes are core activities, and will be supported by a wider range of activities within the community alongside essential tasks with the Local Action Group.



# Appendices

## Compiling the Living High Streets Craft Kit

The Living High Streets Craft Kit was produced through a co-design process that involved many different individuals from the Government Departments and High Streets Task Force within Northern Ireland. This extensive process and the production of this document were facilitated and developed by MAG on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC) and its team who wish to thank all those involved in this collaboration:

- Belfast Healthy Cities
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- Department for Communities (DfC)
- Department for the Economy (DE)
- Department of Finance (DoF)
- Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
- Department of Justice (DoJ)
- Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE NI)
- The Executive Office (TEO)
- The Strategic Investment Board (SIB)

**This co-design process was led by Justine Daly and Graham Marshall, both MAG Expert Advisors with support from:**

Andrew Haley	MAG Chair
Roisin Donnelly	MAG Member
Tara Florence	MAG Expert Advisor
Gerry Millar	MAG Member
Nicola Waddington	MAG Member



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### Part 1 and Part 2 Covers

**Bottom middle:** Urban Villages - TEO

**Bottom right:** : Urban Villages - TEO

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- 1: Belfast Healthy Cities
- 2: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- 3: Urban Villages - TEO
- 4: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
- 5: Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

### Page 6

- 1: Ards and North Down Borough Council
- 4: Ards and North Down Borough Council
- 5: Urban Villages - TEO
- 6: Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- 7: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

### Page 14

- 1-5: Urban Villages - TEO

### Page 22

- 1-5: Urban Villages - TEO

### Page 24

- 1-5: Urban Villages - TEO

### Page 28

- 3: Belfast City Council
- 5: Belfast Healthy Cities / RNIB

**Page 30**

- 1: Belfast Healthy Cities
- 2: Belfast Healthy Cities / RNIB
- 3: Department for Infrastructure
- 4: Urban Villages - TEO
- 5: Department for Infrastructure

**Page 38**

- 1: Urban Villages - TEO
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**Page 44**

- 1: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
- 3: Department for Infrastructure
- 4: Urban Villages - TEO
- 5: Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

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- 1, 2, 3 and 5: Urban Villages - TEO
- 4: The Paul Hogarth Company

**Page 54**

- 1: Urban Villages - TEO
- 2: Belfast City Council
- 3: Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- 4: Ards and North Down Borough Council
- 5: Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

## Key Contacts

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MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP  
ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**Mid and East Antrim Borough Council**  
**Action Notes - Climate Change Sub-Committee - 20 February 2024**

**Attendees:** Ald R Logan, Cllr Roy Beggs, Cllr M Donnelly, Cllr Bethany Ferris, Cllr Reuben Glover, Catherine Hunter, Anne Hardy, Lindsay Houston, Vanessa Postle, Daniel Walmsley

**Notes:** Patricia Hughes

Agenda item	Action Required	Officer Responsible	Action Completed Date/ Target Date
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>The Environmental Education Officer welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that apologies had been received from the following.</p> <p>Cllr G McKeen (Chair)  Ald A Wilson (Vice Chair)  Cllr A Skinner  Philip Thompson  Joseph Jordan  Connor O'Dornan</p> <p>Council's Climate Change Sub-Committee did not proceed, as it did not meet the quorum. The Terms of Reference states a quorum of 50% (6 Elected Members) needs to be met to proceed.</p> <p>This figure may have been agreed based on the smaller number of Members in the previously named 'Climate Change Working Group', however as the new Sub-Committee has 12 Elected Members, a review of the quorum % to be reduced down to 30% has been requested to enable future meetings to proceed, and decisions on reports to be taken forward.</p>		

Meeting Date: 7 March 2024 - Microsoft Teams

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**Glenarm Regeneration Sub-Committee Meeting**

**Attendees:** Ald Ms G Mulvenna (Mayor), Leslie Morrow (LM), Steve Kirby (SK), John McVeigh (JMcV), A McMullan (AMcM), Eamon McMullan (EMcM), Ashleigh Morrow (AM), Dave Wall (DW), Mono Hyndman (MH), Ben Bolgar (BB), K Steele (KS)

**Apologies:** Ald Mrs B Adger MBE, Philip Thompson, Laura Cowan, Steven Bailie, Frances Wilson, Karena Catterson

**Notes:** H McIlwaine (HMcl)

No	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
	The Chair (Mayor, Ald Ms G Mulvenna) welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies recorded above.
<b>2</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
	None.
<b>3</b>	<b>MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON 14 DECEMBER 2023</b>
	The minutes were received as an accurate record. Proposer – Leslie Morrow. Seconder – Chair (Mayor, Ald Ms G Mulvenna).
<b>4</b>	<b>KEY MATTERS ARISING</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Update on Quarry</b>
	<p><b>Main Points Below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members are considering further options for the former Limestone Quarry and Mill site to include housing; and</li> <li>A Design Consultant will be carrying out further work to bring to Members by early Summer 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ald Morrow</b> - How will this impact the use of the site for activities? <b>JMcV</b> – No decisions have yet been agreed.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Eglinton Barn Remedial Works Phase 1</b>
	<p><b>Main Points Below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works to Eglinton yard surfacing to be progressed w/c 4 March 2024;</li> </ul>

Meeting Date: 7 March 2024 - Microsoft Teams

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No	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anticipated completion date mid-April 2024; and</li> <li>▪ There needs to be guidance on the booking of facilities.</li> </ul>
4.3	<p><b>Shared Island Eglinton Barn – Phase 2</b></p> <p><b>Main Points Below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 2 design complete;</li> <li>• Shared island RIBA Stage 3 report complete; and</li> <li>• Planning application submitted, going to the next Planning Committee Meeting in April 2024.</li> </ul>
4.4	<p><b>Toilet Block Refurbishment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete.</li> </ul>
4.5	<p><b>Signage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographs to be circulated to the Group.</li> </ul>
4.6	<p><b>Pop Up Restaurant</b></p> <p><b>Ald Morrow</b> – Approached by someone to set up a ‘Pop-Up’ shop to sell coffee and snacks.  <b>EMcM</b> – Was made aware of this request on 7 March 2024, but made the Group aware that before the request could be considered, other traders would need to be contacted to determine that they are not selling the same product.</p>
4.7	<p><b>Streetscape</b></p> <p><b>Main Points Below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no budget for Streetscape currently;</li> <li>• The Regeneration Team are engaging with the Heritage Fund to enquire on any upcoming grants that may be available; and</li> <li>• Meeting to be organised with the ‘community’ regarding projects that the Architectural Fund can support.</li> </ul>
6	<b>UPDATE ON FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES</b>
6.1	<b>Update on Shared Island Fund Activities</b>

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No	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared Island Fund activities complete; and</li><li>• Proposals for Phase 2 for Eglinton Barn now submitted for planning permission.</li></ul>
6.2	<b>Capital Plan FY 2023/24 Update</b>  JMcV gave an overview of the 2024/25 budget.
7	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>
	Chair (Mayor, Ald Ms G Mulvenna) – Referred to a container in the ground and what was the purpose?
8	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>
	Thursday 30 May 2024 at 2.00pm. Venue to be confirmed.





**Council/Committee:** Environment & Economy Committee

**Date:** 15 April 2024

**Report Title:** Ballymena Business Improvement District Update

**Publication Status:** Open

**Author:** Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development

**Approver:** Paul Duffy, Acting Director of Development

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on the Ballymena Business Improvement District (BID) activity from December 2023 to March 2024

## 2. Background

- 2.1. In March 2015 Ballymena became the first town in Northern Ireland to become a Business Improvement District (BID) area. Business Improvement Districts are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses.
- 2.2. Governance arrangements associated with a Business Improvement District include the collection of a levy which is charged on all business ratepayers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects that will benefit businesses in the local area. There is no limit on what projects or services can be provided through a Business Improvement District. The only requirement is that it should be something that is in addition to services provided by local authorities. Improvements may include, but are not limited to, extra safety/security, cleansing and environmental measures.
- 2.3. Council has five listed properties (including two car parks) within the Ballymena Business Improvement District boundary that equate to a levy of approx. £15,083 per annum.
  - Ballymena Town Hall, Museum & Arts Centre
  - Springwell Street Carpark
  - Granville Drive Carpark
  - 12 - 16 Bridge Street
  - Wellington Court Toilets

- 2.4. The BID term lasts for a period of 5 years after which another election campaign must be undertaken and a positive vote declared. Due to the pandemic the re-ballot was put back until 31 March 2021. At Full Council on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, Members voted in favour of supporting the BID and subsequently submitted their yes vote before the deadline of the 30 March 2021.
- 2.5. After a successful vote the new BID term commenced on the 1 April 2021 for a five-year period. With Council being a BID levy payer and working in close partnership with BID it was agreed that regular updates on the Ballymena BID's activity would be presented on a quarterly basis, the latest update was presented to Elected Members on the 11 December 2023.
- 2.6 Councillor Laurie Philipot was nominated by Council to represent Council on the BID Board.

