
Environmental Wellbeing Pillar: Physical and Environmental Regeneration Thematic Working Group (TWG):

Workshop 1 – Tuesday 14th June 2016

Attendees: Joanne Wallace, Wallace Consulting; David McMullen, Armagh Community Development; Esther Baird, Portadown 2000; Mark McMullan, Translink; Mary McAlinden, South Lough Neagh Regeneration Association; Sean Woods, Futurescapes, Stephen Reynolds, Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Ailbhe Hickey, Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Adrian Farrell; Chamber of Commerce Portadown, Lynne McDonald, DSD

ABC Elected Representatives: Councillor Marie Cairns, Councillor Fergal Lennon and Councillor Glen Barr

ABC Council: – Sharon O’Gorman, Therese Rafferty, Elaine Gillespie, Noreen O’Callaghan, Rosemary Hughes, Michelle Markey, Lisa Soye, Jennifer Doak (NISRA), Gemma Richardson, Helen Stoops, Mechelle Brown, Richard Griffin, Shane Kelland, Gillian Toppings, Claire Toner.

1. Welcome & Introduction

Ailbhe Hickey, NIHE introduced herself as Chair of the Regeneration TWG and welcomed everyone to the first workshop. Elaine Gillespie, Head of Community Planning provided an overview of the Community Planning process. Sharon O’Gorman, Position Directorate, ABC Council provided a strategic direction to TWG during the process.

2. Baseline Statistics

Jennifer Doak, NISRA presented key statistics relevant to the RWG. A number of areas for exploration were suggested:

- Illegal dumping and fly tipping;
- Breakdown of statistics for Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon (some data has been presented at this level but the emphasis remains at Borough-wide);
- Car parking availability, ownership & restrictions (likely too detailed to provide at this stage);
- Green space audit (info. to be sent to Jennifer);
- Flooding priority plans;
- Dereliction in town centres (related to vacancy rates);
- Shopping habits & perception of town centres and settlements (this would likely need to be commissioned);
- Number of people living in private rented accommodation;
- Cost of vacant business properties to Council (i.e. Rates)
- Waterways
- Biodiversity and sustainability
- Environmental conservation

Outcome: Jennifer will look at the relevance/availability of additional statistics, as per agreed priorities.

3. Identified Issues

Joanne Wallace, Wallace Consulting led a series of group discussion and feedback sessions. A number of problems, which impact regeneration were identified during group discussions. These have been thematically grouped as follows:

Environment

- Lack of green spaces;
- Fly tipping/dumping;
- Litter/rubbish & lack of enforcement;
- Lack of ownership, interest and pride in areas;
- Traffic congestion;
- High pollution rates to include waterways.

Settlements: Economic Issues

- Changing perceptions/use of town centres (beyond Borough);
- Accessibility of car parking and off street parking;
- Competition from out of town shops;
- Poor environmental quality/attractiveness of towns & village centres & lack of investment;
- Struggling independent traders;
- High business rates;
- High business vacancy rates;
- Poor condition of some retail units;
- Poor connectivity to mobile and broadband services especially in rural areas.

Settlements: Infrastructure & Social issues

- Challenges of planning & providing services for an ageing & growing population;
- Centralisation of services may not match the needs of an aging or rural population (i.e. poor connectivity & accessibility);
- Poorly designed & connected communities (poor proximity to services in some rural areas);
- Planned housing developments & up-grades don't always take physical infrastructure needs into account (e.g. draining, sewage);
- Levels of anti-social behaviour, crime & perceptions of community safety;
- Current housing provision is inadequate to meet future needs;
- Increased levels of homelessness;
- Planning policy restrictions & disjointed working;

- Lack of connectivity and accessibility;

4. Shared Priorities

There was a high degree of consensus regarding the types of issues that needed to be prioritised and would benefit from a collaborative approach under community planning. The following agreed priorities are inter-linked:

Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment

- Raise awareness & respect for natural & built heritage in both rural and urban areas;
- Initiatives to connect people with the environment, take ownership & feel proud (e.g. litter picking, encourage greater use of natural & built assets);
- Use natural & built environment to develop a unique sense of place;
- Initiatives to protect (e.g. promote alternative transport uses/solutions, tackle pollution).

Revitalisation of Town Centres, Villages and Rural areas

- Create places of choice & focus on place making – diverse uses & improve environmental quality/attractiveness (e.g. Ulster in Bloom);
- Link physical, social, cultural & environmental regeneration;
- Town centre design must meet the needs of residents, visitors and investors;
- Review on street parking availability & waiting time restrictions (does it impede access to business?);
- Develop actions based on health checks for town centres (e.g. living over the shops, private rented sector investment incentives to improve stock condition, dereliction & vacancies).

