
Environmental Wellbeing Pillar: Regeneration Thematic Working Group

Regeneration Thematic Working Group (TWG): Workshop 2, 30th June 2016

Attendees: Joanne Wallace- **Wallace Consulting**, Ailbhe Hickey - **NIHE**, Alan Gilmore – **DART Partnership**, Ester Baird – **Portadown 2000**, John Waddell – **Armagh Rural Forum**, Sean Woods – **Futurescape**, Sinead Collins – **NIHE**, Stephen Reynolds – **NIHE**, David McMullan – **CACD**, Adrian Farrell – **Portadown Chamber** and Lynn Mc Donald – **Department of Community**.

ACBCB Council- Barry Patience, Cllr Gemma McKenna, Elaine Cullen, Elaine Gillespie, Gerard Houlahan, Jennifer Doak, Lisa Soye, Lynsey Daly, Noreen O’Callaghan, Richard Griffin, Rosemary Hughes, Sharon O’Gorman, Therese Rafferty, Paul McCullough, Mechelle Brown, Claire Toner, Helen Stoops and Jonathan Hayes

Apologies: Anita Waite – **DSD**, Catriona Regan – **ACBCBC**, Donna Fletcher – **Laurelvale and District Community Association**, Mark Mullan – **Translink**, Stephen Fields – **West Armagh Consortium** and Mary McAlinden – **Lough Neagh Regeneration Association**

1. Welcome & Introduction

Ailbhe Hickey – NIHE welcomed members as Chair of the Regeneration Thematic Working Group.

2. Baseline Statistics

Jennifer Doak, NISRA updated the baseline report as per Workshop 1 requests:

- Footfall for Banbridge;
- Car parking statistic both free and charged;
- Number of people living in private rented accommodation;
- Biodiversity statistics.

Outcome: TWG members agreed that the draft report reflected the current situation.

3. Workshop 1 Report

Joanne Wallace, Wallace Consulting provided a recap of the issues and priorities agreed at the previous session. The three inter-linked priorities were:

- Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment;
- Revitalisation of Town Centres, villages and rural areas;
- Improve urban and rural planning, design and connectivity.

Long-term outcomes for each priority were presented based upon the outputs of Workshop 1:

Priority	Draft Long-term Outcome	Agreed Long-term Outcome
Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment	Our rich built heritage & exceptional natural assets, habitats, plants & wildlife are conserved, protected & enhanced for future generations to enjoy	Our rich built heritage & exceptional natural assets, habitats & wildlife are conserved, protected, enhanced and expanded for future generations to enjoy
Revitalisation of Town Centres, villages and rural areas	Our distinctive & vibrant city, town & village centres are at the heart of community & economic life, meeting the needs of residents, visitors, businesses & investors.	Our distinctive & vibrant city, town & village are at the heart of community & economic life, sustainability meeting the needs of residents, visitors, businesses & investors.
Improve urban and rural planning, design and connectivity	We live in well-designed, sustainable & connected neighbourhoods – benefiting from quality & affordable housing, convenient & accessible amenities, parks & green spaces.	We live in well-designed, sustainable & connected communities – benefiting from quality & affordable housing, convenient services and amenities

The Vision was revised as follows:

Draft Vision	Agreed Vision
<i>“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.”</i>	<i>“Each urban and rural area values & protects its distinct identity & assets to realise its full potential as a vibrant place for living, working, visiting & investing.”</i>

Outcome: We will review the vision at the next workshop

4. Short- and Medium-Term Outcomes

Joanne presented draft short- and medium-term outcomes. The following suggestions have been drafted on the basis of the discussions (see Table 4.1).

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree proposed Short-, Medium- & Long-term outcomes at Workshop 3.