### **3. Key Issues for Consideration**

#### Christmas

- 3.1 BID's festive campaign for the town centre commenced on November 22<sup>nd</sup> and ran until December 23<sup>rd</sup>. This included television, digital, radio, outdoor advertising, and influencer marketing. BID promoted the Christmas sales for the Town Centre via Digital Marketing during December to the end of January.
- 3.2 BID supported the Jingle all the Way day on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, which was a great day for the town and the charity. Footfall was strong, and the atmosphere was excellent throughout the day. BID supported this day with added value of entertainment, staffing, and helped the charity coordinate the event. BID also held a raffle for the charity with a £500 Ballymena Gift card. Over 70 businesses sold raffle tickets to help raise funds for the charity and the Jingle campaign. The Raffle and Jingle Day raised approximately £8,000.
- 3.3 BID supported the Tractor Association with the Santa rally on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. This event was greatly received by the community and many town centre businesses. Hospitality did extremely well because of the event, and the feedback and PR from the event were extremely high.
- 3.4 BID supported Council officers in handing out tote bags and goodies to shoppers.



### Gift Card Update

- 3.5 Ballymena Gift Card Christmas campaign resulted in £53,000 worth of sales. A local family won our gift card provider's "Win Your Christmas" campaign, which received entries from the UK & Ireland. Ballymena had the 5th highest number of entries to this campaign, and the family won x2 £500 gift vouchers (funded by Miconex) to spend in Ballymena Town Centre. This positive news story was also picked up by the press.
- 3.6 Following the festive season, BID has had several meetings with the gift card provider and those running successful programmes to help strategise and boost sales for 2024-2026. This plan is in the final stages to be presented at the next BID board meeting.

### Survey to Business Owners

- 3.7 A survey to business owners surrounding Christmas and trade in 2023 went out early January. Overall, 16% of those who responded reported an exceptional festive trade. 32% reported an increase in sales on the previous year, 48% said trade was good, 32% average, 1% poor, with 6% reporting a decrease in revenue. Over 90% highlighted they'd like to see more festive events in the town centre in the coming years.

### Activity to Date

- 3.8 Programme of activity included a Pancake Tuesday, Valentine's promotion on digital, and Mother's Day highlighting places to shop and dine. BID also released an article on 10 reasons to visit Ballymena, which appeared in Local Women and is part of our Spring Campaign. BID Spring Video/Advertising commenced w/c 11 March.
- 3.9 International Women's Day: Each year, BID feature inspirational women from the Ballymena Town Centre Businesses Community. This year, 7 fabulous women took part, sharing their stories, advice, and aspirations.
- 3.10 Leaders of Tomorrow Programme: On Tuesday, March 12th, BID's leadership of tomorrow course commenced. This is a 6-month programme with an initial 8-week kickstart and follow-on support for those in the town centre who wish to improve their leadership skills or aid them with the necessary skillset to help them move to the next level within their current place of employment.
- 3.11 Additional Business Support: - BID has aided businesses with their applications for funding and planning applications for the shopfront scheme.

In addition, it has assisted businesses with social media and procurement support.

- 3.12 A meeting took place on the 20 March involving the BID Chair, BID Manager, Council's Head of Economic Development and the Town Centre Development Manager to discuss future project proposals, joint venture initiatives, new business support, challenges and external funding opportunities.

3.13 Upcoming Events

- BID Directors are holding 2 strategic planning sessions in March/April.
- Gift Card: Next big campaign will be end of term (Treat your teachers).
- Ballymena Country Music Festival for Late Summer is still in the pipeline, and BID are just finalising costs and strategy.
- Boost your social media following and sales event is currently being planned for Late Spring.
- Lineup of summer events are being planned that will see BID bring back fun Fridays and a Summer Artisan Market.
- A financial support request was received from MEABC events team requesting that BID finance the buses to and from the town centre for the bagpipe event. This has been signed off at board level.
- An event has been strategised for Halloween and will go to the BID Board at the next meeting.
- Discount Day is planned for Thursday, November 7th, this year.
- BID is keen to host an information event for Councillors.

Challenges

- 3.14 Ballymena BID continues to work in partnership with Housing for All, Council, Tractor Association and PSNI. Ongoing challenges encountered by BID include the reduction in levy income and due to work pressures of LPS, BID will not receive the data drawdown until end of April at the earliest resulting in bills being delayed until May. A further challenge is dog fouling and general litter with some cases of fly tipping now causing concern.

- 3.15 BID has highlighted that following the news of the rates increase, there has been many calls and office drop-ins from those sharing their concerns and the impact it will have on their businesses. A report on this will be sent to the council in the coming weeks.

#### **4. General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1. Financial - Council properties are within the Ballymena BID boundary and Council will be required to continue to pay the BID levy which is approx £15,083 per annum
- 4.2. Human Resources – Council continues to support partnership projects both through the support of the Town Centre Development Team & Council's Communications Team

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1. Council to continue to support the Ballymena BID through regular engagement and project development support.
- 5.2. Commitment from Council to ensure efficient billing system in place for future levy payments.
- 5.3. Elected Members to generate awareness in relation to upcoming BID events and activities.

#### **6. Recommendation or Decision**

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the successful outcomes of Ballymena BID during the period December 2023 to March 2024

#### **7. Appendices / Links**

N/A



<b>Council/Committee:</b>	<b>Environment and Economy Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Economic Development Activity</b>
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Open
<b>Author:</b>	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
<b>Approver:</b>	Paul Duffy, Acting Director of Development

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on current Economic Development activity.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. The Economic Development Function includes five key strategic areas including:
  - Skills and Entrepreneurship
  - Business Growth
  - Investment and Funding
  - Investment and Place
  - Town Centre Development

## 3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 The following update is to provide Members with an overview across the five key operational areas within the Economic Development Team

### **Skills and Entrepreneurship**

#### **Go Succeed**

- 3.1 The Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (branded as 'Go Succeed') was launched in November 2023. There has been strong interest locally, driven by an intensive multichannel marketing campaign with almost 300 MEA based individuals signing up for support across the start-up and growth elements of the service. A full update on progress will be brought to the next Committee.
- 3.2 Alongside the delivery of the main Go Succeed Service, Councils are responsible for the delivery of an enterprise outreach plan which is funded by Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC). Activities to date include the 'Getting Social' intro to social enterprise sessions with local community groups and the forthcoming Mums at Work Conference in March 2024. Officers are also working with colleagues in Community Planning, stakeholders including Northern Regional College, Schools and with the community clusters on further enterprise outreach activities.

**Science Summer School**

- 3.3 A separate report is being presented to this Committee.

**STEM Ambassadors Interventions Programme**

- 3.4 Detail on this programme is included within the Science Summer School Report tabled at this Committee.

**Labour Market Partnership****Transport Academy**

- 3.5 Transport 4: Twenty participants were selected in August 2023, eight have now acquired licenses and five have secured employment outcomes, eight are progressing through training and testing, four have left the Academy without achieving a qualification and two are still awaiting a determination from DVA regarding their Provisional Entitlement applications.

**Enterprise Pathways**

- 3.6 Enterprise Pathways provides bespoke developmental support to unemployed residents who wish to start a business/sustain self-employment. The support is additional to and complements the 'Go Succeed' offer. All mentoring is now complete, 15 participants received 222 cumulative hours one-to-one mentoring and bespoke developmental support. An evaluation is to be delivered in April 2024 once all activity comes to an end.

**Work Connections**

- 3.7 Work Connections aims to develop the employability skills of unemployed / underemployed adults with disabilities / barriers to employment via training, one-to-one support and work placements. Project targets have been met: 10 participants undertook 11 placements (1 participant had placements with 2 separate employers) and 4 participants have secured jobs with Wrightbus, JAQ Group (Essence Vault), Nibble & Gnaw and Ulster Sports Club. 3 placements are set to continue beyond the project end date of 31 March 2024.

**NHSCT Support Services Academy**

- 3.8 This Academy has been designed in partnership with the NHSCT and local employers and covers a range of support service roles which include Catering Assistants, Care Assistants, Porters and Car Park Attendants. Nine participants enrolled on the academy between November 2023 and January 2024. As part of the academy, sixty online training courses and eighteen level 2 qualifications have been achieved. Two participants have moved into employment and seven participants are currently engaging with mentors to further develop their employability skills.

**Administration Academy**

- 3.9 The Academy will offer participants the opportunity to develop their employability skills by completing our Bespoke Administration Skills Academy. Participants will complete a Level 2 qualification in Communication

Technologies and Office Skills. The Academy commenced on 13 March 2024 and there are currently 9 participants enrolled on this.

#### **Engineering /Coachbuilding Academy**

- 3.10 This three-week training programme will give participants the opportunity to learn from industry experts and be introduced to a range of engineering processes including, carpentry skills, vehicle electrics, fabrication and employability skills. The course will also include practical hands-on skills, company visits and guest speakers. The course is open for registration and will commence on 21 March 2024.

#### **Tourism Academy**

- 3.11 This Academy is a tailored programme with participants areas of interest being part of the co-design process to determine role model speakers and employers selected for a Taste of Tourism visit. An interactive approach to training, immersive site visits, building rapport with mentors and participants from the outset as well as providing weekly contact and one to one mentor at each stage of the academy will ensure participants engage and complete the project. Recruitment for the academy commenced on 22 February 2024 and the Academy will commence in April 2024.

