



CASTLEWELLAN FUTURES



Castlewellan Forest Park

CASTLEWELLAN VILLAGE PLAN

November 2012



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**
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AN tAontas
**Talmhaíochta agus
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MINISTRE O
**Fáiríes an
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**'The European Agricultural Fund
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Castlewellan Village Plan has been led by two community groups in Castlewellan, namely Castlewellan Regeneration Limited (CRL) and Castlewellan Community Partnership (CCP), assisted by local facilitators. It was carried out in a unique way with a big focus on participation and a understanding that the most effective local development occurs when local people take responsibility for implementing actions they wish to see happening. This started with the local community taking charge of the plan development process themselves. The approach sought to lean on what motivates people ahead of diagnosing what is wrong. This approach worked in both directions, firstly by identifying needs and then working on what people wanted, which would work with their energies but also directly address the needs identified. Innovative forms of participation were used including:

- World Cafes
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Vox pops
- Elements of "Whole System in the Room" processes

Traditional forms of engagement were also used including questionnaires. The process targeted people not normally involved in community based conversations and outreached through youth groups, churches, sports organisations, newspapers, face book and the internet.

The Castlewellan Futures process was designed with several goals in mind:

- To ensure maximum participation by ordinary people
- To build on the assets of the town
- To seek collaboration across projects and groups
- To create common ground as to the key issues and solutions

The process began with an exercise to identify the key issues that the plan would seek to work on. The first event was a café conversation workshop that took place in April 2012 in the Lodge Cultural Centre in Castlewellan and involved up to 50 local people in exploring the key issues for the town.

That meeting identified business and retailing, the forest park, sustainability, heritage, and arts and culture as key issues. They also agreed that there was a strong need for Castlewellan to begin to coordinate activities and working together to enhance chances of success. The meeting agreed that much good work was being undertaken at individual group level – among all the active organisations in the town but that lack of coordination of effort was affecting success.

A second meeting was held with seniors within the town and this meeting endorsed the findings of the first meeting.

A third exercise was carried out as a questionnaire exercise – undertaken during the Celtic Fusion festival in June and at the Castlewellan Agricultural Show in July. Around 200 questionnaires were completed.

A fourth workshop in July was held under the banner of Sustainability, where 25 people were introduced to the concept of sustainability under the banner of: Sustain Your Town (to keep it around). That workshop highlighted the potential for Castlewellan to pursue a development strategy based on the goals of sustainable development – in particular in thinking of a local food economy and a comprehensive strategy to look at energy use.

Once these processes were completed the organising committee created a process to identify all of the key stakeholders who would need to be included in a workshop to create a plan for the future. Around 80 names were identified and these stakeholders were invited to a “whole system in the room” event to be held in November 2012.

A website (<http://castlewellanfutures.org>) and a Facebook Page were created to assist with the communications. Full page articles were placed in the Mourne Observer and in the Irish News and posters were placed in every shop in town.

The workshop took place over two days in the Castlewellan Community Centre on the 9th and 10th November 2012. 60 people participated in the workshop.

The workshop was built on the process of Appreciative Inquiry, where appreciative interviews were undertaken by all of the participants and where the group was able to share experiences of what has worked in Castlewellan in the past and to draw from that the lessons of what works for Castlewellan and the themes upon which a new plan can be built. The workshop identified wishes and potential projects for the town.

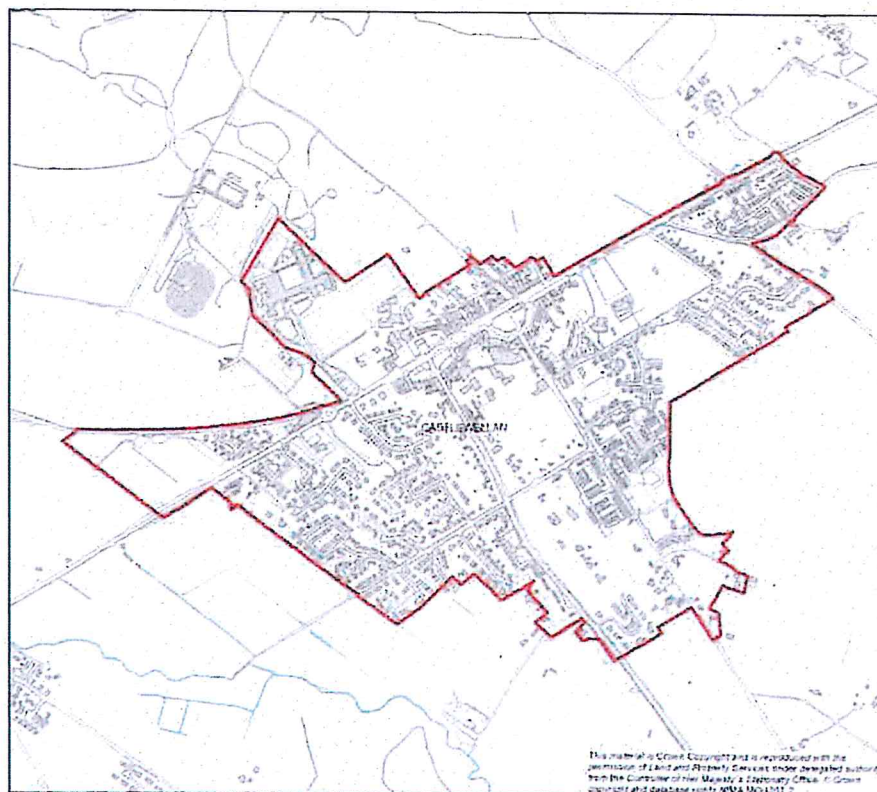
The workshop outcomes are explained in more detail in the following sections.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The two main Community Groups in the town undertook Castlewellan Integrated Plan Process: Castlewellan Regeneration Limited and Castlewellan Community Partnership. In April of 2012 they began to work together under the banner of Castlewellan Futures along with a group of five process helpers who are locally based and who specialise in business, facilitation, and community development.