Table 4.1 **Priorities & Outcomes**

Priority	Short-term (0-5 years)	Medium-term (6-9 years)	Long-term (10-15 years)
Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment	There is greater understanding of and respect for the contribution of the built and natural environment to improve the health and vitality of urban and rural communities, their sense of place, character and identity.	Our physical and environmental assets are accessible and everyone appreciates & takes responsibility for their protection, preservation and enhancement, particularly those at risk.	Our rich built heritage & exceptional natural assets, habitats & wildlife are conserved, protected, enhanced and expanded for future generations to enjoy
Revitalisation of Town Centres, villages and rural areas	Collaborative initiatives are underway to improve the quality and accessibility of urban centres and rural areas, to address decline and provide innovative responses to community needs.	Urban centres and rural areas are more accessible, multifunctional and balanced, enabling business growth within a mutually supportive environment.	Our distinctive urban & rural areas are at the heart of community & economic life, sustainably meeting the needs of residents, visitors, businesses & investors.
Improve urban and rural planning, design and connectivity	We have strengthened our approach to ongoing physical, economic and social renewal through more integrated investment, regeneration & planning policy and practice.	The regeneration of place supports quality living environments, to include appropriate land use and housing strategies, compatible infrastructure development.	We live in well-designed, sustainable & connected communities – benefiting from quality & affordable housing, convenient services and amenities.

5. SWOT Analysis

Therese Rafferty, ACBC Borough Council provided a snapshot of partner activities relevant to the priorities. Members conducted a SWOT analysis on each priority to inform action planning.

Table 5.1: Protection, promotion and enhancement of natural and built environment	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich built & cultural heritage (e.g. Armagh, Loughgall, Argory); • Many natural assets (including Waterways - Lough Shore, River Bann, Lough Neagh and canal), Oxford Island, Gosford Forest Park; • High quality environment due to limited manufacturing plants; • Rich biodiversity; • Central location in Northern Ireland; • Good track record in getting funding; • Range of parks (e.g. Lurgan Park, Peoples Park, Palace Park and Peatlands Park) & quality & quantity of green space; • 96 Play areas in the Borough; • Models of best practice in partnership with community & voluntary sector; • Expertise of Biodiversity team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor transportation links in some areas & lack of sustainable transport; • Poor condition of some built heritage; • Limited waste management structure impacting on pollution (e.g. waterways through agricultural waste); • Lack of investment in infrastructure; • Traffic congestion; • Poor transport links in some areas (e.g. Armagh); • Poor awareness of and accessibility to open space in some areas; • Varying quality of open space - rural; • Lack of collaborative maintenance with central government; • Lack of knowledge of spread/distribution of open space; • Poor partnership working between private individuals, community organisations and land owners; • 79 buildings at risk; • Lough Neagh highest pollution in UK & has no navigational authority
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of asset transfer to encourage community usage; • Funding via Heritage Lottery Fund; • Lough Neagh Partnership & environmental programme; • Newly formed Lough Neagh Development Trust; • Potential for canal development; • Expand Walking Routes; • Learn from best practice elsewhere; • Links to Tourism; • New approaches to planting for biodiversity and maintenance efficiency; • Promote our 5 conservation areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little appreciation of open space; • Potential deterioration of assets without intervention; • Lack of funding for infrastructure; • High car use; • Flooding incidents; • Concern for the environment is decreasing; • Low levels of recycling; • Brexit & impact on funding; • Perceived anti-social behaviour

Table 5.2: Revitalisation of Town Centres, villages and rural areas

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good connectivity to broadband in most areas; • Strong town centre promotion; • Use of large scale/cultural events; • Unique town centres; • Strong independent retailers; • Good partnerships – Chamber, Business Partnership Alliance, forums; • Masterplans developed & track record in public realm works; • 5 town centres with strong retail base of independent stores; • Distinct sense of community/identity in rural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor broadband connectivity in rural area; • Town centre units are traditionally small – larger companies need substantial renovation to enlarge the units; • Migration of central services e.g. banking; • Limited funding sources (particularly rural) & knowledge sharing around sources; • Poor linkages, public access and transportation; • Dereliction; • Separation of central government & local (e.g. transport)
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration using full suite of powers; • Using the environment/greenspace (e.g. opening the canal walkway and encourage users to stop at settlements along the way); • Opportunities to collaborate with private sector; • Better carpark management and promotion; • Introduction of alternative transport such as bikes; • Creation of rural hubs; • Encourage living in town centres; • Develop evening economy; • Develop Business Improvement Districts; • Technology advancement (e.g. parking initiatives, broadband used in different ways); • Housing partnerships – match funding to encourage living in town centres, LOTS; • Partnerships with communities, providing services in community venues, re-imagining the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure of high business rates & rents; • Lack of flexible response to changing markets; • Uncertainty around economic impact of Brexit, recession, market forces & opportunities for growth; • Growth of online shopping & changing consumer habits; • Failure to align plans; • Concerns over access to funding to deliver programmes and projects; • Out of town/online shopping competition; • Traffic congestion in town centres; • Brownfield site regeneration damaging wildlife; • Parking charges mean decreased town centre use