#### **Females Into Non-Traditional Trades Academy (Do It Herself)**

- 3.12 This course is being delivered in two parts by WomensTec. Delivery of an introduction to DIY Skills including power tools, domestic electrics and decorating, commenced in November 2023 for one day a week for four weeks in Glenravel Parish Centre. After completing these Introductory sessions, participants chose a Level 2 Joinery pathway with 8 participants finally completing on Friday, 15 March 2024. On 7 March 2024, 10 participants commenced phase 2 of the course at Millbrook Community Centre in Larne and will collectively agree to progress a Level 2 OCN Accreditation in one of the following pathways: Carpentry, Domestic Electrical Maintenance, Domestic Plumbing or Painting and Decorating.

#### **Plant Operations**

- 3.13 This course is being delivered by Belfast Skills Development Ltd (BSD) throughout March and April 2024 and will provide 11 participants with the opportunity to obtain a qualification and boost skills in an CSR 360<sup>o</sup> Excavator, ITSSAR Wheeled Loaded Shovel or CSR Forward Tipping Dumper in order to progress within the construction sector and career as a plant operator. The individuals will also get the opportunity to obtain a CSR card, enhance personal developmental skills, meet local employers and also get the opportunity to apply for suitable vacancies.

#### **Graduate Disability Academy**

- 3.14 This Academy provides training and employment opportunities and outcomes for graduates with disabilities who are unemployed, under-employed or economically inactive. Graduates are provided with one-to-one mentoring



support, undertake a 6-week placement with employers with a guaranteed interview and can complete a Level 3 Employability and Professional Skills qualification. There are 8 participants enrolled on the programme with 7 completing the Level 3 qualification. NOW Group held an Employer Awareness Session in Galgorm on 23 February 2024 with 17 employers present. There have been 2 full time job outcomes to date with Tesco and JP Corry Carrickfergus, 2 placements commenced in Wrightbus, 1 with PowerNI and another waiting to be commenced with Danske Bank.

**Childminding Academy**

- 3.15 This Academy provides an opportunity for participants to become registered childminders. Of the 10 participants enrolled, 7 have completed their training and are awaiting the necessary approvals and the remaining 3 have completed their First Aid training and are awaiting dates to complete Health & Safety training.

**Education & Training Programme**

- 3.16 This Level 3 Education and Training Award is a qualification designed for those looking to start a career in education or training, providing them with the essential knowledge and skills required to support learners effectively. This entry level teaching qualification will develop interpersonal skills and lay the foundation for a future of enlightening minds and shaping skills. The first cohort commenced on 1 February 2024 with 6 participants completing the training and the second cohort commenced on 29 February 2024. Demand has been very high and a waiting list has been drafted for a further cohort subject to funding.

**Introduction to ESOL Workshops**

- 3.17 Three workshops have been arranged to provide residents with an Introduction to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).
  - 26 February 2024      The Braid Ballymena      8 attendees
  - 4 March 2024          Carrickfergus Town Hall    3 attendees
  - 25 March 2024        Larne Town Hall            1 attendee

**Dementia Awareness Upskilling**

- 3.18 LMP Officers engaged with local care providers to provide Dementia Awareness Upskilling training to support staff to complete training to enable them to provide one to one support for residents/clients with dementia. The training completed in mid-March with participants registering for the training. Thirty-five participants have completed the training and to date, eight participants have increased their hours of employment and 4 have secured new part time employment.

**Security Industry Authority (SIA) Training**

- 3.19 This project is in partnership with The Carson Project and aims to recruit and train 10 participants. Participants will complete L2 Door Supervisor qualification and Level 3 Emergency First Aid qualification. The course commenced in late March and ran over 7 days. Successful participants who passed the course will register for their SIA License in April 2024.

**Classroom Upskilling Academy**

- 3.20 Recruitment for the Classroom Upskilling Academy commenced in August 2023. 13 participants were enrolled and 13 remain engaged to date with all participants working towards their Level 3 qualification.

**Apprenticeship E-Hub**

- 3.21 MEA Labour Market Partnership received a letter of offer on 21/02/24 for additional easement funding of £43,500 for the implementation of an MEA Apprenticeship E-Hub. This project will give greater visibility and access to apprenticeship opportunities at Level 2, Level 3 and Higher Level Apprenticeship while supporting the sustainability of the local business base with a talent pipeline. Work is ongoing to build the platform, promote the service and manage the E-hub to include processing applications, aptitude tests and interviews to June 2024.

**Business Growth****Stakeholder Panel**

- 3.22 Council continue to provide wrap-around support to local businesses by utilising stakeholder panel relationships to secure additional business growth support.
- 3.23 The Escalate Programme ceased on 31 March 2024 with delivery of growth mentoring support underway under the Go Succeed Service. Officers are currently conducting reviews on this programme which will be reported to Committee in May and will include stakeholder referrals outcomes.

**Mid and East Antrim Food and Drink Network**

- 3.24 Mid and East Antrim Food and Drink Network initiative aims to support the growth of agri-food and drink businesses by facilitating information sharing, learning and encouraging collaboration. Officers will spend time in this quarter reviewing the network activity since June 2023 to determine future direction. It is anticipated the cohort of participants engaged in the network activity will be supported through Masterclasses Peer to Peer Networking and Mentoring that is available under the Go Succeed programme.
- 3.25 Four Artisan producers will showcase on Council's stand in the NI Food Pavilion at Balmoral Show, 15 – 18 May 2024. Officers are engaging with these producers to organise set up and interactions with Food NI to ensure they are suitably prepared.

**Go Succeed Growth Mentoring**

- 3.26 Go Succeed Growth mentoring support will be delivered through Business Client Managers business engagement, conducting diagnostics and allocation of mentoring via a framework of mentors by thematic and sector specialisms, in keeping with the current tailored provision since 2018 as a continuum from

Amplify Business Escalator programmes. Businesses can access up to 15 hours free tailored mentoring support.

3.27 Appointed delivery agent Mallusk Enterprise Park will deliver a series of Masterclasses and Peer to Peer network activity as well as dedicated mentoring packages to established businesses in the sectors of:

- Retail
- Social Enterprise
- Tourism & Hospitality

3.28 21 businesses have been allocated mentoring from Mallusk Enterprise Park with 12 businesses from retail sector and 9 businesses from tourism/hospitality sector.

3.29 Masterclass delivery is underway. The first Masterclass was delivered in November 2023, specifically for retail sector which 16 businesses attended. A series of three Masterclasses has been specifically designed to support the Tourism & Hospitality sector, developed in conjunction with Council's Tourism Officers, 73 businesses attended across the three sessions. A leadership Masterclass was held on 21 March 2024 which 11 businesses attended.

Officers are currently in the planning phase with the appointed delivery agent to develop and plan Masterclasses & Peer to Peer Network activity from April 2024 to March 2025 under the service.

### **Go Succeed Grants**

3.30 Under the Go Succeed Service, Start-ups and Businesses can apply for a grant to enable them to overcome possible barriers to growth. The minimum grant amount available is £1,000 and the maximum is £4,000 which can contribute for up to 70% of eligible costs.

To be eligible to apply for the grant, businesses

- must be actively trading
- have less than 50 employees and;
- must have completed at least 50% or more of their mentoring hours through Go Succeed and;
- identified a barrier to growth that a capital / revenue grant can help address

3.31 Grants are now live and those who are 50% way through mentoring under the service are invited to apply. The following video has been developed to talk businesses through the opportunity: <https://bit.ly/48a1IKH>

**Digital Transformation Flexible Fund - (11 NI Council partner fund, led by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's FFNI consortium)**

- 3.32 A total of £7.5m was secured by Councils from the NI complementary Fund, for the Northern Ireland wide Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF). DTFF is delivered by all 11 local authorities supported by Invest NI, under the existing Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium (FFNI) which is led by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council. The project is part funded by the NI Executive, UK Government, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and all local authorities in Northern Ireland.

The capital fund seeks to address the financial barriers that many small businesses face when seeking to digitally transform. DTFF capital investments are designed to enable business transformation and not improve the 'digitisation' of existing business models/operations. As such the DTFF will fund advanced digital technologies projects which include the following:

- Smart technologies/ smart environments and the Internet of Things (IoT)
- Process automation via robotics/cobotics
- Big-data and analytics
- Immersive Technologies (AR/VR/MR/Haptics)
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning; and
- Distributed ledger systems/ blockchain technologies

- 3.33 Successful applicants will be offered a grant of a minimum of £5,000 and up to a maximum grant of £20,000 towards a Digital Transformation Project up to 70% with 30% match funding to come from the applicant. The 70% intervention rate is typically unheard of from government funded grants but is important to stimulate innovation amongst our micro and small businesses. Mid and East Antrim has a target of delivering 36 grants over three years. The first call of the fund opened on 8<sup>th</sup> November and closed on 6<sup>th</sup> December. From the first call MEA had one successful applicant.

- 3.34 The second funding call opened for Expressions of Interest (EOI) on 4 March 2024. Key dates are as follows:
- EOI deadline: 29 March 2024
  - Those deemed eligible from EOIs invited to full application: 15 April 2024
  - Applications close: 10 May 2024

- 3.35 Officers released communication advising businesses of the opportunity and Business Client Managers will continue to raise awareness of the opportunity with businesses.