Improve Urban and Rural Planning, Design & Connectivity

- More collaboration & linkage to create functional, sustainable, healthy & clean environments;
- Conduct a combined land asset audit;
- Infrastructure (e.g. mobile/broadband connectivity, road, walking, cycling networks, green space, play & leisure, public transport, housing) must meet the needs of the community;
- Future proof housing (e.g. build more supported living & single person units, shared housing, mixed tenure developments)

Outcome: TWG members agreed the following priorities: Revitalisation of town centre and rural areas; Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment; and *Improving Urban and Rural Planning, Design & Connectivity*

5. Long-term Outcomes

Based upon the agreed priorities, PERWG members discussed long-term goals (10-15 years) for the community plan. These have been developed as follows for discussion at Workshop 2 (see Table overleaf).

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree LT outcomes at Workshop 2. Joanne Wallace to draft Short- & Medium-Term outcomes based on existing information for discussion at Workshop 2.

Need/Problem	Priority	Long-term Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of green spaces; • Fly tipping/dumping; • Litter/rubbish & lack of enforcement; • Lack of ownership, interest and pride in areas; • Traffic congestion; • High pollution rates to include waterways. 	<p><i>Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness & respect for natural & built heritage for both urban and rural areas; • Initiatives to connect people with the environment, take ownership & feel proud (e.g. litter picking, encourage greater use of natural & built assets); • Use natural & built environment to develop a unique sense of place; • Initiatives to protect (e.g. promote alternative transport uses/solutions, tackle pollution). 	<p>Our rich built heritage & exceptional natural assets, habitats, plants & wildlife are conserved, protected & enhanced for future generations to enjoy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing perceptions/use of town centres (beyond Borough); • Accessibility of car parking and off street parking; • Competition from out of town shops; • Poor environmental quality/attractiveness of towns & village centres & lack of investment; • Struggling independent traders; • High business rates; • High business vacancy rates; • Poor condition of some retail units; • Poor connectivity to mobile and broadband services especially in rural 	<p><i>Revitalisation of Town Centres, Villages and Rural areas:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create places of choice & focus on place making – diverse uses & improve environmental quality/attractiveness (e.g. Ulster in Bloom); • Link physical, social, cultural & environmental regeneration; • Town centre design must meet the needs of residents, visitors and investors; • Review on street parking availability & waiting time restrictions (does it impede access to business?); • Develop actions based on health checks for town centres (e.g. living over the shops, private rented sector investment incentives to improve stock condition, dereliction & vacancies). 	<p>Our distinctive & vibrant city, town & village centres are at the heart of community & economic life, meeting the needs of residents, visitors, businesses & investors.</p>

areas.		
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Need/Problem	Priority	Long-term Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of planning & providing services for an ageing & growing population; • Centralisation of services may not match the needs of an aging or rural population (i.e. poor connectivity & accessibility); • Poorly designed & connected communities (poor proximity to services in some rural areas); • Planned housing developments & upgrades don't always take physical infrastructure needs into account (e.g. draining, sewage); • Levels of anti-social behaviour, crime & perceptions of community safety; • Current housing provision is inadequate to meet future needs; • Increased levels of homelessness; 	<p><i>Improve Urban and Rural Planning, Design & Connectivity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More collaboration & linkage to create functional, sustainable, healthy & clean environments; • Conduct a combined land asset audit; • Infrastructure (e.g. mobile/broadband connectivity, road, walking, cycling networks, green space, play & leisure, public transport, housing) must meet the needs of the community; • Future proof housing (e.g. build more supported living & single person units, shared housing, mixed tenure developments). 	<p>We live in well-designed, sustainable & connected neighbourhoods – benefiting from quality & affordable housing, convenient & accessible amenities, parks & green spaces.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning policy restrictions & disjointed working• Lack of connectivity and accessibility		
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6. Thematic Vision

TWG members developed their long-term vision, to be achieved under the Regeneration Pillar. These suggestions have been integrated into the following statement, for discussion at Workshop 2:

“Each city, town, village & rural area in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon values & protects its distinct identity & assets to realise its full potential as a vibrant place for living, working, visiting & investing.”

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree Thematic Vision at Workshop 2.

7. Parked Issues

These were raised as important and will be explored in subsequent Physical & Environmental TWG sessions and/or discussed under related Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing TWGs.

- Strong connectivity between economic, community & health & wellbeing groups;
- Design for health, community safety, economy, connectivity;
- Need better information & communication about existing services (mapping);
- Design age friendly environments.

8. Next Steps

The remaining Workshops are scheduled as follows:

- The 2nd Workshop will be on Thursday 30th June 2016 10.30 – 4.30 Old Town Hall Banbridge.
- The 3rd Workshop will be on Friday 12th August 2016: 9:30-1pm Marlborough House, Craigavon

Workshop 2 will focus on:

- Revisions to draft Outcomes & Vision;
- Developing Short- and Medium-term outcomes;
- Identifying strengths/weaknesses;
- Actions & targeting.