The process was aimed at securing a place for the voices of the ordinary people of Castlewellan in determining the priorities for the town and the way in which these priorities would be taken forward.

1.1 Socio Economic Profile / Demographics



The population of the village of **Castlewellan** on Census day (29th April 2001) was 2,392 people. The demographic characteristics of the people living in **Castlewellan** at this time was as follows:

- 29.8% were aged under 16 years;
- 13.8% were aged 60 and over;
- the average age was 31.9 years (NI average age 35.8 years);
- 49.4% of the population were male and 50.6% were female;
- 92.1% were from a Catholic Community Background;
- 6.6% were from a 'Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)' Community Background;
- 6.9% were born outside Northern Ireland; and

- 0.5% were from an ethnic group other than white.

On Census Day 2001 there were 811 households in **Castlewellan**. Statistics relating to **Castlewellan** households include:

- average household size was 2.94 persons per household (NI level 2.65 persons per household);
- 68.3% of households were one family households;
- 10.1% were lone-parent households with dependent children.

It is recognised that the population of the **Castlewellan ward** has grown by over 20% in the 10 years 2001 – 2010, and is currently estimated at 3,636. This is made up as follows;

	Castlewellan	NI Average
Total Population	3,636	1,799,392
Children (0-15 years)	26.2%	21.2%
Young working age (16-39 years)	35.7%	33.1%
Older working age (40-59/64 years)	25.2%	28.5%
Older (60/65+ years)	12.8%	17.1%
Population Change	20.2%	6.5%

Source – new NINIS statistics – geographical information for Castlewellan ward

This highlights the growth in population in recent years also that Castlewellan has a younger demographic split than the Northern Ireland average.

There are a total of 582 wards in Northern Ireland and each ward is measured in terms of the level of deprivation that exists – Castlewellan is ranked 223 out of 582 in relation to multiple deprivation but scored poorly in the category of living environment, being within the top 30% deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

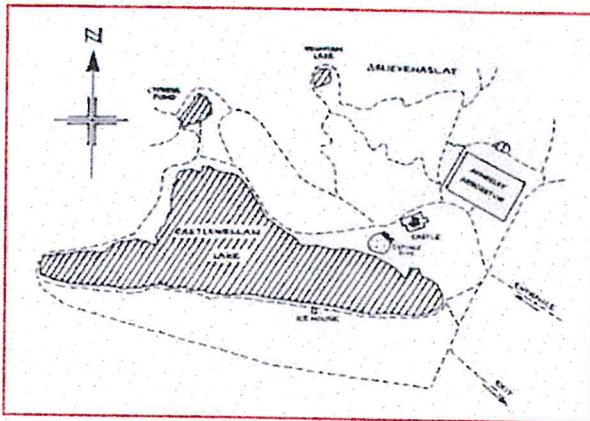
It is apparent that the population in Castlewellan has grown considerably over the last decade and this has brought additional pressures to the town as the core resources have not been upgraded to cope with the rising population.

1.2 History of Castlewellan

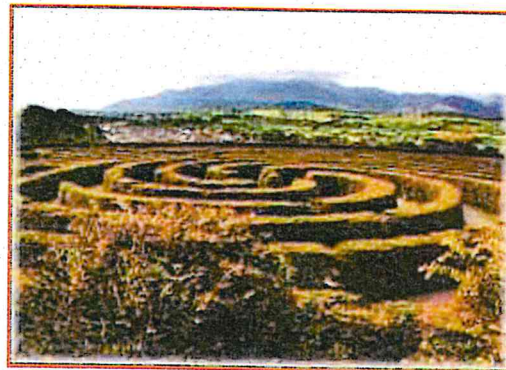
Castlewellan (from Irish: Caisleán Uidhilín meaning "Uídhilín's castle") is a village in County Down, Northern Ireland. It is beside Castlewellan Lake and Slievenaslat mountain, 11 miles (18 km) southwest of Downpatrick.

It is situated between the Mourne and Slieve Croob Hill and is proud of its heritage. The Castle in Scottish Baronial style, was owned by the powerful Annesley family who built the town during the 18th Century. The town of Castlewellan has a wide main street which runs through two main squares lined with chestnut trees. It was designed by a French architect for the Annesley Family and is unique within Ireland due to its tree lined squares both in the old town (upper square) and new town (lower square) as well as its very wide main street. The old market house in the upper square was built in 1764 and now houses the public library.