- 3.36 Three online business briefing sessions took place on 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March. In addition, Council hosted an in person briefing session on Friday, 15 March 2024 at ECOS Hub, Ballymena which was delivered by appointed Digital Transformation 4.0 technology specialists appointed for the fund from Queen

University. A total of 4 businesses attended and each had a chance to and a 1:1 chat with the specialists.

### **Innovation Partnership**

- 3.37 The Innovation Partnership aims to build a connected innovation community in order to increase businesses knowledge and engagement with the innovation journey, work together to deliver innovation events and support partner activity around innovation.
- 3.38 In a bid to avoid duplication of effort, Officers are keeping up to date on emerging initiatives aimed at stimulating innovation within the NI economic development landscape. Such as the Business Innovation Grant cited within Department for Economy 10X strategy, Officers continue to engage with Invest NI to understand the status of this project. In addition, under Belfast City Region Deal there is a group set up to investigate the feasibility of developing and delivering a (small) digital innovation grants competition under the BRCD Digital Challenge Fund Programme, an Officer from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has attended the first meeting of this group, this project is still at early stages.
- 3.39 Taking into consideration the potential for new initiatives, Officers are turning focus at this stage, to looking at options to showcase and promote local business innovation, as a means to inspiring more businesses to engage in innovation and value creation activity, through cost effective methods such as PR campaigns, case studies on communications platforms etc.

### **Investment and Funding**

#### **PEACEPLUS Programme**

- 3.40 The Head of Economic Development continues to attend meetings regarding the PEACEPLUS Programme and the last Board Meeting took place on Tuesday, 27 February 2024. A temporary Investment and Funding Manager has been appointed and will be working on the PEACEPLUS Action Plan and Application until submission to SEUPB.
- 3.41 An Open Call for Expressions of Interest for Community/Sports Capital Projects went live on 23 January 2024, with a closing date of 20 February 2024. Recommendations from the Assessment Panel on applications recommended for inclusion in the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan and Application were tabled and approved at the PEACEPLUS Partnership meeting on 27 February 2024 and subsequently approved alongside the PEACEPLUS Action Plan at the Environment and Economy Committee on 4 March 2024.
- 3.42 Given that all budget was not committed it has been agreed to re-open the programme for a further call for Expressions of Interest on 19 March 2024 with a closing date of 16 April 2024. Officers will continue to work on the detail for the Application to be submitted to SEUPB by the extended closing date of mid-May 2024

### **Investment and Place**

#### **Manufacturing Task Force (MTF)**

- 3.43 The 17<sup>th</sup> MTF Steering Team Meeting was held in Ballymena on 21 March 2024 and was well attended with representatives from over 30 company and stakeholder groups from the manufacturing sector across the Borough in attendance. The focus of the meeting was on three key areas of digitalisation, skills and cleantech and there were a range of presentations included an introduction from new MTF member company Dowds Group who have recently moved into the Borough.
- 3.44 The current contract for the MTF Chair ends on 31 March 2024 and a procurement exercise to appoint a Chair for a 1-year period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 is underway. Officers have secured private sector funding of £20,000 for the Chair's role for the 2024 - 25 financial year against total estimated costs of £29,500 with the remainder being funded by Council as approved by Elected Members at the last Committee meeting.

#### **Hydrogen Training Academy (HTA)**

- 3.45 Officers continue to support delivery of HTA related activities in the absence of revenue funding from DfE to develop the project further. This includes ongoing management and maintenance of the H2 Gas Safe Lab, including renting the lab to Northern Regional College for delivery of practical sessions as part of the OCN Level 3 in Hydrogen Technologies and Applications which was developed under the HTA pilot.
- 3.46 There continues to be interest in the HTA training offering and Officers have been facilitating tours and demonstrations of the H2 Gas Safe Lab for a range of stakeholders. Officers also continue to share learnings from the pilot HTA at various events including presenting to the Hydrogen NI Committee on 6 March 2024 and at the All-Ireland Sustainability Summit on 21 March 2024.

#### **i4C Innovation and Cleantech Centre – St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena**

- 3.47 Council's internal City Deal PMO (project management office) are on target to appoint the ICT 'design' team for the i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre project in the next few weeks, and similarly proceed to advertise the procurement competition for the appointment of i4C operator, aided by consultants KPMG. The Council PMO are also liaising with the team in the Belfast Region City Deal office on the final detail of the i4C 'Contract for Funding'.

#### **iLAB (Innovation Lab), i4C and PEACEPLUS**

- 3.48 The 'Innovation Challenge Fund' measure of the EU PEACEPLUS programme (worth €65m) is scheduled to open on 10 April 2024 and close for applications on 5 June 2024. As reported over the last few months, Council officers are preparing to submit a collaborative cross border bid that would include for a 4-

to 5 year pilot phase of the Innovation Laboratory (iLAB), which is a precursor to the new i4C Innovation and Cleantech Centre, which will open in 2027. A full report on the PEACEPLUS application will be presented to Elected Members at this Committee in May 2024.

#### **NI Complementary Fund – HyTechNI project**

- 3.49 Invest NI are in the process of reviewing the Outline Business Case (OBC) for this hydrogen economy project that has been allocated £15m under the NI Complementary Fund. The project represents a Council collaboration with Queens University Belfast, Ulster University and several local industry partners including Wrightbus, Firmus and B9 Energy.
- 3.50 The project includes for three testbed trials to be undertaken in Ballymena around hydrogen transport/mobility, gas blending and a green hydrogen and renewables demonstration and skills training at the Ecos Hub. A funding decision by Invest NI is anticipated in late 2024.

#### **MEANZ Business Project – Innovate UK Fast Followers**

- 3.51 Work on the MEANZ Business Project continues across three key areas: Corporate and Industry Net Zero Dissemination Programmes; Corporate and Industry Decarbonisation Project Activities; and the Future Ready programme and a separate report on activities and progress has been tabled for this Committee meeting.

#### **ECOS Hub, Ballymena**

- 3.52 Ecos Hub is currently at full occupancy with no tenant rental space available. Rental income from meeting rooms and conference facilities continues to grow and Officers are planning a renewed promotional campaign for Spring/Summer 2024 to generate further income.

#### **Investment Opportunities**

- 3.53 Officers have been liaising with several external investors who are exploring opportunities to invest in the Borough and recently met with a manufacturing company set to invest in Carrickfergus and sign-posted the company to relevant supports available to them including the Michelin Fund, access to the Manufacturing Task Force network and Business Growth mentoring support.
- 3.54 Officers have been supporting companies to find suitable premises in the Borough to establish or grow their business. There has been recent engagement with an indigenous company seeking to develop a bespoke manufacturing and engineering facility of c20,000sq ft. Officers presented a number of options and accompanied the investor on site visits and will continue to work closely with them to try and secure the investment. Investors are increasingly interested in sites for sale rather than rent and shorter term, more

flexible leases. This offers opportunities for Council in terms of potential income generation from sale of Council assets.

### **International Relations**

- 3.55 As previously reported the Elected Member Sister Cities Sub Committee met on 21 November 2023, the focus was on existing sister cities tourism and cultural links and it was agreed that economic opportunities including those in the CleanTech/green energy sector in North America will be presented at the next meeting for discussion and agreement on approach.

### **Town Centre Property Repurposing Pilot Grant Scheme**

- 3.56 The Scheme is closed for new applications. Five projects totalling £119,000 were approved under the Scheme with two projects reaching completion stage resulting in £42,750 in total being spent. Two projects failed to meet their Letter of Offer pre-commencement conditions and did not proceed, with one project not commencing the capital works by the end date. Officers have informed the Department for Communities of the under spend, with the monies re-profiled and aligned to the contract for funding.

### **Town Centre Development**

#### **Footfall**

- 3.57 Footfall for the month of February 2024 across all three towns was slightly down on footfall recorded for the same period in February 2023, although this is a similar trend across Northern Ireland. Ballymena footfall decreased (-3.1%), Carrickfergus (-0.9%), Larne (-2.3%) compared to the previous year. The Northern Ireland average was (-3.9%) against the same reporting period.

#### **Town Centre Events & Activities**

- 3.58 The third Carrickfergus Artisan market of the year took place on Saturday, 2 March 2024 in Carrickfergus Town Hall from 11am - 3pm with regular and new traders in attendance. The market was well attended and the 14 market vendors reported good sales and steady footfall throughout. The next monthly market is due to take place at Market Place on the 6 April 2024, however may be relocated to the town hall if inclement weather is forecast. The database of local artisan producers continues to grow and demand for market pitches is high. A fresh marketing campaign has been developed to generate awareness of the market and to encourage new local crafters.
- 3.59 A Larne Spring/Summer Fashion Show will take place on the evening of Thursday, 28 March 2024 in Larne Football Club. Funded by the Department for Communities and supported by Larne Football Club. A total of 9 local independent retailers are taking part in the Fashion show by offering clothes, shoes and accessories for the models to wear on the night. This is a good number as each retailer will be able to showcase their offering through a variety



of outfits. There will be entertainment and a Charity Raffle with proceeds from the raffle donated to Women's Aid and 'This is Me' Dementia Friendly Choir. Eleven businesses in Larne were asked if they would like to donate to the raffle and be included in the programme of events on the night. Currently 11 businesses have offered to donate prizes to the charity raffle with more to be confirmed.