Table 5.3: Improve urban and rural planning, design and connectivity

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of up to date masterplans; • Good partnerships in place; • Good transport routes M1, A4, A1; • Accessible urban centres; • Rail link between NI and RoI; • Large land base within urban areas; • Previous investment in public realm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of connectivity; • Weak rural transport provision & connectivity; • Dispersed settlements – difficult to plan services; • Need to upgrade links (e.g. & rail network); • Car dependency; • Infrastructure gaps impact on tourism (e.g. backpackers); • Lack of connectivity; • Lack of internet access in some parts • Lack of affordable social housing in some areas; • Lack of resources to deliver masterplans; • Insufficient services and infrastructure; • Lack of rail connection for Armagh and Banbridge
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of government departments; • Sustainable transport options – e.g. cycling, greenways; • Community Planning process leads to better coordination of services & infrastructure (e.g. landowners come together to masterplan, Council & NIHE surplus land); • New local development plans to facilitate better urban and rural development; • Development of more green spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community plan raises expectations regarding delivery; • Poor collaboration – central government collaboration for components of place that we do not control (e.g. TNI, infrastructure); • Lack of funding; • Antisocial behaviour/crime.

6. Proposed Actions, Beneficiaries & Indicators

Members discussed potential actions for each priority. These are presented on the following pages.

Outcome: TWG members to discuss & agree proposed activity tables at Workshop 3.

Table 6.1: Natural and Built Environment Proposed Actions

Proposed Actions		Detail	Outcomes
1	Create a Collective Assets Register & Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a combined register of public sector owned natural and built assets across the Borough; • Identify key assets/land in private ownership; • Review quality, management and use; • Develop action plan to strengthen & the offering & increase use (e.g. improve cross-marketing & shared use, incentivise private owners) – explore best practice; • Partnership regarding enhancement (e.g. HLF, NIEA) [Link to Revitalisation Priority & Economic, Tourism TWGs] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is greater understanding of and respect for the contribution of the built and natural environment to improve the health and vitality of urban and rural communities, their sense of place, character and identity; • Our physical and environmental assets are accessible and everyone appreciates & takes responsibility for their protection, preservation and enhancement, particularly those at risk; • Our rich built heritage & exceptional natural assets, habitats & wildlife are conserved, protected, enhanced and expanded for future generations to enjoy.
2	Borough-wide Education & Community Action Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of local assets, their contribution to sense of place & individual & community wellbeing, the need to maintain & safeguard these for the future; • Community Action Programme aimed at increasing knowledge, responsibility, ownership & pride - linked to Age Friendly, primary schools, intergenerational, communities, workplaces. [Link to Health, Communities, Tourism TWGs] 	
Targeting:		Potential Partners	Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents; • Disadvantaged/marginalised groups (incl. rural/S75); • Land & property owners; • Farming communities; • Private car users; • Visitors; • Developers. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business sector/employers; • Community & voluntary groups, churches, conservation/heritage groups/sporting/health groups; • Environmental NGOs; • DRD, DOE, ABC Council, Schools, Education Authority, NIEA, Waterways Ireland, Health Promotion Agency/HSCT/Health Board, Tourism NI; • Enforcement agencies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater community knowledge & appreciation of natural & built heritage • Increased quality green space • Increased visitors to sites • Decreased sites at risk • Target species protected