There are numerous objects of national heritage interest within the region, such as the Annesley Garden and Arboretum within Castlewellan Forest Park.



The walled Annesley garden, dating from 1740, provides a central focal point for the National Arboretum at Castlewellan and its collection ranks among the top three arboreta in the British Isles and the finest in Ireland. It is also highly significant among European collections. It includes:-18 oldest existing specimens in the British Isles, 34 'champion' trees of the British Isles and 42 'champion' trees of Ireland. However it is currently in a state of disarray and needs to be restored to its former glory.



The Forest Park's most recent attraction, the Peace Maze, is the world's largest permanent hedge maze representing the path to a peaceful future for Northern Ireland. Planted in 2000 with community involvement, it is maturing quickly and visitors attempt to solve their way to the peace bell in the centre of the maze.

Indeed there are many "lost" heritage facts in relation to Castlewellan, such as its twinning with a French town and this process has re-ignited an interest within the community in our local heritage.

2. THE PROCESS

In April 2012, Castlewellan Regeneration Limited and Castlewellan Community Partnership began to work together under the banner of Castlewellan Futures. They were supported by a group of five process helpers who are locally based and who specialise in business, facilitation and community development.



The process that was used was as follows:



Community participation was key to the success of the Village Plan and the café style process enabled all those in attendance to air their views on the key issues that needed to be addressed.



Participants at The World Café workshop identified these issues for further discussion.



These topics were then explored in detail in the subsequent community meetings.

3. KEY GOALS & OBJECTIVES ARISING FROM PROCESS

3.1 Overview of the key Issues:

Several key issues and opportunities have been identified for Castlewellan where need is apparent and solutions have been proposed:

Jobs and Business Development

Castlewellan has been badly affected by the recession, in particular the construction industry decline. Many young people have emigrated in the past years and this has had a detrimental effect in business and the community life of the town. There are few major employers in the town, particularly of high value employment, and small businesses are struggling to maintain viability. This is witnessed in the increasing vacant units within the town and the increasing emigration among young people. There is no coordinated organisation by businesses to address these issues.

Regeneration

Castlewellan's townscape is run down and tired. The last major "facelift" for the town was over 15 years ago. The town is a "Conservation" area and yet has dereliction, poor street furniture, poor signage – both on shops and for orientation. The major square in the town is dilapidated and adds to an air of neglect with broken furniture, degrading surfaces, vacant units and some dereliction.

Facilities, Especially for Young People and Early Years Provision

Castlewellan has a high population of young people, far above the NI average, yet provision for young people is inconsistent and uncoordinated. Facilities that do exist are over subscribed and often being run in buildings that are barely fit for purpose. In particular the Community Centre that caters a youth club with over 120 members and has Early Years programmes in terms of sure start, mothers and toddlers, a Irish speaking pre-school and mothers and toddlers. The Irish speaking pre school is run from a mobile room. Another is the Cultural Centre that hosts music and cultural classes and events for hundreds of young people but is lacking on space to accommodate the demands. Sports organisations need development of their facilities to offer even basic comfort to those engaged. A pavilion is sorely needed by both soccer and GAA organisations as a shared facility alongside the playing fields in the town. More opportunities for new sports and recreation are needed to cater for those into boxing, skateboarding, and other marginalised sports that are seen as outside the mainstream.

Heritage

The heritage of the town is its greatest asset yet is in neglect. Designed by French architects with unique characteristics, the town has forgotten its origins. Waterways surround the town but are damaged and neglected. The architecture, the biodiversity of the forest, the National Arboretum within the forest along with the grange yard in the forest are all key assets but in decay. Softer heritage in the form of ancient hiring fairs are largely forgotten. Heritage is important to the town as it is the towns identity, it potentially offers economic development and jobs, it could be used to attract investment and visitors to the town. It's potential is unrealised.

Tourism Provision

Castlewellan sits at the gateway to the Mourne, has an amazing asset with the Forest Park in the town, as well as relative proximity to populations of Belfast and Dublin and the transport links they offer. Despite that it has no method of enhancing its tourism potential. There are no working tourism welcomes, from a brand, to guides, tours, signage. It is difficult to assess the potential of tourism to the town but it is an obvious target. Many events are organised within the forest park by different organisations but have little connection to the town itself. Next year the World Fire and Police Games will be hosted in the Forest Park for rowing events and nearby mountain running and mountain biking will take place. Castlewellan has potential to tap into those events that are already organised to take place.

Sustainability

Castlewellan is a town that struggles with sustainability. It is not unique among towns in this regard. However fuel poverty due to a reliance on home heating oil is thought to be widespread locally. This is alongside a farming industry that has struggled to find markets for its produce. Falling household incomes has created an interest in growing food but with no opportunity to get the know-how or the space to have an allotment patch means this is unfulfilled. Overall there is an apparent lack of appreciation of the growing issues of climate change, fuel security, globalisation, biodiversity loss, food security or indeed the opportunities that tackling these issues produces. There is a high appreciation of the issues of local economy, heritage, and community resilience.