- 3.60 Members will be aware that National World cancelled the Carrickfergus Business Awards scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7 March 2024. National World is currently working with Council to look at other options to ensure that the finalists can receive their awards.
- 3.61 A Mini Food Festival two-day event took place on the 3 & 4 April 2024 in Ballymena Town Centre Pop Up Shop and activities included; Mindful food tasting workshop, Family cupcake decorating workshop, Pesto/salsa making workshop, Family horticulture workshop- grow your own vegetables, Fungi-fy me mushroom workshop. The event was unique to Ballymena and encouraged footfall to the town, the project had full support of the Revitalise steering group and was funded by the Department for Communities.
- 3.62 A community engagement event took place in Carrickfergus pop-up shop from the 26 March to the 30 March. The Living Map project delivered by Big Telly is a community engagement project centred around a giant map that fills up with tales of travel, where people met, what places mean etc. This week-long project held in Carrickfergus Pop Up Shop was focused at bringing animation activities to Carrickfergus and encouraging footfall.
- 3.63 A Teddy Bear Hospital and Easter Chick hunt took place in Larne Pop Up Shop on 29 March 2024. This successful project has been run previously in the town centres and draws children and families into the town centres. There was a quiet session for children with additional needs ensuring that town centre family entertainment is inclusive to all.
- 3.64 The Town Centre Team is working with the Age Friendly Coordinator within Council to run a 'Classic Movie Day' in Carrickfergus Town Hall on Wednesday 27 March 2024 from 2pm to 4pm.
- 3.65 Cosmetic work on each of the town centre Pop Up Shop has now been completed. The Carrickfergus and Larne Shops will now have furniture installed ready for participants. Ballymena Pop Up Shop had its first participant take up residency from Monday, 4 March 2024 for 1 week. Due to the requirement for advertising consent the shops will not have signage fitted until permissions are through. Marketing material has been developed to enable the opportunity to be promoted to as many community groups and entrepreneurs as possible.

## Business Support

- 3.66 As part of the Revitalise programme there was an opportunity for the hospitality sector to apply for pavement café furniture. An expression of interest form went out to the Town Centre Hospitality businesses to offer Tables, Chairs and Cafe Barriers. This project was previously rolled out under the Covid Recovery scheme and many businesses received pavement café furniture enabling the setup of new pavement cafes in the High Street. The Tables and Chairs have now been delivered to 13 businesses and the Cafe Barriers are currently in production and will be delivered out to businesses in the coming weeks.
- 3.67 The Town Centre team is currently involved in the Dementia Steering Group, which is led by the Alzheimer's Society and has representatives from Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Northern Trust and local Community and Church groups. The aims of the group are to give a steer on business needs and the best ways to meet these in terms of becoming dementia friendly and accessing training. Training took place across the borough in October 2023 with a further training plan for the next few months currently being developed.
- 3.68 The Larne Business Forum continues to meet monthly with Officers present at each meeting to support the group.
- 3.69 The Public Realm Enhancement Scheme on Bridge Street and Castle Street in Ballymena is now complete. The team will carry out post project surveys with businesses and users in due course.
- 3.70 As previously advised, Council has been successful at attracting funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) for a Revitalise Programme. The support includes, a small grants programme, pop-up shops, regeneration works, gap site developments, public art activities, pavement café support, animation support and low carbon initiatives.
- 3.71 Officers across the Town Centre Team and the Regeneration Team are continuing their work on the Small Grants Scheme. Council received 109 applications for the Shop Front Scheme. All applications have now been assessed and eligibility checks complete. To date Council have issued 89 Letters of Offer. 4 Applicants withdrew at the Letter of Offer Stage leaving 85 Businesses with a Total Grant of £296,271.28. Pending approval, the final 2 Letters of Offer will be issued totalling a further £8,115.00. Council Officers will now begin working on the verification and payment of claims. To date 10 Businesses have completed their project and submitted their claims.
- 3.72 A requirement of the DfC funding is that a steering group is established with representation from the business community. Based on the model of the Covid Revitalise a steering group has now been established involving representation from Ballymena BID, Positive Carrickfergus, Larne Business Forum and Larne Renovation Generation. The group meets monthly and is supported by Council staff.

- 3.73 The Department for Communities is seeking a post project evaluation of Covid Recovery Revitalise Programme to be completed by March 2024. Surveys have issued to the town centre businesses for their feedback on the project. In addition, 36 shoppers in each of the towns have been interviewed to ascertain their thoughts on the projects which is a total of 108 surveys.

#### **4. General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1 No implications relating to this update report.

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1 The report is presented for noting.

#### **6. Recommendation or Decision**

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the updated Economic Development Activity report.

#### **7. Appendices / Links**

N/A



<b>Council/Committee:</b>	<b>Environment and Economy Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>MEANZ Business Project Update</b>
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Open
<b>Author:</b>	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
<b>Approver:</b>	Paul Duffy, Interim Director of Development

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the 'MEANZ' Business Project, fully funded under the Innovate UK Fast Followers Net Zero Living Programme.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Council applied to Innovate UK under the Fast Followers strand of the Net Zero Living Programme in March 2023 for the 'MEANZ' (Mid and East Antrim Net Zero) Business Project. The Fast Followers programme is a £6m investment programme designed to support Local Authorities across the UK to address non-technical barriers to achieving net zero.
- 2.2. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was awarded £299,454.28 by Innovate UK in May 2023 for the two year 'MEANZ' Business Project which is 100% funded by Innovate UK. There were two other projects in Northern Ireland awarded funding, Derry and Strabane District Council and the Mid South West Growth Deal Region, with 18 other projects across England, Scotland and Wales. As part of the project funding, Councils were required to appoint a dedicated Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager to lead the project and an Officer took up this post on 1 July 2023.

## 3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The MEANZ Business project began in July 2023, with the Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager working with internal and external stakeholders to develop a MEANZ Business Action Plan to guide delivery of the project over the two-year funded programme. The action plan outlines a full programme of activity to support businesses in the Net Zero transition and expedite Council's progress towards Net Zero. The dedicated funding is allowing Council to build on recent and ongoing investment in the CleanTech sector and continue to innovate and inform in this key area.
- 3.2. The overall objectives of the MEANZ Business Project are to:

- Raise awareness and increase understanding and knowledge of decarbonisation and Net Zero both within Council and the local business community;
  - Address specific non-technical barriers to achieving Net Zero in Mid and East Antrim using a systems-based approach; and
  - Deliver practical decarbonisation projects across Council and in partnership with industry.
- 3.3. The MEANZ Business Action Plan, approved by Innovate UK in September 2023, includes the following key work packages:
- Council and Industry Net Zero Insights Programme;
  - Council Decarbonisation Projects;
  - Industry Decarbonisation Projects; and
  - Future Ready Programme of support for Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Managers.
- 3.4. The *Council and Industry Net Zero Insights Programme* includes a range of information sharing activities including knowledge transfer events, meetings and workshops, best practice visits, business focused 'Net Zero Insights' webinar series, company case studies and an online communications campaign. Events delivered to date include a business launch event and a CleanTech Information Event for Elected Members.
- 3.5. The Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager has also spoken at numerous events about the MEANZ Business project and how it builds on Council's ambition to be a CleanTech hub for NI, including to: Council's Climate Change Sub-Committee, the Manufacturing Task Force, the DfE Hydrogen Economy Stakeholder Workshop, Hydrogen NI Committee, Invest Northern Ireland, Department for the Economy, Hydrogen Innovation Initiative, Hydrogen Ireland Annual Conference, the Sustainable Development Forum Northern Ireland and the All-Ireland Sustainability Summit. An internal 'Net Zero Initiatives' Officers group has also been established to share knowledge and information on all Net Zero project activity.
- 3.6. Upcoming activity under the *Council and Industry Net Zero Insights Programme* includes delivery of a bespoke series of eight industry focused Net Zero themed webinars between June 2024 and June 2025, underpinned by a Net Zero myth busting social media campaign. The insights webinars have been designed to increase awareness, understanding and knowledge of Net Zero within local industry by having expert speakers and companies sharing best practice experience via a series of short webinar events. Four webinars will be targeted at smaller companies (<50 employees) and four at the larger companies (>50 employees) with topics including: Decarbonisation, Energy Efficiency, Net Zero Investment, Sustainably Supply Chains and Carbon Accounting and Emissions Reporting.