Table 6.2: Revitalisation Proposed Actions		
Proposed Actions	Detail	Outcomes
1	<p>Establish a Revitalisation Task Force</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct town/village centre health checks; • Review Masterplans to identify short-, medium- & long-term actions; • Explore extent of Council powers & necessary stakeholders (e.g. parking, dereliction, transport, planning, licensing/change of use, business rates, PSNI/PCSP); • Ensure framework is in place to enable change; • Work with Business Alliance Partnership to establish priorities & actions <p>[Link Economic, Infrastructure TWGs]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative initiatives are underway to improve the quality and accessibility of urban centres and rural areas, to address decline and provide innovative responses to community needs; • Urban centres and rural areas are more accessible, multifunctional and balanced, enabling business growth within a mutually supportive environment; • Our distinctive urban & rural areas are at the heart of community & economic life, sustainably meeting the needs of residents, visitors, businesses & investors.
2	<p>Pilot initiatives to redefine the use of space in town & village centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an information hub – showcasing projects & best practice in regeneration across the Borough • Develop & extend physical regeneration initiatives (e.g. Gateway development, town centre living, evening economy, creating shared spaces, pop up shops, shop-fronts, signage, leisure, social enterprise, extended opening hours); • Link with PSNI/PCSP/C&V sector regarding crime & ASB (design out crime). <p>[Link Economic, Infrastructure, Communities TWG]</p>	
3	<p>Improve ABC Branding, Marketing & Information flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw on existing town and village plans to define & develop an overall ABC product/identity based upon the unique selling points of towns, villages & rural settlements – complimentary not competing; • Make use of natural/built assets to deliver economic objectives; • Work with retailers to deliver customer service & define niche product/services; • Themed Borough wide events/animation programme (as well as localised); <p>[Link Tourism, Arts & Culture, Communities, Economic TWGs]</p>	
Potential Targets	Potential Partners	Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents/Visitors; • Small businesses/retailers/hospitality sector; • Landlords/Investor Property owners; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism NI, Housing Associations/NIHE, DfC, Planners, Council, Business Alliance Partnership - Business sector, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Community sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved town centre health • Increased business starts & Decreased vacancy rates • Decreased crime and antisocial behaviour • Increased town centre living • Increased active evening hours & evening economy

Table 6.3: Design and connectivity			
Proposed Actions		Detail	Outcomes
1	Borough-wide Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do all the elements currently fit together? Schools, housing, health care, employment zones, transport networks Improve connectivity & planning between statutory agencies – use to identify potential land-use Explore pre-planning impact assessment to ensure adequate infrastructure, drainage, green space, flooding risk, natural environment Planning gain – infrastructure benefits from large developments Use to shape balanced commercial growth & be responsive to need <p>[Link Infrastructure TWG]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have strengthened our approach to ongoing physical, economic and social renewal through more integrated investment, regeneration & planning policy and practice; The regeneration of place supports quality living environments, to include appropriate land use and housing strategies, compatible infrastructure development; We live in well-designed, sustainable & connected communities – benefiting from quality & affordable housing, convenient services and amenities.
2	Inform, coordinate & promote initiatives for digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to broadband, speed & affordability – explore rural development programme opportunities <p>[Link Economic & Infrastructure TWGs]</p>	
3	Take forward initiatives to improve the transport infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve connectivity from urban centres to rural areas & within & between rural areas through better planning & innovative travel solutions (e.g. green travel, social economy, community transport) Connectivity to Belfast and Dublin <p>[Link Infrastructure, Communities TWGs]</p>	
Target Beneficiaries		Potential Partners	Potential Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban & rural communities; Landowner/Developers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport NI, Translink, Utility providers, Sustrans, Housing Associations/NIHE; Department for Communities, Planners, Council, Central Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to high speed broadband Decreased unmet housing need; Decreased distance to greenspace; Decreased net migration; Fear of crime decreased.

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 3rd Workshop will be on **Friday 12th August 9.30- 1 pm Marlborough House**

Workshop 3 will focus on:

- Revisions/refinements to draft Activity Tables;
- Complementarity with other Pillars & TWGs;
- Links to Cross-cutting themes.