3.2 Our Immediate Goals (not prioritised)

- 1) To enhance the visibility of the rich heritage that Castlewellan has and make it a driver of development in the town.
- 2) To position the forest park as an enabler of activities and prosperity for the town.
- 3) To undertake an overhaul of the towns physical landscape to attract and keep visitors as economically valuable shoppers and tourists.
- 4) To ensure a diverse and attractive programme of events and activities that creates a destination offering for locals and visitors.
- 5) To ensure that development in Castlewellan is undertaken sustainably and that people are increasingly able to live sustainably.
- 6) To create more business opportunities for the town
- 7) To articulate a "Castlewellan offering" as a visitor destination
- 8) To ensure that children and young people are meaningfully involved in community life.
- 9) To ensure that community facilities are upgraded and meet the needs of the town
- 10) To provide a useful cooperation mechanism to ensure that groups and individuals are able to work effectively together

3.3 Our Immediate Projects

Flowing from the goals we identified the following projects as suitable for further development in the first instance.

- 1)** Streetscape improvements to include replanting, planters, repairs and painting of key historic buildings, developing the squares with a covered market, and improving the public realm and shop signage and frontage and approaches to the town.
- 2)** Extension/ improvements to the Lodge to offer the capacity required
- 3)** Upgrading the Community Centre to make it more sustainable by increasing its ability to cater for wider mixed use, and improve energy efficiency.
- 4)** Provision of permanent early years provision for the growing Irish speaking community (perhaps in partnership with other early years providers)
- 5)** Improvement of sporting facilities such as the provision for a Boxing Club and for the Pavilion/changing rooms at Bann Road Playing fields.
- 6)** Enhancement of and creation of green space/ allotments such as between Bann Road roundabout and Burrenwood park area
- 7)** Develop the Forest Park in association with other agencies to ensure it can be a principle asset for the town. This would include restoring all listed buildings such as the Grange and developing the sporting opportunities and leisure pursuits with interpretations, pathways and trails. Restore the arboretum to its former glory including planting and hard landscaping and stone ornaments, gates, glass houses and out houses etc.
- 8)** Establish a themed festival for 2013
- 9)** Creation of a welcome pack and tourism signage to aid the marketing of the town
- 10)** Creation of a collaboration and coordination "structure" that is used by all the organisations and communities to lead the development of the town

3.4 How we intend to deliver on our big ideas

Several recurring themes have come back again and again throughout our process. These were very much reaffirmed at the community workshop weekend and relate to the forest, the townscape, the community values, young people, the arts and cultural assets of Castlewellan and the local heritage assets.

The reader will quickly understand that each of these projects is “**integrated**” in that each has a knock on effect on another priority. Heritage affects the Forest Park, and the Business Development. Arts and Culture affects the Business Development and has a role in the Forest Park. This is intentionally created.

3.5 The First Big Idea - To Position Castlewellan as an Events Town - to create regeneration opportunities and to enhance local quality of life

1. Forest Park

Goal: To position the forest park as an enabler of activities and prosperity for the town.

The Need: The Forest Park is hugely valued by local people – both as a source of recreation and as a national asset that draws in visitors. Local people are keen to help with the development of the Forest as a resource for them and for visitors. It is also worth protecting and developing for its intrinsic value for fresh air, heritage status, open space, and biodiversity. Already the park is a destination for many camping and day visitors and the venue for a wide range of sporting events from running to triathlon and now mountain biking. However, there is little economic connection to the town itself and that is where the greatest opportunities lie. The facilities need to be upgraded, a practical commercialisation strategy created, the heritage enhanced, and the physical links to the town created.



Key Strategic Actions

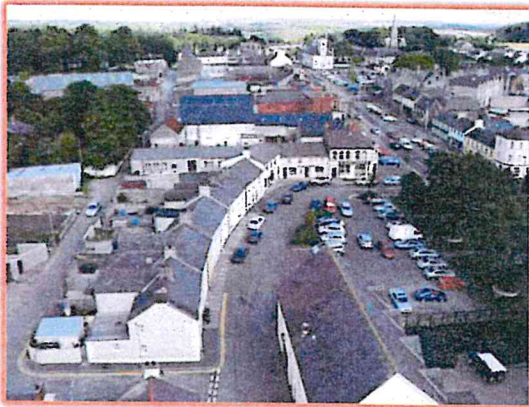
1. Create a mechanism for local participation in park planning
 - a. Establish a local forum for consultation to make a voice for the towns people in park planning process
 - b. Undertake hidden heritage project under HLF
2. Create physical connections between park and town

- a. Create linkages between the park and the town (train, bus)
 - b. During events - Change entrance to the park e.g. reverse the exit and entrance
3. Create opportunities for local ownership of Park operations
- a. Create a social enterprise bike-wash business
 - b. Flower show – biodiversity planting
 - c. Plant sales – reflecting what is in the park
 - d. Enhance volunteering within the Park
4. Enhance the Parks Facilities (esp through heritage)
- a. Renovate the Moorish Tower in the park
 - b. Lengthen the lake for international rowing events
 - c. Restore walled garden
 - d. Map biodiversity of park
 - e. Restore "Grange" yard as business facilities

2. Townscape Improvement

Goal: To undertake an overhaul of the towns physical landscape to attract and keep visitors as economically valuable shoppers and tourists.