- 3.7. The Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager is developing a proposal for a joint Council Officer and industry stakeholder best practice visit to the Midlands area of England. This area has a significant presence of Net Zero projects and initiatives, and the best practice site visit will include areas of focus such as green energy production, green transport initiatives, low carbon heating solutions and green hydrogen production or utilisation initiatives.
- 3.8. The *Council Decarbonisation Projects* focus on removing non-technical barriers, including data and digitalisation, planning and permitting, and capacity, capability and skills building. A Data and Digitalisation project is being delivered, with a subscription to the Climate Essentials data collection and analysis tool being approved in late 2023 and the Climate and Sustainability team leading on implementation of the software tool to inform Council's reporting and planning.
- 3.9. Following engagement with Council's Planning Department, a project proposal has also been developed which focuses on capacity building for Planning Officers around Net Zero, Sustainability and Renewables. Officers are currently liaising with training providers to agree training activity.
- 3.10. A Net Zero Skills Mapping piece across Council staff is also underway, which will identify and highlight skills, experience and expertise which Council staff currently possess in relation to Net Zero to support future investment planning and effective project management.
- 3.11. *Industry Decarbonisation Projects* include supporting work with existing industry networks. TetraTech have been appointed to continue supporting the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network, with Phase 2 activities agreed in early 2024 and project activity beginning with Environmental, Social and Governance training in March 2024. TetraTech will work with a minimum of 10 SMEs and stakeholders on the CleanTech Collaborative Growth network over the next three months to support their decarbonisation journeys and on development and delivery of a joint decarbonisation project.
- 3.12. The second *Industry Decarbonisation Project* is working with HyTech NI project partners to develop a Gas Blending Consumer Engagement and Customer Perceptions research piece, seeking to understand customer perceptions of the Gas Blending trial planned at St Patrick's Barracks as part of the NI Complementary Funded HyTech NI project.
- 3.13. The Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager has been availing of *Future Ready Programme* support, a dedicated resource provided by Innovate UK and their partners to develop capacity and skills in the Officers funded under the Fast Followers projects across the UK. This has included attendance at a range of webinar events focusing on non-technical barriers and a two-day Systems Change bootcamp. The officer also receives monthly 1:1

mentoring from a subject expert to support delivery and overcome challenges associated with delivery of the MEANZ Business project.

- 3.14. The Programme has also included monthly online meetings, quarterly in-person events across the UK with in-person events taking place to date in Nottingham (July 2023), Bristol (October 2023) and Newcastle Upon Tyne (February 2024). The Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager was one of three project representatives invited to present at the February 2024 Future Ready Cohort event on the progress of the MEANZ business project, highlighting challenges faced to date and what we have learned and showcasing Council's CleanTech projects including the award-winning Hydrogen Training Academy, the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network and the HyTech NI hydrogen testbed project.

#### 4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Financial:** The MEANZ Business Project is fully funded by Innovate UK under the Fast Followers programme.
- 4.2. **Economic Benefits:** An opportunity exists to generate economic benefits through successful delivery of the MEANZ Business Action Plan, developing awareness, understanding and knowledge for both Council officers and across local industry in relation to decarbonisation and the journey to Net Zero. This project also underpins much of the work being done to further cement Mid and East Antrim as the Cleantech Hub for Northern Ireland through initiatives such as the i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre and the HyTech NI project.
- 4.3. **HR Implications:** The dedicated Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager is fully funded by the Innovate UK Fast Followers Programme with support in kind from the wider Economic Development team and from other key stakeholders across Council.

#### 5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. N/A

#### 6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the significant progress being made on the MEANZ Business Project.

#### 7. Appendices / Links – N/A



# JOIN US TO CELEBRATE

We are delighted to invite you to a celebration lunch with the winners of the 2024 Carrick Times business awards!

Thursday 25th April: 12.30pm  
Carrickfergus Golf Club  
Dresscode: Business Casual

rsvp: [rebecca.thompson@nationalworld.com](mailto:rebecca.thompson@nationalworld.com)



<b>Council/Committee:</b>	<b>Environment and Economy Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Review of Science Summer School NI 2024</b>
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Open
<b>Author:</b>	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
<b>Approver:</b>	Paul Duffy, Acting Director of Development

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on the Science Summer School NI 23-24 and to seek approval for Science Summer School NI 24-25.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. At October 2019 Borough Growth Members gave approval to host the first Science Summer School, a concept devised in 2012 by Professor Brian Cox CBE and Lord Andrew Mawson OBE, in Northern Ireland. Due to the pandemic, the date was placed on hold. The first event took place in The Braid on Tuesday 15 November 2022 with the second taking place on 23 January 2024.
- 2.2. The Science Summer School event is a key activity supported by the Manufacturing Task Force and aims to inspire young people to become the next generation of scientists with an inspirational programme that mixes the best of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) through a series of seminars, discussions and hands-on experiments.
- 2.3. Company interest in the event was high and officers secured financial support from Kilwaughter Minerals as the Headline Sponsor and six key event sponsors: Ryobi, IPC Mouldings, Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, Yelo, Michelin Development and Caterpillar. In addition to this, funding was secured through three programme sponsors: GES Group, Phoenix Energy and Wright Bus. This funding enabled a full programme of activities and events alongside the main event to ensure that the wider school community can benefit from this flagship event. Additional financial support was also secured via the MEA Labour Market Partnership, funded by Department for Communities (DfC). In total, £21,500 was secured through private sponsorship and £5,120 through the Labour Market Partnership. In addition to this, in kind support from Council was provided through Officer time in organising and delivering the series of events and the Mayor attended the day long events adding great support from Council to the importance of STEAM promotion amongst our young people.

- 2.4. Interest from leaders in STEAM subjects was very high and we received in-kind support from organisations to facilitate a broad spectrum of interactive, engaging and thought-provoking workshops and TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) style presentations, co-designed with teachers and educators to blend with the curriculum, skills needs and to appeal to young people. All workshop facilitation time for the event was provided at no cost to council and all speakers gave their time in kind, with no speaker fees paid.
- 2.5. The main event was attended in person by Professor Brian Cox CBE, OBE, FRS (Fellowship of the Royal Society) who presented a Keynote address to schools, workshops facilitators, TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) presenter and programme partners. Professor Cox also hosted the evening careers event which featured a broad spectrum of STEAM experts.

### **3. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 3.1. The Science Summer School is an annual event that has run successfully in London since 2012. Led by Lord Mawson, Well North Enterprises and Professor Brian Cox it aims to develop the Science Summer School model nationwide with projects now in Rotherham and Skelmersdale as well as Northern Ireland.
- 3.2. The Science Summer School is not a stand-alone event but is a catalyst for a collaborative vision for the borough to nurture future talent. MEA and partners developed a comprehensive programme of schools' engagement activities from December 2022 to January 2024.
- 3.3. The school engagement activities included Cosmic Classroom sessions delivered by Armagh Observatory and Planetarium, an inclusive and immersive Story Telling Session and a wide range of exciting school visits to local companies to learn about pathways and career options. A number of School Competitions were also held, with the two winners securing a pair of tickets each and a meet and greet with Professor Brian Cox at his show in Belfast Waterfront Hall on 24 January 2024, as part of his worldwide HORIZONS tour.
- 3.4. Feedback from the event on 23 January was extremely positive with many sponsors and non-sponsor companies expressing a keen interest to be involved in any future planned Science Summer School event. Pupils and teachers have provided exceptional feedback, rating the event professional and seamless with a broad variety of hands on, engaging workshops and excellent TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) Talks.
- 3.5. The partnership with Well North Enterprises has been pivotal to secure this prestigious event, Professor Cox's and keynote speaker attendance as well

as the year-round programme of activities offered to schools in the borough under the Science Summer School umbrella.

- 3.6. The events can be tailored according to local requirements and resources. However, it is important that the goal is to provide an event of the highest quality and an experience, which reflects, not only Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's aspirations but capitalises on the high-profile involvement of Professor Cox CBE, OBE, FRS. The continued partnership with Well North Enterprises, subject to Council approval, will ensure that the involvement of Professor Cox remains interlinked with the event at a vastly reduced cost to Council and help promote MEA as an exemplar in employer/schools and public sector engagement with a national UK audience. Professor Cox has confirmed that he is available to attend Science Summer School NI on 21 January 2025.

#### **STEM Ambassador Interventions Programme**

- 3.7. A successful bid for £15,000 funding has been secured through The STEM Ambassador programme funded by UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). The programme has an overarching aim of enabling all young people in the UK to engage with and connect with STEM, research and innovation. The aim of these awards is to engage STEM Ambassadors in impactful sustained engagement (not one-off events) to support young people with the most need in a region. This funding is for project activities which are to be delivered by September 2024. Due to project completion date stipulated by UKRI it is not possible to use any of this funding towards the Science Summer School initiative.
- 3.8. Officers propose to deliver a STEM interventions programme between April and September 2024 to schools in the borough, engaging with pupils in years 9-10. The programme will include partnership and collaboration with companies and STEM Ambassadors. This funding will also help deliver teacher insight days in August to give teachers the opportunity to find out about career pathways available with local companies.

#### **4. General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1. Financial implications – The total budget for the Science Summer School 2024 event including the wider programme of activities was £26,620 with no cost to Council apart from in-kind officer time. Officers were able to secure £21,500 in sponsorship from Kilwaughter Minerals Ryobi, IPC Mouldings, Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, Yelo, Michelin Development, Caterpillar, GES Group, Phoenix Energy and Wright Bus. For the 2023-24 intervention considerable industry support was also secured in kind from the many companies to provide their knowledge and time to develop and deliver this project. Given the nature of this careers and company engagement

programme SSSNI was included in the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2023-2024, securing an additional £5,120 of funding from DfC.