The Need: Castlewellan is run down and tired. Many buildings are empty and some are derelict, others just dilapidated. The squares are unwelcoming and street furniture is inappropriate. An overhaul is needed.



Key Strategic Actions

1. Create an ambitious "Masterplan" of the townscape
 - a. Involve the community in re-design of the townscape
 - b. Re-invent Upper Square as people-friendly venue
 - c. Improve approaches to the town
 - d. Repurpose key buildings
 - e. Consider "covering" the upper square to make it all-weather
 - f. Market House as a venue for cycle hire, farmers market, tourist info, homework club, exhibitions
 - g. Restore / value buildings and architecture
2. Carry out immediate remedial work
 - a. Get colour into the town and forest park – flower planting, baskets – get businesses involved



- b. Mask dereliction
 - c. Repair broken furniture
 - d. Repaint former upper sq. supermarket – e.g. picture house, national school
 - e. Paint the town
 - f. Use the vacant shops for creative purposes
 - g. Design and source a covered area for upper square
 - h. Replace dead trees
3. Exploit available Green Spaces in the town
- a. Organise a community clean up – planting event
 - b. Fix up the green spaces to make them safer
 - c. Do some guerrilla gardening with food – starting now!
 - d. Create allotments for town (focus on available green spaces e.g. Burrenwood)

3. Heritage

Goal: To enhance the visibility of the rich heritage that Castlewellan has and make it a driver of development in the town.

The Need: Heritage is hidden but has huge potential to lead the development of the town. Much of our heritage in a conservation town is under threat through neglect and ignorance of its status. There is a clear need to identify, preserve, enhance, and develop the heritage of the town for locals and visitors alike. Heritage is a “unifying” aspect of the town that has impacts on the Forest, Business, Tourism, Sustainability, and Community Facilities.

Key Strategic Actions

1. Identify the relevant “exploitable” heritage of the town
 - a. Prepare HLF bid “your heritage” that links with the forest and the town
 - b. Enhance the link between the heritage of the forest and town
 - c. Twin or link with French town
2. Present Heritage in an accessible format
 - a. Revive the hiring fairs
 - b. Create a heritage tour of Castlewellan
 - c. Organise a tour of the towns water resources – asap
 - d. Create a “theme ” around Irish Myths and Legends – druids, standing stones, enchanted garden events, dragons
 - e. Arc to organise a pre Christmas arboretum walking tour for the town
 - f. Local guided tours – architectural heritage and wildlife / horticultural



4. Entertainment – Culture and Arts

Goal: To ensure a diverse and attractive programme of events and activities that create a destination offering for locals and visitors

Need: The town has a history of organising great events for locals and visitors. In recent times these have become uncoordinated and in some cases are no longer of economic value to the town such as the two traditional hiring fairs of May and November. Castlewellan needs a coordinated programme of events to fully exploit the space available, the events that are already organised and those planned for the summer time and to enhance an identity for the town.



Key Strategic Actions

1. Establish notable cultural events branded as Castlewellan events
 - a. Enhance the annual Celtic Fusion event
 - b. Put on "Music in the square" events
 - c. Create a themed festival as an annual event
 - d. Use the Walled Garden as a closed performance space
 - e. Create a Community festival – Comhaltas, drive-in movie, arts festival
 - f. Random acts of public art (guerrilla crochet)
 - g. Big public themed art event – junk art, willow weaving etc.
2. Focus on Police and Fire Games and other externally organised events
 - a. Exhibitions of police and fire stuff in the square during police and fire games
 - b. Create events for spectators – walking tours, pub crawls, history of Castlewellan
 - c. Traditional music throughout the town during big events
 - d. Street entertainment
 - e. Party in the town to welcome events
 - f. Encourage pubs to coordinate music and entertainment for event weekends
 - g. Schools parade wearing uniforms / colours of different countries
 - h. Float parade – every group and pub / business
 - i. Put murals on the shopfronts celebrating latest event

5. Marketing and Welcome

Goal: To articulate a "Castlewellan offering" as a visitor destination

Need: Castlewellan is poorly marketed. Services are uncoordinated and unannounced. Signage is poor. Information on what the town has to offer visitors is poor.

Key Strategic Actions (with sub actions)

1. Articulate Castlewellan's "offering"
 - a. Investigate and collate what Castlewellan can offer to visitors
 - b. Create a "welcome pack" for visitors
 - c. Apply to DCAL innovation fund to create a digital app
2. Design and implement a promotional campaign for all visitors including competitors and fans of external events
 - a. Create a "Culture NI" video regarding the arboretum
 - b. Raise media profile of the town at key events
 - c. Create a presentation including a short video of the town and area – send to all event organisers to market Castlewellan
3. Create accessible visitor information
 - a. Develop one or several easily found info-points for visitors that are accessible when they are needed
 - b. Create a display in the library – e.g. games through the ages / popular local games / heritage
 - c. Clear signage and maps for town approaches (forest park, info points) incl. multilingual signs.
 - d. Hospitality – welcome groups as trained welcome ambassadors
 - e. Local volunteers – guides, interpreters etc
4. To maximise opportunities for visitors to stay in and around Castlewellan for events that are organised here, including the police and fire games.
 - a. Identify and promote accommodation options: B&B, extra temporary campsites, spare rooms, house swaps, facilities for families
 - b. Ask event organisers to host a meeting locally about their accommodation needs
 - c. Open up houses for accommodation during events
 - d. What is required for NITB B&B registration? – any grants?
 - e. Link to Air BNB – online database of "rooms in homes"

3.6 The Second Big Idea - To upgrade community facilities

6. Community Facilities

Goal: To develop community facilities in Castlewellan to make them service the needs appropriately

Need: Some of the current facilities are over subscribed and undertaken in buildings that are not fit for purpose. In particular this refers to Castlewellan Community Centre, the Lodge Cultural Centre and the Irish Language Community.

Key Strategic Actions (with sub actions)

1. Renovate Community Centre in keeping with sustainable development
 - a. Undertake a feasibility study for what is needed and desirable
 - b. Identify potential funding for the project
2. Extend the facilities within the Lodge Cultural Centre
 - a. Prepare study of potential and needs
 - b. Identify funding sources to carry out work
3. Provide Pavilion at Bann Road
 - a. Undertake scoping study to identify the needs for sports organisations and public
 - b. Identify funding sources for the work
4. Provide new facilities for Irish Language community
 - a. Complete construction of purpose built early years and community resource at site of Bun Scoil
 - b. Identify funding sources for the work

3.7 The Third Big Idea - Sustainability

7. Sustainability

Goal: To ensure development in Castlewellan is undertaken sustainably and that people are increasingly able to live sustainably.

Need: Sustainability is now understood as a multidisciplinary approach to business and society. Communities that organise themselves using principles of sustainability are more resilient and prosperous along a range of indicators. Energy and food are perhaps the



two best-known aspects of sustainability, alongside waste, transport, water, biodiversity, and community development. Castlewellan has no coordinated approach to sustainable living, in particular to fuel poverty and energy efficiency. While there are many opportunities from this approach, few are currently realised.

Key Strategic Actions

1. Create an "energy" culture in the town
 - a. Undertake analysis of current energy use including fuel poverty
 - b. Explore opportunities for retrofitting
 - c. Exploit opportunities from commercial renewables – off shore project, wind farms
 - d. Explore establishing local Energy Supply Company to undertake district heating, renewables provision as an income generator
 - e. Create an "energy advice" night
 - f. Create a buyers group to bulk buy fuel for local residents
2. Undertake Programme of Education for Sustainability
 - a. Run series of workshops on key sustainability issues
 - b. Appraise opportunity for a Sustainable Living Centre to provide education, training, marketing for sustainability related activities. Can be used to regenerate heritage or derelict buildings.
 - c. Shared knowledge Workshops Day – gardeners, bakers, chefs etc.
3. Promote Local Food and Crafts Economy
 - a. Create "Grow It Yourself" Initiative
 - b. Educate on the Local food economy
 - c. Market for local crafts and fruit and veg
 - d. Create a distinct "Castlewellan Craft" to sell

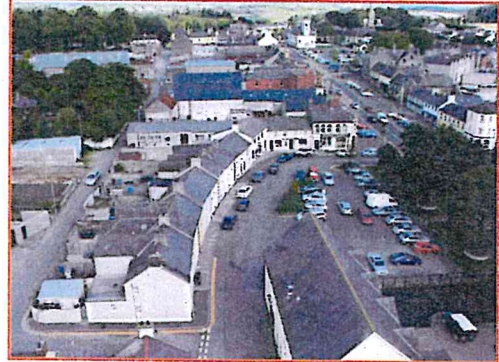
3.8 The Fourth Big Idea – Driving Collaboration and Engagement

8. Local Business Driving Development

Goal: To create more business and job opportunities for the town

Need: There is no business or traders association in the town. Retailers are struggling and outwards migration is high. For a town that was dependent on the construction trades, it has suffered in the downturn with businesses closing.

There is a clear need for businesses to collaborate to enhance their prospects and to better harness the potential of entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment. Tourism, sustainability, engineering, food economy, and retail are all obvious paths for development.



Key Strategic Actions

1. Create a unified forum for business cooperation on key issues
 - a. Create a business forum
 - b. Create business goals for investment for job creation
 - c. Build a lobby for investment in key areas
 - d. Develop support to new businesses (incubator)
 - e. Build partnerships with supporting organisations – SERC, Universities, Down District Council
2. Create initiatives to enhance business offering
 - a. Local businesses to develop a “shop local” discount scheme
 - b. Shop window display competition
 - c. Explore setting up a local currency
 - d. Provide dedicated outlet for local produce
 - e. Provide wifi in key locations in town (e.g. café’s)
 - f. Create hot-desk office for self employed
 - g. Create “innovation” initiative – e.g. hacktivist event

9. Coordinating Success

Goal: To ensure that groups and individuals throughout the town have the space, know-how, and opportunity to engage in collaborative working

Need: Castlewellan Futures will be the vehicle for carrying forward the work emerging from this process. It has no legal status but as a centralising and coordinating function it will assist by providing IT, mentoring, process design, and facilitation to help ensure that the overall process runs smoothly. It will “hold” the space for the other initiatives to flourish. The key element of successful projects in the town is when collaboration is present, common goals and common ways of working. We will honour this by paying attention to how the ability to collaborate is provided to all.