- 4.2. Anticipated costs to host SSSNI25 will be similar to 23/24 c£26,000 with usual inflation increases to be expected on AV Hire and Technical Support, Marketing and Promotion as well as the increase in venue hire, which will take the form of internal recharges. Workshops and TED Talk presentations are facilitated by partners in kind, demonstrating excellent value for money and maximising on the relationships developed over the years through this initiative.
- 4.3. For the 24/25 event £6,900 has been requested through the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) towards the initiative, a slight increase on the LMP contribution in 23/24. Feedback from sponsors and partners in 2023/24 has been extremely positive with many keen to support the initiative once again. Many workshop facilitators have agreed to participate in the next event in January 2025 and conversations are ongoing with previous sponsors and potential new sponsors through the Manufacturing Task Force. One company sponsor has been secured to date. The initiative will be funded through private sponsorship and LMP contribution with no cost to Council envisaged other than Officer time.
- 4.4. Good Relations – Establishing partnerships with local companies, universities, college, schools and organisations for the 2023-24 events and activities including Royal Academy of Engineering, Ulster University, Northern Regional College, Queens University Belfast and Armagh Planetarium enabled the delivery of a number of engagement projects at no cost to council. The legacy of these relations continues to inspire engagement with existing and new companies in delivering a range of interactive and engaging activities with local schools into 2024. Activities were provided to all schools including special schools. Note all screening documents will be completed prior to commencement of the initiative.

## **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1. Officers will liaise with companies to secure private sponsorship to host the key event once again in January 2025. In addition to this, relations between employers and schools will be explored further through a series of engaging activities throughout the year in the lead up to the main event. Officers will be able to utilise existing relationships to maximise delivery of the SSSNI activities.

## 6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to:

- 6.1 Note the success of the Science Summer School 2024 key event and supplementary schools/company engagement and recognise the joint efforts of teams across Council in their collaboration to deliver the Science Summer School NI programme;
- 6.2 Recognise the commitment and contribution of the external companies and educational organisations involved and the relationships developed with the Council in delivering a successful event of this scale;
- 6.3 Approve the STEM Interventions Programme to be delivered April – September 2024 through funding secured from UKRI;
- 6.4 Approve to host NI Science Summer School and all supporting activities once again in 2024-25 including the costs contributed to the partnership with Well North Enterprises, subject to securing private sponsorship and DfC funding via Labour Market Partnership.

## 7. Appendices / Links

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Key Note Speakers, Practical Workshops and Science Summer School Careers Insight Event Panel members |
| Appendix 2 | Schools who Attended the Event   |
| Appendix 3 | Employer Engagement Activities: Pre-Science Summer School Activity                                   |



**Appendix 1 Key Note Speakers, Practical Workshops and Science Summer School Careers Insight Event Panel members**

<b>Guest TED Talk Presenter</b>	<b>TED Title</b>
<b>Mr Vince Rosales</b> QUB Midwifery Graduate, Queens University Belfast	Nursing and Midwifery, Professions for All
<b>Dr Simon Doherty</b> Senior Lecturer, School of Biological Sciences, Queens University Belfast	Wonky donkey: An Atypical Career in Veterinary Medicine
<b>Dr. Andrew McIntosh</b> Head of Research and Development with Kilwaughter Minerals Ltd.	Making Grey, Green.
<b>Dr. Erin Higgins</b> Astrophysicist at the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium	Black holes making ripples in space-time.
<b>David Surplus OBE,</b> Managing Director, B9 Energy Storage	The role of DAC in production of Scalable Zero Emission Bunker Fuels
<b>Suzanne Leslie,</b> Partner Sales Manager <b>and Fiona Simpson,</b> Head of Commercial NI, Amazon Web Service	You don't know, what you don't know, until you know!
<b>Mr Richard Furey</b> Managing Director, Yelo Ltd.	Photonics – The magic that makes the world work.
<b>Daniel Kraska,</b> Engineering Supervisor <b>and Ciaran Maxwell,</b> Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Engineer, Ryobi	How to Engineer Your Future: Navigating Diverse Career Paths in Engineering

**Practical Workshops**

<b>Science in the Cinema</b> <i>The Nerve Centre</i>	<b>Portable Planetarium</b> <i>Armagh Planetarium</i>	<b>Nursing and Midwifery</b> <i>QUB School of Midwifery</i>
<b>Brush Monster Challenge</b> <i>Ulster University</i>	<b>Terumo Brownie Factory</b> <i>Terumo</i>	<b>Building Sustainability –</b> <i>Wright Bus</i>
<b>Deep Racer</b> <i>Amazon Web Services (AWS)</i>	<b>Electric Power at Your Fingertips</b> <i>Caterpillar</i>	<b>Clue -pho a workshop of clues and photonic</b> <i>Yelo</i>
<b>Discover your future in Engineering</b>	<b>The Art of Air: Investigating Cement</b>	<b>Quality in a Manufacturing Environment</b>

<i>Royal Academy of Engineering</i>	<b>Renders through Touch and Feel - Kilwaughter</b>	<i>IPC Mouldings</i>
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### Science Summer School Careers Insight Event Panel members

Hosted by: Professor Brian Cox CBE, OBE, FRS	
Professor Mark Lawler, Professor of Digital Health and Chair in Translational Cancer Genomics, Queens University, Belfast	Ms. Gillian Riddell, Technician Commitment Manager, Queens University, Belfast
Fiona Byrne, <b>Organisational Development Director</b> , Kilwaughter Minerals	Fiona Simpson, Head of Commercial NI, Amazon Web Services
Suzanne Leslie, Partner Sales Manager, Amazon Web Services	Helen Reilly, Larne Facility Manager, Caterpillar
Jonathan Kerr, B9 Energy Storage	David Watson, Senior Advisor, Ryobi

### APPENDIX 2 Schools who Attended

St Patrick's College	St Louis Grammar
Slemish College	Dunclug College
Ballymena Academy	Larne High School
Larne Grammar School	Integrated College Glengormley
Cambridge House	Antrim Grammar School
St Killian's College	Cullybackey College
Castle Tower	

### APPENDIX 3      **Employer Engagement Activities: Pre-Science Summer School Activity**

<p>NI Apprenticeship Week February 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Young people from Larne High School, Ballymena Academy and St Patricks College schools attended career insight visits to Caterpillar and Clarke.</li> <li>- Young people in Carrickfergus Grammar welcomed Ryobi to their school to learn about Apprenticeship opportunities.</li> <li>- 20 young people attended information sessions in The Construction Industry Training Board's mobile training unit at the Radius Housing development on the St Patrick's Regeneration Site.</li> </ul>
<p>Innovation Platform Meeting February 2023</p>	<p>An Innovation Platform Meeting was hosted in the Curran Court Hotel, Larne, with teachers and principals from schools in the borough, 2022 event sponsors and potential new sponsors and partners to discuss ideas for better employer-education engagement.</p>
<p>School Career Fair, Carrickfergus March 2023</p>	<p>Arranged in partnership with the three schools in Carrickfergus (Ulidia Integrated College, Carrickfergus Grammar and Carrickfergus Academy) the Labour Market Partnership invited over 60 employers to a Career Fair in Carrickfergus Amphitheatre which was attended by over 500 students from all three schools.</p>
<p>Hospitality Takeover Day April 2023</p>	<p>Event at Ecos providing behind the scenes insights to promote tourism and hospitality careers with 54 pupils from Larne High School and St Patrick's College.</p> <p>The Hospitality Takeover Day is aimed at pupils in school years 12 – 14 and addresses skills gaps, helps create an industry pipeline, and educates young people of career opportunities / progressive pathways in the sector.</p>
<p>School visit – Slemish College and Caterpillar May 2023</p>	<p>Young people in Slemish College welcomed Caterpillar to their school to learn about Apprenticeship opportunities and other career pathways. Over 70 pupils were engaged in the visit.</p>
<p>Schools Engagement activities</p>	<p>In June, pupils from Larne High School took part in a career insights visit to Kilwaughter Minerals which</p>





<p>June, October and November 2023</p>	<p>produces high quality products for the construction and agriculture sectors. Larne Grammar School, Cullybackey College and St Killian's College took part in visits in October and November.</p> <p>In June, pupils from Carrickfergus Grammar visited Yelo and Ryobi to learn about career pathways between two very different, neighbouring companies and to see behind the scenes.</p>
<p>School Mock Interviews  June 2023</p>	<p>Carrick Grammar School hosted a mock Interview Skills day on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June. 40 pupils from Year 13 took part in the one-to-one interviews. The following companies offered their time to assist with the mock interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kilwaughter Minerals</li> <li>- IPC Mouldings</li> <li>- Ryobi</li> <li>- Yelo</li> </ul>
<p>Official launch on SSSNI23/24  June 2023</p>	<p>Hosted at Headline Sponsor Kilwaughter Minerals, the SSSNI23-24 initiative was officially launched. Council was delighted to announce sponsorship support from some of the Borough's key employers, with headline sponsor Kilwaughter Minerals and company sponsors Ryobi, IPC Mouldings, Terumo Blood and Cell Technologies, Michelin Development, Caterpillar and Yelo.</p>
<p>Hospitality Takeover Day November 2023</p>	<p>Event at Galgorm Resort and Spa providing behind the scenes insights to promote tourism and hospitality careers with 96 pupils from five schools.</p> <p>The Hospitality Takeover Day is aimed at pupils in school years 12 – 14 and addresses skills gaps, helps create an industry pipeline, and educates young people of career opportunities / progressive pathways in the sector.</p>
<p>Global Enterprise Week November 2023</p>	<p>The Young Enterprise NI Business Challenge took place in November 2023 and engaged with 800 primary school pupils.</p>