Key Strategic Actions

1. Create a user-friendly on-line forum to hold all the different pieces of the process
2. Organise the meetings that need to be held to gel the process
3. Publish the Integrated Plan online
4. Continually seek to engage broader interests
5. Communicate with the stakeholders both already engaged and yet to engage
6. Hold the values of the process – local ownership, coordination, collaboration, community, inclusiveness.
7. Create a distinct short-term role to professionally support the emergence of a collaborative ethos throughout the town and support the development and implementation of key actions in this document.
8. Create networking events

10. Engaging with young people

Goal: To ensure that children and young people are meaningfully involved in Community Life.

Need: Castlewellan has a disproportionately high youth population but with inadequate service provision. There are opportunities for those pursuing football or Irish music but few and far between for others. Recent moves to establish a youth club have been very successful. More facilities and services are desperately required to enable young people to take their place in leading the development of the town.

Key Strategic Actions

1. Create on-going opportunities for young people to contribute to civic life
 - a. Schools competitions to involve students and parents
 - b. Undertake participation training to learn how to engage groups
 - c. Use games as a theme to engage students and parents
 - d. Table quiz – local high schools (incl. Shimna)
 - e. Involve schools and young people
 - f. Involve all existing groups in the town – what can they offer – how can they help make this all happen
2. Ensure that facilities that are aimed at young people are excellent
 - a. Create database of facilities and services that are already available
 - b. Upgrade key facilities to make fit for purpose (e.g. Community Centre)
 - c. Explore creation of skateboard facility in the town

4. THE LONG TERM WISHES FOR CASTLEWELLAN

The Process identified wishes they had for Castlewellan. This is well of ideas and projects that are useful for long-term planning. Participants chose what they wished to prioritise from this list.

FOREST PARK WISHES

- A thriving forest park that is closely involved and linked to the success and well being of the town and its people
- Restoration of the arboretum and forest park to former glory
- Trim trail /play park possibly in the forest park
- Enclosed, staffed play park centrally located
- More expansive coffee shop/social outlets overlooking forest park views
- Forest Park being central to draw people into Castlewellan
- Strong healthy woodland that is sustainably managed
- Better use of the Demesne and Castle...9 hole golf
- Facilities for Equine activities
- Arboretum as a closed performance space
- Repair greenhouses in arboretum
- Play park in the forest park
- *Using the forest park as a resource to create tourism, to get people working together and volunteering*
- Using the forest park as a local resource
- More direct access from forest park to the town
- Improve tourism facilities in the forest park

TOWN/ECONOMIC WISHES

- Resolution of the severe traffic problems
- Connect most of Castlewellan with public/community transport with trailer for bikes etc as they do in Austria
- Return the heart of the town to the upper square
- Upper Square becomes what it should be...covered..for market use etc
- No derelict buildings
- More sympathetic and imaginative lighting of the town, the churches and upper sq
- Thriving local businesses, independent retailers and service sector
- Fix up the green spaces to make them safer
- Use open spaces to make connections
- Making the town look good
- Market House as a venue for cycle hire, farmers market, tourist info, homework club, exhibitions
- Townscape developed
- Restore / value buildings and architecture
- Create covered areas in the town squares (perhaps with parking in the forest)
- Rent / rate reductions
- Reduce overheads
- Save and diversify local businesses
- Create local work opportunities

SPORTS / LEISURE WISHES

- A leisure centre or athletic tracks etc for all the community
- Swimming pool
- A boxing club
- A pavilion at the Bann Rd

TOURISM WISHES

- Prosperity and better tourist links
- Tourist Facilities
- Castlewellan Festival...doesn't matter what just every year
- Castlewellan established as a must see venue in summer....horse show, celtic fusion, activity based mini breaks
- More Tourist attractions
- More Tourists and visitors coming
- Adoption of National Park status

COMMUNITY WISHES

- Improved cross community work – people really working together
- People brought together to exploit the possibilities...no divisions
- Talk openly about difficult issues..how do we do memory?
- Establishes additional traditions
- More vibrant and inclusive culture
- A community hub for all..gym/communal sports..that could be fund raised by all groups

YOUTH ISSUES

- Young people 14-17 having facilities for recreation
- A boxing club
- A pavilion at Bann Road sports facility
- A skate Park
- A playground in the park
- Irish language Youth Club
- Cinema
- Create activities for young people
- Create facilities for young people
- Safe café or place for young people on non-profit basis

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

- Bring back focus on Town Fairs
- Festivals and events – town challenge, dragon safari, fleadh, Celtic Fusion
- Revive the markets, fair days
- Exploit local artists / musicians, drama etc through concerts etc
- Festivals for culture and to attract visitors
- Food festival – square is made for festivals
- Events for visitors – festivals
- Something to do at night in the summer

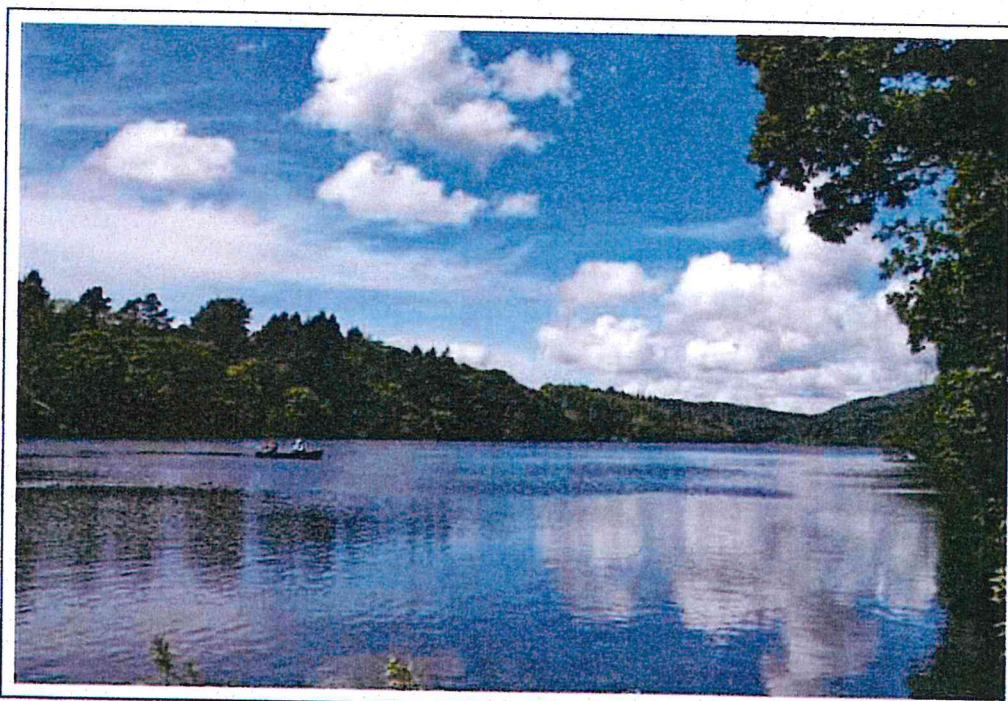
SUSTAINABILITY

- Local food economy
- Energy projects

- Resilience – community partnerships, local trade opportunities, forest park
- Accessible transport
- Community run supermarket
- More sustainable town, no fuel poverty
- Local food economy that works
- Remains resilient
- Take advantage of the economic benefits of the proposed wind farm in the Irish Sea
- Appreciating the resources we have
- Take on board environmental concerns – climate change, peak oil, renewable energy

HERITAGE

- Value the industrial heritage of the area
- Exploit the local heritage – e.g. the fairs
- Capture the history of Castlewellan
- Create a historical society
- Tell the story of the past – good and bad (warts and all)
- Twin the town with a French town – for festivals, hiring fair
- Town has a great history – great stories to be told – French Design, Americans in the war



5. CONCLUSION

The village of Castlewellan is rich in heritage and is ideally placed to offer significant tourist potential. The community within Castlewellan have fully engaged in the development of the Village Plan and have identified a number of key priorities which will have a lasting impact on the village and result in significant regeneration.

Already, a number of sub-groups have been set up to explore the implementation of the Plan and a number of short term, medium term and long term objectives have been identified.

There is a priority list of projects that are "ready to go" and an associated need to create the mechanisms that will enable collaboration both within the town but also significantly with other organisations and groups who can bring the strategic focus required.

All involved are enthusiastic in the exciting future that lies ahead for the village of Castlewellan.

APPENDICES

What works in Castlewellan

The workshop identified that these themes are essential to the future success of any community effort:

Collaboration between groups

- Getting people to mix together
- Getting people to work together on a common goal
- When activities are coordinated
- People working out what they want and working towards it

Creating Community

- Equity, Education, Empowerment
- Valuing Castlewellan's status as big, yet small
- Valuing family, friends and faces
- Instilling pride in the area
- Helping people relate to each other
- Tolerance of different communities
- Cross community work
- Community serving the community
- Working cross generational
- Inclusivity for all nationalities, cultures and religions
- Warmth of the community – friendliness
- Building on our rich community infrastructure
- Feeling accepted
- Running, walking, laughing and sharing
- Diversity
- Education of children

Opportunities Present to Secure Castlewellan's Legacy as an Events Town

Overview: Many of the initiatives above aim towards placing Castlewellan on the map as an "events town". There are many events already focused on the town but with little or no engagement by local people or businesses. With some little effort all events can be made welcome here and the marketing potential through the networks of people who attend and who follow those events is considerable.

- Walking Festival
- Bike Events in Forest Park
- GAA sevens
- Celtic Fusion
- Rowing Regatta
- All Ireland Triathlon
- Christmas Cracker race
- Viking Boat Races

Acknowledgements

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