	<p>Other school activities for GEW 2023 included the Boss Baby Sessions and What's Your Flavour Ice Cream competition which received over 500 entries.</p>
<p>Young STEM Ambassador Programme</p> <p>March 2023 - March 2024</p>	<p>The initiative exceeded all targets, training 247 young STEM Ambassadors from five post primary schools in the borough who collectively delivered science-based workshops to 1,200 primary pupils. Each young person who took part in the programme will receive Accreditation from CREST.</p>
<p>Competitions</p>	<p><b>Cosmic Classrooms Competition</b> Pupils across the borough in Key Stage 1 &amp; 2 were asked to show us what they knew about climate change by illustrating a superpower that could help protect our planet. Two lucky winners won a Cosmic Classroom session for their class, hosted by Armagh Observatory and Planetarium. The sessions were hosted on 25 &amp; 26 January 2024.</p> <p><b>Sustainable Futures Competition</b> Pupils in Years 8-10 were asked to showcase a sustainable future for all by creating a space that will incorporate a number of sustainable and carbon emission reduction technologies, demonstrating their understanding of climate change, sustainability and 'clean tech' opportunities available. The winner and their class were invited to visit Ecos Sustainability Hub in March 2024 to find out more about renewable energy technology, reedbed filtration systems, as well as sustainable food management and biodiversity.</p> <p><b>HORIZONS: A 21st Century Space Odyssey</b> Students in Year 10 were offered an exciting opportunity to win a pair of tickets to see HORIZONS: A 21st Century Space Odyssey, with Professor Brian Cox CBE, OBE, FRS at Belfast Waterfront Theatre on Wednesday 24 January 2024.</p> <p>We asked pupils to tell us about their career aspirations, their motivations and what change they hope to make in the future.</p>

<b>Council/Committee:</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Economy</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2024
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Carrickfergus 'Around the Town' Music Festival</b>
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Open
<b>Author:</b>	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
<b>Approver:</b>	Paul Duffy, Acting Director of Development

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Elected Members for the costs associated with match funding a nine-day music festival in Carrickfergus Town Centre during August 2024.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Council has been presented with a proposal from Positive Carrickfergus to support a new music festival branded 'Around the Town' scheduled to take place in August 2024
- 2.2. Positive Carrickfergus is a Community Interest Company led by people who live and work in Carrickfergus. Their mission is to build the community, promote community-led regeneration and increase civic participation so that Carrickfergus is a great place to live. Their primary aim is to carry out activities that benefit the community, with a focus on initiatives that contribute to the social, economic, and environmental regeneration of Carrickfergus.
- 2.3. Positive Carrickfergus started in 2017 as a social movement on Facebook, creating a place to tell a positive and hopeful story about their hometown. Lee Robb, founder helped to bring Big Telly's Creative Shop project to Carrick in 2018 which became their most successful Creative Shop proving that when given the opportunity people in Carrick really want to engage. Big Telly has returned to Carrickfergus a number of times working with the Council's Town Centre Team.
- 2.4. In September 2022, Positive Carrickfergus were awarded £155,850 in funding from the National Lottery Community Fund's People and Communities programme to create an arts strategy for Carrickfergus with the local community, and to prototype the Town Hall, as an Arts Centre by putting on monthly events.
- 2.5. Positive Carrickfergus have been hosting, on average, one event per month since they launched this project in April 2023. Positive Carrickfergus have

hosted 11 audience packed events over the last 7 months. They have recently added monthly craft workshops to the programme - all selling out.

- 2.6. Positive Carrickfergus is represented on the Council's Revitalise Steering group, attending monthly meetings and taking an active role in bringing forward ideas to regenerate and encourage footfall to Carrickfergus.

### 3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 As part of the 'Talk of the Town' project people were asked what their wildest dreams were for Carrickfergus, music emerged as a strong theme. Positive Carrickfergus has put on a number of music events in the last year and with funding from Clanmil Housing, they have been speaking with, and gathering musicians, performers and entertainers who want to work together on events, and share ideas and resources in the hope of creating a thriving music scene for Carrickfergus.
- 3.2 As the musicians gathered monthly to support each other's work and plan events; a desire for a music festival emerged. The group has now evolved into a Festival Planning Group which is made up of many local musicians, groups, entertainers and event planners who live and work in Carrickfergus. The unique music festival to run in Carrickfergus in August would showcase the best of our town's talent and be an event that would reflect much loved Carrick events of the past, like Back Carrick Week.
- 3.3 The draft proposal for the 9-day music and entertainment festival featuring local artists and performers is outlined in the table below:

DATE	ARTIST	TIME	VENUE
Friday, 2 August	Grampian Concert Orchestra	afternoon	Town Hall
Saturday, 3 August	Loughshore Trad	afternoon	The Courtyard
Saturday, 3 August	Third Silver Band	afternoon	Market Place
Saturday, 3 August	Artisan Market Busking	afternoon	Town Hall
Saturday, 3 August	Bands Showcase	evening	Town Hall
Sunday, 4 August	Grease Singalong Movie	afternoon	Town Hall
Monday, 5 August	Eden Trad	afternoon	Civic Centre
Monday, 5 August	Potential workshop	afternoon	Pop Up shop
Monday, 5 August	Paint Sip Sing	evening	Pop Up shop
Tuesday, 6 August	Allen McClure	afternoon	Civic Centre
Tuesday, 6 August	Potential workshop	afternoon	Pop Up shop



DATE	ARTIST	TIME	VENUE
Tuesday, 6 August	Andrew McCoubrey	evening	Windrose
Wednesday, 7 August	The Big Carrick Treasure Hunt	afternoon	Around the Town
Wednesday, 7 August	Barry MacAuley	afternoon	Castleview Supported Living
Wednesday, 7 August	Flamin Ukes	evening	Ownies
Thursday, 8 August	Eden Trad	afternoon	busking
Thursday 8 August	Potential workshop	afternoon	Pop Up shop
Thursday, 8 August	The Rogues	evening	Ownies
Thursday, 8 August	Open Mic	evening	Town Hall/ Dobbins
Friday, 9 August	Potential workshop	afternoon	Pop Up shop
Friday, 9 August	Sounds Like Craic	evening	Town Hall
Saturday, 10 August	Flamin Ukes	morning	High Street
Saturday, 10 August	Anna's Number	afternoon	High Street

- 3.4 Participants will be the performers, audiences and volunteers that make the events happen outside of the original planning group. Some of the performers are more experienced and seasoned than others so this is a great opportunity to offer and nurture a platform for music performance to be developed. The PA technicians and event planners are all local people who have worked on significant festivals and events over the years and are keen to contribute their skills and see Carrickfergus town centre developed into a place that has its own music scene.
- 3.5 In addition to the significant increase in town centre footfall, the business and residential communities of Carrickfergus will benefit from the festival taking place. Positive Carrickfergus will be offering 9 days' worth of reasons to come into the town centre and enjoy, at no cost to the public, entertainment, gigs, busking, development workshops. Working in partnership with the Town Centre team the town centre businesses will be given the opportunity to open their spaces as pop up venues and to consider festival catering.
- 3.6 Events span across the afternoons and evenings with a variety of smaller and more intimate events, interactive workshops, to full blown large and loud band events. Positive Carrickfergus plan to work alongside Castleview Supported Living to offer an in-house performance and to help support residents attend any other elements of the festival they would like to be part

of. They have strong connections with both Junior and Senior Gateway groups and The Base at Kilcreggan and are keen to continue our relationship with their members and residents who have attended some of our previous events. They also have a strong connection with MEABC Autism Champion and are keen to have their input as the program develop.

- 3.7 Positive Carrickfergus (with support from Council's Town Centre team) will manage and deliver the event, overseeing health and safety, promotion, reporting and financial management and the overall running of the nine-day event.
- 3.8 It is envisaged that the total costs of running the event will be £15,000. Positive Carrickfergus has presented their proposals to the revitalise steering group requesting funding support of £5,000 from the DfC Revitalise fund. In addition, a funding application has been made to Belfast Harbour Community fund for £5,000. The proposal to Council is for £5,000 match funding.

#### **4. General Considerations / Implications**

- 4.1. **Financial** – £5,000 funding allocation from the Carrickfergus Town Centre budget. £15,000 is available across all town centres and £5,000 of this allocation is proposed to be allocated to the music festival.
- 4.2. **Staff resource** from the Town Centre team prior to and during the event for supporting Positive Carrickfergus to deliver the large-scale event.

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1. Council Officers to work with Positive Carrickfergus to firm up the plans for the music festival and support in the overall organisation of the event.
- 5.2. Council Officers to ensure that the town centre businesses are brought on board to be involved in the weeklong activities.

#### **6. Recommendation or Decision**

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to approve the match funding request of £5,000 towards the Carrickfergus 'Around the Town' Music Festival subject to match funding being secured.

#### **7. Appendices / Links**

N.A